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Faculty of Social Sciences

Southampton Business School  
HR Management & Organisational Behaviour

**Employer Branding and the potential effect on employee performance and intention to leave within a UK franchised, fast-food environment**

by

**Renato Martyn Raho**

Thesis for the degree of   
Doctor of Business Administration

March 2021

**University of Southampton**

**Abstract**

Faculty of Business, Law & Art

Management

Thesis for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

**Employer Branding and the potential effect on employee performance and intention to leave within a franchised, fast-food environment**

Renato Martyn Raho

Employee perceptions of employer branding and the potential influence on performance and intention to leave has not been extensively researched within the UK franchised fast-food industry. A systematic review of the extant literature highlighted existing definitions and generated a conceptual model, validated by a pragmatic, qualitative and single data source approach through interviewing thirty-six participants across three separate restaurant locations. A demonstration of diversity within the participant population was achieved via interviewing different cohorts from managers, hourly paid crew members and part time operatives. The research findings contribute to the definition of employer branding and the emergent themes suggest employer branding, when viewed through the lens of the psychological contract, influence both employee performance and intention to leave. Violations of the psychological contract had negative consequences on an employee’s performance and intention to leave. Delivering on the brand promise was seen to reduce staff turnover and increase performance.

The practical contribution of this research is to offer best practice and clear advice for franchisees and franchisors in order to attempt to maximise employee performance and reduce employee intention to leave. The emergent ideas suggest a more exploratory approach for the franchisor, enabling the franchisee at the local level to develop new ways of working. The franchisee should look to embrace strong recognition schemes, focus on training and development, ensure their organisation is supportive and caring, create a warm and fun environment and maintain a good work-life balance for all employees. The contributions as outlined will hopefully offer a mechanism for employer branding to be seen as a vehicle to influence employee performance and reduce turnover within a fast-food organisation within the United Kingdom.

Table of Contents

[Table of Contents i](#_Toc65657053)

[List of Figures vii](#_Toc65657054)

[List of Tables ix](#_Toc65657055)

[Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship xi](#_Toc65657056)

[Acknowledgements xiii](#_Toc65657057)

[Definitions and abbreviations xv](#_Toc65657058)

[1. Introduction 1](#_Toc65657059)

[1.1. Background context 3](#_Toc65657060)

[1.1.1. Why study Employer Branding in relation to the fast-food sector? 6](#_Toc65657061)

[1.2. Research Aim 7](#_Toc65657062)

[1.3. Research Questions 7](#_Toc65657063)

[2. Systematic Literature Review 9](#_Toc65657064)

[2.1. Employer Branding 15](#_Toc65657065)

[2.1.1. Definitions of Employer Branding 18](#_Toc65657066)

[2.1.2. The relationship of employer branding with employer brand promise 20](#_Toc65657067)

[2.1.3. Employment and benefit factors of employer branding to employees 22](#_Toc65657068)

[2.1.4. A Conceptual foundation for employer branding 28](#_Toc65657069)

[2.2. Attitudes 29](#_Toc65657070)

[2.2.1. Organisational commitment 29](#_Toc65657071)

[2.2.2. Job satisfaction 31](#_Toc65657072)

[2.3. Performance and Behaviours 32](#_Toc65657073)

[2.3.1. Performance 32](#_Toc65657074)

[2.3.2. Task performance 33](#_Toc65657075)

[2.3.3. Contextual performance 34](#_Toc65657076)

[2.3.4. Organisational citizenship behaviour 35](#_Toc65657077)

[2.4. Intention to leave 36](#_Toc65657078)

[2.5. The Research Gap 38](#_Toc65657079)

[2.6. Summary 39](#_Toc65657080)

[3. The Psychological Contract (PC), underlying theories and organisational identification (OID) 41](#_Toc65657081)

[3.1. Definition of the psychological contract 41](#_Toc65657082)

[3.2. Social exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) 41](#_Toc65657083)

[3.3. Organisational Identification (OID) 43](#_Toc65657084)

[3.4. Brand psychological ownership 43](#_Toc65657085)

[3.5. Violation of the psychological contract 44](#_Toc65657086)

[4. Methodology 47](#_Toc65657087)

[4.1. Philosophy 47](#_Toc65657088)

[4.2. Ontology 48](#_Toc65657089)

[4.3. Epistemology 49](#_Toc65657090)

[4.4. Axiologically 51](#_Toc65657091)

[4.5. Positioning of this research study - pragmatism 51](#_Toc65657092)

[4.6. Research Design – abductive reasoning 53](#_Toc65657093)

[4.7. Methodological Approach 54](#_Toc65657094)

[4.8. Data collection 55](#_Toc65657095)

[4.9. Developing Interview Questions 57](#_Toc65657096)

[4.10. Participants 60](#_Toc65657097)

[4.11. Ethical Considerations 63](#_Toc65657098)

[4.12. Risks 64](#_Toc65657099)

[4.13. Data Collection 65](#_Toc65657100)

[4.14. Reliability and Validity 66](#_Toc65657101)

[4.15. Data Analysis 68](#_Toc65657102)

[4.16. Summary 69](#_Toc65657103)

[4.17. Pilot Study 70](#_Toc65657104)

[4.17.1. Methodology 70](#_Toc65657105)

[4.17.2. Sample Selection 71](#_Toc65657106)

[4.17.3. Interview Process and Format 72](#_Toc65657107)

[4.17.4. Analysis, Results and Discussions 74](#_Toc65657108)

[4.17.5. Conclusions 76](#_Toc65657109)

[5. Treatment of Qualitative Data 77](#_Toc65657110)

[5.1. Introduction 77](#_Toc65657111)

[5.2. Procedure 77](#_Toc65657112)

[5.3. Data Saturation 77](#_Toc65657113)

[5.4. Thematic Analysis 78](#_Toc65657114)

[5.4.1. Phase 1: Familiarising with the data 78](#_Toc65657115)

[5.4.2. Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes 79](#_Toc65657116)

[5.4.3. Phase 3: Searching for Themes 80](#_Toc65657117)

[5.4.4. Phase 4: Reviewing Themes 81](#_Toc65657118)

[5.4.5. Phase 5: Defining and naming Themes 81](#_Toc65657119)

[5.4.6. Phase 6: Producing the Report 81](#_Toc65657120)

[5.5. Chapter Summary 82](#_Toc65657121)

[6. Findings 83](#_Toc65657122)

[6.1. Introduction, Data Structure and Participant Definitions 83](#_Toc65657123)

[6.2. Brand Influence – Aggregate Dimension One 83](#_Toc65657124)

[6.2.1. Theme One – Definition of Employer Branding 83](#_Toc65657125)

[6.2.2. Theme Two - Franchisee versus Company Ownership 90](#_Toc65657126)

[6.2.3. Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits 95](#_Toc65657127)

[6.2.4. Theme Four - Perceived Organisational Benefits 102](#_Toc65657128)

[6.3. Aggregate Dimension Two - Dimensions of Performance 107](#_Toc65657129)

[6.3.1. Theme Five - Teamwork 107](#_Toc65657130)

[6.3.2. Theme Six - Perceived Personal Factors 110](#_Toc65657131)

[6.3.3. Theme Seven - Training & Development 115](#_Toc65657132)

[6.4. Aggregate Dimension Three - Intention to Leave 120](#_Toc65657133)

[6.4.1. Theme Eight - Relationships 120](#_Toc65657134)

[6.4.2. Theme Nine - Employer Issues 123](#_Toc65657135)

[6.4.3. Theme Ten - Personal Feelings 128](#_Toc65657136)

[6.5. Aggregate Dimension Four - Levels of Commitment 132](#_Toc65657137)

[6.5.1. Theme Eleven – People Practices 132](#_Toc65657138)

[6.5.2. Theme Twelve - Recognition 137](#_Toc65657139)

[6.5.3. Theme Thirteen - Culture 140](#_Toc65657140)

[6.6. Aggregate Dimension Five - Flexibility Construct 144](#_Toc65657141)

[6.6.1. Theme Fourteen – What is Flexibility? 144](#_Toc65657142)

[6.6.2. Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors 147](#_Toc65657143)

[7. Discussions and Analysis 151](#_Toc65657144)

[7.1. Introduction 151](#_Toc65657145)

[7.2. Research Question I: How does employer branding affect task performance within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom? 151](#_Toc65657146)

[7.2.1. What participants understood by the term employer branding 151](#_Toc65657147)

[7.2.2. The influence of Employer branding on task performance 153](#_Toc65657148)

[7.3. Research Question II: How does employer branding affect organisational citizenship behaviour within a franchised, fast food environment within the United Kingdom? 159](#_Toc65657149)

[7.3.1. Encouragement and Happiness 159](#_Toc65657150)

[7.3.2. Self-Esteem 160](#_Toc65657151)

[7.3.3. Perceived Organisational Support (POS) 161](#_Toc65657152)

[7.3.4. Employee Determination 162](#_Toc65657153)

[7.4. Research Question III: What is the role of the psychological contract on the relationship between employer branding, employee behaviour and performance 163](#_Toc65657154)

[7.4.1. Beneficial Actions 164](#_Toc65657155)

[7.4.2. People Practices 165](#_Toc65657156)

[7.4.3. Job Satisfaction influences Life satisfaction 166](#_Toc65657157)

[7.4.4. Fairness 166](#_Toc65657158)

[7.4.5. Recognition 167](#_Toc65657159)

[7.4.6. Culture 168](#_Toc65657160)

[7.5. Research Question IV: How does employer branding influence employee’s intention to leave within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom? 169](#_Toc65657161)

[7.5.1. No Job Involvement 169](#_Toc65657162)

[7.5.2. Perceived Supervisory Support 170](#_Toc65657163)

[7.5.3. Critique Culture 171](#_Toc65657164)

[7.5.4. Poor Communication 171](#_Toc65657165)

[7.5.5. Work-Life Balance 172](#_Toc65657166)

[7.5.6. Stress and Pressure 172](#_Toc65657167)

[7.5.7. Proximity and Just a Job 173](#_Toc65657168)

[7.6. Research Question V: What benefits do employees perceive they derive from the brand? 174](#_Toc65657169)

[7.6.1. A Globally Recognised and Trusted Brand 174](#_Toc65657170)

[7.6.2. Monetary Benefits – a reciprocal exchange 175](#_Toc65657171)

[7.6.3. Non-Monetary Employee Benefits 175](#_Toc65657172)

[7.7. Chapter Summary 180](#_Toc65657173)

[8. Conclusions, Contributions and Limitations and Direction for Future Research 181](#_Toc65657174)

[8.1. Conclusions 181](#_Toc65657175)

[8.1.1. Qualitative Findings 182](#_Toc65657176)

[8.2. Contributions 187](#_Toc65657177)

[8.2.1. Theoretical contributions 187](#_Toc65657178)

[8.2.2. Contribution to practice 189](#_Toc65657179)

[8.3. How the contributions addressed The Research Gap 192](#_Toc65657180)

[8.4. Research Findings in relation to the COVID-19 worldwide Pandemic 196](#_Toc65657181)

[8.5. Research Implications 199](#_Toc65657182)

[8.6. Limitations 201](#_Toc65657183)

[8.7. Directions for Future Research 202](#_Toc65657184)

[Appendix A Interview Matrix 205](#_Toc65657185)

[Appendix B The Researcher Position 207](#_Toc65657186)

[Appendix C Interview Questions – with literature review justification 209](#_Toc65657187)

[Appendix D Interview Questions – with literature review justification 213](#_Toc65657188)

[Appendix E Participant Information Sheet (Interviews) 217](#_Toc65657189)

[Appendix F Consent Form (Interviews) 221](#_Toc65657190)

[Appendix G Interview Questions - Pilot Study 223](#_Toc65657191)

[Appendix H Interview Questions - Main Research 225](#_Toc65657192)

[Appendix I Code Mapping and Iterations 227](#_Toc65657193)

[Appendix J Demographic Data 229](#_Toc65657194)

[Appendix K Final Data Structure 231](#_Toc65657195)

[Appendix L Definition of Themes 233](#_Toc65657196)

[Appendix M Participant Perceptions by Theme 237](#_Toc65657197)

[List of References 297](#_Toc65657198)

List of Figures

[Figure 1 Literature review methodology – systematic literature review – three stage approach 11](#_Toc65690011)

[Figure 2 Literature map of employer branding, task performance and intention to leave 14](#_Toc65690012)

[Figure 3 The topography of employer brand success characteristics 22](#_Toc65690013)

[Figure 4 A suggested conceptual map of the relationships within employer branding 29](#_Toc65690014)

[Figure 5 The psychological contract 41](#_Toc65690015)

[Figure 6 Code Mapping 80](#_Toc65690016)

[Figure 7 Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding 84](#_Toc65690017)

[Figure 8 Theme Two - Franchisee versus Company Ownership 90](#_Toc65690018)

[Figure 9 Theme Three – Perceived Employee Benefits 96](#_Toc65690019)

[Figure 10 Theme Four - Perceived Organisational Benefits 103](#_Toc65690020)

[Figure 11 Theme five - Teamwork 107](#_Toc65690021)

[Figure 12 Theme Six Thematic Map – Perceived Personal Factors 110](#_Toc65690022)

[Figure 13 Theme Seven Thematic Map – Training & Development 115](#_Toc65690023)

[Figure 14 Theme Eight thematic map – Relationships 120](#_Toc65690024)

[Figure 15 Theme Nine Thematic Map – Employer Issues 124](#_Toc65690025)

[Figure 16 Theme Ten Thematic Map – Personal Feelings 128](#_Toc65690026)

[Figure 17 Theme Eleven Thematic Map – People Practices 132](#_Toc65690027)

[Figure 18 Theme Twelve – Recognition 137](#_Toc65690028)

[Figure 19 Theme Thirteen – Culture 140](#_Toc65690029)

[Figure 20 Theme Fourteen – What is flexibility 144](#_Toc65690030)

[Figure 21 Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors 147](#_Toc65690031)

List of Tables

[Table 1 Research aim and questions 7](#_Toc65690032)

[Table 2 Analysis of journals, rating and literature publications 12](#_Toc65690033)

[Table 3 Definitions of employer branding 18](#_Toc65690034)

[Table 4 Definitions of task performance 33](#_Toc65690035)

[Table 5 Philosophical assumptions based on a continuum of objectivism and subjectivism 48](#_Toc65690036)

[Table 6 Implications of ontological approaches 49](#_Toc65690037)

[Table 7 Implications of epistemological approaches 50](#_Toc65690038)

[Table 8 Pragmatism as a research philosophy 52](#_Toc65690039)

[Table 9 Total sample population by job category for three restaurant locations 61](#_Toc65690040)

[Table 10 Research philosophy, approach and methods 70](#_Toc65690041)

[Table 11 Pilot Study Sample Population 71](#_Toc65690042)

[Table 12 Interview Saturation 78](#_Toc65690043)

[Table 13 Coding Key for Participant Perception Tables 85](#_Toc65690044)

[Table 14 Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding – Sub Theme Meaning 85](#_Toc65690045)

[Table 15 Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding – sub–Theme Internal or External 87](#_Toc65690046)

[Table 16 Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding – sub–Theme Attributes of QSR Definition 89](#_Toc65690047)

[Table 17 Theme Two – Franchisee versus Company Ownership – Sub theme No Influence 91](#_Toc65690048)

[Table 18 Theme Two – Franchisee v Company Ownership – Sub theme Franchisee Dependent 92](#_Toc65690049)

[Table 19 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Environment 96](#_Toc65690050)

[Table 20 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Family Based 97](#_Toc65690051)

[Table 21 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Pay and Rewards 98](#_Toc65690052)

[Table 22 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Non-Monetary 99](#_Toc65690053)

[Table 23 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Work-Life Balance 101](#_Toc65690054)

[Table 24 Theme Four – Perceived Organisational Benefits – Sub Theme Globally Recognised 103](#_Toc65690055)

[Table 25 Theme Four - Perceived Organisational Benefits – Sub Theme Market Leader 104](#_Toc65690056)

[Table 26 Theme Four - Perceived Organisational Benefits – Sub Theme Systematic 105](#_Toc65690057)

[Table 27 Theme Five - Teamwork – Sub Theme Collaboration 107](#_Toc65690058)

[Table 28 Theme Five - Teamwork – Sub Theme Supportive and Friendly 108](#_Toc65690059)

[Table 29 Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors – Sub Theme Determination 110](#_Toc65690060)

[Table 30 Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors – Sub Theme Happiness 112](#_Toc65690061)

[Table 31 Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors – Sub Theme Self-Esteem 113](#_Toc65690062)

[Table 32 Theme Seven – Training – Sub Theme Cooperation 115](#_Toc65690063)

[Table 33 Theme Seven – Training – Sub Theme Education & Apprenticeships 117](#_Toc65690064)

[Table 34 Theme Seven – Training – Structured Career Progression 118](#_Toc65690065)

[Table 35 Theme Eight – Relationships – No Job Involvement 120](#_Toc65690066)

[Table 36 Theme Eight – Relationships – Perceived Supervisory Support 122](#_Toc65690067)

[Table 37 Theme Nine – Employer Issues – Critique Culture 124](#_Toc65690068)

[Table 38 Theme Nine – Employer Issues – Negative Hierarchy 125](#_Toc65690069)

[Table 39 Theme Nine – Employer Issues – Poor Communication 127](#_Toc65690070)

[Table 40 Theme Ten – Personal Feelings – Work Life Balance 128](#_Toc65690071)

[Table 41 Theme Ten – Personal Feelings – Stress and Pressure 130](#_Toc65690072)

[Table 42 Theme Eleven – People Practices – Sub Theme Progressive 132](#_Toc65690073)

[Table 43 Theme Eleven – People Practices – Sub Theme Fairness 134](#_Toc65690074)

[Table 44 Theme Eleven – People Practices – Sub Theme Pastoral Care 135](#_Toc65690075)

[Table 45 Theme Twelve – Recognition – Sub Theme Encouragement & Appreciation 137](#_Toc65690076)

[Table 46 Theme Twelve – Recognition – Sub Theme Autonomy & Independence 138](#_Toc65690077)

[Table 47 Theme Thirteen – Culture – Sub Theme Fun 141](#_Toc65690078)

[Table 48 Theme Thirteen – Culture – Sub Theme Fast Paced 142](#_Toc65690079)

[Table 49 Theme Fourteen – What is Flexibility – Sub Theme Hours of Employment 144](#_Toc65690080)

[Table 50 Theme Fourteen – What is Flexibility – Sub Theme Social Capital 146](#_Toc65690081)

[Table 51 Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors – Sub Theme Proximity 148](#_Toc65690082)

[Table 52 Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors – Sub Theme Just a Job 149](#_Toc65690083)

**Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship**

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Title of thesis: **Employer Branding and the potential effect on employee performance and intention to leave within a franchised, fast-food environment in the United Kingdom**

I, Renato Martyn Raho declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as a result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

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7. None of this work has been published before submission;

Signed: ………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………………………………

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Definitions and abbreviations

CAQDAS Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

CEO Chief Operating Officer

EBSCO Elton Bryson Stephens Company

EFTPOS Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale

FSA Food Standards Agency

GDPR Global Data Protection Regulation

HR Human Resources

IT Information Technology

NVIVO Computer Software to perform QDA

OCB Organisational Citizenship behaviour

PC Psychological Contract

POS Perceived Organisational Support

PSS Perceived Supervisory Support

QDA Qualitative Data Analysis

QSR Quick Service Restaurants

SET Social Exchange Theory

SME Small Medium Enterprises

SOC Station Observation Checklist

TP Task Performance

WOS Web of Science

# Introduction

The concept of employer branding has become prevalent amongst employers in recent years as a human capital management strategy of choice (Aurand, Gorchels and Bishop, 2005; Backhaus, 2016). There is no doubt that there is substantial research on employer branding as a marketing concept in relation to consumer products and corporate brand theory (Schroeder, Salzer-Mörling and Askegaard, 2006; Hankinson, 2007; Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre, 2015). Interestingly, within the field of marketing there is awareness of the employees’ impact on brand management and brand strategy and the interaction of employees and ongoing personal contact with consumers can influence the way in which consumers view the company (Dowling, 2000; Henkel, Tomczak, Heitmann *et al.*, 2007). This is particularly true within the service brand context and culture (King and Grace, 2005). In fact, marketing scholars have defined the concept of employer branding as the sum of the company’s efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work (Lloyd, 2002) or formally the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Ewing, Pitt, De Bussy and Berthon, 2002). In fact, in Lloyds paper titled ‘*Branding from the inside’*, scholars started to look at internal employer branding in relation to employees, rather than just corporate and consumer led external employer branding. Moreover, this author linked both consumer and corporate branding, purporting they may share similar theoretical foundations with other stakeholder groups, e.g. staff and employees. Indeed, several practitioners viewed having a successful employer brand as desirable to attract and retain employees (Willock, 2005; Barrow, Mosley and Schöbitz, 2006). Employer branding utilises basic marketing concepts, such as branding identification, image, reputation, along with some of the human resources’ concepts such as organisational identity and employee satisfaction (Katoen and Macioschek, 2007). Moreover, Maxwell and Knox (2009) claim that the perception of employees regarding employer branding is often overlooked.

However, it is reasonable to expect that employees experience the employer brand in significantly different ways to consumers experiencing a product or service (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). For example, employer branding is seen as the key component of attracting the right individuals at the start of the recruitment process (Kaliprasad, 2006). Further, it has been suggested that firms with a strong employer brand have a competitive edge (Moroko and Uncles, 2008) which make people want to work there.

In the current climate, organisations wish to be competitive and are engaged in what they see as a ‘war for talent’ (Martin, 2009) with some scholars predicting a knowledge and skills shortage to be long term (Ewing *et al.*, 2002). The successful brands, for example McDonalds, Apple, Microsoft, Nike, Coca-Cola, consistently deliver on the inherent promise of the brand. This view corresponds with organisational behavioural research on psychological contracts and the beliefs in reciprocal obligations between employees and employers (Rousseau, 1989; Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). When the psychological contract is fulfilled, the employee is more likely to be engaged and loyal; however if the contract is broken a fall in productivity and engagement can result, with an attendant impact on staff turnover (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). There is a delicate balance between managing the expectations of employees, whilst keeping promises and obligations to employees (Grigg, 2011a; Martin, Gollan and Grigg, 2011; Martin and Cerdin, 2014).

Further, in relation to employee performance, a fundamental empirical question is whether firms using brand and marketing disciplines in their HR functions achieve better performance? Conversely do firms employing best Human Resource (HR) practice in their relationship marketing (brand promise) programmes do better (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Wong, 2014). This research has developed the existing themes identified by scholars of two types of performance, task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour, within a franchised fast-food environment. The importance of improved performance is critical within the fast-moving and low margin quick service restaurant sector (QSR). Improved performance will add value to any franchisee/business owner if he or she can gain increased productivity from the organisation’s employees. For the purposes of this research task performance is defined as the accomplishment of duties and responsibilities associated with a given job (Milich, Licht, Murphy and Pelham, 1989). This definition aligns itself to the specific nature of individual roles that make up the production team within a typical fast-food environment. Conversely, organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) can be defined as an individual contribution in the workplace that goes beyond role requirements and contractually rewarded job achievements (Organ and Ryan, 1995). Furthermore, these authors found that job attitudes are robust predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour and may have more importance than personality and attitudinal factors in determining organisational citizenship behaviour. Further, it is suggested that one could expect task performance to be determined largely by ability, particularly as it interacts with precise incentive structures for the quantity or quality of task performance (Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 1994). So, if attitude, for example, relates more strongly to organisational citizenship behaviour than in role performance, then human resource programmes need to focus on ways to improve job attitudes and commitment (Organ and Ryan, 1995). Empirical evidence suggests that in-role performance (task performance) is likely to be an antecedent of job satisfaction (Bagozzi, 1980; Wright, McMahan and McWilliams, 1994) and extra-role (organisational citizenship behaviour) performance a consequence of it (Organ, 1988). Additionally, in-role performance can be perceived as an antecedent of organisational commitment whereas extra role performance as a consequence of it (Peterson, Smith, Akande *et al.*, 1995). Further, questions have been postulated to ask are employers getting satisfactory returns for their employer branding investment when it comes to organisational and employee performance (Rosethorn and Mensink, 2007).

In relation to an employee’s intention to stay, it has been argued that employer branding has been introduced as a method of enhancing retention by making the promise of employment so distinctive and superior to that of the competitors that the employee would not consider switching (Taylor, 2002). Moreover, organisations that have strong cultures experience increased retention of employees to augmented satisfaction and commitment (Wheeler, Richey, Tokkman and Sablynski, 2006). However, perceptions of the characteristics of successful/unsuccessful employer brands have not been empirically examined (Moroko and Uncles, 2008).

This research has added significant insight and has built upon the conceptual models of the relationships between perceived employer branding, an employee’s performance and their propensity and intention to leave. From the existing literature little evidence was found of an understanding of whether firms using brand marketing disciplines achieve better performance (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Wong, 2014). Furthermore, understanding employer branding as a form of internal marketing that helps in attracting and retaining employees is a gap within the literature little research focus (Wilden, Gudergan and Lings, 2010).

## Background context

The United Kingdom (UK) has the highest consumption of fast food in the world.[[1]](#footnote-1) The country is known for having many different cultures and this different cultural taste has a large impact on the success of the fast-food industry at a national level. The current UK market in the food-to-go sector is worth an estimated £17.4bn in 2019 and is expected to grow by £6.1bn over the next 5 years to be worth £23.5bn by 2022.[[2]](#footnote-2) Within this sector the ‘quick service restaurants’ (QSR) element is worth £6.3bn. McDonalds current share of the QSR market in the United Kingdom is c£4.2bn.

Within the current marketplace several themes are apparent that dramatically affect the nature of the market both today and ongoing into the future.

Politically, the Government are looking at the health of UK citizens and making a conscious effort to tackle obesity in the UK population. Themes surrounding obesity are a popular topic. It is suggested that without Britain slimming down, estimates forecast obesity could progress to 48% by 2045.[[3]](#footnote-3) In response to this, a sugar tax has been levied upon fizzy drinks within the fast-food industry as this is seen of a way of reducing the effect of un-healthy foods; a list of which products this is applied to has been drawn up. At present in the UK most food in VAT zero-rated, but many types of junk-food attract the standard rate of 17.5%. Moreover, Public Health England (PHE) are suggesting increasing VAT on foods with high fat, sugar or salt content in an effort to tackle obesity. In France for example, sweets, chocolates, margarine and vegetable fat attract a rate of 20.6% tax while healthier foods attract a rate of 5.5% [[4]](#footnote-4). A goods service tax (GST) will undoubtedly affect pricing with fast food chains having to differentiate themselves through better customer service rather than product alone.

Economically, franchising is gaining momentum with most fast-food chains moving towards this model as it helps increase brand image and de-risks the costs for the franchisor. Moreover, fast-food franchising models appeal to Private Equity (PE) investors because there is a future flow of franchise royalties, the model is very scalable and franchisees are financially and contractually committed to the franchise network and model [[5]](#footnote-5). This said, the impact of increased labour costs and a reliance on ‘product offers’ is squeezing the industries margins. It has also been suggested that retail chains have to spend more time and money in order to build their brands in the current labour market as a result of less than clear strategies that make them trustworthy employers (Bilińska-Reformat and Stańczyk, 2018). However, in recessionary times, the QSR market does better business compared to other expensive restaurants. The informal eating out market (IEO) has suffered in the last two years, for example Jamie’s Italian, Five Guys, Wagamama, as their price points are very high when compared to the QSR market players. It is true to say that people tend to cut down their expense when their disposable income is becoming less.

Health and lifestyle trends also influence the fast-food industry on a global scale. In the United Kingdom this is no different. QSR’s respond to the UK societies requirements as the social perception is that health has changed vastly. People in the UK have busy lifestyles and fast-food restaurants are known for a convenient and quick service and have become part of the fast-paced UK lifestyle. Some Fast-food restaurants have adapted their menus to serve less calorific foods to combat a more health-conscious need. Moreover, social media has played its own important role in changing the perception of what is healthy. The industry has faced heavy criticism for targeting young children [[6]](#footnote-6).

QSR restaurants have had to keep up with the fast pace of technology to maintain a competitive advantage. As an example, McDonalds recently upgraded the whole UK estate to Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale (EFTPOS) which can accept credit or debit cards from customers at the time of their purchase. Online applications, apps and mobile ordering technology is also aiding a faster and more convenient service. The home delivery market, estimated to be worth £5bn in the UK in 2018,[[7]](#footnote-7) is also heavily based on technology. For example, McDonalds are partnering with Uber Eats and Just Eats as the delivery vehicle worldwide. This is primarily based on their advanced smart-phone applications and customer base.

In today’s world, there is more awareness of the treatment of animals and being environmentally friendly and providing sustainability. Many resources that once may have seemed to have an infinite supply are now seen as precious and greater efforts are being made to find alternatives and to cut down usage.[[8]](#footnote-8) Of course, as resources like oil, beef costs, transportation costs rise the cost of the product rises. McDonald’s are now using recycled paper to wrap their hamburgers, therefore reducing the amount of deforestation across the world. Moreover, a change in packaging from polystyrene to paper has also been undertaken in a response to more ‘environmentally friendly’ packaging (Samnani, 2014). These environmental factors, portraying the business as environmentally friendly, are believed to enhance McDonalds positioning in the workplace market as an employer of choice, attracting potential employees to want to work within the business. In the current world, to be an environmentally friendly company has a good image in the minds of customers and future employees (in addition, McDonalds changed their packaging to paper in 1991 and straws from plastic to paper in 2018).

Legislatively, with new data a protection regulation such as Global Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) enterprises like fast-food restaurants have to be careful about how they obtain data about their service via surveys. They have to be careful not to ask too personal data and receive consent from individual customers when they do. Moreover, the industry is under very strict guidelines for Health and Safety from the FSA (Food Standards Authority) in the United Kingdom. The fast-food operators have to maintain ever increasing levels of hygiene, numbers of staff, customer service metrics, payments to staff and storage of unused items and other such factors (Samnani, 2014).

The QSR market expects challenging times ahead. However, with an increased usage of digital technology and improvements in the way restaurants engage with the customers, good operators will survive and increase their market share.[[9]](#footnote-9) The operators can capitalise on a desire for more healthy eating, informal dining experiences and an increased focus on food provenance and sustainability. Brands that position themselves in a very positive way to future employees may benefit from a stronger workforce and attracting the best talent to their workforce. For example, Greggs achieved significant success in 2019, with sales in excess of £1.2bn. They returned a cash bonus of £7m to the staff, paying 19,000 employees who joined pre-March 2019 £300 each.[[10]](#footnote-10) In turn, the best talent may perform at a higher level and be less likely to leave the employ of an organisation that promotes development and makes staff feel secure. This in essence is what this research will focus upon.

### Why study Employer Branding in relation to the fast-food sector?

With the background scene set the importance of studying employer branding is now outlined. Employer turnover in the global fast-food industry is at an all-time high. Some analysts in the sector are reporting losing between 100% and 150% of employees annually. In essence this means that the industry is losing still more of the employees hired to replace those leaving. This problem appears to be getting worse within the industry as a whole[[11]](#footnote-11).

Within the McDonalds system, employee turnover has been represented by a cost, in terms of a cost per employee. Logically there is a time period in order to hire a new worker, an additional time to train that individual and time to for that person to become proficient on the job. This time as apportioned to these operations can be related to a cost which is estimated to be £2,000 per employee. On average it takes 8 weeks to train a new starter fully. During this period half of the pay is factored in as a potential loss should that employee leave. Interestingly, if an employee stays beyond ninety days (three months) staff turnover dramatically reduces. In addition, there are fewer tangible costs to account for such as organisational disruption and team disruption.

In conjunction with the disruption, there is a perception that a deterioration in profit margins can be attributed to employee turnover and in turn this is linked to the impact of employee turnover on performance[[12]](#footnote-12). Daily task management when people are constantly leaving the business becomes a struggle. In turn this has a negative effect on staff productivity and the team dynamics suffer with the team being unable to build rapport. The lack of continuity becomes unhealthy and constantly training new starters eventually impacts productivity and customer satisfaction as a by-product of poor employee performance. All these factors also perpetuate a vicious circle whereby the company image is tarnished as a company with a negative reputation as so many people are always leaving the organisation.

As previously stated, employer branding can be viewed as the sum of the company’s efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work (Lloyd, 2002) or formally the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Ewing *et al.*, 2002). This internal mechanism of communication and alignment of the company values to all employees is therefore of enormous potential value to business owners who can facilitate this branding in a positive and beneficial manner. The financial burden and opportunity cost of having high staff turnover rates is an adverse financial cost which could lead to a reduction in performance levels, less intention for employees to go above and beyond their roles and ultimately lower productivity. The financial benefits to franchisees (business owners) and franchisors who can execute this internal branding successfully are potentially extensive. In fact, in Lloyds paper titled ‘*Branding from the inside’*, scholars started to look at internal employer branding in relation to employees, and several practitioners have commented that having a successful employer brand as desirable to attract and retain employees (Willock, 2005; Barrow *et al.*, 2006).

It is for these reasons that employer branding is such a critical area of study for the quick service restaurant (QSR) sector. If employer branding is executed effectively, and with the backdrop of the traditionally high turnover rates within the industry, franchisees and franchisors alike could see significant improvement in performance and productivity with the resultant cost saving in recruitment and staff turnover.

## Research Aim

The aim of this research was to determine to what extent employer branding effects task performance, organizational citizenship behaviour and intention to leave amongst employees within a fast-food, franchised environment within the United Kingdom. Using the psychological contract as a theoretical lens, employee performance and intention to leave will be explored from the employee’s perspective in relation to how they feel employer branding influences them. Research questions supporting this research aim are shown in Table 1.

## Research Questions

The research questions for this study are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Research aim and questions

| Research Aim | Research Questions |
| --- | --- |
| To determine to what extent employer branding affects task performance, organizational citizenship behaviour and intention to leave amongst employees within a fast-food, franchised environment within the United Kingdom | I. How does employer branding affect task performance within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom? |
| II. How does employer branding affect organisational citizenship behaviour within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom? |
| III. What is the role of the psychological contract on the relationship between employer branding, employee behaviour and performance? |
| IV. How does employer branding influence employee’s intention to leave within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom? |
| V. What benefits do employees perceive they derive from the brand? |

# Systematic Literature Review

This systematic literature review followed three stages: planning the review, conducting the review and reporting and dissemination (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003). Within each stage, there were distinct phases of activity. The overall process is summarised in Figure 1.

The purpose of this literature review was to undertake a systematic review of the relevant literature, as defined by the research questions and criteria as outlined (Figure 1), and review employer branding and its relationship with employee’s task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour (organisational citizenship behaviour) and employee intention to leave. The literature review was broken down into three main topics:

1. Employer branding
2. Employer branding and its effect on employee performance – contextual, task performance (TP), and organisational citizenship behaviour (organisational citizenship behaviour)
3. Employer branding and the influence and relationship on an employee’s intention to leave

Each topic was explored separately and then each theme was cross-referenced to understand the research gaps within the literature and potential areas to define research questions.

An initial search was run against the following databases to see which database gave the most reliable and complete results.

* Web Of Science (WOS)
* EBSCO Host Premier
* Scopus
* Delphis
* Google Scholar

The research journals were narrowed down using the Delphis database as this one database collectively searches WOS, EBSCO Host Premier and Scopus and returned all journal articles which were peer-reviewed.

The search terms used were *‘employer branding’, ‘intention to stay or leave or turnover intention or leaving intention’, ‘task performance’, ‘performance’ ‘organisational citizenship behaviour’, ‘staff turnover’, ‘psychological contract’, ‘perceived brand promise’*. The search identified articles that mentioned these words in their title, abstract or keywords and was restricted to peer-reviewed academic journals which were featured in the Academic Journal Guide (AJG) 2018 with a minimum Academic Journal Rating (AJR) of one and above. All other types of publications such as books, commercial journals, conference papers and editorial notes were removed from the search as these are not peer-reviewed (this amounted to 2,764 references). The first peer reviewed article on employer branding and staff retention was in 2000 (Ruch, 2000) and on employer branding and staff performance in 2006 (Kaliprasad, 2006). English language publications were then only selected. The remaining articles were exported into Excel from Delphis (and EndNote was populated with references and articles as attachments) and duplicates were removed. This left 312 articles. This approach of limiting the review to title searches has been recognised to have some weaknesses but is also thought to be useful when a systematic review is faced with overwhelming lists of citations to review in a short timeframe (Pittaway, Robertson, Munir *et al.*, 2004).

To reduce the number of articles further the ABC classification was adopted as purported by (Thorpe, Holt, Macpherson and Pittaway, 2005). Each article was separated into A, B and C lists. A lists articles that were relevant articles, B lists articles were partially relevant and C lists non-relevant articles. This resulted in 132 relevant documents, 84 partially relevant documents and 96 non-relevant documents. The non-relevant documents were not reviewed.

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Figure 1 Literature review methodology – systematic literature review – three stage approach

The variety of journals comprised in the literature review is shown in Table 2. Most of the literature focusing on branding is within marketing and brand strategy journals (*such as Journal of Brand Management and Journal of Marketing Management*). International journals (*International Journal of advertising and International Journal of Hospitality and Management*) also exhibit substantial literature. More specific business journals (*Business Horizons and Global Management Review*) also contain articles on the business-related impacts of employer branding. The handbook of qualitative research and the book interpreting interviews both have a 5\* rating.

Table 2 Analysis of journals, rating and literature publications

| Name of Journal | Number of publications |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing & Logistics 2\* | 2 |
| Business Horizons 2\* | 2 |
| Corporate Reputation Review 1\* | 1 |
| Employee Responsibilities & Rights Journal 3\* | 5 |
| Ethnography: Principles in practice 2\* | 1 |
| European Management Journal 3\* | 1 |
| Global Management Review | 2 |
| Handbook of qualitative research 5\* | 2 |
| Human Recourse Management 4\* | 3 |
| Human Resources Department Management Report 3\* | 3 |
| International Journal of Advertising 2\* | 2 |
| International Journal of Business & Economics 2\* | 3 |
| International Journal of Hospitality Management 3\* | 3 |
| International Journal of Human Resource Management 3\* | 3 |
| Interpreting interviews 5\* | 1 |
| Journal of Brand Management 2\* | 5 |
| Journal of Brand Management 2\* | 4 |
| Journal of Consumer Research 4\* | 2 |
| Journal of Managerial Psychology 3\* | 8 |
| Journal of Marketing (Intelligence & Planning) 4\* | 4 |
| Journal of Marketing Management 2\* | 8 |
| Journal of Organizational Behaviour 4\* | 9 |
| Journal of Positive Management/Psychology 1\* | 2 |
| Journal of Product & Brand Management 1\* | 7 |
| Management Dynamics | 3 |
| Organization Management Journal 1\* | 1 |
| Social Behaviour & Personality: an international journal | 4 |
| Strategic Management Journal 4\* | 4 |
| Total | **132** |

Once the initial research streams had been conducted the main headings of research were organised as a literature map (Creswell and Clark, 2007; Creswell and Garrett, 2008). This enabled the researcher to see what aspects of the literature may open research gaps and opportunities. The main themes of the research were outlined and visually depicted as a flow chart of the identified literature streams. This is shown in Figure 2.

The literature map provided a visual summary of the research that has been identified and helped understand how the proposed study added to, extended or replicated research already completed. The map is a visual representation of research that has been conducted by others. In the map below a top-down approach was adopted with a top-down presentation of the literature, ending at the bottom with a proposed study/research topic. The visual picture of the areas to explore, with key authors in each research area, have been identified. Several sense making principles (Creswell and Clark, 2007) of map design used are:

* The topic was placed at the top of the hierarchy
* The main study areas were subdivided into four main topics underneath the first question which are employer brand, psychological contract, performance and intention to stay or leave.
* Within each box are labels that describe the nature of the studies in the box i.e. outcomes.
* Also, within each box are references to major citations illustrating its content. The references are in HarvardSotonUNI2015 style.
* The levels of the map show major topics, subtopics and then to further subtopics.
* Once organised into a diagram, the researcher considered which branches of the figure would lead to an area for proposed study. The box at the bottom of the map identifies the nature of the proposed study. This is based on ideas written by other authors in the future research sections of their studies.

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Figure 2 Literature map of employer branding, task performance and intention to leave

The common themes within the employer branding literature were analysed, as related to employee intention to leave and retention and performance, reviewing each subject area and identifying potential research gaps within the literature. The psychological contract is discussed separately in Chapter 3 as the theoretical ‘lens’ through which this research study was conducted.

## Employer Branding

The term employer branding was first introduced by Amber and Barrow in 1996. Employer branding and the employer brand have been described as an organisations most valuable asset. A simple search on the term *‘employer brand’* on Google returns 123,000,000 results in 2020.[[13]](#footnote-13)

However, published academic literature on employer branding is still noticeably limited (Ewing *et al.*, 2002; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005). There appears to be a lack of common understanding and clarity amongst scholars and practitioners on the definition of employer branding (Sullivan, 2004; Martin, 2008). Further, a fundamental empirical question arises of whether firms using brand and marketing disciplines in their Human Resource (HR) functions achieve better employee performance (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). In a recent study by Kaur, Malhotra and Sharma (2020) the results suggested that employer branding positively impacted employees performing above and beyond expectations. The study inferred a direct and indirect link between ‘internal branding’ and employee performance. Further, Tumasjan, Kunze, Bruch and Welpe (2020) suggested that employer branding is positively related to form performance.

The concept of employer branding has its roots within marketing and brand management. The term employer branding can be discussed from both an internal and external perspective. It should be considered of importance to embed brand organisational values within the company’s culture (Biswas, Allard, Pousette and Härenstam, 2017). Investing in employer branding is suggested to lead to beneficial outcomes since linkages between an organisation’s reputation and this investment is seen as beneficial (Verčič and Ćorić, 2018). Moreover, research is reported towards bringing together the single disciplines of human resources (HR) and brand marketing into a single conceptual framework (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). Employer branding can be described as an innovative concept that connects the worlds of marketing brand management and HR management. Employer branding has emerged as a new concept to meet the challenges of globalization, cut throat competition and changing market scenario (Rana and Sharma, 2019). This means that employer branding utilises basic marketing concepts, such as branding identification, image, reputation, along with some of the human resources’ concepts such as organisational identity and employee satisfaction (Katoen and Macioschek, 2007). It has also been suggested of importance to identify measures to map and effective employer branding strategy (Deepa and Baral, 2017). Understanding employer branding as a form of internal marketing that helps in attracting and retaining employees is considered a research gap with little research focus and the relationship between the employer brand and employee performance and employee intention to leave requires further research (Wilden *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, Maxwell and Knox (2009) claimed that the perception of employees regarding employer branding is often overlooked. In order to attract and retain the best available talent, companies should consider this as management issue and implement the employer branding strategy systematically covering all functions and stakeholders of the company. Additionally, similar to marketing messaging and customer journeys, job applicants are wanting personalized and customized experiences during recruitment process. Especially in recruitment dialogue, communication could be enhanced with digital tools such as artificial intelligence to create customized messaging about the progress of recruitment (Lonka, 2019).

Within the field of organisational talent management the predictors that are most effective in predicting the influence of employer branding are that an organisation rewards and remunerates fairly, manages work–life balance and attracts and recruit’s talent (Maurya and Agarwal, 2018). These authors go on to argue that employee and thus corporate performance could be influenced by awareness, positive attitudes towards the ‘brand’, loyalty, trust that the ‘brand’ is there for the employee (the concept of the psychological contract between employer and employee is developed in Chapter 3). The more attractive the product, in functional and psychological terms, the higher the economic price that can still provide user satisfaction. In the context of employer brand promise, firms are well aware that higher functional and psychological benefits permit greater flexibility in compensation packages (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Sokro, 2012; Wallace, Lings, Cameron and Sheldon, 2014). As a result, brand management is a key activity within many firms (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). A further review (Lievens and Slaughter, 2016) identified only one study about the effect of employer image on firm performance (Fulmer, Gerhart and Scott, 2003). It suggested looking at other marketing studies about the effects of branding on financial performance which can be held out as exemplars e.g. (Rao, 2004).

Interestingly, employer branding utilises sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) practices to create the company culture. The recent advent of the term ‘sustainable HRM’ practices (Bendaravičienė, 2017) recognises that a sustainable development can foster innovative approaches to a variety of business problems. Sustainable HRM is largely an employer driven exercise based on raising employee productivity, placing employees at the centre of such practices. In essence, it concerns the methods by which HRM practice develops and oversees attempts to make sure employees are willing and able to stay in employment now and for as long as possible (Richards, 2020).

Sustainable HR activities create value for potential and encourage investment for long-term viability of employees and a high-quality workforce going forwards. In this fashion employer branding goes beyond Human Resource Management (HRM) in that it uses the competitive advantages sustainable HRM creates in order to differentiate the organisation both in the external marketplace and internally with the employees (Mishra and Sarkar, 2020). Employer branding and HRM practice are effective when a sustainable HR model is incorporated into the employer branding message and communicated to employees that the corporate image matches the employer brand as promulgated by the HR function of the organisation (Backhaus, 2016).

In a pluralist world, where the power is shared between employer and employee, effective HRM practices cannot truly be sustainable if employee perspectives are not included and employers use the imbalance of power to harm employees (Van Buren III, 2020). In this way, sustainable HRM practices may help organisations, for example, establish a stronger employee brand in seeking new talent within the marketplace. Moreover, sustainable HRM practices benefit the organisations internal employer branding , having a positive effect on employee commitment to the brand (Diaz‐Carrion, López‐Fernández and Romero‐Fernandez, 2018). So, employer branding (EB) is an overall holistic marketing concept that utilises, in part, HRM as one facet in order to provide the whole brand experience.

Taking this concept further, employer branding is particularly relevant within service organisations, and hospitality companies such as McDonalds. It is seen as especially important within this research study. The employee is a key component in a service organisation because customers will have direct contact with the employee. In this way, through employer branding, the brand identity of the company should be emphasised to the employee (Safitri, Do and Irawanto, 2017).

Traditional marketing theory can only be applied to a part of a service firms total marketing function. Instead, the alternative marketing effort of service or interactive marketing is vitally important. An organisation that can market and brand itself to demonstrate its capability throughout the customer journey of purchasing and consuming its products will achieve a positive brand reputation, a desirable public image (external brand image) and repeat customers with sustained business growth (Grönroos, 2020). The first comprehensive service marketing theory was postulated by Rathmell (1974). Specific marketing techniques for service firms were evidenced as lacking (as oppose to the marketing of products) and an approach developed that recognised services are different from products and marketing concepts. Models needed to be developed in relation to service-based organisations (Grönroos, 1982, 2020). Employer branding is seen as one of the best methods which can differentiate an organisation from others and help in attracting and retaining talent (Prajapati and Patel, 2017).

Employer branding (EB) thus encapsulates aspects of HRM and utilises this systematic approach to differentiate an organisation from its competitors, internally with the staff and the type of organisation they work for and externally as a recipient of new talent (Itam, Misra and Anjum, 2020). The benefits of EB extend beyond the HRM systems and define the organisation, its foundation and culture. In a paper by Itam *et al.* (2020) it was suggested that good communication, a realistic HRM and marketing strategy help to build noticeable and distinctive brands. Their findings stated that employer branding is not just a practice but is more a phenomenon which sets a context for the growth and development of the best workplaces. The employer brand is the combined effect of branding and HRD practices of a company as the employer, which is unique and distinct to both potential and existing employees.

### Definitions of Employer Branding

With refence to the background of employer branding, the systematic literature review identified how EB is defined by scholars within the extant literature. Definitions of employer branding have been summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 Definitions of employer branding

| Author | Employer branding definitions |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| (Ambler and Barrow, 1996 p. 187) | *The employer brand is the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company* |
| (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014 p.248) | *Employer branding is the creation of a brand image of the organisation for prospective employees. It will be influenced by the reputation of the organisation as a business or provider of services as well as its reputation as an employer* |
| (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004 p.502) | *The process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors* |
| (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004 p.503) | *The employee brand promise or value-proposition is seen as the term to identify a set of attributes and benefits that actual and potential employees perceive they would gain through their employment with a particular organisation* |
| (Berthon *et al.*, 2005 p.153) | *Internal employer branding refers to communicating the brand affectively to employees; trying to convince them of the relevance and worth of the brand; and being able to link every job performed in the organisation to the delivery of the ‘brand essence’* |
| (Buil, Catalán and Martínez, 2016 p.4) | *The employer brand is the specific values and features, that associated to the corporate brand, represent an organisation and the products offered to the market* |
| (CIPD 2008 Annual Survey) | Employer branding is a set of attributes and qualities – often intangible – that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform to their best in its culture |
| (Dell, Ainspan, Bodenberg *et al.*, 2001) | The employer brand establishes the identity of the firm as an employer |
| (Gilliver, 2009) | The employer brand identifies an organisation in the marketplace and makes it unique |
| (Grigg, 2011a) | The employer brand is the process by which branding concepts and marketing, communications and HR techniques are applied to create an employer brand |
| (Grigg, 2011b) | The employer brand is a generalised recognition for being known amongst key stakeholders for providing a high-quality employment experience and a distinctive organisational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident and happy to promote to others |
| (Jenner and Taylor, 2009 p.89) | *Employer branding represents an organisations effort to communicate to internal and external audiences what makes it both desirable and different as an employer* |
| (Lievens and Slaughter, 2016 p.410) | *The external employer brand is a synonym for employer image management whereas the internal employer brand corresponds to the organisation’s identity e.g. an insider’s mental representations of attributes related to an organisation as an employer* |
| (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) | Employer branding as a concept is an extension of relationship marketing principles which identify the need to build acquisition and retention strategies across a number of critical stakeholders’ markets through closer relationships |
| (Schneider, 2003) | A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors |
| (Itam *et al.*, 2020) | The employer brand is the combined effect of branding and HRD practices of a company as the employer, which is unique and distinct to both potential and existing employees. |
| (Suikkanen, 2010 p.4) | Employer branding aims to promote unique benefits and unique employment experience to external and internal employment markets in order to make the employer distinctive to attract and retain people who will thrive best in its culture |
| (Sullivan, 2004) | Employer branding is a targeted long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders regarding a particular firm |

For the purposes of this research the definition as proposed by (Lievens and Slaughter, 2016) has been adopted. The external employer brand is a synonym for employer image management whereas the internal employer brand corresponds to the organisation’s identity e.g., an insider’s mental representations of attributes related to an organisation as an employer. This definition includes the external and internal thinking behind an employer’s image and identity. Understanding the employer branding value proposition is a critical part of understanding how to communicate an organisations attractiveness. It was postulated in one study, by Dabirian, Berthon and Kietzmann (2019) that there were eight employer value propositions which could aid an organisations ability to make sense of what was important data. Lastly, these are considered an important distinction as the research is looking at what influence the internal branding has on its employees. The external branding is more targeted to consumers although in the case on McDonalds, employees are consumers as well. The relationship between the employer brand and what the employees think the brand will deliver to them, the brand promise, is discussed in Section 2.1.2.

### The relationship of employer branding with employer brand promise

The unique aspects an organisation can offer to the employee influence the environment and employment offerings. The employer brand has a strategic importance for the organisation and it is the responsibility of the CEO and human resources (Balmer and Thomson, 2009). A suggestion has been advocated to study the empirical impact of corporate branding in the business field (Buil *et al.*, 2016). In a study by (Moroko and Uncles, 2008) it was suggested that there are commonalities with some aspects of employer branding and other forms of branding. Two themes emerged from this study. Firstly, the ability of the firm to deliver on the promise of the nature of the employment experience as perceived by current and perspective employees and to recognise and manage the source of these perceptions. The notion of a brand, they suggested, is that of a brand as a ‘promise’. Though there are many definitions of brand (see table 3), one is the notion of the brand as a ‘promise’ (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Ind, 2007). For the purpose of this research the definition of a ‘promise’ is defined as any communication of future intent (Rousseau, 1989). The organisations ‘employee value proposition’ or brand promise is seen as a term used to identify the set of attributes and benefits that actual and potential employees perceive they would gain through their employment with a particular organisation (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Successful employer brands are characterised as having a value proposition that is relevant to, and resonant with, their prospective and current employees (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). This ‘internal marketing’ of the employer brand is an important aspect of employer branding because it carries the brand ‘promise’ made to recruits and employees of the form and incorporates it as part of the organisational culture (Frook, 2001).

The successful employer brands are accurately portrayed through marketing communications and consistently deliver on the inherent promise of the brand. Some scholars have purported to suggest that effective employer branding will enhance employee satisfaction, commitment, engagement, employee performance and competitiveness (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Barrow *et al.*, 2006). Organisations that have strong internal brands (identity) experience increased retention of employees in addition to augmented satisfaction and commitment (Wheeler *et al.*, 2006; Lievens and Slaughter, 2016). Employer banding is a comprehensive strategy which can be used by employers to attract and retain talented employees. In a global economy where a talented workforce is scarce and has plenty of choices available to them, firms can use employer branding as a strategic opportunity to enhance employee engagement (Chawla, 2019).

One other scholar suggested that employer branding can be a stimulus to improvement of all people-related processes that create organisational excellence (Dell *et al.*, 2001). Further, Ergun and Tatar (2018) postulate that having a comprehension of employer branding within an organisation contributes to their competitive advantage in attracting the best talent. However, employer branding primarily addresses potential and existing employees and in this sense it is a sub-brand of the corporate brand (Foster, Punjaisri, Cheng and Management, 2010) which is related to organisational success (App, Merk and Büttgen, 2012).

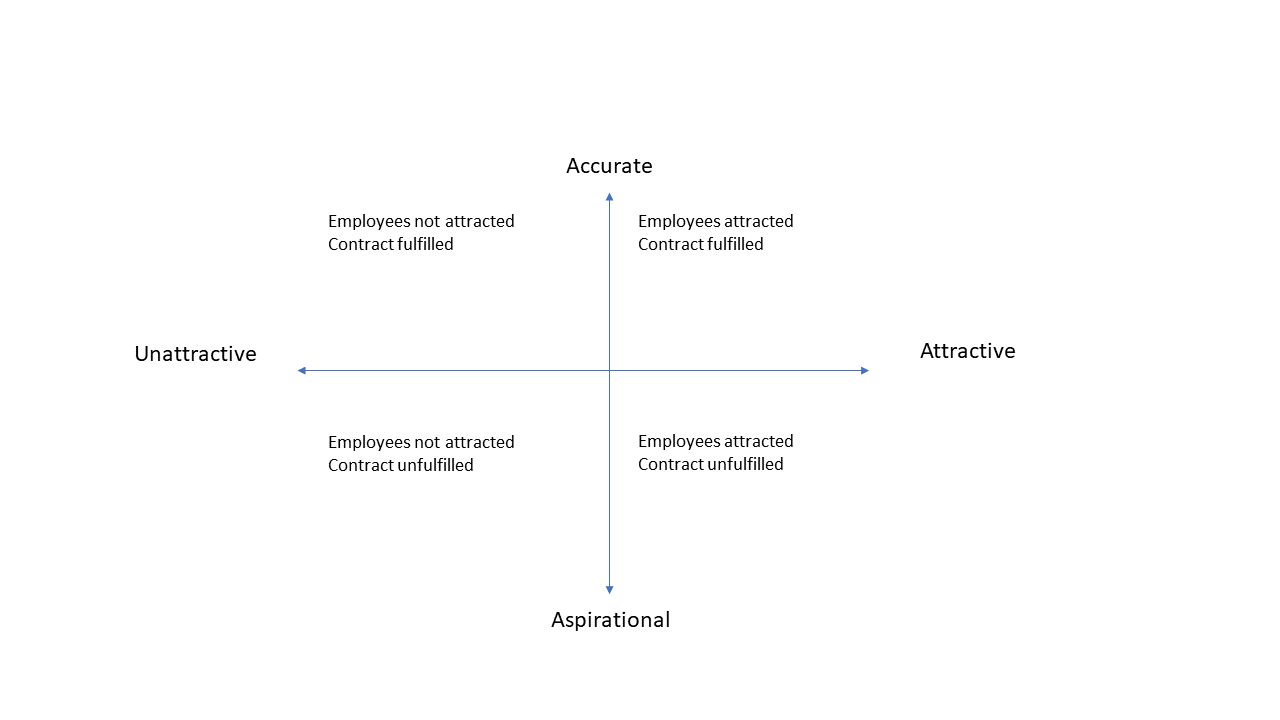
Further, a human resources (HR) department is aiming to create a ‘value proposition’ to its employees and potential employees whilst the marketing departments are aiming to create a value proposition to customers. The two themes concern the ability of the organisation to deliver on the promise of the nature of the employment as perceived by current and prospective employees and to recognise and manage the source of these perceptions (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). They go onto suggest that there are two key dimensions to successful and unsuccessful employer branding; one characteristic is identified as an attractiveness dimension (attractive-unattractive) whilst the other dimension they describe is that of fulfilling a psychological contract and unintended appropriation of brand values. These values define the accuracy dimension (accurate-aspirational). 

Figure 3 The topography of employer brand success characteristics

Each cell of the diagram describes the key factors in driving the state of employer branding success. The combined impact of potential and current employees forming psychological contracts with the employing company, and then being able to evaluate the inferred promises of the employer brand emphasises the importance of managing employer brands. The brand promise can be described as the organisations ‘employee value proposition’ and identifies a set of attributes and benefits that actual and potential employees perceive they would gain through employment with a particular organisation (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The attractiveness factor is a key component of what appeals to the potential suitable target audience, the potential employee (Eger, Mičík, Gangur and Řehoř, 2019). It has also been demonstrated that a critical factor is an employees’ recommendation of an employer as an employer of choice and is arguably the most important indicator of employer internal brand strength (Saini and Jawahar, 2019).

### Employment and benefit factors of employer branding to employees

Several themes identified within employer branding can be potentially related back to benefiting the employee (Wong, 2014). In her research into the best-of-the-best employees in Canada, she identified several categories that could represent these benefits. This research assessed these categories and created a non-monetary category in addition. Each potential benefit has been listed and then researched in terms of a potential employee benefit factor.

Employee orientated benefits: Employment benefits.

1. **Monetary** – bonus programmes, profit sharing, incentive schemes, rewards
2. **Non**-**Monetary Rewards** – Procedural Justice, Supervisor Support, perceived organisational, recognition.
3. **Professional development** – team building and training, courses, structured development personally and professionally.
4. **Social and psychological** – culture valued by employees, staff events, fun and creative work environment.
5. **Work-life** – flexibility, zero hours contracts, sabbaticals
6. **Symbolic** – association with a successful company, uniforms, golden-arches, role
7. **Personal influence and involvement** – ability to change things, be yourself, inclusiveness.
8. Monetary Rewards

Long and Shields (2010) suggest money is a motivator of attracting and retaining talent, because it helps meet basic needs such as food and shelter. Further, a study found that employees productivity increased by 30% after the introduction of monetary incentives (Locke, Feren, McCaleb *et al.*, 1980). In another study (Stajkovic and Luthans, 2001) it was found that work performance was highest amongst employees with a monetary incentive intervention. This compared with those who received performance feedback or social recognition e.g. saying well done, great job. However, generous amounts of money and monetary incentives sometimes fail to motivate and may lead to counterproductive outcomes such as financial misrepresentation (Harris and Bromiley, 2007). Further, when employees are promised high amounts of monetary incentives, they can choke as a result of increased fear of failure (Chib, De Martino, Shimojo and O'Doherty, 2012). Interestingly, it has also been postulated that monetary rewards can have positive and less desirable effect on firm-level performance (Aguinis, Joo and Gottfredson, 2013; Spekle and Verbeeten, 2014; Kunz, 2015).

1. Non-Monetary Rewards

Organisational rewards given to employees are for their contributions to the company (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe *et al.*, 2002). They can be in the form of monetary, Section 2.1.3 a), or non-monetary benefits and employees judge how good these rewards are and gain emotional ties to an organisation (Malhotra, 2016). Other rewards are intangible perceptions such as procedural justice. This is the employees perception of the fairness with which the organisation distributes resources (Greenberg, 1990). Employees will decide if this the procedural justice is fair or not, as it must be related to organisational support by showing concern for the welfare of the employees (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Perceived organisational support (POS) and supervisor support are discussed in Section 2.1.3 d. POS can be described as the employee’s beliefs that the company values their contributions (Dawley, Houghton and Bucklew, 2010) whilst supervisory support is perceived as the support and value supervisors give employees by paying attention to their welfare (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

1. Professional Development

The benefits of professional development can be developed based on the work of (Nordhaug, 1989). Few studies have investigated the antecedents of continuous learning; in one study it was suggested that attitudes and perceptual variables have a significant and unique effect on development activity (Noe and Wilk, 1993). Further, it was perceived the employees perceived three types of benefits, personal, job and career resulting from participation in development activities (Noe and Wilk, 1993).

It has been suggested that business success is based on the innovative creativity, knowledge and expertise an organisation has available (Bergenhenegouwen, 1996). To derive maximum benefit from an organisations core competency it is important to recognise the expertise and skills of employees by also pay underlying attention to motives and qualities of the employees (a competence can be defined as a basic personal characteristic that is a determining factor for acting successfully in a job or situation (McClelland, 1993).

Interestingly, some organisations which place emphasis on development and training, and give individual competencies a central place in the organisation, rather than hierarchical systems of fixed jobs with associated job descriptions, achieve an improvement in the organisations level of performance and the creation of a competitive advantage (Bergenhenegouwen, 1996). This total approach is attractive to employees who are creative and innovative, want to learn new skills, to have more responsibility and to be continuously adding to their own expertise. This type of management gives expression to employees by empowering them. The employee aims to develop competencies, which in turn they see add to the organisations core competencies, whilst developing their individual skills and development (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 2002). One aspect of an employee’s perceptual sense could be ‘I understand how training can help me reach my career goals’; other such perceptions can be based on the Career Exploration Survey developed by (Stumpf, Tymon and van Dam, 2013). Moreover, this approach is reinforced in a study by Espinoza, Rojas, Rojas and Raymundo (2018) who postulate that the development of employee training programmes significantly reduces high rates of staff turnover and any costs associated with recruitment are therefore reduced accordingly.

1. Social and Psychological

Concepts of social exchange (Blau, 1964) have long been used by organisational researchers to describe the motivational basis behind employee behaviours and the formation of positive employee attitudes (Levinson, 1965). In general research findings suggest that positive, beneficial actions directed at the employees by the organisation and representatives (such as a warm and fun culture, staff rewards and parties, and a creative environment) contribute to a higher value exchange relationship (Konovsky and Pugh, 1994). Further, the atmosphere of an organisation is the most meaningful cultural dimension to impact job satisfaction and reduce intention to leave (MacIntosh and Doherty, 2010). In one model postulated by Tanwar and Prasad (2017) it was suggested that the healthy work atmosphere dimension was the greatest influence over the employer brand. There is a significant relationship between organisational support and employee retention (Arasanmi and Krishna, 2019).

Humour in the workplace can assist with team creation, as postulated by Holmes and Schnurr (2005) and Plester and Hutchison (2016) suggested that fun is a specific workplace value. This social interaction and exchange can be looked at on two levels, one between the organisation and the employees and the other a more focused dyadic relationship between the employees and their superiors (Settoon, Bennett and Liden, 1996). Further, it has been suggested that employees form a global belief concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. It has been labelled perceived organisational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa, 1986; Shanock and Eisenberger, 2006). This support and pastoral care enforces the relationship between the employee and employer based on the perception of fairness and the employees own commitment to their organisation (Moideenkutty, Blau, Kumar and Nalakath, 2001; Loi, Hang‐Yue and Foley, 2006; Dinç, 2015). Empirical research has found that perceived organisational support (POS) to be positively related to performance of conventional job responsibilities, citizenship behaviour and commitment (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Shore and Wayne, 1993). Further, it is argued that whilst training and development can be imitated, tacit knowledge is in-built within an organisation and embedded in the company (Luthans and Youssef, 2004). An organisation is not good because of its structure. Its good because of the set of capabilities that are embedded within the firm [[14]](#footnote-14). These tacit social capital factors include interpersonal, intergroup and interorganisational relationships, networks and connections as well as group resources, social structure and cultural dynamics.

Psychological influences may also include happiness and self-esteem in the workplace. Happiness is suggested to influence employees performance at work and may contribute to increased organisational success and commitment (Gavin and Mason, 2004; Money, Hillenbrand and Da Camara, 2009). Organisational based self-esteem is also thought to have a positive influence on employee performance and organisational citizenship behaviour (Korman, 2001; Pierce and Gardner, 2004). Moreover, transformational leadership has been suggested to aid the development of psychological attachment with the employer and the employee (Sahu, Pathardikar and Kumar, 2018).

1. Work Life

Employees draw their social capital from multiple sources which are not limited by organisational boundaries and external factors also play a part (Luthans and Youssef, 2004). Further, it has been suggested that work-life conflicts have a positive correlation with high intention to leave rates depending upon employee perceptions (Noor, 2011; Deery and Jago, 2015). These potential conflicts and outside activities can impact job performance, both directly through created connections and contacts and indirectly through enriched social support and enhanced psychological well-being. One aspect of potential conflict surrounds employer flexibility. It has been suggested that flexible working arrangements may generate positive employee commitment and attitudes (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Butts, Casper and Yang, 2013) and these may contribute indirectly to employee performance (De Menezes and Kelliher, 2017). Moreover, the comfort of the workplace and flexible conditions of the organisation are also seen as applicant values which should be paid attention to (Tikhonov, 2019).

Interestingly, the location of the workplace may also be a consideration. A proposition as offered by Dalton, Jones, Panter and Ogilvie (2013) suggested that the distance between home and the workplace was negatively associated with commuting. Another study suggested that work-life balance satisfaction was negatively correlated with intention to leave (Hadi and Ahmed, 2018).

It has also been suggested that life satisfaction can cause job satisfaction but not vice-versa (Judge, Thoresen, Bono and Patton, 2001). This may imply that more people orientated organisations emphasise an employee’s quality of life both inside and outside of the workplace and take actions to prevent intrusions on their personal time. One company [[15]](#footnote-15) for example, offers sabbaticals, job sharing, part-time and flexible work arrangements and a career management service as part of their employee benefits scheme. Perceived workload and job stress are also thought to be positively correlated (Wibowo, 2012) so a reasonable work-life balance needs to be achieved.

1. Symbolic

Research has confirmed the key role of potential applicants initial impressions or organisations as employers (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003). This supports the concept offered by Foster *et al.* (2010) who purported that employer branding primarily addresses potential and existing employees and in this sense it is a sub-brand of the corporate brand. Some studies reveal that the initial organisational attraction was influenced by applicants perceptions of job and organisational characteristics such as pay, location, development or organisational structure (Turban and Keon, 1993; Cable and Graham, 2000). Other studies revealed that prospective applicants prescribed traits to organisations (Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse and Mohr, 2004). It is therefore suggested that applicants initial attraction to an employing organisation is based on symbolic meanings (inferred traits) they associate with that organisation (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003; Lievens and Slaughter, 2016). Further, existing literature revealed a proposition offered by App *et al.* (2012) which relates this organisational success back to being a perceived perception of the employees. In the context of employees and recruitment, these symbolic attributes are linked to peoples need to maintain their self-identity, to enhance their self-image or express themselves (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Aaker, 1999). This is linked to peoples basic need to maximise benefits and minimise costs. Concluding upon this, and in a separate study by Tikson, Hamid and Mardiana (2018), it has also been shown that male respondents are more likely to be looking for good promotional pathways whilst female respondents may prefer more symbolic attributes where a conducive working environment prevails.

1. Personal influence and job involvement

It has been posited that job involvement may be better understood if viewed as an obsession-compulsion (Schwartz, 1982). Obsessive-compulsive employees place a premium on the value of a ritualised pattern of thought and behaviour. Job involvement when viewed this way could be seen as a type of socialisation which emphasises hard work, diligence and initiative (Chonko, 1983). Research has found that job involved people are less sensitive to situational characteristics. Further, job involvement generates a more stable work attitude in that it is a disposition and may be more difficult to change (Blau and Boal, 1989). Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) and Du Preez and Bendixen (2015) stated a need to make an occupation attractive so that the employee would not want to leave and as such go the extra mile. It has been suggested that this can only be achieved when employers understand the factors contributing towards employer attractiveness (Kashive and Khanna, 2017). Further, a higher level of organisational fit with each person’s aspirations reduces any intention to leave and increases organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (Vancouver and Schmitt, 1991; Kumar, Ramendran and Yacob, 2012). Further, it has been postulated by Potgieter and Doubell (2018) that it would be beneficial for organisations to acknowledge person-organisational fit when enhancing the employer branding to ensure new avenues are pursued in order to strengthen the employer branding process. Additionally, it has been suggested by Lin, Chiang and Wu (2018) that the service industry should pay attention to the customer orientation of applicants into the industry. Employer branding should look to develop this orientation in order to hire employees that fit into the organisational culture. When it comes to employer attractiveness, employers should engage in employer branding and align it with the organisations marketing strategy to make themselves more attractive and manage the perceptions of both existing and potential employees as well as reduce company recruitment costs over time (Kylmäluoma and Puhakka, 2017). Lastly and supporting this, another study purported that job involvement was a good predictor of task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour (Paullay, Alliger and Stone-Romero, 1994).

### A Conceptual foundation for employer branding

The practice of employer branding is predicated on the assumption that human capital brings value to the firm, and through skilful investment in human capital, firm performance can be enhanced (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Resource based view (RBV) supports this, suggesting that the characteristics of a firm’s resources can contribute to sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Priem and Butler, 2001; Newbert, 2008; Terziovski, 2010). Further, employer branding establishes an organisation as an employer of choice, creating a workforce that is hard to imitate by enabling it to attract the best employees; As there is a ‘war for talent’ in the employment marketplace, employer branding can be seen as an advantageous necessity (Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod, 2001). This distinct workforce creating competitive advantage is only sustainable whilst stable, otherwise the advantage ceases to exist (Barney, 1991). This internal marketing and employer branding in turn can help and contribute to employee retention (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). Further, one study concluded that an effective employer brand is essential for satisfying its existing workforce. If the employees are satisfied this may increase business performance and an attractive environment may contribute to the long-term relationship of employer and employee (Kaur and Syal, 2017).

The psychological contract (Chapter 3) and its effect on the employee organisational relationship provides a second theoretical foundation for employer branding. This view corresponds with organisational behavioural research on psychological contracts and the beliefs in reciprocal obligations between employees and employers (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). When the psychological contracts is fulfilled, the employee is more likely to be engaged and loyal; however if the contract is broken a fall in productivity and engagement can result, with an attendant impact on staff turnover (Moroko and Uncles, 2008).

Conceptually, brand equity provides a complimentary theoretical perspective for employer branding. Brand equity is the desired outcome of employer branding activities, encouraging external potential employees to apply whilst promoting productivity internally and encouraging existing employees to stay (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). A conceptual map of the suggested relationships within employer branding and how they relate to employee performance and intention to leave, developed from the systematic literature review, is outlined in Figure 4.

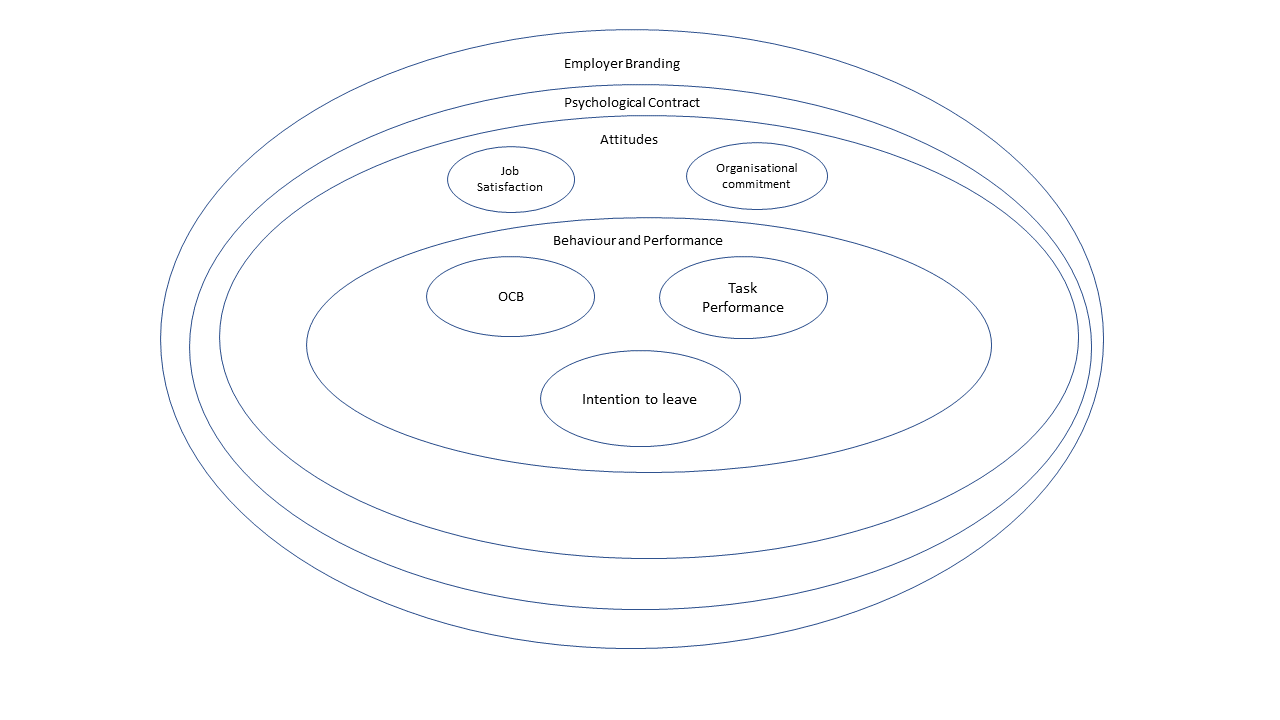


Figure 4 A suggested conceptual map of the relationships within employer branding

## Attitudes

### Organisational commitment

The attitudinal aspects of commitment were postulated as a separate construct (Meyer and Allen, 1987). Each conceptualisation of attitudinal commitment in recent literature reflects one of three general themes: affective attachment, perceived costs and obligation. Commitment can be considered as an affective or emotional attachment to the organisation such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1996). Further, this view was also taken by (Kanter, 1968, p.507) who described ‘cohesion commitment’ as the attachment of an individual’s fund of affectivity and emotion to the company. This affective attachment approach is also represented by (Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian, 1974) who defined organisational commitment as the ‘relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organisation. For other authors, ‘affect’ plays little part in the concept of commitment. For example, (Rusbult and Farrell, 1983, p.504) defined ‘cognitive-continuance commitment’ as that which occurs when there is a profit associated with continued participation and a cost associated with leaving. A three component model of organisational commitment was developed by (Meyer and Allen, 1987) which labelled each approach as affective, continuance and normative commitment. Common to these approaches is a link between the employee and the organisation that decreases the likelihood of turnover and intention to leave but the nature of the link differs. Employees with strong affective commitment remain because they want to, those with strong continuance commitment remain because they need to and those with strong normative commitment because they feel they ought to.

Further, based on the work of (Becker, 1960) employees make side bets when they perform an action that raises the costs associated with discontinuing another action. For example, a staff member invests time acquiring a job skill and he or she needs to be employed in the organisation to win the bet (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Conversely, it has been suggested that negative correlations exist between continuance commitment and performance. In one study, staff members who feel bound and a need to be there, because of an accrual of side bets, are less likely to perform organisational citizenship behaviour and go the extra mile (Shore and Wayne, 1993). However, positive job attitudes influence organisational citizenship behaviour (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine and Bachrach, 2000). This is because employees are more likely to offer extra-role behaviour and go the extra mile when they are satisfied with their jobs or committed to organisations (Bolino, Turnley and Bloodgood, 2002).

Research has studied the influence of employee attitudes on organisational citizenship behaviour (Trivellas, Akrivouli, Tsifora *et al.*, 2015). For example Organ (1988) reported that job satisfaction is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). This finding is supported by MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Ahearne (1998) and Podsakoff *et al.* (2000) who posited that job satisfaction motivates employees to perform organisational citizenship behaviour voluntarily such as helping co-workers solve work related problems. Further, a perception of determination emerged, supporting a proposition as offered by Gagné and Deci (2005) which suggests that employee motivation is on a continuum from controlled to autonomous motivation which may influence OCB and going the extra mile. This offers further theoretical support for the offerings of De Baerdemaeker and Bruggeman (2015) and Segers, Inceoglu, Vloeberghs *et al.* (2008).

There are various forms of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) which have been described as sportsmanship, civic virtue, and helping behaviour (MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998). Further, helping behaviour is a composite of several types of citizenship behaviour which are altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping and cheerleading (Organ, 1990). These share the theme of helping co-workers solve or avoid work related problems. However, it has been argued that altruism and co-operation are a feminine value (Hofstede and Organization, 1980). In addition, the forms of organisational citizenship behaviour may arise from a growing emphasis on social justice and fairness as the fundamental participants inclination towards organisational citizenship behaviour. It is also argued that measures of job satisfaction reflect more of a respondent’s cognitive assessment of the work context than the affective mood state (Organ, 1990) and it is contended that these assessments have mainly to do with conceptions of fairness. Another form of organisational citizenship behaviour has to do with dispositional variables. If personality factors account as a considerable measure for differences in job attitudes (Staw, Bell and Clausen, 1986) it is possible that these are the same dispositional constructs that could account for organisational citizenship behaviour. These personal qualities could explain the relationship between positive attitudes and organisational citizenship behaviour, in that they are related as both devolve from personality factors. However, in two separate studies looking at consciousness and agreeableness no support for this theory has been statistically proven (Organ and Konovsky, 1989).

Interestingly, human resource (HR) practices may affect firm performance through developing committed employees who can be trusted to use their discretion to carry out job tasks in ways that are consistent with organisational goals (Arthur, 1994; Arthur Jr, Bennett Jr, Edens and Bell, 2003). Performance-orientated HR systems are positively related to affective commitment, which in turn enhances firm performance (Gong, Law, Chang and Xin, 2009). Further, Brun and Dugas (2008) argued that there is a need for recognition practices to be implemented by business leaders and this is felt by the workforce, regardless of status or profession of the employees. A simple please and thank you is thought to be significant (Blanchard and Nelson, 1994) and this may influence higher staff commitment, retention and motivation (Luthans and Youssef, 2004; Bradler, Dur, Neckermann and Non, 2016). However, it is noted that important employee attributes such as commitment have yet to be fully examined from a research perspective (Ostroff and Bowen, 2000).

### Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be defined as a multi-dimensional concept that includes a set of favourable or unfavourable feelings by which employees perceive their job (Aziri, 2011). It is recognised that both job satisfaction and organisational commitment are job attitudes, however job satisfaction is believed to cause organisational commitment as it is more specific, less stable and more rapidly formed (Williams and Hazer, 1986). Further, and consistent with prior research, organisational commitment helps to reduce employee turnover (Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell and Black, 1990). Communication with executives is also considered to be an important predicator of job satisfaction and communication is correlated with intention to leave (Probst, Baek and Laditka, 2010; Vermeir, Blot, Degroote *et al.*, 2018). It is possible to distinguish between two types of performance (section 2.3) as they have different antecedents and consequences (Organ, 1990). Empirical evidence suggests that task performance (in-role performance) is likely to be an antecedent of job satisfaction (Bagozzi, 1980; Wright *et al.*, 1994) and organisational citizenship behaviour (extra-role performance) a consequence of it (Organ, 1988). Additionally, task performance can be perceived as an antecedent of organisational commitment whereas organisational citizenship behaviour as a consequence of it (Peterson *et al.*, 1995). However, research into the relationship between commitment and turnover found it to be significantly weaker than the relationship between commitment and propensity to leave. A low propensity to leave is a fundamental part of what it means to be committed to an organisation (Reichers, 1985). Further, it has been suggested that research should look at how employer equity brand building is related and correlates to performance. Very little academic research has been found on the effect of employer branding on employee performance. In one study (Fulmer *et al.*, 2003) the relationship was examined between employees sustained positive attitudes towards their organisation, being a great place to work, and the organisations financial performance. The results indicated a positive relationship between employee attitudes and organisational financial performance. It should be noted that the success of performance is judged primarily by employees themselves. Similarly, these organisations demonstrated having financial performance that is often substantially better than that of their competitors.[[16]](#footnote-16) A separate study (Roper and Davies, 2007) examined the influence of employer branding on the psychological theme (satisfaction, loyalty) of employee performance. All responders were managers. It was found that satisfaction was predicated by agreeableness. Davies also found that managers sense of loyalty was not influenced by their perception of their organisation’s competence. However, the positive influence of employer branding upon employee performance are mainly self-reported by organisations representatives without any adequate verification (Martin, 2008). It has also been suggested that affective employer branding initiatives may not directly affect employee or organisational performance but rather affect the mediators of employee performance e.g. satisfaction and engagement. This is then assumed to positively influence employees work efforts, behaviours and performance (Ostroff, 1992; Fulmer *et al.*, 2003). Moreover, as an ‘employer of choice’ an organisation would establish a source of competitive advantage in good public relations, enhancing positive image (Lenaghan, Eisner and Conflict, 2006). There is evidence that the best (‘employer of choice’) employers are able to yield better financial performance than non-recognised employers (Fulmer *et al.*, 2003; Love, Singh and Psychology, 2011).

## Performance and Behaviours

### Performance

The Oxford English dictionary defines performance as *‘the action or process of performing a task or function.’* Further, it is ‘*a task or operation seen in terms of how successfully it is performed’*. Performance can be interpreted as work that can be achieved by a person on order to achieve the objects of the organisation (Barasa, Gunawan and Sumali, 2018). It has also been suggested that the governance and ownership of the organisation could influence the learning styles and subsequent performance within different types of structure. These two learning styles that may affect performance are exploitation and exploitation. Exploitation is the incremental improvement of existing routines by using standard practices passed down whilst exploration is the development of new routines that allows restaurants to adapt to new and localised markets (Sorenson and Sørensen, 2001).

For the purposes of this research, job performance is defined as measurable actions and behaviours that are within an employee’s control, in which they engage, and that are linked with, contribute to, or detract from organisational goals and attainment (Viswesvaran and Ones, 2000; Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). In attempts to define job performance, theoretical models distinguish between task performance and contextual performance (Borman and Motowidlo, 1997). The two types of performance are discussed in Section 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4.

### Task performance

Task performance is role prescribed (Katz and Kahn, 1978) and is determined largely by ability, particularly as it interacts with precise incentive structures for quantity or quality performing the role (Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 1994). The definitions and conceptualisations have two central features. Firstly, task performance requires that the activities contribute to the technical core, for example, raw materials are converted to the products the organisation specialises in (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). In the case of a fast-food restaurant these activities are focused on the kitchen and operational areas that produce the finished food product and assemble the orders to be delivered to customers. Secondly, the concept of task performance requires that these tasks (activities) are formally recognised as part of the job. For example, within McDonalds there are specific job descriptions and Station Observation Checklists (SOCs) that detail the exact tasks required to execute every stage of food assembly, by product, in order. This is completely prescriptive and standardised.

A summary of the definitions of task performance is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Definitions of task performance

| Author | Task Performance definitions |
| --- | --- |
| (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993) | Task performance is activities that are formally recognised as part of the job and that contribute to the organisations technical core |
| (Campbell, McHenry and Wise, 1990) | Defined terms job-specific and non-job specific task proficiency to describe actions and behaviours engaged in for completing technical tasks |
| (Milich *et al.*, 1989) | Task performance has been defined as the accomplishment of duties and responsibilities associated with a given job |

For the purposes of this research task performance is defined as the accomplishment of duties and responsibilities associated with a given job (Milich *et al.*, 1989). This definition aligns itself to the specific nature of individual roles that make up the production team within a typical fast-food environment. Within a fast food, franchised environment, for example McDonalds, the notion of contributing to the technical core is measurable by very detailed reporting coming directly off the internal, real time information technology (IT) systems. Timings of food preparation, speed of service, time to the counter, wait time, cook times, order assembly times, number of guests served, food quality and should be able to be measured across all restaurants as all adhere to the same standards and requirements and have the same reporting systems across the United Kingdom. Task performance in this instance can include the behaviours that contribute to the production of a good or of a service. Conversely, task proficiency factors are more heavily saturated with prescribed role behaviour (McDonalds is a mechanistic prescribed model) and brings out an important distinction between performance behaviours that contribute to organisational effectiveness in other ways. These other factors are more heavily saturated with contextual elements of performance such as organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), prosocial behaviour and organisational spontaneity (Campbell *et al.*, 1990).

### Contextual performance

In contrast to task performance, contextual performance behaviours and organisational citizenship behaviours do not support the technical core itself as much as they support the broader organisational, social, psychological core in which the technical core must function. Contextual performance is more typically discretionary. Five categories of contextual performance suggested are : 1) Volunteering to carry out task activities that are not formally part of the job 2) Persisting with extra enthusiasm when necessary to complete own task activities successfully 3) Helping and co-operating with others 4) Following organisational rules and procedures even when it is personally inconvenient 5) Endorsing, supporting and defending organisational objectives (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). The constructs of task performance and contextual performance are useful to help in the structure of the performance domain, but the distinction between them has not yet been directly and empirically supported (Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). This implies that the individual differences in knowledge, skills and abilities should correlate more with task performance that with organisational citizenship behaviour or contextual performance. However, behaviours such as volunteering, co-operating and persisting are not likely to be correlated to training, skills and abilities and as such organisational citizenship behaviour are probably better predicted by individual differences in interpersonal skills and motivation. Therefore, personality variables should be better predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour and contextual behaviour (Motowidlo and Van Scotter, 1994).

### Organisational citizenship behaviour

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) has been researched very extensively and its literature is large enough that a meta-analysis has been conducted (Organ and Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000; Hoffman, Blair, Meriac and Woehr, 2007; King and Grace, 2012). Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) can be defined as an individual’s contribution in the workplace that goes beyond role requirements and contractually rewarded job achievements (Organ and Ryan, 1995). It was found that job attitudes are robust predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour and they gave as much importance to personality and attitudinal factors in determining organisational citizenship behaviour. Further, (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000) proposes that altruistic spirit can be evoked by organisational commitment and employees with altruistic spirit might produce citizenship behaviours that deliver extra-role value to the customers and colleagues and the employee goes the extra mile. A construct of brand citizenship behaviours and its dimensions has been proposed to be helping behaviour, brand consideration, brand enthusiasm, sportsmanship, brand endorsement, self-development and brand advancement (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). They suggest that brand citizenship behaviours would lead to higher customer satisfaction and this is an important consideration for the purposes of this research study. Further, positive employee relations are thought to impact aggregate-level performance through effects on worker motivation and productivity (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). There is potentially relevance to link these behaviours through positive employee relations back through the employee perception of the McDonalds brand.

Several examples of organisational citizenship behaviour are helping co-workers, attending functions that are not required, and volunteering to do something when one is not obliged to do so as part of their normal day to day job. It is not therefore surprising that understanding why employees engage in organisational citizenship behaviour is of considerable interest to employers. Several researchers have demonstrated that organisational citizenship behaviour is related to job satisfaction (Organ, 1988) and two different theoretical explanations for this relationship have been forwarded. One theory emphasised the role of cognitions (Farh, Podsakoff and Organ, 1990; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000) and in particular the perception of fairness (Organ, 1990; Dinç, 2015). Organ suggested that organisational citizenship behaviour represented an input for the employee’s equity ratio and one that can be altered more easily than those involving employees formal job duties. Employees who feel treated fairly are likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour to maintain equilibrium between them and the organisation whilst those who feel unfairly treated may withhold organisational citizenship behaviour. This view suggests that organisational citizenship behaviour is a controlled and deliberate behaviour influenced by cognitive rather than affective factors. Conversely, the affective view is that people in positive moods are more likely to help others than those in negative moods (Isen and Baron, 1991). In addition, it has been suggested that a positive mood can also lead to behaviours of protecting the organisation, making constructive suggestions, developing oneself and spreading goodwill (George and Brief, 1992). The relative contribution of affect and cognition to organisational citizenship behaviour has been examined in several studies. For example, Williams and Anderson (1991) found that cognitions about intrinsic and extrinsic job characteristics played a more powerful role in predicting organisational citizenship behaviour than did affect variables. However, in another study of retail employees it was found that a positive mood predicated altruism and customer service above and beyond cognitions (fairness, pay cognitions, distributive justice) but not vice versa (George, 1991). Further, it was found that both cognitions and affective factors contributed uniquely to the prediction of organisational citizenship behaviour. This supported a partial mediation model purported by Kemery, Bedeian and Zacur (1996) who suggested that the relationship between job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour is stronger than that between satisfaction and in-role performance. However, as it has been suggested, task performance is determined largely by ability (Section 2.3.2). Therefore if employee attitudes relate more strongly to organisational citizenship behaviour than task performance, human resources programmes need to focus on ways to improve employee job attitudes and commitment (Organ and Ryan, 1995).

## Intention to leave

An employee’s intention to leave can be defined as the separation of the employee from the organisation (Yahaya, Yahaya, Tamyes *et al.*, 2010). Empirical evidence supports the position that intent to leave is strongly related to intention to leave (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) and this psychological contract violation has a significant effect on job stress and in turn job stress has a significant effect on intention to leave (Suarthana and Riana, 2016). From a career perspective an employee’s intention to leave can be related to their overall level of job satisfaction (El-Jardali, Dimassi, Dumit *et al.*, 2009). Further, employee turnover is also affected by the same factors with negative factors contributing to intention to leave and increasing staff turnover (Blythe, Baumann, Zeytinoglu *et al.*, 2005). For clarity, staff turnover can be seen as the movement of employees across the boundaries of a company (Suikkanen, 2010). It is very important to establish the reasons that makes people leave their jobs because it enables you to estimate intention to leave behaviours in advance and take measures against them (Kuean, Kaur and Wong, 2010). Employer branding has an impact on an organisation's ability, not only to recruit, but also to retain, desired employees. Further, the organisations which are able to successfully project their images as potential employers of choice are bound to reap benefits in the long run (Gupta, Mittal and Mittal, 2019).

Employer branding is seen as an important factor in the total employee brand experience and employer attractiveness, as a recruitment activity, as illustrated by the conceptual framework proposed by (Mosley, 2007; Wilden *et al.*, 2010). Training staff in internal branding activities may present career opportunities thus enhancing the total employer brand experience (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Further, this will encourage employees to remain in an organisation (Baruch, 2004; Punjaisri, Wilson and Evanschitzky, 2009). A proposition offered by Ahmad and Daud (2016) states that there is a significant relationship between the level of training and development and an employee’s intention to leave. Moreover, firms that follow an implicit employer branding model seem to have a higher retention rate and less staff turnover, particularly amongst their more highly skilled people (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). As (Dell *et al.*, 2001) explicitly argues, the employer brand establishes the identity of the firm as an employer of choice. It encompasses the firm’s values, systems, policies and behaviours towards the objectives of attracting, motivating and retaining the firms current and potential employees. The ‘war for talent’ and an assumption of a positive relationship between employer branding and employee or organisational performance is well publicised by vendors of such services to improve company branding, branding strategies and attracting, employing and retaining the best talent (Handfield-Jones, Michaels and Axelrod, 2001; Martin, 2008). This is turn could be used to measure other key constructs of brand equity such as commitment, retention, behaviour and performance (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). Further, findings from another study (Dowling, 1994) suggested that firms that follow an implicit employer branding model seem to have a higher retention rate, particularly amongst their more highly skilled people. In addition, these companies can attract the best candidates more easily in the first place, as reflected in the attitudes and career choices of potential and existing employees. It is suggested that the principles of relationship marketing could allow marketing and HR activities to share a common framework. In turn, the principles of brand marketing can be applied to improving internal relationships, retention and corporate performance (Ambler and Barrow, 1996).

In one particular study, (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004) it is argued that employer branding should communicate accurate information about the culture. Violations in the psychological contract or misinterpretations as a result of unmet expectations can result in employees being more likely to quit (Cable, Judge and processes, 1996; Cable, Gino and Staats, 2013). Employee messages that fail to adequately provide a realistic job preview will contribute to intentions to quit and higher employee turnover. In addition, the employer brand presents information that contributes to the psychological contract between employer and employee (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Further, a company offering high levels of organisational support would be less vulnerable to employees intention to leave (Maertz Jr, Griffeth, Campbell and Allen, 2007; Tuzun and Kalemci, 2012). It could also be useful to determine the extent to which a programme of branding has an effect on the performance and behaviour of the employees (Wright *et al.*, 1994). In this way, the study suggested it would be necessary to identify factors that operate between the firm’s employer branding programme and the firms profit margin. A more measurable question may be to measure improved recruitment outcomes and see if employee retention and productivity improves as a result of the employer branding programme and perceived perceptions, as seen by the employees.

In more recent studies several other themes have also been recognised. For example, Frye, Kang, Huh and Lee (2020) postulate that employees need to feel comfortable with their managers and feel that they will be supported. There is a significant relationship between organisational support and employee retention (Arasanmi and Krishna, 2019). Creating a fair and supportive culture will encourage employees to remain within the hospitality industry. The use of internal marketing (employer branding) techniques and clear communication should be adopted to treat employees as internal customers, so they become enthusiastic about their company and advance brand advocacy. Employer branding has been shown to influence the retention of staff if positively perceived, which is especially true for the younger, generation Y employees (Bussin and Mouton, 2019).

## The Research Gap

The systematic literature review identified research gaps which this study has attempted to address. The research questions (RQ) in Section 1.3, Table 1, are formulated based on these emergent gaps. The research questions focused on three primary questions relating to performance and intention to leave and two ancillary questions relating to the psychological contract (PC) and employee benefits. RQ I and RQ II have been formulated to address Research Gap One. RQ III and RQ IV address the second research gap as violations of the psychological contract influence an employee’s intention to leave. RQ V seeks to clarify what benefits employees perceive they gain from the brand.

These research gaps are summarised as follows:

1. How does employer branding effect employee performance? A fundamental empirical question arises of whether firms using brand and marketing disciplines in their Human Resource (HR) functions achieve better employee performance (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Wong, 2014). Further, it has been suggested that research should look at how employer equity brand building is related and correlates to performance. Very little academic research has been found on the effect of employer branding on employee performance. Only one study was evidenced (Fulmer *et al.*, 2003) where the relationship was examined between employees sustained positive attitudes towards their organisation, being a great place to work, and the organisations financial performance.
2. How does employer branding influence an employee’s intention to leave? The research suggested that more research is required to understand the effect of employer branding on an employee’s intention to leave and employee retention (Cardy et al., 2007; Wilden et al., 2010). Further, the researcher identified that it could also be useful to determine the extent to which a programme of branding has an effect on the behaviour of the employees (Wright *et al.*, 1994). In this way, the study suggested it would be necessary to identify factors that operate between the firm’s employer branding programme and improved recruitment outcomes and see if employee retention and productivity improves as a result of the employer branding programme and perceived perceptions, as seen by the employees (Maertz Jr *et al.*, 2007; Tuzun and Kalemci, 2012).
3. What area of the employer brand carries the most value for employees? Employee perception of performance and intention to leave have been identified from the literature research as areas that employer branding may influence (Gilani and Cunningham, 2017). Internal branding also needs further investigation and sub-areas like communication, brand citizenship behaviour and brand commitment and loyalty should also be explored.

Within the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) industry in the United Kingdom it would be useful to identify reasons employees leave restaurants. The detailed literature review indicated an influence of employer branding on brand perception and brand image, which in turn could lead to retention. One author, (Gilani and Cunningham, 2017), suggested that these employee perceptions that may influence organisational citizenship behaviour and the internal brand, need further research. This could result in clear financial benefits being identified, for example lower potential staff costs because of less hiring due to lower employee intention to leave and less training courses as employees stay longer with the organisation. Potential answers to these research questions helped identify practical solutions to enable an understanding of intention to leave behaviours in advance and take measures against them (Kuean *et al.*, 2010).

## Summary

The literature review explored and addressed the research gaps which led to the development of the Research Questions in Section 1.3, Table 1. Chapter 2 was broken down into five sections. Section 2.1 explored the concept of Employer Branding and definitions of employer branding (EB). Section 2.2 explored employee attitudes in relation to commitment and job satisfaction. Section 2.3 defined employee performance on two levels, task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Section 2.4 explored the potential reasons why employees may be influenced to leave an employ. Section 2.5 summarised the research gap and section 2.6 summarised chapter 2.

The literature suggested that when an employee is aware of the employers’ brand attributes via the organisation’s internal communications and external marketing this heightens the employees’ psychological contract in relation to the specific content items, for example, a training company or a flexible employer. In effect this signals the intent. This aspect of the research concurs with the findings of Grigg (2011a) who referenced signalling theory as a basis for such behaviours. So, if an employer such as McDonalds promotes being a good at training employees through its employer branding activities, this in turn will heighten employees’ expectations in terms of expecting to be well-trained. Moreover, if an employee believes that McDonalds, for example, has failed to keep its promise to provide these opportunities, according to psychological contract research he or she may experience lower levels of trust, job satisfaction, performance and intention to leave. Conversely, the opposite is true when the contract is perceived to be fulfilled.

Throughout this research, the researcher has used the psychological contract (PC) as the ‘lens’ with which to explore these concepts. The extent to which employer branding has an influence on an individual’s psychological contract is explored throughout the research. In conjunction with the psychological contract (PC), Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) are the underlying models that explain this reciprocal exchange between employer and employee. Further, the extent to which employees identify with their employer is called organisational identification (OID) and can influence performance and intention to leave. These concepts are now discussed in Chapter 3.

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# The Psychological Contract (PC), underlying theories and organisational identification (OID)

The psychological contract (PC) is the theoretical ‘lens’ through which this research study has been conducted. Chapter 3 describes what the psychological contract (PC) is, the underlying reciprocal exchange models, Social exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT), and how employees may be influenced by the extent of their engagement with an employer, called Organisational Identification (OID). Further, an extension of this psychological contract correlates to employer branding which is called psychological brand ownership. How the research uses the PC to explore this relationship within employer branding has also been discussed.

## Definition of the psychological contract

The term psychological contract can be defined as ‘an individual’s belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between a person and another party; there is a belief that a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations’ (Blau, 1964; Rousseau, 1989; Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). Moreover, the psychological contract is revised throughout the employees tenure within an organisation over time (Rousseau and McLean Parks, 1993). The successful brands consistently deliver on the inherent promise of the brand and a strong employer brand makes people want to work there (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). A potential framework of the psychological contract is shown in Figure 5. This follows the work of several authors (Argyris, 1960; Weick, 1979) and has been developed on themes from legal concepts such as relational contracts (Macneil, 1985b) and the work of (Rousseau, 1989).

Figure 5 The psychological contract

## Social exchange Theory (SET) and Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Employees form a view of these reciprocal obligations during the recruitment process, based on explicit statements of the firm, together with informal and perhaps imprecise information (from external recruiters, press, word of mouth). The role of employer branding within this process can be seen as the impact on the formation of the anticipatory psychological contract (APC) and the final intent of a candidate to join an organisation. All the marketing efforts an organisation perform are the part of its branding process and exist with the purpose of attracting and retaining the right talent. These efforts lead to employer attractiveness and project the organisation as the employer of choice to its prospective employees (Ruchika and Prasad, 2019). The beliefs that employees form can arise from overt promises (bonuses discussed in the recruitment process), interpretations of patterns of past exchange, vicarious learning (witnessing another employees experiences) as well as factors each party may take for granted (good-faith, fairness) (Macneil, 1985a). For example, when an individual receives economic and socioemotional support from their organisation (money) they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organisation with hard work. There is seen to be basic ‘rules of exchange’ (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theory (SET) argues that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties’ that are usually reliant on the actions of another person (Blau, 1964). Further, SET suggests that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. The employer-employee relationship is built on unspecified obligations, employee perceptions about the quality of the two-way relationship, employee hard work and the benefits on offer, for example, pay, recognition, investment, training (Coyle‐Shapiro, Kessler and Purcell, 2004; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This relationship usually involves reciprocity or repayment rules such that the actions of one-party lead to a response or action by the other party. Furthermore, the psychological contract offers a consistent way of looking at the reciprocity of exchange and the psychological contract itself as a two-way relationship between employer and employee (Robinson, Perryman and Hayday, 2004). It should be noted that a psychological contract differs from an implied contract, which is a mutual obligation existing at the level of the relationship, for example dyadic. Unlike subjective perceptions of the psychological contracts held by individual parties to a relationship, implied contracts are patterns of obligations arising from interactions between parties (e.g. individuals and organisations) that become part of the social structure of which the relationship is part (e.g. legal, cultural). These implied contracts are often said to be borne out of a context of long-term employment.

However, an alternative theoretical view posited by Abrams and Hogg (1988) is that of social identity theory (SIT) to explain the employee-employer relationship which should be highlighted at this juncture. This theory suggests that an organisation can become the focal and salient social category that employees can identify with (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Cornelissen, Haslam and Balmer, 2007). The individuals social identity is the emotional significance attached to the membership of the group (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008).

For the purposes of this study, this research has used Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the theoretical underpinning of the psychological contract and as the ‘lens’ with which this research was conducted as this exchange of reciprocal obligations resonated with this research study. Organisational identification (OID) can be described as the perceived oneness employees have with their employer (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008), and is now discussed in Section 3.3.

## Organisational Identification (OID)

Social exchange theory (SET) and social identity theory (SIT) have been discussed in Section 3.2 as two theoretical bases for explaining the relationship between an employee and employer. Organisational identification is defined as the extent to which an employee defines himself/herself with the employer of which he/she is a member of (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). There is a suggestion that OID can lead to positive employee and organisational outcomes such as low intention to leave rates (Smith, Amiot, Callan *et al.*, 2012) higher performance (Walumbwa, Mayer, Wang *et al.*, 2011) and organisational citizenship behaviour (Van Dick, Grojean, Christ and Wieseke, 2006). Performance and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) are discussed in Section 2.3.

Social exchange theory suggests that the relationships employees engage in are based on the judgements of cost benefit trade-offs when compared with the alternatives (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Further, perceived organisational support (POS) is a key variable of this exchange and is the employees belief to what extent the employer values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Employees perceive that they contribute resources to the relationship in terms of an investment that becomes an essential part of that relationship (Goodfriend and Agnew, 2008). As such, when the investment is high it has been suggested that the organisational identification is less susceptible to a lack of organisational support. Conversely, employees with stronger exchange beliefs may place less emphasis on social identity and therefore develop weaker organisational identification (OID). Further, this may result in a negative influence on task performance and organisational citizenship behaviours (Scott and Colquitt, 2007) and higher intention to leave rates (Redman and Snape, 2005).

Organizational identification and how to increase this reciprocal exchange between employee and employer was an area of interest to this research project. One study by He, Pham, Baruch and Zhu (2014) argued that social exchange is critical in developing organisational identification (OID). Further, as a result of the positive effects perceived organisational support and employee investment has on OID, organisations should provide strong support for employees and encourage to them invest in their employer. Section 3.4 discusses the relationship between the individual investment and the employer brand.

## Brand psychological ownership

‘Brand psychological ownership’ in relation to employer branding has defined as the psychological experiences that make employees produce positive brand cognitions and brand attitudes, such as feelings of ownership towards the corporate brand and altruistic spirit towards brand-related activities (Chang, Chiang and Han, 2012). Moreover, brand psychological ownership has been found to be an antecedent of organisational commitment and is enhanced through organisational support (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004) and employer branding is believed to positively influence attitudes and behaviours of employees (Chiang, Chang, Han and Mcconville, 2013). Moreover, the theory of the psychological contract and its effect on employee organisational relationship provides a foundation for employer branding and this traditional concept of the psychological contract between employer and employees offers job security in return to loyalty to the company (Hendry and Jenkins, 1997). However, a new form of psychological contract is emerging which employers provide marketable skills through training and development in exchange for effort and flexibility (Baruch, 2004). Firms use employer branding to advertise the benefits they offer, including training, career development, personal growth and development. Internal branding is the process of promoting and educating the brand and brand value to employees (Aurand *et al.*, 2005). This in turn can make employees perception and behaviours transformed (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). Psychological ownership invokes feelings of ownership towards things that are substantial or non-substantial, referring to tangible of intangible objects such as sub-groups, ideas, artistic creations and people (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004). However, in general, firms have been perceived to fail to deliver some of these offerings (Hendry and Jenkins, 1997).

## Violation of the psychological contract

A violation of the psychological contract occurs when one party in the relationship perceives that the other party has failed to fulfil promised obligations (Rousseau and McLean Parks, 1993; Robinson *et al.*, 2004). When the psychological contracts is fulfilled, the employee is more likely to be engaged and loyal; however if the contract is broken a fall in productivity and engagement can result, with an attendant impact on staff turnover (Turnley and Feldman, 2000; Moroko and Uncles, 2008). Contracts are based on assumptions of good faith and fair dealing and rely on promises of parties on promises of the other and as such violations can lead to serious consequences for the parties involved (Macneil, 1985b). When employees’ expectations become unmet, employees may become less satisfied, perform less well, and become more likely to leave their employer. Moreover, the unmet expectation (realistic or otherwise) coupled with a broken psychological contract could cause the intensity of the reaction to increase. This is because it is not only attributable to unmet expectations or specific rewards, but to general beliefs about respect for a person, trust for a person and other patterns of behaviour associated with relationships (Rousseau, 1989). In addition, failure to honour a contract creates a sense of wrongdoing, deception and betrayal with pervasive implications for the employment relationship and an increased tendency for employees to leave (Rousseau, 1989).

Procedural justice and careerism have also been identified by scholars to offset and impact violations of the psychological contract. Procedural justice can offset consequences of contract violation if administered in advance, for example, a warning relating to potential redundancy or pay cuts may reduce the negative reaction of employees. However, contracts research suggests that outcomes associated with an obligation or promise are not easily offset by just procedures (Sheppard, Lewicki and Minton, 1992). Additionally, careerism was identified as an important factor in violation reaction and output (Rousseau, 1990). A careerist is someone who perceives their current employer as a steppingstone up the interorganisational career ladder and is likely to adopt a more ‘transactional’ employment relationship with their employer. Their relationship is not intended to be long term and what is exchanged has a short-term focus; what the employee values are the more immediate rewards of the relationship such as pay, training and credentials to obtain a better job in another organisation. This is very relevant to the fast-food industry and the perception of a ‘transient’ workforce within a culturally diverse staff within McDonalds. Careerist individuals could be expected to react differently to those lower on this orientation. For example, careerists may experience less loss from psychological contract violations than do those who are low on the careerism scale.

In summary, the Psychological Contract (PC) is the theoretical ‘lens’ through which this research study was conducted. There is an obligation formed between the employee and the employer that results in this contract formation. These reciprocal set of obligations exist and are an individual’s belief regarding the terms and conditions of an exchange agreement between themselves and their employer. Social exchange theory (SET) and social identity theory (SIT) have been discussed in Section 3.2 as two theoretical bases for explaining this relationship between said parties. The successful brands consistently deliver on the inherent promise of the brand and a strong employer brand makes people want to work there. This organisational identification (OID) can be thought of as the extent an employee identifies with his/her employer. However, when employees’ expectations become unmet and the psychological contract (PC) is violated, employees may become less satisfied, perform less well, and become more likely to leave their employer. Chapter 4 now details the methodology used to conduct this research study.

# Methodology

## Philosophy

This chapter considers relevant research assumptions in the context of the study’s aim of exploring employer brand influence of employee’s performance and intention to stay. It is reasoned that a subjectivist and interpretive approach, underpinned by a pragmatist’s worldview and philosophy, is adopted for the purposes of this research study.

Prior to discussing research philosophies there is a need to be able to distinguish between them. Three types of research assumptions that enable one to distinguish research philosophies are: ontology, epistemology and axiology.

Ontology refers to assumptions about the nature of reality (Creswell and Poth, 2017), what is believed about it and what constitutes it (Schwandt and Schwandt, 2001) and whether the social world is independent of the social actors or viewed as something they influence and fashion (Bryman, 2008).

Epistemology concerns assumptions about knowledge, what constitutes acceptable, valid and legitimate knowledge, and how individuals communicate knowledge to others (Burrell and Morgan, 2017). Other perspectives state that epistemology is concerned about how knowledge is known, what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified, for example, *‘how do you know what you know’* (Patton, 2001, p.134),*‘how knowledge can be distinguished from opinion or beliefs’* (Thomas, 2004, p.36), *‘the truths we seek and believe as researchers’* (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011, p.103).

Axiology refers to the role of values and ethics within the research process (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). It is further argued that researchers demonstrate axiological skill by being able to articulate their values as the basis for making judgements about what research they are conducting and how to go about it (Heron and Reason, 1997). For example, if one places great importance on data collection through participant interviews, it may suggest one values personal interaction with respondents rather than anonymous feedback via another method.

The three philosophical assumptions of ontology, epistemology and axiology can be examined via a scale of subjectivism and objectivism as a multidimensional set of continua (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015; Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Creswell and Poth, 2017). Table 5 summaries the continuum and their subjectivist and objectivist extremes in relations to their three types of philosophical assumption discussed.

Table 5 Philosophical assumptions based on a continuum of objectivism and subjectivism

| Assumptions | Questions | Continua | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Objectivism | Subjectivism |
| Ontology | What is the nature of reality? | Real  External  One true reality (universalism) | Decided by convention  Socially constructed  Multiple realities (relativism) |
| Epistemology | How do we know what we know? | Adopt assumptions of natural science  Facts | Adopt assumptions of the arts and humanities  Opinions |
| Axiology | What is the role of values in research? | Value- free  Detachment | Value-bound  Integral and reflexive |

## Ontology

Subjectivism is often associated with the arts and humanities and ontologically embraces a relativist ontology (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). This ontology holds that the world and scientific laws are not already in existence and waiting to be found but they are created by people (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2013). Subjectivism embraces the interpretivist philosophy and holds that the researcher should ensure that the knowledge captured reflects the reality of the research participants and is not independent of the person (Lincoln *et al.*, 2011). This research study is concerned with teasing out the employee’s thoughts, feelings and perceptions of what the employer brand means to each employee in the context of the research question. Therefore, subjectivism is the ontological approach this research study is adopting.

The implications to this study of a subjectivist ontology is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Implications of ontological approaches

| Ontology | Implications for proposed study |
| --- | --- |
| Subjectivist Ontology (Relativist) | Employer branding is created from employees’ perceptions and how employees view the brand. The branding is created through social interaction and can be revised and viewed in different ways (Patton, 2001; Saunders and Townsend, 2016). |
| Objectivist Ontology (Realist) | Employer branding exists independently of employees’ perceptions and has no relation to the employees; it exists within its own right and could be measured by a researcher (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). |

## Epistemology

An epistemology associated with subjectivism (relativism) is interpretivism, which can also be referred to as social constructivism (Mertens, 1998; Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Interpretivism emphasises that humans are different from physical phenomena because they create meanings (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Research findings are created by the interaction between the researcher and participant (Lincoln *et al.*, 2011) and as such the research is value-bound; subjectivists believe that as they actively use data they cannot detach themselves from their own values (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). This interpretive epistemology is the approach this research study is adopting and throughout this study the researcher/s will acknowledge and actively reflect on and question their own values, which has been called radical reflexivity e.g. an axiology (Cunliffe, 2003). This epistemology is associated with an abductive line of reasoning whereby a data set is gathered and from this broader generalisations are inferred (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2013). Epistemologies which are interpretivist would have the following implications for this study, Table 7.

Table 7 Implications of epistemological approaches

| Epistemology | Implications for proposed study |
| --- | --- |
| Interpretivist Epistemology  (relativism/subjectivism) | The concept of employer branding would be viewed through the experiences and perceptions of the employees: the research would take account of this complexity by collecting date meaningful to their research participants (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). With the emphasis on making sense of meanings, interpretivism is explicitly subjectivist; the focus is on the meaning, context and understanding (Myers, 2013).  Research Approach: A field study would interact with employees by gathering information personally (Crotty, 1998). The information could be gathered via interviews using broad, open-ended questions (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). |
| Positivist Epistemology  (realism/objectivism) | The study would adopt a scientific approach that would focus on discovering observable and measurable facts and regularities about employer branding and only phenomena you can observe and measure would lead to the production of credible and meaningful data (Crotty, 1998). The purpose of this study would be to look for causal relationships in the data to create law-like generalisations similar to those produced by scientists (Duberley, Johnson, Cassell and challenges, 2012).  Research Approach: A theory would be put forward and a hypothesis formed and tested; it would be expected that the findings would be able to have predictive capabilities in wider settings and organisations (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). |

## Axiologically

Interpretivism recognises that one’s own interpretation of research material and data and one’s own values and beliefs, play an important role in the research process. Crucial to interpretivism is that the researcher adopts an empathetic stance (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). In addition, the meaning is always of a social nature, arising from an interaction with a human community (Crotty, 1998). Conversely, objectivists seek to conduct research without bringing in their values and thoughts to the process, and by doing so they think will reduce bias in the research process (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). As such, the process of qualitative research is largely inductive/abductive and associated with an interpretivist philosophy with the inquirer gathering meaning from the data collected in the field. Axiologically, a value-bound, integral and reflexive approach will be adopted in this research study.

## Positioning of this research study - pragmatism

This research is following a line of human enquiry to see how others make sense of the world (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). As such, this research can be explored based on an interpretivist philosophy, to see what perceptions employees have about employer branding as the researcher believes employer branding is created from employees’ perceptions and how employees view the brand. The approach will be subjective as ontologically, interpretivism is explicitly subjectivist as it focuses on interpretation and how to understand meanings (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). However, restricting research to a purely subjectivist lens and interpretivist philosophy potentially restricts the researchers flexibility and choice of research methods (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012). Adopting a pragmatic philosophy, the researcher can focus on the research problem using a relevant approach that best suits the research problem (Rossman and Wilson, 1985).

Pragmatism provides a basis for such research and supports a qualitative, subjective research approach. Pragmatism is a separate school of philosophy and dates back to the late 19th century and early 20th century with the work of several scholars (Peirce, 1905; James and Burkhardt, 1975; Dewey, 1998). Pragmatism is a philosophy that recognises and inseparable connection between rational cognition and rational purpose and the basis of the philosophy (Peirce, 1905). As a worldview and philosophy, pragmatism arises out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions (as in post positivism) (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Further, pragmatism avoids the researcher having to choose between a pure objectivist view, dealing with observable phenomena, numbers and facts, and a pure subjectivist view focused on exploring meaning (Brandl, Daudigeos, Edwards and Pernkopf-Konhäusner, 2014). In essence, pragmatism opens the door for multiple methods, different worldviews and different assumptions as well as different forms of data collections and analysis for a mixed methods researcher (Cherryholmes, 1992; Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Pragmatist inquiry is always done with ends-in-view and as such it is possible to evaluate the value of different theories and propositions (Martela, 2015). Pragmatists come to believe certain assertions through the process of inquiry and through this process rely upon certain ways of arriving at these assertions which are more reliable than others. Three elements that define the pragmatist approach for conducting research are 1) a connection to practice with an ends-in-view 2) a fallible abductive process of inference in order to gain insight and 3) a collective interaction with colleagues to convince them of the soundness of one’s insights (Martela, 2015). The pragmatic philosophy is further developed in the work of several more recent scholars (Cherryholmes, 1992; Rorty, 1995; Patton, 2015) and can be seen as a diverse philosophical tradition. Whilst grounded in transactional realism, pragmatism moves away from the traditional dualism of subjectivity and objectivity (Biesta and Burbules, 2003) and raises thoughts on intelligent action and as the main objective is to address social problems by taking action in an intelligent way (Hall, 2013).

Table 8 sets out the philosophical positioning for pragmatism.

Table 8 Pragmatism as a research philosophy

| Pragmatism | |
| --- | --- |
| Ontology  The researchers view of the nature of reality  (Saunders and Townsend, 2016; Creswell and Poth, 2017) | Researchers focus upon the research problem, not the methods, and use the most relevant approach available to understand the problem (Rossman and Wilson, 1985). |
| Epistemology  The researcher’s assumptions about what constitutes acceptable and legitimate knowledge, and how we communicate to others (Burrell and Morgan, 2017). | Pragmatism asserts that concepts are only relevant when they support action (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). Not committed to a specific epistemology (Patton, 2001); perfectly possible to work with different types of knowledge and methods (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). |
| Axiology  The researchers view of the role of values and ethics in research (Saunders *et al.*, 2015) | Pragmatism is value-driven, and researchers values drive the reflexive process of inquiry, which is initiated by a doubt and re-creates belief when the problem has been resolved (Elkjaer and Simpson, 2011). The most important issue in research design is the research problem to be addressed and the research question (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). |
| Methodology | Pragmatism open the door for researchers to have freedom of choice; in this way researchers are free to choose the methods, techniques and procedures of research that best suits their needs and purpose (Cherryholmes, 1992; Morgan, 2007; Creswell and Creswell, 2017) |

## Research Design – abductive reasoning

Pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute unity. In a similar way, mixed-method researchers look to many approaches for collecting and analysing data rather than subscribing to only one way such as qualitative or quantitative (Morgan, 2007). In this world, methods can be separated from epistemology out of which they emerge and stand as their own reasonable way to find out what is happening in human settings (Patton, 2001). A pragmatist feels that concepts are only relevant when they support action and can be looked at in terms of their practical consequences (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). Further, pragmatism would also emphasis explicit reflective work regarding the researchers values (Martela, 2015) and this common sense inquiry can be looked at as a single loop inquiry where the methods are given and the task is to reach a goal by assessing the situation at hand (Bradbury and Reason, 2003). This approach can suggest a predominantly interpretivist nature to a study and would underpin a mixed methods approach where this supports the aim for making a difference to organisational practice and a rich understanding (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). However, coupled to this pragmatists use the method or methods that enable credible, well-founded, reliable and relevant data to be collected that advance research (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). For this research study, data will be collected to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and explain pattens which will contribute to theory and subsequently be tested with additional data collection using thematic analysis. This is an abductive approach to research and called abductive reasoning (Peirce, 1905) or inference to the best explanation (Josephson and Josephson, 1996). Abductive inquiry starts from a perspective of doubt or wonder and provides a current explanation of the world (Marcio, 2001). Rather than move from theory to data (deduction) or data to theory (induction) an abductive approach moves back and forth and combines both induction and deduction (Suddaby, 2006). In the context of this research study, abduction will enable an ongoing process of contributing to theories based on research evidence as the researcher is led to look at new theoretical insights. It is suggested that abduction is the most conjectural of the three logics (induction, deduction, abduction) because it seeks a situational fit between observed facts and rules (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). For example, in this research study, and applying an abductive research approach, the reasons why people leave McDonalds will be explored. This will mean obtaining data that is sufficiently rich and detailed to allow exploration of the phenomenon and therefore explain the themes and relationships. Thereafter, integration into a conceptual framework will be developed in order to build up a theory of employee intention to leave within the retail fast food environment. Furthermore, deduction and induction processes will complement abduction as logical reasons for theory testing (Van Maanen, 2011). Further, qualitative researchers may know what they are looking for in a general sense and they can use observations, interviews, and allied methods to discover it and document it more fully. By utilising the process of abduction in this research, one may discover something that is under specified theoretically or something new or unexpected (Arino, LeBaron and Milliken, 2016).

## Methodological Approach

In this research, a single data collection technique will be used and as such the methodological approach followed will be of a mono method qualitative study. The data will be collected in the field with face-to-face interaction with the use of a one-on-one interview.

The research interview is one of the most important qualitative data collection methods in conducting field studies and ethnographic research (Qu and Dumay, 2011). There is a substantial amount of literature written on this subject (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Wengraf, 2001; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin and Rubin, 2011; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Interviews can take place in group settings, called focus groups, or individually, one on one with an interviewer and interviewee. A group interview was not considered appropriate for this research as when studying sensitive subjects, for example an employee’s intention to leave, individuals are often reluctant to discuss such matters in a public setting (Qu and Dumay, 2011). There are three types of recognised individual interviews which are structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Firstly, a structured interview asks a set of pre-established questions and leaves little deviation for responses as all interviewees are asked the same questions in a particular order. This style aligns with a neopositivist view which sees the interview as a tool for getting the truth and a pipeline for getting knowledge (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011). In this instance the interviewer pretends that the context does not affect the meaning of questions and answers and tries to reduce interviewer bias by a standardized procedure. Further, researchers ignore criticisms of lack of trust and control and seek to solve these through repeating interviews (Morgan, 1997; Morgan, 2007). For this research, structured interviews will not be used as they will not provide the flexibility to capture rich data from each interview (Qu and Dumay, 2011).

An unstructured interview lies at the other end of the interview continuum. This type of interview proceeds on the assumption that the interviewer does not know in advance all the necessary questions to ask. It is linked to a romanticist view that the engagement builds rapport and over time, as much truth as possible is revealed (Alvesson, 2010). The interviewer seeks to gain more from the interview, with the interviewee as the participant and both expressing feelings and expressing a more realistic picture than can be uncovered by the neopositivist approach (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Bauman, Beck, Beck-Gernsheim *et al.*, 2011). In this research study, the questions to be asked are clearly laid out and as such tis interview technique will not be appropriate. Moreover, it can be argued that the unstructured interview only represents the interviewees perspective at a point in time and the data collected may only be a narrative not reflecting reality (Qu and Dumay, 2011). For this reason, this research study will not utilise this method of interviewing participants.

The last interview technique is the semi-structured interview. This technique is flexible, accessible and capable of disclosing important facets of human and organisational behaviour. Often it is the most effective and convenient means of gathering information (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Underlying the semi-structured interview is the assumption that the questions must be comprehensible to the interviewee. For this study, a localist position is adopted. This is a position which understands interviews in a social context and not as a data gathering process in isolation. The researcher uses these interviews to approach the world from the interviewee’s perspective. Localists see the interview as an important empirical piece of information as the information produced is a detailed account of the phenomenon and they challenge assumptions, claims and the use of interview as a research tool (Silverman, 2016).

In adopting a semi structured and localist perspective to interviews for this research study, the researcher will be able to step in and out of the research process and cross the border between the insider and outsider (Jönsson and Lukka, 2006). Through the use of semi-structured interviews, and this localist perspective, there will be an understanding that as a researcher he/she is an integral part of the dyadic interaction between interviewer and interviewee. In this way, rich data capture is achieved, and a reflective process adopted enabling the researcher to step back to analyse their interview process before conducting further interviews.

## Data collection

Semi structured interviews are often referred to as qualitative research interviews where the researcher explores a list of themes and key questions within a specific organisational context and in relation to the research topic. This research will utilise open-ended interview questions that will attempt to probe and uncover a richness of understanding, whilst seeking explanation that would be of practical help to best practice for the organisation (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). A primary technique used in semi-structured interviews is the use of scheduled and unscheduled probes. These provide the researcher with a means to draw out more meaningful narratives from the interviewee. This can be done from semi-verbal sounds, nods or body language. Akin to active listening, these techniques can lead to further elaboration (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015); The nature and discussion are captured by audio-recording for later transcription, analysis and interpretation.

Conducting semi-structured interviews requires a great deal of planning and care, during and after the interviews with regard to the way questions are asked and interpreted (Qu and Dumay, 2011).

Further, four important interviewing skills for the researcher/interviewer are advocated (Hannabuss, 1996):

* Establishing rapport with interviewee
* Learning how to keep interview going
* Learning when to interrupt and how to focus and pace the interview
* Adopting silence and a non-judgemental attitude so moments of silence work on the interviewer’s behalf

Good preparation is the key to successful semi-structured interviews and it is important to plan how to demonstrate competence and credibility to gain the confidence of the interviewee; the researchers level of knowledge, developing interview themes and questions, supplying information prior to the interview to the interviewee and the appropriateness of location are critical to success (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). During the interview, use of an interview protocol may be adopted (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). This protocol includes the following components:

* A heading (date, place, interviewer, interviewee – anonymised and coded)
* Interview instructions so a standard process is adopted
* Interview questions – ice-breaker question first followed by 4-5 questions, more follow up questions and who, why or what open-ended questions
* Further probing questions to follow up on the 4-5 questions asked, asking individuals to explain their ideas or elaborate on what they had said
* A silence and pause between questions to record responses
* A final close and thank you statement to acknowledge the time the interviewee spent during the interview

Within this qualitative approach it remains vital, irrespective of the method used, to demonstrate methodological rigour and a theoretical/conceptual contribution (Bansal and Corley, 2011).

## Developing Interview Questions

This section outlines the qualitative stage of data collection by evidencing the interview questions asked of each participant, alongside the justification for the inclusion of each question based on the literature review (Chapter 2). Appendices G and H respectively show the pilot and final interview questions used to interview each participant.

Q1: What do you understand by the term Employer Branding?

*The literature review established that this term has many different definitions. IT was first introduced by Amber and Barrow in 1996. Table 3, p.16 details the many different versions of what employer branding could mean. From a research perspective understanding what participants thinks will aid theory development in this area.*

Q2: What does the brand McDonalds mean to you?

*The literature review identified employer branding as a new term (Ambler and Barrow, 1996) and suggested that the term was not clearly defined or understood within the literature. In terms of setting the scene the interviewer must establish what employees think the brand McDonalds means to them and actually how this may affect their employment within Renz Restaurants Limited, T/A McDonalds.*

Q3: How do you think McDonalds stands out as an employer of choice within the UK fast food industry?

*The literature review highlighted that it may be useful to have a desirable employer brand to attract and retain employees (Willock, 2005). Further, in order to attract the best talent, it is postulated that employers should hold themselves out to be the employer of choice (Ewing et al., 2002). The inclusion of this research question may help to clarify how the McDonalds brand promotes the organisation in this light.*

Q4: What employment benefits do you think McDonalds gives you as an employee?

*The literature review identified several employment benefits for example, monetary, developmental, and work-life, that relates back to the employees perception of what the brand may offer them (Wong, 2014). The inclusion of this question is looking to understand what each employee feels the brand offers them in their everyday workplace and employment.*

Q5: What do you think the company gives you in return for your efforts at work? (follow up probing question - do you think this is fair?)

*From the literature review it is suggested that employees believe certain things about particular brands, and as such, depending upon what they actually receive when working for a particular company, they may feel more disposed to work harder (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).*

*The literature review identified established theory in terms of the psychological contract (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). This question is looking to see what each employee feels the company gives them in return for undertaking their work. In addition, with follow up questions such as how and why, it may be possible to establish how strongly attached to the company each employee is.*

Q6: What do you like about working for McDonalds?

*From the literature review it is suggested that strong employer brands make people want to work there (Moroko and Uncles, 2008) and a set of beliefs bind the parties together in a set of reciprocal obligations (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). The inclusion of this research question may help to clarify what McDonalds delivers as oppose to what it promises (Q5) to each employee. This may help in establishing the feeling of strength of the psychological contract and what this actually means in practice for each employee.*

Q7: Do you feel positive towards the brand? If so why?

*The literature review identified the concept of brand psychological ownership in which the employee feels positive thoughts towards the brand and may adopt an altruistic spirit towards brand related activities (Chang et al., 2012). The inclusion of this research question may uncover the contextual factors that affect employee’s organisational commitment.*

Q8:Do you feel negative towards the brand? If so why?

*The literature review identified the concept of brand psychological ownership in which the employee feels positive thoughts towards the brand and may adopt an altruistic spirit towards brand related activities (Chang et al., 2012). The inclusion of this research question may uncover the contextual factors that affect employee’s organisational commitment.*

Q9: How do you think you perform at work? (follow up probing questions – how, why, examples)

*From the literature review it is suggested that task performance is an antecedent of job satisfaction (Wright et al., 1994). The inclusion of this question is looking to explore how an employee feels about their day-to-day activities and what they feel makes them satisfied in their daily routine.*

*NOTE: Then explain day to day stuff, filling out forms, making products, taking meat off the grill, what tasks do you really like doing? Apart from day-to-day stuff when I talk about extra performance I mean staying behind after work to help colleagues when you have clocked out or due to go home.*

Q10: What activities do you perform above and beyond your job role? When do you feel more inclined to go the extra mile at work?

*From the literature review it was identified that organisational citizenship behaviour is a consequence of organisational commitment (Peterson et al., 1995). Further, it was found that employees having an altruistic spirit may be more inclined to produce behaviours that deliver extra-role performance to customers and colleagues (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The inclusion of this research question is looking to explore what feelings employees have when they are inclined to exhibit these behaviours.*

Q11: How committed are you at work? (follow up - do you feel committed at all? Examples)

*From the literature review it is postulated that a strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved with, and enjoys membership of the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1996). This research question will look to explore how the employee feels committed and when they feel a strong sense of involvement with the company.*

Q12: Are there times when you have ever thought about leaving this job? When? (We all think about leaving our job at some stage)

*The literature review identified that training staff in internal branding activities may encourage employees to stay within the organisation (Punjaisri et al., 2009). Moreover, firms that follow an implicit employer branding model seem to have a higher retention rate, establishing the firms identity strongly in the mind of the employee as an employer (Dell et al., 2001). This research question is looking to explore what employees feel about staying in employment within the business. Further, it will detail what potential influences they raise as important to them as part of their commitment to the organisation.*

*Violations in the psychological contract or misinterpretations as a result of unmet expectations can result in employees being more likely to quit (Cable et al., 2013).* *It is also suggested that e*mployee *messages that fail to adequately provide a realistic job preview will contribute to intentions to quit and higher employee turnover. In addition, the employer brand presents information that contributes to the psychological contract between employer and employee (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The inclusion of this research question will explore what feelings may trigger an employee’s intention to leave McDonalds.*

Q13:How do you think employer brand affects employee performance and retention?

*The positive influence of employer branding upon employee performance is mainly self-reported by organisations representatives without any adequate verification (Martin, 2008). It has also been suggested that affective employer branding initiatives may not directly affect employee or organisational performance but rather affect the mediators of employee performance e.g. satisfaction, engagement; this is then assumed to positively influence employees work efforts, behaviours and performance (Ostroff, 1992).*

*From the literature review it was identified that job satisfaction leads to higher levels of organisational commitment (Johnston et al., 1990). This question will help to extend the investigation on how contextual factors may influence senior employee commitment to the company as their shadow will spread a positive mood that will filter down the organisation. This is supported by another author who suggests that a positive mood can also lead to behaviours of protecting the organisation, making constructive suggestions, developing oneself and spreading goodwill (George and Brief, 1992).*

## Participants

To ensure the opinions are representative of all employees within the organisation a relevant number of participants needs to be interviewed at every level within the organisation. A form of non-probability sampling was adopted to choose the cases interviewed which is called purposive sampling. This sampling technique enabled the researcher to make judgements about which cases to exclude and include to best enable answering the research questions. Careful consideration was required to develop this strategy to examine cases that prove to be information-rich (Patton, 2001; Neuman, 2007). This research study was able to clearly outline the participant population (employees) and who to sample within each level of the organisation population. It was suggested that this developed based on the simultaneous collecting, coding and analysis of the data, as the study progresses. Twelve participants were selected from each of three separately owned restaurant groups. These restaurant groups are located in Woking (Franchised), Farnborough (Company owned) and Tonbridge (Franchised). This made a total sample population of thirty-six participants. Table 9 shows participant selection based on employee level and remuneration type. However, this research was interested at looking at the collective perceptions of participants across restaurants in different locations and under different ownership. This combined account of overall views helped to build an overall account to explain these perceptions.

Table 9 Total sample population by job category for three restaurant locations

| Employee Level | Number of Participants | |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Semi Structured interviews | Remuneration |
| Supervisor, Manager (Business Manager, 1st Assistant, 2nd Assistant) | 12 | Salaried Employee |
| Shift Manager (SM) | 7 | Hourly Paid |
| Crew Trainer (CT) | 9 | Hourly Paid |
| Crew Member (CM) | 8 | Hourly Paid |
| Total Participants | **36** |  |

The characteristics of participant selection is documented below:

* An equal number of participants with service of less than three years and more than three years
* An equal proportion of part-time and full-time employees
* An equal proportion of native English speakers and overseas nationals
* An equal proportion of female and male interviewees

The criteria for the salaried face to face semi-structured interviews was to interview everyone until data saturation is achieved. Data saturation is when the additional data collected provides little, if any, new information or suggests new themes. They are less in numbers and no focus groups will be undertaken at this level. These individuals, based on their position, should engage better in a one-on-one situation and hopefully be more responsive.

It is important to reflect upon the nature and size of the sample population when conducting non-probability sampling. The sample size is dependent upon the research question and objectives. In this instance the question asked is what is needed to be discovered, what has credibility and what can be done with the available resources (Patton, 2015). The researcher for the purposes of this research study had access to a pool of employees, and interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached. The sample population was a homogeneous pool of participants who’s only differentiating factor was the way in which each staff member was remunerated. Twenty-four participants were paid by the hour whilst twelve were on a fixed salary.

Over the last couple of decades, academics have postulated on guidance for the number of interviews required for saturation (Francis, Johnston, Robertson *et al.*, 2010; Baker and Edwards, 2012; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar and Fontenot, 2013; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Saunders and Townsend, 2016; Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The largest analysis looking at interview size to date was conducted by (Saunders and Townsend, 2016) who examined two hundred and forty-eight published studies. They discovered that only 80% of studies reported their sample size and only 4% reached data saturation. The average number of interviews to reach saturation was 32.5. However, they also recognised that following any intended specific number of qualitative interviews may compromise the integrity of such field based qualitative research. They concluded that when considering sample size for reaching data saturation in qualitative, interview-based research, each sample size should be based on a case-by-case basis.

Looking in more detail at several principles of data saturation, particularly in relation to purposive diversity sampling techniques, Francis *et al.* (2010) suggested that one should conduct a minimum of ten interviews, with a further two in order to demonstrate that the criterion had been met (twelve in total). It was found that within this study, the first twelve interviews elicited 97% of the important codes that evolved.

Further, Guest, Namey and Chen (2020) specifically looked at a method of assessing thematic saturation in inductive analysis of qualitative interviews. They defined the base size as the minimum number of data collection events (i.e., interviews) to calculate the amount of information gained. This was called the denominator. The run length was defined as a set of consecutive events or interviews. This can be thought of as the number of interviews to calculate new information and was called the numerator. The results gave a ratio which was then extrapolated to define, with flexibility, how many interviews maybe necessary to achieve data saturation. This method affords researchers the ability to choose different degrees of rigor by selecting different run lengths and/or new information thresholds. It was found that typically six to seven interviews will capture most themes in a homogenous sample (Six interviews to reach 80% saturation). At a higher level of saturation, 95%, eleven to twelve interviews might be needed, tracking with existing literature indicating twelve interviews are typically needed to reach higher degrees of saturation. This research followed these principles of data saturation with the relevant numbers of both hourly paid and salaried remunerated participants interview, namely twelve and twenty-four. Moreover, in this research, this guidance was followed, and participant numbers increased until saturation was achieved with repetition of at least three examples in each 1st order coding category. This was in accordance with reference to guidance (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Suddaby, 2006; Corbin, Strauss and Strauss, 2014). Thirty-six participants took part in the research from different locations and restaurants. The number of interviews required to achieve saturation, by research question, has been outlined in Chapter 5, Section 5.3. Further, the NVIVO modelling tool assisted in establishing patterns and coding themes to aid the establishment of saturation. The model tool allowed the symbols on the chart to be linked back to original text, thereby allowing the researcher to keep close to the data by browsing the original text. This use of the matrices and charts helped to build up the analysis (Gibbs, 2018). Data saturation was when the additional data collected provided little, if any, new information or suggested new themes and is summarised by several scholars with regards to the population size (Saunders *et al.*, 2015; Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

## Ethical Considerations

Ethics refers to standards of behaviour that will guide the researcher with regards to the rights of the participants who become involved with the research process. It is primarily concerned with how the researcher conducts themselves and behaves during their research. Research ethics cover all aspects and processes in which the researcher is engaged, from how they first approach their topic, through to how they conduct their research and present their findings (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). Throughout this research project, it was seen as important to engage in ethical practices and to anticipate what ethical issues were likely to arise (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010; Saunders *et al.*, 2015). As qualitative research is interpretative research with the researcher (inquirer) actively involved with the participants, this introduces a range of strategic, ethical and personnel issues into the qualitative process (Locke, Spirduso and Silverman, 2014). Several authors have addressed the importance of ethical considerations within this process that need to be considered (Marshall and Rossman, 2014; Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; Spradley, 2016). Foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the participants. The researcher’s roleshould include statements about past experiences and comment on the connection between the researcher and participant. In this study, the researcher is studying their own organisation (sometimes called backyard research (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992) and so potential compromises may arise. In this case it will be necessary to employ multiple validity strategies to create reader confidence in the accuracy of the findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

The emphasis within qualitative, pragmatic research is on what the researcher does in practice rather than what they say they do. These ethical principles are also supported by other scholars such as Creswell, Robson and Saunders. These are as follows:

1. The researcher should always act with integrity and show respect for the subjects of the research (participants and other affected parties)
2. Participation in research should be entirely voluntary and participants should be able to withdraw at any time without consequence
3. Participation based on informed consent
4. The risk of harm to participants should be minimised
5. Confidential research data should not be disclosed, and participants should not be identified unless consent has been obtained (or there is a legal and professional duty to disclose)

All interviews were conducted in person, at each restaurant location with a face-to-face meeting. This was to try to make each participant as relaxed as possible and within their own environment. Additionally, to reduce bias, the same researcher conducted all the interviews and asked the same interview questions (Appendix H). Each participant gave informed consent, was able to ask questions and end the interview at any time of he/she felt uncomfortable. Appendix E and F evidence the participant information sheet and consent form for the interviews. Each interview was recorded for later transcription. At the end of each interview within each location, each participant was asked not to discuss the interview questions with other participants until after everyone had been interviewed. All people’s names have been altered to a number sequence (master copy to code back to each participant’s name) to reflect anonymity and complete confidentiality. Moreover, all electronic transcripts and recordings are in a password protected environment to ensure compliance with the institutional code of ethics. The interview transcripts are only accessed by the lead researcher, supervisor and NVIVO support team.

Furthermore, the University of Southampton has a code of ethical guidelines called ERGO. There is a requirement for ERGO to be followed which ensure ethical working practices for researchers.

## Risks

This section looks to identify potential risks that could occur throughout the research process. In addition, it outlines and investigates strategies to mitigate against such risks.

The researcher is the owner/franchisee of the business being researched and as such careful consideration needs to be given to how the research is conducted. The proposed methodology chosen in this research is a single data collection technique using semi-structured interviews. As such the research design followed will be of a mono method qualitative study.

Potential limitations and consequences mainly surround practical matters. For example, the need to engender participation and collaboration, the researcher’s role as the facilitator and performing the semi-structured interviews with the correct skill set and professionalism.

In this situation the researcher must be mindful of his role. In knowing an organisation, familiarity will be present and any assumptions and preconceptions may prevent one from exploring issues that would enrich the research (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). However, the advantages of knowing an organisation implies that the researcher understands the complexity of what goes on in his/her own organisation which may help in understanding the data discovered.

The power dynamics of the interviewee and interviewer relationship in one’s own organisation will need to be explored and fully understood in order to mitigate any risks and validity in information. It can be argued that the interview data only represents an interviewees perspective at a point in time and the interviewee gifts answers as influenced by the imbalance of personal power and authority. Much has been written on the influence of the asymmetrical power distribution in qualitative interviews (Anyan, 2013; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) and it is suggested that interviews cannot be one sided (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Further, because the interviewer sets the stage, controls the script and setting the interviewer seems to have direct control over the interviewee (Haworth, 2006).

To mitigate risk surrounding the qualitative interview, astute interviewers can use clever techniques to get access to the participants experiences. For example, they must build rapport and have a sympathetic relationship and sense of mutual trust in the research interview (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009). Drawing on a wide variety of experiences, (Smith, 2006) concluded that the power imbalance in qualitative interviews does not make this research technique an erroneous tool.

Practicing reflexivity is a positive tool a researcher can use to mitigate the risk of power imbalances in interviews. During analysis and interpretation, the interviewer can analyse the interview from several perspectives to reflect upon his or her own dynamisms within the interview; this will help reduce power imbalances as it unveils the interviewer’s knowledge of how the knowledge was created (Aléx and Hammarström, 2008). Further, research involving peers and colleagues has received relatively little consideration in the literature to date. There are difficulties associated with interviewing participants with whom the researcher has a pre-existing and ongoing relationship in the same organisation. However, to ensure ethical conduct, strategies can be used to mitigate negative situations such as practising reflexivity, trust and rapport building, self-disclosure and confidentiality (McDermid, Peters, Jackson and Daly, 2014).

Underpinning the qualitative research is the issue of the quality of the research and its findings. Qualitative validity and reliability have been outlined in section 4.14 and with the use of reliability procedures these risks can be mitigated against. However, the generalisation of the findings of a piece of qualitative research may be limited to the context of a specific site as it has been suggested that the value of such research is the hallmark of qualitative research (Greene and Caracelli, 1997).

## Data Collection

This phase of this pragmatic, abductive and single data collection research utilised semi-structured interviews with participants in order to yield in depth responses about their perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge about the questions put to them (Patton, 2015). This qualitative approach adopted semi-structured interviews, with the interviewer asking a series of open-ended questions in the same order to all the participants. Where information was not so forthcoming in response to the questions asked, the interviewer asked probing follow-up questions to ascertain a more detailed response. By using this approach a greater understanding of the participants perceptions was able to be collated, which was appropriate for explaining phenomena undergoing constant change (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013).

The interview questions looked to explain the five research questions (RQ) (Section 1.3) and were constructed as such in this order and sequence. Thematic analysis followed six phases, as identified by (Braun and Clarke, 2006):

*familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.*

(Baruch and Forstenlechner, 2017) provide an example of a career theory paper reflecting the thematic analysis approach adopted in this study. Although the six phases are reported in a linear approach in this chapter, an iterative approach was favoured to enhance the richness and depth of the findings (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

The recorded interviews were all transcribed by the researcher using Google Documents and then loaded onto NVIVO to facilitate thematic analysis.as NVIVO offers transparency, flexibility, the ability to code data and the ability to retrieve data quickly (Miles, Huberman, Huberman and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

## Reliability and Validity

Qualitative validity refers to the researcher checking the accuracy of findings by employing certain procedures during the research process. Qualitative reliability indicates that the researchers’ approach is consistent across different researches and projects (Gibbs, 2018). It is further suggested that a researcher should document as many steps of the procedures of their studies as possible and setting up a detailed case study protocol and database (Aberdeen, 2013). Several reliability procedures can be outlined such as checking all transcripts to ensure no obvious mistakes have been made and ensuring that the definitions of codes are consistent (Gibbs, 2018). It was good practice to get another researcher to cross-check the codes to determine the level of consistency of coding and it has been suggested that the consistency of coding for good qualitative research be at least 80% in agreement (Miles *et al.*, 1994). For the qualitative researcher, each participant interview brings a viewpoint for establishing validity. Combined with this, the bias the researcher brings to this research should incorporate validity strategies into a proposal as this will be a key part in enabling accurate checking of the findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). As this study is pragmatic and abductive in nature, with open-ended questioning of participants, the validity procedures will reflect this. These procedures will focus upon authenticity (fairness enlarges personal constructions and leads to improved understanding of others and empowers action), and trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability) (Lincoln *et al.*, 2011). The forms of these validity procedures will include: [[17]](#footnote-17)

* Member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings
* Building rapport with each participant to gain a level of trust
* Reflexivity throughout each interview and the on-going process
* Applying a localist interview perspective as the aim is for interviewee and interviewer is to become equal to remove and any bias and impose no harm, preserving the dignity and privacy of the individual
* Using rich, thick description to convey the findings
* Clarifying the researcher’s role and bias within the study via self-reflection, such creating an open and honest narrative that will resonate with the readers
* Spending adequate time in the field in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study
* Data structure and notation guidance (Gioia *et al.*, 2013) allows one to configure data into a sensible visual aid, providing graphic representation of how the progression from raw data to themes occurred. This is a key component of demonstrating rigour in qualitative research (Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010).

Using NVIVO 12 software (CAQDAS) the data was also scoped in order to provide well-founded analysis and in order to check the completeness and validity of the research coding and interpretation (Gibbs, 2018). The tools within the software were used to scope the data which allowed for the identification of the themes and aided in deciding what claims could be made based on the data (Richards, 2004). Further, the software allowed for a clear and consistent audit trail to be established as a means for tracking decisions and assumptions (Siccama and Penna, 2008). Audit trails are an additional strategy for ensuring greater consistency between the results of the study and data collected (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). During this study, the researcher maintained this trail by putting a date and time stamp on all documents and entries created and edited in NVIVO.

The use of the NVIVO 12 software is not on its own a way of ruling out validity threats. What is established is a technique of maintaining the continuity between this dynamic software and the static form required in this written document. NVIVO 12 screen shots provided richness, depth and insight into the process of data analysis and as a unique way to document how coding processes and validity threats were ruled out. The use of screen captures throughout the data analysis process were used to demonstrate transparency when communicating research findings. These also demonstrate consistent use of the software, thereby allowing others to accurately evaluate the research (Bringer, Johnston and Brackenridge, 2004; Bringer, Johnston and Brackenridge, 2006).

## Data Analysis

The qualitative data set produced from the research sample then underwent thematic analysis, built on a set of codes developed and defined from identified themes within the data. Qualitative data analysis primarily entails classifying things, persons and events and the properties which characterise them (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973). During the data analysis, data was organised categorically and chronologically, reviewed repeatedly and continually coded; a list of major ideas that surface will be chronicled (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). The researcher’s interpretation of the codes and subsequent themes are considered more important than the frequency with which the participant cited codes (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). The aim was to theorise the importance of patterns and of their wider meanings (Morse and Field, 1995; Boyatzis, 1998). The data analysis process was aided using the computer program NVIVO. This program enabled transcribed interviews to be loaded, along with observations, memos and illustrations. The information was then tagged and coded so that chunks can be pulled out and then re assembled in a new and illuminating configuration (Padilla, 1989). Meaningful data themes were then identified, isolated, grouped and re grouped for analysis. NVIVO offers this facility for transparency, flexibility and the ability to code data and retrieve data quickly (Miles *et al.*, 1994; Corbin *et al.*, 2014).

The thematic analysis followed the six phases as identified by (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which is detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.4 and called the Treatment of Qualitative Data. An iterative approach to the six phases is preferred to enhance the richness and depth of the findings (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield and Terry, 2019). The final phase of thematic analysis was to document phases one to five. In order to provide a clear audit trail for the research, documentation was produced in parallel with these five stages; data collection and analysis must be a simultaneous process in qualitative research (Marshall and Rossman, 2014; Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). This in turn promoted a reliability in the treatment of the data. Data presentation in qualitative studies is diverse (Lofland, 1974) and it has been suggested that narrative text is the most frequent form of display for qualitative data (Miles *et al.*, 1994). As an interpretivist and subjective study, results were presented in descriptive, narrative form rather than a scientific report and thick description was the vehicle for communicating the holistic picture of the participants experiences and their meaning (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The data structure of this study followed an holistic approach to inductive concept development that balances the conflicting need to develop new concepts inductively whilst adhering to the high rigour demanded by top journals (Gioia *et al.*, 2013). This data structure and notation guidance not only allowed research to be configured into a sensible visual aid, but it also provided graphic representation of how the progression from raw data to terms and themes in conducting the analysis occurred. This is a key component of demonstrating rigour in qualitative research (Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010). One limitation of thematic analysis is that is does not follow the account of one participant. However, this research was looking at participants perceptions as a collective and the combined accounts helped build an overall picture to explain their views. It should be noted that the basis of the assumptions is that the researcher is a knowledgeable person who could figure out patterns in the data and identify relationships that the participant (informant) may be unaware of. Moreover, the researcher was able to formulate the resulting concepts in a theoretically relevant format. Further, the participants and those responsible for constructing the organisations realities know what they are trying to explain and are capable of explain their thoughts, intentions and actions (Gioia *et al.*, 2013).

## Summary

Qualitative research seeks to understand issues or particular situations by investigating the perspectives and behaviours of people in these situations and the context in which they act (Kaplan and Maxwell, 2005). For this study a pragmatic, qualitative and abductive research approach will focus upon the employee’s perceptions of employer branding and how it potentially influences their performance and intention to leave. This approach enabled the researcher to generate a richer, more complex, contextual and socially constructed and observed data set than a quantitative line of enquiry would be able to do. It is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social problem. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that follows an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

In summary, the interviewer remained open, stepped away from neopositivist or romanticist views and viewed the interview as a conversation considering it the art of questioning and listening (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). It was an enriching experience for interviewees through dyadic interplay with the interviewer and obtained new insights into the research question (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Through a localist perspective and applying metaphors to aid thinking about understanding complex phenomena, new levels of understanding will be achieved and this research study, as a piece of qualitative research, was strengthened. A diagrammatic representation of the logical steps in the philosophy, research approach and methodological processes discussed in this chapter is outlined in Table 10.

Table 10 Research philosophy, approach and methods

| Process | Adopted style |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Philosophy | Subjectivism/interpretative/pragmatic |
| Research design | Pragmatic abductive reasoning |
| Methodological data collection | Single data collection/semi-structured interviews |
| Data analysis | Thematic analysis; NVIVO |
|  |  |

## Pilot Study

In order to examine the validity and reliability of the interview questions, an initial pilot study was undertaken. The pilot study provided a preliminary insight into all the elements perceived by participants as benefits from employer branding, how the brand affects performance, intention to leave and what employment benefits are derived by each participant from working for the brand.

The goal of this pilot study was to validate the qualitative data testing instrument, namely the interview questions, as formulated by the researcher and ascertain if the process would enable a rich and full data set to be captured. Specifically, the pilot study attempted to ascertain if the instrument of measurement (the interview questions) were fit for purpose and answered the research questions.

### Methodology

The pilot study was concerned with assessing the face validity of the measuring tool (interview questions) to see if the questions explored and uncovered common and different themes in the data yielded from a sample population (Section 4.17.2). The main priority of the research was to capture and present the participants stories, feelings, and perceptions thoroughly and accurately regardless of theoretical and methodological perspectives the method may have drawn upon. In order to do this the interview questions needed to be fit for purpose.

This process of assessing validity in the above sense refers to internal validity. This can also be referred to as measurement validity and is concerned with if the findings that are discovered as a result of asking the interview questions actually represent the reality of what is being measured. (Saunders *et al.*, 2009, 2015). This largely depends upon the design of the questions asked. In this sense the ‘face validity’ of the questions asked were tested by the researcher so that the participant understood each question in the way intended and answered in a way that the answer is understood by the researcher (Foddy and Foddy, 1994). It should be noted that face validity is a subjective judgement and is evaluating the appearance of the interview questions in terms of feasibility, readability, consistency of style and formatting and the clarity of language used (Taherdoost, 2016). In essence it refers to the researcher’s subjective assessments of the relevance of the measuring instrument and whether the questions asked are relevant, reasonable, unambiguous, and clear (Oluwatayo, 2012). The researcher asked an independent rater to see if the perception of what he was seeing was the same as them. The independent assessed a 0.7% reliability, evidencing a positive inter-rater reliability.

The researcher used the four stage model developed by (Foddy and Foddy, 1994) to assess if each question is valid. The stages are:

1. the researcher is clear about the design of each question and data requirements
2. participant decodes the questions as researcher intended
3. participant answers the question
4. researcher decodes the question in the way the participant intended.

Each question was then examined on a dichotomous scale of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to indicate a favourable or unfavourable item. A favourable item means that the item is objectively structured and can be positively categorised under a thematic category (Taherdoost, 2016).

### Sample Selection

For the purposes of this pilot study, and to be consistent with the main research study, a form of non-probability sampling was adopted to choose the cases (participants) interviewed which is called purposive sampling. This sampling technique enabled the researcher to make judgements about which cases to exclude and include to best enable answering the research technique. Careful consideration is required to develop this strategy to examine cases that prove to be information-rich (Patton, 2001; Neuman, 2007).

Six participants were selected from one group of restaurants in Woking in order to test the validity and reliability of the qualitative data gathering technique in this single data research. These six participants did not form part of the thirty-six participants for the main body of research and were additional and solely interviewed for the purpose of the pilot study. Table 11 evidences the sample population chosen.

Table 11 Pilot Study Sample Population

| Employee Level | | Number of Participants | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Semi Structured interviews | | Remuneration |
| Supervisor, Manager (Business Manager, 1st Assistant, 2nd Assistant) | 1 | | Salaried Employee |
| Shift Manager (SM) | 2 | | Hourly Paid |
| Crew Trainer (CT) | 1 | | Hourly Paid |
| Crew Member (CM) | 2 | | Hourly Paid |
| Total Participants | **6** | |  |

The characteristics of participant selection is documented below:

* An equal number of participants with service of less than one year and more than 5 years
* An equal proportion of part-time and full-time employees
* An equal proportion of native English speakers and overseas nationals
* An equal proportion of female and male interviewees

Past research has used expert samples to gain valuable insights for the advancement of knowledge and the development of new theories (Karaosmanoglu and Melewar, 2006; Melewar, Lim and Baumgarth, 2010). Therefore, it is imperative to answer the exploratory research questions along with ensuring that the data collection techniques are robust and specific enough to answer the research questions.

The targeted sample size for this pilot study was set at 6 participants, with reference to the participant selection criteria and job level (Table 11).

In a study, *how many interviews are enough* (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006), , it was found that 94% of codes they categorized as high frequency were identified within the first six (6) interviews. This view is supported by other scholars who suggest similar numbers (Francis *et al.*, 2010; Marshall *et al.*, 2013; Saunders and Townsend, 2016). With reference to this finding, the researcher concluded that a sample size of six interview participants would be reasonable and appropriate for this pilot study.

### Interview Process and Format

The identified participants all agreed to participate within the research and signed the consent form (Appendix F) and pre read the participant information sheet (Appendix E). Each participant was interviewed in the restaurant, one on one as a face-to-face meeting and in a quiet area of the dining area where no one could overhear the conversation.

The following questions were asked in the same order to each participant:

Note: Appendix G outlines these questions and Appendix C evidences the literature review justification for each interview question for this pilot study

Q1: What does the brand McDonalds mean to you?

Q2: What attracted you to the McDonalds brand?

Q3: How do you think McDonalds stands out as an employer of choice within the UK fast food industry?

Q4: What employment benefits do you think McDonalds gives you as an employee?

Q5: What are your expectations when working for the McDonalds brand?

Q6: What do you think the company gives you in return for your efforts at work? (follow up probing question - do you think this is fair?)

Q7: What do you like about working for McDonalds?

Q8: Do you feel positive towards the brand? If so why?

Q9:Do you feel negative towards the brand? If so why?

Q10: How do you think you perform at work? (follow up probing questions – how, why, examples)

Q11: Day to day, what elements of your role do you feel satisfied with?

Q12: What activities do you perform above and beyond your job role? When do you feel more inclined to go the extra mile at work?

Q13: How committed are you at work? (follow up - do you feel committed at all? Examples)

Q14: Are there times when you have ever thought about leaving this job? When? (We all think about leaving our job at some stage)

Q15: What factors make you think about leaving McDonalds?

Q16: What else could you tell me about your work at McDonalds?

Q17: How do you think employer brand affects employee performance and retention?

Q18: What do you think the company gives employees in return for their efforts at work?

### Analysis, Results and Discussions

The results were analysed and presented using the four-stage model (Foddy and Foddy, 1994) as outlined in Section 4.17.1, to test for face validity of each interview question. Two phases of analysis were undertaken.

#### Phase 1

In the first phase of the analysis the researcher decided which questions were not generating the intended response or indeed which questions were duplications and could be removed or altered within the interview question framework. For example, question 16 uncovered no other response from participants other than ‘no’ and as such was removed from the interview question template. Question 18 was also found to be a duplication of question 6 as participants repeated themselves. This added no further information to the process and was hence removed as duplication. To summarise, the following actions were taken following the first stage of the analysis:

* Question 16 removed
* Question 18 removed

#### Phase 2

The next phase of the analysis involved looking at questions that could be merged, as they elicited similar responses.

For example, Questions 1 and 2 appeared to elicit responses that had a similar meaning for five out of six participants. For example, participant 2 (of the pilot study) answered to both questions that the *location, flexibility and quality both attracted her and this is what the brand meant to her*. Participant 6 suggested for both questions that the *brand meant a well-established global brand and as an employer one that is respected and trusted.* On this basis question 1 was rephrased to get participants to respond to what they understood by the term employer branding. A further follow up question became question number 2 in specifying what the brand name McDonalds meant to them specifically. In this way the initial question appeared to elicit a clearer understanding of what employer branding was with the next question directing each participant to give a personal account of the meaning to them self.

In addition, Questions 5 and 6 initially confused the participants. Each came back to the researcher with comments such as ‘I have already answered that’ or ‘as I said before’. All six participants gave similar feedback in this manner as they clearly felt that their expectations were in fact what they also liked about the business. For example, participant 6 said in response to question 5 *‘For myself I get more benefits than certain employees because of the job title that I am. I'm a second assistant and I get a work-based pension, I get health benefits, I get 6-weeks holiday, I get a university degree course and this development is very important for me and Ii get employee discounts.* He also made the same comments about question 6. On this basis both questions were merged into question 5 of the main body of questions and the question using the term ‘expectation’ was removed.

Also, in response to question 11 the participants seemed reluctant to give any meaningful answers. The researcher established that all participants had a clear understanding of what the question was asking as part of the protocol of the interview process. or three of the participants they could not come up with any response at all that answered that specific question. When pushed they all felt that they could go further and do better and when asked when they go above and beyond, more meaningful answers were elicited.

Further, for questions 14 and 15 generated very similar responses from each participant. For example, participant 1 said in response to question 14 ‘*I have thought about leaving in the past with the previous business manager and I thought that was a mistake.  However, since the changes I have not. It was really all about that one person as a superior who made life very difficult.’* The same participant has nothing else to say with regards to question 15 and said the reasons were the same as just answered. Similarly, participant 5 said in response to question *14 ‘Yes of course. Becoming a mother 12 years ago I thought that part time wasn’t for me.’* When the same participant was asked question 15, she commented that the same factors remain and she can’t commit to anymore that she does because of her parental responsibilities. The question was reduced to one question and more simply worded. This became question 12.

To summarise, the following actions were taken following the first stage of the analysis:

Questions 1 and 2 merged into question 1 of the main body questions

Questions 5 and 6 merged into question 5 of the main body questions

Questions 11 and 12 merged into question 10 of the main body questions

Questions 14 and 15 merged into question 12 of the main body questions

This two-phase process resulted in a final interview template for the main body of research comprising of 13 questions, re-numbered and presented as below (also in Appendix H):

Q1: What do you understand by the term Employer Branding?

Q2: What does the brand McDonalds mean to you?

Q3: How do you think McDonalds stands out as an employer of choice within the UK fast food industry?

Q4: What employment benefits do you think McDonalds gives you as an employee?

Q5: What do you think the company gives you in return for your efforts at work? (follow up probing question - do you think this is fair?)

Q6: What do you like about working for McDonalds?

Q7: Do you feel positive towards the brand? If so why?

Q8:Do you feel negative towards the brand? If so why?

Q9: How do you think you perform at work? (follow up probing questions – how, why, examples)

Q10: What activities do you perform above and beyond your job role? When do you feel more inclined to go the extra mile at work?

Q11: How committed are you at work? (follow up - do you feel committed at all? Examples)

Q12: Are there times when you have ever thought about leaving this job? When? (We all think about leaving our job at some stage)

Q13: How do you think employer brand affects employee performance and retention?

### Conclusions

This pilot study took on the challenge of establishing whether the interview questions as constructed could illicit a meaningful, rich and valid data set with which to analyse the influence of employer branding upon employee performance and retention as a phenomenon. For this research, the phenomenon is named as the ‘employer branding effect’. Following the analysis of face validity and the consequent changes that were made to the interview questions we can consider that the research instrument (i.e. interview schedule) is now ready to be used on a larger sample. Further, the researcher learned to use the data analysis tool throughout this pilot process. With this understanding, the researcher proceeded to complete the research by seeking to expand the research to the full sample population, across three separately located groups of restaurants.

# Treatment of Qualitative Data

## Introduction

This chapter discusses the treatment of qualitative data as reported by applying the thematic analysis outlined within the Methodology Chapter 4, Section 4.15. The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to understand the collective perceptions of the participants in relation to the five research questions (Section 1.3).

## Procedure

All interviews took place in person at each three restaurant locations: Woking (Surrey), Farnborough (Hampshire) and Tonbridge (Kent). Interviews ranged from 34 minutes to 48 minutes in duration with an average length of 41 minutes. Sufficient participants were chosen to provide the breadth and saliency of data necessary for authentic analysis (Patton, 2015). To add to the credibility, rigour and validity of the process, this research used Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) in the form of NVIVO 12. It should be noted that this software does make any analytical contribution to the research at all; it merely acts as a receptacle for managing concepts and NVIVO provides many functions to display, organise and recover the work upon the researcher’s instructions (Woolf and Silver, 2017). The researcher’s interpretation of the codes and subsequent themes were considered more important than the frequency with which the participants cited the codes. However, frequency was a basis of proving data saturation within the context of this research. Each theme had internal homogeneity and the data inside the code was related; In addition, each theme had external heterogeneity and the themes themselves were distinct from each other (Boyatzis, 1998). The interpretative and semantic nature of the themes alluded to a patten of codes, developing and showing a richness of the entire data set, by explain participants perceptions of performance and intention to leave. The research aim was to theorise and extrapolate the importance of those pattens and their wider meaning (Boyatzis, 1998; Morse, Stern, Corbin *et al.*, 2016).

## Data Saturation

Data saturation means that any additional data collected provides little, if any, new information to suggest new themes. In this research, guidance was followed with regard to formulating a protocol and participant numbers increased until saturation was achieved with repetition of at least three examples in each 1st order coding category to reach data saturation. This was in accordance with reference to guidance (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Suddaby, 2006; Corbin *et al.*, 2014). For rich and robust explanations, saturation needed to be established (Richards, 2004). Within NVIVO multiple tools allow demonstration of connections between the development of ideas and enable clarification of concepts and their relationships. Within this research, data saturation was established and demonstrated through the software by a concept of idea not being considered a finding until all of the participants had three examples at a particular node (a named concept that can be linked to other components). *NB a component in software terms is something that can be acted upon.* Supporting data was imperative and taken into account, such as hearing similar words and themes.

Overall saturation was achieved at around thirty-one interviews with the representation of male/female, full-time and part -time, length of service and native English speakers and overseas nationals achieved at thirty-six. Section 4.10 references the homogenous participant population and rationale for data saturation.

Table 12 shows the saturation level and when this was achieved by research question.

Table 12 Interview Saturation

| Saturation | |
| --- | --- |
| Research Question | n = population |
| I | 28 |
| II | 33 |
| III | 29 |
| IV | 24 |
| V | 21 |

**Appendix J** shows the demographics of the participants across the sample population.

## Thematic Analysis

This section evidences the six phases of thematic analysis as suggested by (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun *et al.*, 2019):

*familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.*

(Baruch and Forstenlechner, 2017) provide an example of a career theory paper reflecting the thematic analysis approach adopted in this study. Although the six phases are reported in a linear approach in this chapter, an iterative approach was favoured to enhance the richness and depth of the findings (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

### Phase 1: Familiarising with the data

The first step involved transcribing, with the aid of Google Documents, thirty-six interview recordings into separate word documents. Each document was given a unique identification number as a reference. This process enabled the researcher to listen to the interview at least four times over again whilst transcribing the material. Moreover, each interview was re-read through which enabled the researcher to become immersed within the data, checking for validity, and to start colour coding the interview to facilitate content analysis. Each of the thirty-six interviews was uploaded on the software NVIVO 12. The demographic information for each participant was coded to each unique transcript in order to identify each participant’s personal details and location.

### Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

The researcher first postulated a structure of coding in order to relate back to each research question. A table of topics, based on word frequencies within the interview transcripts, was initially laid out next to each research question to stimulate ideas and an outline of a draft structure. Interview one was then used to reduce and refine this information through the generation of further initial codes which were documented within the NVIVO 12 software. The researcher then coded each subsequent interview, returning as necessary to previous transcripts to refine the coding structure. This process demonstrates one of an iterative and abductive refinement process whereby in-depth familiarisation of the data enabled the generation and organisation of the codes. Two hundred and four initial codes were identified.

Code mapping was used to organise this initial set of two-hundred and four identified codes. These codes were identified by using In Vivo coding practice. In this method, the codes identified use the actual language of the participant as the initial coding structure (Saldaña, 2015). The coding structure resembles a more action orientated and dynamic structure and enables more evocative analytic memo writing about the phenomenon. Figure 6 below (also shown in Appendix I) details the initial code structure and iterations resulting in fifteen themes. For the purpose of our data structure, we use these In Vivo codes as 1st order codes as represented within our framework. This process is analogous with open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and is participant (informant) led.

Two-hundred and four initial codes emerged

ITERATIVE PROCESS

Similarities/differences refined to one-hundred and fifty codes

Thirty-seven initial themes identified

Twenty-two themes removed upon review

Fifteen themes remaining across five aggregate dimensions

Figure 6 Code Mapping

### Phase 3: Searching for Themes

This next strategy enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the observations as a second cycle of iteration was progressed during second cycle coding. The iterative process as outlined in Figure 6 demonstrates the processes and refinement of the themes and the number of stages to get to the final data structure. The full set of two-hundred and four codes were analysed and reorganised and refined in stages. This process is analogous to the notion of axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Similarities and differences were looked at between the categories and eventually this process resulted in a refinement of codes to one-hundred and fifty codes. In this analysis, the researcher looked at what was going on with the relationships and developed a scale of dimensions, within each property. This 2nd order coding is theoretically based as the codes were reclassified to relate back to theory.

The next phase involved searching for themes across the one hundred and fifty codes. All the potential themes were extracted and listed, interpreting the long list of items within the NVIVO software. In accordance with (Javadi and Zarea, 2016) the researchers interpretation of the codes and subsequent themes was considered more important than the frequency with which the participants cited codes. This led to the initial identification of thirty-seven themes, with the mapping of one hundred and fifty codes within these themes (see Figure 6).

### Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

It is determined that each theme should have internal homogeneity and the data inside the themes is related and external heterogeneity and the themes themselves are distinct from each other (Boyatzis, 1998). This led to twenty-two themes being removed and integrated into existing identified themes. Fifteen themes remained, adhering to internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Finally, the data was further reduced by assembling similar themes into the five aggregate dimensions that make up the basis for this research study’s theoretical insight (Corley and Gioia, 2004). The researcher’s supervisor and external NVIVO tutor then independently completed phases one to four of thematic analysis, again evidencing the iterative approach to this research study.

### Phase 5: Defining and naming Themes

The next phase of the thematic analysis demanded that each of the fifteen themes and aggregate dimensions were named and defined. Further familiarisation with the data and a thorough review of the codes that generated each theme was undertaken. This iterative and abductive process led to naming and defining each elicited theme. The definition of each theme are shown in Appendix L.

### Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final phase of the thematic analysis is to document phases one to five. In addition, by thoroughly documenting the five stages the researcher can provide a clear audit trail for the research and in turn this promotes the reliability of the treatment of the qualitative data. The report captured the interactive and iterative nature of the six phases with the finalised version of the report capturing the final iteration of the thematic analysis. Appendix K outlines the final data structure based on guidance and notation by (Gioia *et al.*, 2013). After the process of data gathering and the initial stages of analysis, the researcher undertook a procedure of cycling between the emergent data themes, concepts and dimensions to ascertain if new concepts and any precedents have been discovered. At this stage the literature was constantly being consulted and as such the process adopted an abductive research methodology as data and existing theory were being considered in tandem (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007). Chapter 5 incorporates this treatment of the qualitative data and the six phases of thematic analysis, to present findings and discussion.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the treatment of the qualitative data throughout this pragmatic, abductive and single data collection research (Methodology, Chapter 4), to test the validity and to understand participant perceptions of the impact of the brand on intention to leave, performance and commitment. The treatment of the qualitative data through six phases of thematic analysis resulted in the identification of one-hundred and fifty codes, leading to fifteen themes and five aggregate dimensions.

Demographic information was documented for each participant, with their written consent, and is shown in Appendix J. This information was loaded into the software NVIVO 12 and used as part of the data analysis phase to identify potential themes, properties and dimensions. Detailed matrices were constructed as this is a function of the software and lines of thought examined.

# Findings

## Introduction, Data Structure and Participant Definitions

This chapter evidences the results of the findings from the empirical study and the outcomes of the treatment of the qualitative data to offer analysis of the emergent themes, 1 – 15 as related back to the data structure. The analysis draws upon specific participant vignettes to elicit these findings and discuss the emerging participant perceptions.

Within Chapter 6 the analysis has been undertaken by aggregate dimension and theme, as this follows the Data Structure as outlined and captures the data from the qualitative interviews. This guidance and notation has followed Gioia *et al.* (2013). Participant perception in the form of their comments are referenced within each theme, highlighting the most relevant examples. All the participant vignettes for each of the fifteen themes are documented in Appendix M.

This iterative and abductive process led to the definition and naming of one hundred and fifty codes (1st Order process), fifteen themes (2nd Order process) and five overall groupings called aggregate dimensions. The overall data structure is shown in Appendix K. This figure shows the overall structure of the findings and groups the codes into the fifteen themes, the relevant sub-themes and the five aggregate dimensions on the right-hand side of the diagram. Each theme has then been defined and analysed with supporting participant vignettes to understand and explore the emergent relationships.

The five Aggregate Dimensions are now discussed, each dimension being broken down with the respective themes with reference to the participant perceptions for each theme and sub-theme. Deeper analysis with reference to each Research Question (RQ) with reference back to the literature is set out in Chapter 7.

## Brand Influence – Aggregate Dimension One

This aggregate dimension looked at the potential influence of the McDonalds brand on employee intention to leave and employee performance. There are four themes which emerged from within this dimension which were Definition of Employer Branding (Theme One), Franchise versus Company Ownership (Theme Two), Perceived Employee Benefits (Theme Three) and Perceived Organisational Benefits (Theme Four). The participant perceptions that emerged from within each theme are evidenced in sections 6.2.1 – 6.2.4 and the overall data structure shown in Appendix K. Each sub-theme is developed within the context of each themes individual thematic map.

### Theme One – Definition of Employer Branding

Theme one asked the participants what their understanding of the term employer branding was. For the purposes of the participant interviews, understanding what perceptions each had of the term was important to establish at the outset of this research. Three sub themes emerged which were the meaning of the term employer branding, whether the term was looking at internal or external meaning and the attributes of the definition in relation to the QSR industry within the UK. Moreover, from a research perspective understanding what participants think may contribute to theory development on this subject. The thematic map for Theme One is shown below in figure 7.

Sub Theme One

Meaning

Sub Theme Two

Internal or External

Sub Theme Three

Attributes of QSR Definition

Figure 7 Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding

All participant perceptions which follow have been represented in tabular form within each theme and a coding key for all the tables found within this chapter is shown in Table 13 below. An example of how the codes are represented is also outlined within this table.

Table 13 Coding Key for Participant Perception Tables

| *Coding Key for Participant Perception Tables* | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Demographics* | *Key* | | |
| Position | BM = Business Manager, PM = People Manager, 1st/2nd = Assistant Managers, SM = Shift Managers, CT = Crew Trainers, C = Crew | | |
| Remuneration | S = Salaried, H = Hourly Paid | | |
| Gender | M = Male, F = Female | | |
| Ownership | Fr = Franchised, C = Company Owned | | |
| Status | M = Married, S = Single | | |
| Length of Service | In number of years | | |
| Proximity | In miles from the restaurant | | |
| Work Type | F/T = Full Time, P/T = Part Time | | |
| EXAMPLE | | | |
| *Participant* | | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 2 | | *PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T* | *a well-established global brand. As an employer one that is respected and trusted. As a product it is consistent and has quality* |
| *The above participant is a People Manager, on a salary, Female, working in a Franchised restaurant, Single, service length of 1 year, living 10 miles from the workplace and works part-time* | | | |

Table 14, 15 and 16 as shown below outline the participants perceptions for the three sub themes, Meaning, Internal or External and attributes of the employer branding definition in quick service restaurants (QSR) within the UK, respectively. These are discussed and analysed in the narrative following each respective table.

Table 14 Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding – Sub Theme Meaning

| Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme One - Meaning | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *a well-established global brand. As an employer one that is respected and trusted. As a product it is consistent and has quality* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *Employer branding is for me the bigger the employer then the bigger the brand. People know McDonalds as soon as they seen the Golden Arches straight away. People know McDonalds and have great knowledge of the brand because it’s so popular. People trust Mcdonalds that’s why they come and spend their time with us. The employer needs to ensure it has the best values and strategies and keep their employees happy to ensure their brand stays at the top* |
| 35 | SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T | *It is a theme used to describe the company’s popularity and intentions. It also explains the value the company gives to its employees, its altogether and how the company looks after its people.* |

None of the participants knowingly defined the term employer branding in any form recognised by the literature review (see Chapter 2, Table 3). Thirty-four of the participants had an understanding of what employer branding meant to them, with two-hundred and fifteen references within the transcripts to this theme being evidenced. The findings suggest that participants perceptions may be able to relate back to the term employer branding from within brand theory literature. The challenge of understanding what employer branding meant to each participant drew out inherent themes and suggested participant awareness of what employer branding, and the brand McDonalds, meant to them individually. Two themes emerged from the qualitative interviews which were the meaning itself and whether this was internally or externally related. Participants focused upon aspects of what they perceived the term mean to them, internally from the employee, and externally the outside worlds perception. Interestingly, this perception of external and internal branding was a distinction that was both insightful and unexpected.

Participants’ perceptions appeared to strongly associate with the values the employer was perceived to have, and this appeared to concur with their own values and aspirations. Moreover, and more importantly it appeared aligned to their job role. For example, Participant 2 said that the term meant to her a *respected and trusted* employer. She went further to suggest that the brand demonstrated consistency and quality. This is an interesting view as she discussed the brand from an external viewpoint, whilst defining the brand at the same time. This individual’s position within the organisation is that of as a People Manager within the Human Resources Department. Her focus is that of attracting and retaining staff from the available talent pool in the external marketplace. In this regards she has a vested interest in being recognised and a trusted and respected employer. It is suggested that her perception, based on her seniority and level of education as one of only three participants who went onto university, maybe swayed by her own knowledge and job direction as wanting to attract talent, via a recognised brand, into the organisation. Participant 4 suggested that the brand is easily recognisable due to the size of the organisation when he said *the bigger the employer then the bigger the brand* and went further to say *the employer needs to ensure it has the best values and strategies and keep their employees happy.* He recognised that the values of the organisation have an impact on what employees feel and how they act. Keeping the employees happy was a key aspect that helped him, as a senior manager, deliver his role with a happy workforce. Participant 35 recognised the term and related it to the values of both external and internal employees by relating back to colleagues and how the company treated them internally and to potential employees in the future. Interestingly, this theme was shared by six other participants who had been within the restaurant for more than 4 years and were considered longer serving employees. Moreover, they were salaried employees and were able to articulate their understanding more eloquently than those participants who were more junior and hourly paid. This feeling seemed to suggest that the participants were aware that the brand has an effect on potential new hires that are attracted to working within the organisation, how people are valued and treated and how existing staff are retained to continue working for the organisation. This suggestion crossed both salaried, hourly paid and part-time and full-time employees who had similar reflections. It could be inferred from this that the sample group perceived that McDonald’s employer branding affected their day to day working lives as an internal factor. Moreover, the brand also has an impact of how potential new recruits see the organisation and how customers recognise McDonalds in the marketplace. The internal and external meaning of the term employer branding is discussed next.

Table 15 Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding – sub–Theme Internal or External

| Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme Two – Internal or External | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I would describe employer branding as the given reputation of a certain workplace to a particular demographic outside of our regular customer base, given competitors or potential employees. Employee branding to me is how valued a company is to our staff and potential employees. It is key we show were a brand that is valued so that we can get some of the highest skilled workers possible and retain them whilst training them up through our own internal programs* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *It refers to a way to describe an employer in terms of their values and what they stand for. McDonald’s brand often shows to be very employee and customer driven. By being very employee driven it can give the brand a good reputation as a good employee to work for. For customers it gives the reputations they want the be the ‘best loved restaurant company* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *It’s how the employer presents itself to potential employees and current employees. A certain employer may offer certain things others don’t – doing positive things will benefit their image and maybe they are known for looking after their people or doing more things in the community, litter picking, and other activities* |

The internal and external meaning of the term employee branding was distinguished and perceived by the participants. Exploring these emerging perceptions, participant 11 suggested that the *McDonald’s brand often shows to be very employee and customer driven.* There appeared to be a relationship that the brand appeals to both employees and customers at the same time. This was an interesting perception that the participants appeared to recognise. They perceived that the brand had an internal element which related to their well-being, employment and enjoyment at work and an external, globally recognised customer and external branding. Further, the majority of employees are also customers and when interviewed most of them looked at the brand from both aspects, as if they were both. Interestingly, participant 11 added *by being very employee driven it can give the brand a good reputation as a good employee to work for. For customers it gives the reputations they want the be the best loved restaurant company.* The best loved restaurant company is a statement and company vision that McDonalds teach every employee and one that is recognised throughout the whole workforce. The majority (21 out of 26 participants) recognised the bridge across customers and employees being customers as well. Participant 26 corroborated this viewpoint when he said *It’s how the employer presents itself to potential employees and current employees.* These perceptions emerged throughout both franchised and company owned restaurants. Following on from the internal and external elements of the definition, attributes emerged that related to themes specifically within the QSR industry. These are now discussed.

Table 16 Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding – sub–Theme Attributes of QSR Definition

| Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme Three – Attributes of QSR Definition | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life and things like that. You take holiday pay and if things happen, they are very fair to you so if you need time off for example, they can allocate this and things like that* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *Is the environment. I like to be fast paced. I like to be active. I like to be constantly doing things. If I find that I'm not doing things I kick myself that I've got nothing to do. So, this sort of environment is down my expert route and I enjoy the first base scenario and the people* |
| 15 | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *It's because I enjoy McDonalds and I've always enjoyed retail. I was on really good wages at Tesco's but I've always enjoyed the retail sector. It is the speed and I like to be busy* |

Thirty three out of thirty-six participants perceived readily identifiable themes which related specifically to the QSR industry. These emerging themes of the environment, fast-paced nature of the business and flexibility are also discussed within sections 5.2.3, 5.5.3 and 5.6.1 as they also relate to perceived employee benefits, culture and the flexibility construct.

Thirty-four participants perceived that flexibility is something that the employer brand stands for. Participant 4 said *I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life* and this feeling was echoed bythe vignettes from the participants in Appendix M. it is clear that flexibility appears to be a perception that is synonymous from an employment perspective, with McDonalds. This sentiment was dove tailed with the feeling of the environment and fast-paced nature of the brand bringing meaning to employer branding within the QSR sector. Participant 17 commented on both aspects by saying *Is the environment, I like to be fast paced* and *this sort of environment is down my expert route and I enjoy the fast-paced scenario.* Participant 15 reinforced this perception by adding *It is the speed and I like to be busy.* This feeling of pace and environmental circumstance was a very strong perception throughout the participant interviews. Appendix M shows the vignettes for theme three, thirteen and fourteen that demonstrate these perceptions throughout the whole sample population.

In summary, several findings emerged from the participants understanding of the definition of the term employer branding. There appears to be a distinction between the internal and external viewpoints, which in the case of the sample population, was based on position and job role. For example, from a Human Resources perspective having a business that is viewed as respected and trusted was a key factor in being able to attract new talent into the business. Further, from the perspective of the whole sample population, this factor was also acknowledged. Interestingly, the general feeling of the group was this term was understood to mean how the company valued the employees and how the employees felt treated. The participants also had a general awareness that the brand influences the customer and saw themselves in both positions, as an employee and customer at the same time. Further, clear themes emerged that related specifically to the QSR industry. The fast-paced nature of the employment linked with the environment participants perceived they were working within appeared to differentiate the meaning of the term employer branding within this specific sector.

### Theme Two - Franchisee versus Company Ownership

The participants interviewed were asked if they appreciated any differences between employment within McDonalds owned Company restaurants or franchised restaurants. Further probing surrounded if they only recognised working for McDonalds as the overarching brand in either case. Two sub themes emerged which were no influence and franchisee dependent. The thematic map for theme two is shown in Figure 8.

Sub Theme Two

Franchisee Dependent

Sub theme one

No Influence

Figure 8 Theme Two - Franchisee versus Company Ownership

Tables 16 and 17 outline the participants perceptions for theme two, and the sub themes no influence and franchisee dependent, respectively. The themes are then analysed in the narrative that follows each respective table.

Table 17 Theme Two – Franchisee versus Company Ownership – Sub theme No Influence

| Theme Two – Franchisee versus Company Ownership | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme One – No Influence | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *I don't think it does. I don't think it has a bigger part to play in people's retention and performance and no I don't think it has anything to do with that. As I said that you're going to earn the same money elsewhere but I think it's the people and the environment. I don't know if it comes to the brand. I think it comes from the leadership of the team and the focuses of those teams, the balance or results against customer satisfaction. Happy customers equal happy crew and things like that and there's more to it than just the McDonald's Golden Arches* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *I don't think so. It is pretty similar with a different focus, different management practices. I don't think it's that much different.* *I guess the franchises are more financially driven.  I feel like they've got tighter controls and different expectations depending on the franchisee. I think it’s just different things so I don't think working for a company or franchisee is different as its just working for different people and that's what it's all about* |
| 27 | SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T | *No, it has no effect on them at all.  The young people just think I have got a job with McDonalds and no I wouldn't say so. I think it used to be and people used to be proud to work at McDonald's and my friends and people who didn't know me when they found out I work McDonald's would say wow* |

Participants made forty-eight references that related to the term company ownership and discussed how they perceived this may affect them. The majority of participants, twenty three out of thirty-six, suggested that it had no influence. This spanned both company owned and franchised restaurants. For example, participant 1 said *I don't think it does. I don't think it has a bigger part to play in people's retention and Performance.* He went further to say that *I think it's the people and the environment* and no matter who you work for the loyalty and commitment comes from *the leadership of the team and the focuses of those teams.* This viewpoint was corroborated by participant 25 who stated *I don't think working for a company or franchisee is different as its just working for different people and that's what it's all about.* Participant 27 added to this perception when she said *people just think I have got a job and no I wouldn't say so.* Interestingly, these perceptions are all from the longer serving and more senior employees. In the case of participant 27, she has worked for both a franchised and company owned restaurant and has a similar viewpoint to her colleagues who have only worked in one environment. These perceptions however are consistent amongst the senior participants who have worked in both environments. Further, even though participant 16 perceives that there is a difference between franchised and company owned restaurants, he makes the point that the staff beneath management level would see little of no difference when he said *I don't think it's so relevant for crew members who wouldn't see the difference.*

Further emerging themes related to the hourly paid participants interviewed, and eighteen of the twenty-four interviewed felt that there was no difference between a franchisee owned restaurant and a corporately owned one. Their perception was that at their level within the hierarchy within the restaurant, they were not exposed to any financial rigour or managerial pressures with which to differentiate ownership type. Hourly paid staff effectively come to work to clock in and perform the same tasks operationally whether in a franchised or company owned restaurant. At their level, the procedures of making the products and what to do on a daily basis is systematic and a process and does not vary across the UK estate.

Table 18 Theme Two – Franchisee v Company Ownership – Sub theme Franchisee Dependent

| Theme Two – Franchisee versus Company Ownership | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme Two – Franchisee Dependent | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *As I said, working for a franchisee is wholly different than working for the corporation. I think it’s a very controlling environment when working for the corporation and not that much opportunity to use your initiative* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *It's not so much the brand it's the company you work for I work for a franchise and this company. I feel totally different as I work for Renz restaurants not for McDonald's and I feel that there are two different things in the way things are approached as a franchisee. It's the family atmosphere whereas the company dictates to you as an employee more and it might be dictated to the franchisee more (from the company) but not to the staff if that makes sense* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 14, 2, F/T | *It varies because of the franchise you work with. Different franchisees operate in different ways and on a different basis to others and I'm kind of keeping this completely professional.  Some franchisees are in it for themselves and the people that they know rather than the business and some franchisees try and do things by the book and I've worked for both. The franchises that are in it for the business and the band are better than the ones that are in it for self-improvement.  If you get the right franchisee it's a great place to work and the people are motivated because they all want the same thing out of it, to better the brand. I don't think it's so relevant for crew members who wouldn't see the difference* |

Conversely, thirteen participants perceived that the type of ownership did have an impact on the operations and working style of a restaurant. The clearer and stronger viewpoints appeared to be generated by the more senior, or longer serving and salaried members of the whole sample population. Moreover, this perception was alluded to by employees who worked in a franchised environment and had worked for several franchisees and also may have been exposed to working in company restaurants as well. Participants 2 and 3 emphasized the controlling nature a company operated restaurant may exhibit to them. Participant 2 was a senior salaried manager and participant 3 was a long serving McDonalds employee who had worked for the corporation for twenty years and a franchisee for 10 years. Participant 2 commented *working for a franchisee is wholly different than working for the corporation. I think it’s a very controlling environment when working for the corporation.* Participant 3 added *the company dictates to you as an employee more.* She went on to say *I feel totally different as I work for Renz restaurants not for McDonald's and I feel that there are two different things.* Both felt that a company restaurant was more regimented and the perception was that it would not allow an entrepreneurial spirit and any opportunity to use your own initiative. There was no suggestion from the research that these perceptions influenced the psychological contract but that the participants perceptions were related to their environment and working conditions. Interestingly, participant 3 went on to talk about the family orientated atmosphere that a franchised restaurant engenders as oppose to a regulated and more controlled atmosphere generated by the company. Participant 16 cemented the stream of thought of franchisee dependency when he said *It varies because of the franchise you work with. Different franchisees operate in different ways and on a different basis to others.* In this example it should be noted that this individual was only comparing franchisees he had worked with and had limited company restaurant exposure.

Furthermore, even though participant 25 felt there was little difference, as a Business Manager he emphasised financial control measures when he said *I guess the franchises are more financially driven*. He had been with McDonalds in excess of 19 years and interestingly had worked for both a franchised operation and a company owned operation. This individuals’ views were interesting as they came from his experiences working for a franchisee and a company restaurant. He suggested at the Business Manager level of overseeing running the business, there was increased financial pressure from franchisees. Further, there appeared to be an acceptance from five of his colleagues that the job and brand was identical in both set ups, all be it with a different focus financially. Participant 25 commented that in reality it was just working with different people and a different set of relationships.

In summary, the concept of restaurant ownership and whether it was company or franchised owned suggested several emerging themes. Firstly, thirteen senior staff, both salaried and hourly paid managers, felt that a franchisees perspective was more commercial and financially oriented even when some, participant 25 for example, said there was *little difference when working for either and you just had a process and daily routine to deliver and execute upon in their working practices, with more focus on financial return*. Moreover, it was recognised that the relationship with the franchisee or company representative was an important consideration. These thirteen senior staff participants perceived that their working lives were impacted by ownership type as a result of them being responsible for restaurant performance, both financial and operational. The employees that worked for a franchisee felt they had more freedom and protection, as it was the franchisee who faced off back into the Corporation. In Company owned restaurants the perception was of a more controlling, negative and divisive environment.

Conversely, for most of the sample population, twenty-three participants, the perception was that ownership had no effect on them with regards to their daily routines, work styles and well-being. Interestingly, these feelings were stronger within the crew and hourly paid population. These participants perceived little difference between who owned the business as their perception was of working for the brand McDonalds. At their level they were not exposed to any financial rigour or commercial pressures and whether you worked for a franchised or company owned restaurant, the processes and daily routines for the crew is identical whether you work in a company owned or franchised restaurant. This was corroborated by participant 27 who said *the young people just think I have got a job with McDonalds* and this sentiment was echoed by 22 of the participants interviewed.

### Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits

This theme emerged from the employee benefits that the participants perceived they were gaining from employment within the McDonalds branded environment. Within this theme, five sub themes emerged which were the environment, family based, pay and rewards, non-monetary and work-life balance. The thematic map for Theme Three is shown in Figure 9.

Sub Theme Two

Family Based

Sub Theme One

Environment

Sub Theme Four

Non-Monetary Schemes

Sub Theme Three

Pay and Rewards

Sub Theme Five

Work-Life Balance

Figure 9 Theme Three – Perceived Employee Benefits

Tables 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 respectively represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme and are show below. Narrative and analysis for each sub-theme follows each theme’s respective table. The first theme discussed is the environment.

Table 19 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Environment

| Theme Three – Perceived Employee Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme - Environment | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *So, I love working here. I always love McDonald's food and I'm happy that I work here with nice people, nice managers, nice crew members and what can I say, a nice environment and nice and friendly customers* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *Is the environment. I like to be fast paced. I like to be active. I like to be constantly doing things. If I find that I'm not doing things I kick myself that I've got nothing to do. So, this sort of environment is down my expert route and I enjoy the first base scenario and the people.* |
| 29 | CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T | *I love the environment and the people and interacting with customers and you get to know them so if you give your customers a good service that makes me feel good and if I make some customer happy with what I do I feel good and my manager is happy as well* |

Twenty-four of the thirty-six participants had a very positive perception of what the brand offered them in terms of their working environment and the data set evidenced a strong suggestion this was important to these participants. They strongly associated the term employer branding with a fast-paced environment. Within the transcripts evidence was found of twenty-eight key messages evidencing the environment as a key perceived employee benefit. Interesting viewpoints from employees that had been with the business for less than five years demonstrated this consistent theme. Participants 8 and 29 typified comments from the sample population in that they felt very strongly about the environment they worked within. Participant 8 said *a nice environment* whilst participant 29 commented *I love the environment.* Participant 17 said *it is the environment* and elicited feelings of the nature of the environment as the business. Interestingly, these viewpoints were common across both franchised and company owned restaurants. Further, the individuals that felt more strongly about the environment as a benefit of working for the brand, were within the age range of twenty-one through to thirty-three. A suggestion was elicited that the younger, hourly paid workers with less tenure of service appeared to place more importance on this factor as part of where they wanted to be and as a benefit to them. They suggested that they wanted to have fun, be comfortable in a nice working environment and perceived that this was an employee benefit. For example, participant 8 said so*, I love working here, I'm happy that I work here with nice people.* Interestingly, this feeling was stronger from the full-time employees which maybe because as they spent more time within the environment, they value what this means to them to a greater degree. This could be suggestive of forming a stronger attachment to the working environment, potentially seeing this environment as a platform to integrate with colleagues and share similar ideas and thoughts.

The individuals that demonstrated these perceptions were the longer serving individuals who had started within the business and really grown up with the brand and the working environment. It could be suggested that they had learned through being exposed to the training and culture for a longer period. Interestingly, in twenty seven out of thirty-six cases it transpired that this was their one and only employment throughout their careers to date. Moreover, none of the definitions of employer branding in Chapter 2, Table 3 suggested these perceptions have previously been recognised when academically defining the term from the reviewed literature. The additional term this research uncovered was that of the fast-paced environment, which was borne out by twenty-four participants. This insight is seen as a potential contribution to enhance the understanding of the term employer branding with reference to a franchised restaurant environment within the UK. Table 19 above outlines these participant perceptions.

The second sub-theme of family based is documented below and the findings now evidenced.

Table 20 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Family Based

| Theme Three – Perceived Employee Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Family Based | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *Yes, you do you get a family environment and other benefits are that they (the staff) look up to certain people and take them on as a parent and guiding relationship* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22,12, P/T | *The feeling that you have another family to go to* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *More like a family restaurant is fast food but it's also like a family place* |

The interviews provided evidence suggesting that a family-based viewpoint is perceived by the participants of how they view the McDonalds employer brand. The emerging findings suggested the importance the participants placed upon having a friendly, family-based place of work. They eluded to this emerging theme as something that has an influence on both themselves and the customers as perceived this as an employee benefit. Participant 3 and 13 had similar views in how they described the workplace as a family environment. Participant 3 said *you do you get a family environment* and participant 13 commented *More like a family restaurant.* Both individuals related this family orientation to a parent-child relationship. This was interesting as the workplace does employ a ‘buddy’ system in that new staff are taken under someone’s wing to be trained up. The longer serving employee, participant 3, felt strongly that this respect and mentoring was an integral part of a benefit younger employees gained from working for the brand. Participant 12 corroborated these viewpoints by saying he felt *you have another family to go to.* Table 20 above highlights these perceptions.

The emerging sub-theme of pay and rewards is evidenced and now discussed below.

Table 21 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Pay and Rewards

| Theme Three – Perceived Employee Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Pay & Rewards | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Money. Additionally, we have a rewards scheme, like a bonus scheme for the managers and hitting targets you get a nice pay-out for the year we get recognition* |
| 19 | CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *Money and a sense of achievement* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think it's first of all you got the pay is better than actually anywhere else from what I know* |

Within the sample population twenty-seven participants has clear perceptions on monetary rewards (remuneration and incentive schemes). There were forty-three references to the sub-theme of pay and rewards and of the sample population, ten participants focused only on monetary rewards. Three participant perceptions that were the most relevant to the literature were highlighted as their initial focus was on the levels of pay and additional monetary bonuses at year end. Participant 14 clearly had this as a focus, and he combined this reward scheme with a sense of achievement and recognition that goes with receiving such a bonus. When asked what employee benefits he felt he received from working for the brand, he simply said *money.* Participant 19 concurred with this view and went further to suggest a feeling of achievement when you delivered your contribution to the business by saying the perceived employee benefits to him were *money and a sense of achievement.*  Interestingly, participant 26, a more senior and longer-serving employee, perceived that McDonalds pay structure is more generous than other fast-food retailers, having worked for several and with a greater understanding of the marketplace as a Business Manager (BM). Table 21 above highlights these perceptions.

Following on from monetary rewards, the separate sub-theme of non-monetary rewards is now discussed and evidenced.

Table 22 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Non-Monetary

| Theme Three – Perceived Employee Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Non-Monetary | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *We get breakpoint cards so you can get some free food or drink when you are on break. You might get free points and if you do a good job and you hit your targets for the day you get given a breakpoint card for when you're next in so you can have some extra food and if you do a really good job you can get like a meal reward* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *The people. The people are the reason that attracted me here are very friendly and it does take a special person to work at McDonald's I find because it has to be someone who could deal with happy customers, angry customers, and certain situations. You get a lot of people that can't cope with those situations.  I find that people who work here are normally quite happy, smiling, and laughing* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think the level of the systems we have here for progression is much better.  That is why you have got a lot of people that started in McDonald's as Mcjobs and we understand that. We are here to give them a career and the development of training and to get them where they want to be. Or if they want to use us as a stepping stone to go somewhere else we're quite happy to do that and we will get out of them what we need while they're working for us and at university and studying and they're giving us what we want and they get what they need the with regards to the skills in life they need to take on somewhere else and supporting them financially at the same time. Training and you know what we're not very good at advertising benefits.  Pay and flexibility of work for example. You are a student and you want to come part-time; we can accommodate that. If you want to come and ask for more hours, we will be able to accommodate that, it's just the way our business works* |

Seventeen participants focused on other benefits and non-monetary rewards they felt they achieved by virtue of being employed by the brand which related to benefits above and beyond purely money. There was a diverse perception of what non-monetary benefits were on offer and this applied to both franchised and company owned restaurants. Participant 20 said *the people are the reason that attracted me here* and talked about a benefit in terms of the people one works with. He related the stresses of the role with having to employ a certain type of person and went further to suggest that the brand attracts a happy natured workforce in his eyes. Participant 26, a senior Business Manager, focused upon progression as a great benefit to employees. He suggested that McDonalds caters for individuals who want to progress within the system or others that merely use the brand as a means of earning money and as a steppingstone to further their own experience and career. He stated *I think the level of the systems we have here for progression is much better.*  Another viewpoint was non-monetary in its basis and referred to the breakpoint incentive scheme. Participant 14 said *if you do a really good job you can get like a meal reward* and talked about earning points from the break-point system which is an incentive-based system based on good performance. Every staff member can collect points and exchange for additional food as a reward. All of the seventeen participants mentioned this as a benefit to them and this was mentioned in fourteen cases from the hourly paid employees. These examples suggest that there is variation in what perceptions employees think non-monetary rewards are but similarly, these are common perceptions across both franchised and company owned restaurants. Table 22 above highlights these participant perceptions.

The last sub-theme of work-life balance is now evidenced and discussed below.

Table 23 Theme Three - Perceived Employee Benefits – Sub Theme Work-Life Balance

| Theme Three – Perceived Employee Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Work Life Balance | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life and things like that. You take holiday pay and if things happen, they are very fair to you so if you need time off for example, they can allocate this and things like that* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *It's my work life balance. You know when it hits the fan you got to be there but when something is working your swing that round and what you get out of it what you put into it so the more you put in the more you get out at the end of the day.  But now I've got the store where it needs to be and now my work life balance is very good now* |
| 31 | SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T | *Flexibility and work life balance* |

The term was work-life balance emerged as a separate sub-theme and participant perception from the interviews. This term was mentioned by 25 participants and was referenced 59 times within the transcripts. Both hourly paid and salaried staff, across both franchised and company owned restaurants suggested this as a perceived benefit. Interestingly, it appeared that the longer serving employees valued this as a real benefit as they had the benefit of time to really see how it enhanced their working life. Participant 4 said *we make the hours to work around your life* and had an example of looking after his sick mother. He related this back to his work-life balance and said that McDonalds had been fair with him in how they approached the time he needed to be off. Participant 16 and 31 were more direct with their interpretation of this as an employee benefit and stated this as such from the outset by saying *It's my work life balance and flexibility and work life balance,* respectively. Table 23 above summarises these participant insights to work-life balance perceptions.

In summary, within the theme of perceived employee benefits, participants appeared very capable of articulating a variety of sub-themes. Five sub-themes emerged from both franchised and company restaurants, with certain demographic groups, as analysed above, homing in on the different aspects of what benefits each participant perceived individually. Strong emergent sub- themes focused upon the environment and the fast-paced nature of working for the McDonalds brand. At the same time, a strong perception of a family-based environment materialised and the participants resonated with this sub-theme for both themselves and as a welcoming environment for customers as well. This sub-theme of family based seemed stronger from the longer serving employees who had a longer tenure possibly suggesting they had longer to appreciate this sense of belonging to the McDonalds family. From a pay and rewards perspective, two sub-themes of monetary and non-monetary rewards emeerged. Money as a pure focus was in the minority when percieved as an empolyee benefit with the majority of participants looking at a variety of non-monetary rewards. From te participants interviewed, a wide sense of non-monetary benefits were elicited as each had theor own perception of what appealed to them as individuals. Lastly, the sub-theme of work-life balance was very strong and prevelant across all restaurant locations and ownereship type and seen as a key employee benefit. This flexibility (a separate theme – see 5.6.1) and the work-life balance that McDonalds offers was a key participant perception of the employer brand.

### Theme Four - Perceived Organisational Benefits

This theme looks at the benefits the participants perceive the brand name McDonalds gives them in return for being associated with and employment with the brand. This is subtly different from theme three (an employee benefit) as this was exploring what the participants perceptions of what they felt the brand name can do for their status, career prospects and personal image externally and outside the McDonalds organisation. The emerging concept within this theme was perceived as the ability of the organisation to deliver upon their employer brand promise. Three sub themes emerged which were globally recognised, market leader and systematic. The thematic map for theme four is shown in Figure 10.

Sub Theme One

Globally Recognised

Sub Theme Two

Market Leader

Sub Theme Three

Systematic

Figure 10 Theme Four - Perceived Organisational Benefits

The following tables, 24, 25 and 26, represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of globally recognised, market leader and systematic. The narrative and analysis for each sub theme follows after each respective table of participant perceptions.

The sub-theme of being a globally recognised employer brand is discussed below.

Table 24 Theme Four – Perceived Organisational Benefits – Sub Theme Globally Recognised

| Theme Four – Perceived Organisational Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Globally Recognised | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *I think its status and positioning in global brands makes it appear that it stands out* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *McDonald's is a very well-known brand throughout the world as a fast-food chain. I think it's very big with families and Kids especially around the world and the symbol McDonald's is very famous and eighty or ninety percent of the population of the world knows about it* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *It is a well-known brand that is instantly recognisable by people across the world. People love the brand and everything that they do. The brand offers great customer service and competitively priced products* |

Thirteen participants associated McDonalds with working for a well-known, global brand. All the participants interpreted the interview questions as the researcher intended and answered with reference to the positioning of the brand as they perceived it. Participant 2 and 36 had perceptions that reflected the group. Participant 2 said *status and positioning in global brands makes it appear that it stands out* and participant 36 said a *well-known brand that is instantly recognisable by people across the world* additionally relating the organisational name with families and children. The inference was that people world over would acknowledge the brand and due to this recognition, the brand stood out from the rest of the fast-food brands. The sense when talking to these individuals was that they were proud to work for the brand and liked the fact they could say they did with the perception and organisational benefit that the brand name itself would benefit each individual to a greater degree than if they did not work for the brand. Table 24 details these participant perceptions. Following on from being globally recognised, participants alluded to the market leading nature of the brand, perceptions of which are detailed below.

Table 25 Theme Four - Perceived Organisational Benefits – Sub Theme Market Leader

| Theme Four – Perceived Organisational Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Market Leader | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *Fast food for me. I think really high standards like market leading. We lead the way to me that's one of the big things about the brand* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *I believe Mcdonalds Brand is a world leader in the food service industry. Mcdonalds is constantly looking to innovate and adapt to become the best loved restaurant company* |
| 34 | CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T | *I think McDonald’s stands out as an employer of choice within fast food industry because of their strong continuous focus on customer service, response to competition, inventing new recipes to attract all age groups, fulfilling customers demand* |

Fourteen participants made nineteen separate references to the market-leading nature of the brand as a perception that would also benefit each of them throughout their careers. Whilst this is in a similar vein to being globally recognised it is subtly different in its interpretation as an organisational benefit. Participant 1 and 11 emphasised the market leading nature of the brand and suggest that McDonalds is keeping ahead of the competition as a result of being innovative. They said I *think really high standards like market leading. We lead the way* and *McDonalds Brand is a world leader* and *McDonalds is constantly looking to innovate.* Participant 34 corroborated these thoughts by stating *I think McDonald’s stands out as an employer of choice within fast food industry because of their strong continuous focus on customer service.* She related the market leading nature of the business back to being an employer of choice, which is a recognised terminology from the literature and interesting as her focus within the business was relating to training and development. The majority (nineteen out of thirty-six participants) of participants felt that they worked for a market leader which they all perceived to be a major organisational benefit as a function of working for the brand. Table 25 highlights these perceptions.

Combined with a globally recognised and market leading employer brand, the participants further alluded to the systematic and strong prescriptive culture within McDonalds. A sub-theme emerged surrounding these processes that participants perceived would benefit them with external potential employers. This systematic nature of the brand is discussed below and one which participants felt gave them rigour and kudos.

Table 26 Theme Four - Perceived Organisational Benefits – Sub Theme Systematic

| Theme Four – Perceived Organisational Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Systematic | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *The brand McDonald's means to me about delivery and customer service consistency. When you think about McDonald's it's always thinking of the same procedures the same way of doing things every single time the way we interact with customers is always the same but we put a unique spin on it every single time that's what I think is consistency on the level of uniqueness as well* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *McDonald's is very systematic and they have got good systems in place* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think the level of the systems we have here for training and learning and progression is much better* |

Lastly, sixteen participants recognised the strong systems McDonalds has in place. They perceived a personal career benefit from this organisational structure in relation to their training and potential development. Sixteen references to the systematic nature of McDonalds were evidenced from the participants who clearly felt there is a benefit derived from the ‘infrastructure’ of the brand itself and as part of the fabric of the organisation they work for. Participant 25 said *McDonald’s is very systematic and they have got good systems in place* whilst participant 26 stated *I think the level of the systems we have here for training and learning and progression is much better.* These participants suggested a consistency and uniformity of processes that enabled them to do their job and have clear goals to strive for. Moreover, participant 5 understood that the processes and boundaries of his role enabled him to know what he had to do hour by hour and day by day by saying *when you think about McDonald's it's always thinking of the same procedures*. Interestingly, he also perceived that he was able to add his personality to the role by delivering his role with his unique style and had the freedom to do this when he said *we interact with customers is always the same but we put a unique spin on it every single time that's what I think is consistency on the level of uniqueness as well*. Table 25 evidences these participant perceptions.

In summary, participant perceptions evidence organisational benefits that each individual gains by association with the brand and feels may benefit them outside of the McDonalds organisation. A suggestion was that this may benefit them in future careers outside the organisation. For example, external and other employers see the value in working for the McDonalds brand by virtue of the systems in place, recognition, rigour and discipline and strong training culture. In essence, these organisational benefits were evidenced as those benefits employees perceive from the infrastructure of the employer brand McDonalds itself. The majority (nineteen out of thirty-six participants) of participants felt that the brand name would benefit them as the name was globally recognised and this would be a positive benefit to each of them in their future working life. A sense of prestige about working for such a globally recognised brand emerged. Moreover, participants across all job levels, franchised and company owned and separate locations, felt that the company was known for its innovation and constantly pushing each of them to be better individuals. Interestingly, the perception of McDonalds as an employer of choice was also alluded to from six participants within the comments about the brand being market leading. The overarching conclusion was one of a positive relationship between the brand and the employee. Participant perception was that working for McDonalds will benefit them in some shape or form in their future lives and careers as the brand is recognised globally, respected and trusted.

Section 6.2 analysed participant perceptions of the employer brand. Section 6.3 that follows looks at influence the employer brand has over employee performance.

## Aggregate Dimension Two - Dimensions of Performance

This second aggregate dimension explores how employee perceptions of the employer brand may affect employee performance. Three themes emerged as perceptions within this dimension which were Teamwork (Theme Five), Perceived Personal Factors (Theme Six) and Training & Development (Theme Seven). The overall data structure of this Aggregate Dimension is shown in Appendix K and the associated themes are discussed in Sections 6.3.1 – 6.3.3.

### Theme Five - Teamwork

This theme looked at the benefits of teamwork and its perceived influence on employee performance. Two sub-themes emerged from the participant interviews which were collaboration and support, both as an aspect of the employees’ job involvement. The thematic map for theme five is shown in Figure 11.

Sub Theme Two

Supportive & Friendly

Sub Theme One

Collaboration

Figure 11 Theme five - Teamwork

Tables 27 and 28 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme and are show below. The narrative and analysis for each sub theme follows after each of the respective tables. Collaboration as the first sub-theme is discussed first of all.

Table 27 Theme Five - Teamwork – Sub Theme Collaboration

| Theme Five – Teamwork | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Collaboration | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 5 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *I really enjoy the interaction with the crew because I was the people lead for a little while and I enjoyed the ROIP systems and something we can see physical process and progress going on in the store* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *teamwork we've all got to work together if we don't work together it will just be chaos every day* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *You get to work with your friends you get to see them on a daily basis you get to work when it suits you and that's probably why it stands out now and it's all about procedure, people working together, operations and it's all about our culture, in the operations and in the restaurant* |

A quarter of participants (nine out of thirty-six) appeared to associate a stronger level of performance when they worked collaboratively with colleagues. The stronger examples recognised came from participants within franchised restaurants which is interesting as this may relate back to participant feeling around being more family and people orientated than company restaurants. Perceptions were interesting, for example, participant 15 said *if we don't work together it will just be chaos every day.* Similarly, this feeling was corroborated by participant 16 who commented *and it's all about procedure, people working together* and the enjoyment people felt when interacting more with each other. The feeling from the interviews was one of a strong team work ethic. The perceptions emerging suggested that without teamwork the whole process of providing food and service to the customers would be poor. The participants recognised that the processes within the restaurants were segmented, with each individual doing a part of the overall process and being reliant upon each other.

Participant perceptions regarding collaboration are shown in Table 27.

Combined with the collaborative nature of the restaurant activities, participants alluded to supporting and getting along with work colleagues. This is now discussed below.

Table 28 Theme Five - Teamwork – Sub Theme Supportive and Friendly

| Theme Five – Teamwork | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Supportive and Friendly | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *Because I love my job and I love working here and staying there's 5 or 10 minutes can make someone's whole shift a bit easier. Also helping other people, they will also help you in return* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I don’t mind being moral support when people approach me or to do some cleaning when necessary* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *My main thing is coming in and seeing the people that work for me, the people that I work with. There are people from a different age from 16 years old to 70 years old. It is good to interact with the people and every day, supporting them with a different challenge and you have people issues to booking issues to customer issues and it kind of gives you that little buzz when you successfully deal with those issues and it makes you feel like you have achieved something* |

Participants suggested that another strand of teamwork was a perception of friendliness and being supportive of each other. Seven references were made to support within teamwork as an overarching theme. Interestingly, stronger sentiment came from senior and salaried managers. When probed further, it transpired that these managers perceived that they relied upon the supportive nature of the business employees in order to execute on their own role within the organisation. They perceived that it was a necessity to have this support and it was gained as a result of how the employees felt they interacted and supported them. This perception of a reciprocal exchange emerged as a two-way arrangement that was needed within the business in order for all parties to perform and get the job done. For example, participant 4 said *also helping other people, they will also help you in return.* There was a common thread supported by participant 25 who stated *It is good to interact with the people and every day supporting them with a different challenge.* Taken further, another interesting perception was more of a moral and pastoral support, which some of the managers felt was their responsibility. Participant 22 mentioned this when she said *I don’t mind being moral support when people approach me.* Table 28 represents these participant feelings.

In summary, eighteen participants recognised that teamwork was a vital part of the role and affected how they perform within their respective organisations and restaurants. It emerged from the research that the more senior employees perceived that collaboration was a critical part of the day to day working processes. Their perceptions evidenced that without collaboration and support at all levels within the organisation, many processes that need to be performed would cease to be done effectively. The hourly paid crew also perceived teamwork was an important part of their daily working lives. However, their reference point emerged as being more for the enjoyment of working with each other and supporting their colleagues.

### Theme Six - Perceived Personal Factors

This theme looked at personal factors that participants perceived may affect their performance. Three sub-themes emerged within this theme which were determination, happiness and self-esteem. Figure 12 outlines the thematic map for Theme six.

Sub Theme Two

Happiness

Sub Theme One

Determination

Sub Theme Three

Self-Esteem

Figure 12 Theme Six Thematic Map – Perceived Personal Factors

Tables 29, 30 and 31 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of determination, happiness and self-esteem respectively and are now described below. The narrative and analysis for each sub theme follows after each respective table relating to each theme.

The sub-theme of determination is discussed first of all.

Table 29 Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors – Sub Theme Determination

| Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Determination | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22,12, P/T | *When I am left to show what I can do and achieve. Teamwork for me is what it is all about. I have never looked at things or a shift as staying behind because you are on a time scale, it is about achieving what is needed and that feeling of achievement that will allow you to go home happy and relaxed* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *I try to put myself out and I just carry on going. Determination to prove I can do something that other people say I cannot do. A Lot of people do not realise that I have the strength of two arms in one arm and they do not realise.  I push myself to the limit and over that limit because of my disability and I want to prove people wrong* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think I do that naturally so I think about myself and my reputation.  I take it as the way to do things I don't wait for consultants or someone telling me to do this or that because I think for example if* *I want to do something for my people I will do it because I think it's the right thing to do and I'm not waiting for someone to tell me to do it and this is when a consistent performance comes in* |

Half of the participant population (eighteen out of thirty-six participants) cited determination as a factor they recognised within themselves that enabled and motivated them to perform their role. Common themes emerged from both company and franchised owned restaurants and interestingly across all levels of job role from crew to Business manager. Further, the strength of the sentiment surrounding determination came from both long-serving and newly hired employees. Participant 12 said *it is about achieving what is needed and that feeling of achievement that will allow you to go home happy and relaxed.* As a senior assistant manager, and this was echoed by other assistants, the feeling was that these individuals wanted to push themselves to achieve what they can regardless of their role specification. A sense of going above and beyond their role came across and as participant 18 commented *I try to put myself out and I just carry on going. Determination to prove I can do something that other people say I cannot do.* These comments corroborated the perception of determination and in the case if participant 18, the sentiment was stronger as this individual has a disability and had a determination to go further to overcome colleagues’ perceptions of what he could and couldn’t do. Participant 26 commented *I want to do something for my people I will do it because I think it's the right thing to do and I'm not waiting for someone to tell me to do it* reinforcing the self-determination within the participant population. This emerged as a drive they perceived they had that enabled them to push themselves to the next level. This was seen as an aspect of determination and again was a sentiment echoed across company and franchised restaurants and across all levels of the sample population. In essence, the general feeling from eighteen participants of the population was one of wanting to strive to be better, going above and beyond what is required of them at all levels within the three business organisations sampled. Table 29 outlines the participant perceptions on the facet of determination.

Happiness as a second sub-theme is now discussed below.

Table 30 Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors – Sub Theme Happiness

| Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Happiness | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *For me and my role as an assistant I get sent more targets and things like that and when you hit your target it's a real bonus and I feel very happy* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *When you get encouragement or just recognised if someone can recognise that you put in the work and you're doing it harder than you normally would and they mention you're doing a really good job it makes you happy* |
| 30 | SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T | *I think that recognition is really important and it makes you feel better and motivates people more to work and when people come to work, they feel happy* |

Happiness as a term was referenced fourteen times by the participants, inter linked with the theme of determination. Happiness was seen as a factor that could help to encourage and precipitate determination to a greater or lesser extent. Participant 4 stated *when you hit your target it's a real bonus and I feel very happy.* Participant 9 said *they mention you're doing a really good job it makes you happy.* Interestingly this feeling was representative of the fourteen participants and she felt that the relationships she had with her superiors and the encouragement she received was a key part in how she performed at work. Further, eight of the references made about the term happiness came from individuals who had been with the organisations for a year or less which could suggest that the new entrants to the business need this feeling as part of their development. However, participant 30 said *I think that recognition is really important and it makes you feel happy.* As a longer serving employee with six years’ service in a company owned restaurant this individual clearly related happiness back to recognition. The suggestion and participant perceptions were that being happy influenced an individual’s determination. Happy staff perceived they were more determined to perform at a higher level. A potential relationship between happiness and determination was emerging from the participant responses. Table 30 shows these participant perceptions.

The third sub-theme of self-esteem is now discussed below.

Table 31 Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors – Sub Theme Self-Esteem

| Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Self Esteem | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *For a start, like self-esteem because before I started working here there was a stigma about working with McDonalds because everybody looks down upon you because it is fast food. But having worked here I love working here and I have made so many good friends and the management here very encouraging. They are always trying to push us to improve or get promoted and pushing all the crew to getting promoted whereas where I was working before, I was put down and put in your place. Whereas here everything is encouraged and my self-esteem has shot up for me since I started working here* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *Because I care.  I care more than I did say a year ago because I felt a year ago, I didn't have the support from my superiors as I didn't know what I was doing wrong or what I was doing right. Now I have that new superior who knows what they're talking about and what their expectations are from myself. I am now always trying to look to achieve and he has supported me throughout* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *I guess its pride and we have a ranking. We compare ourselves against other restaurants and we look at our previous results and we always want to be better.* |

Self-esteem appeared to have a relationship with determination and happiness. Happiness was a sub-theme that made people feel good about themselves, more determined to succeed and as such felt increased levels of personal self-esteem. Twenty references from within the sample population were evidenced relating to the sub-theme of self-esteem. Interestingly, individuals had several viewpoints, for example, participant 9 felt that the brand had given her self-esteem which she didn’t previously have when she said *here everything is encouraged and my self-esteem has shot up for me since I started working here.* Her suggestion was that other employers had not treated her with the level of respect she had now working for the McDonalds brand and moreover she initially found this surprising as she relates this back to public perception of the McDonalds brand by saying *there was a stigma about working with McDonalds because everybody looks down upon you because it is fast food.* Participant 17 suggested that his level of care had increased when his relationships had improved with his superiors and they understood him better by saying *I am now always trying to look to achieve.* Self-esteem linked with the underlying message of having pride in what one does was echoed by participant 25 who commented *I guess its pride and we have a ranking.* Interestingly, this participant was long serving and a Business Manager who had only ever worked within a company owned environment. The mentioning of a ranking system and the competitive nature of the McDonalds brand and corporation was evident as that is how every restaurant is rated across the estate. No participant from a franchised environment exhibited the same sense of the competitive nature of their role. Table 30 outlines these participant perceptions.

In summary, the three sub-themes perceived by the participants appeared to have a relationship with one another. These sub-themes were interesting as the research suggested they may influence participant performance. The participants interviewed perceived that they like to be happy at work and in turn recognised for the good work they produced and delivered during the course of their daily routines. Although this seems a very reasonable and obvious statement to be made, it was clearly substantiated by the evidence emerging from the interview questions. There appeared to be a strong sense that the strength of recognition had a positive bearing and relationship with each of them and individuals and how happy they felt about themselves. This feeling of wellbeing was in turn what the participants inferred led to their perceptions of higher levels of self-esteem. Further, the research suggested that the happier and more determined employees are more inclined to go above and beyond their day-to-day role and may perform better within the workplace. Interestingly, seven participants felt that it was as a result of working for the brand itself (McDonalds) and the training and encouragement they had been given that had had a positive effect on their personal self-esteem. As a result, they felt a duty to reciprocate and perform as part of their side of the bargain.

Leading on from personal factors, training and development has been detailed below as a separate theme.

### Theme Seven - Training & Development

Theme seven looked at the potential influence training and development has on participant perceptions of performance. Within this theme, three sub-themes emerged which were cooperation, education and apprenticeships and employees and structured career progression. The thematic map for theme seven is shown in Figure 13.

Sub Theme One

Co-operation

Sub Theme Two

Education & Apprenticeships

Sub Theme Three

Structured Career Progression

Figure 13 Theme Seven Thematic Map – Training & Development

Tables 32, 33 and 34 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of Co-operation, Education and Apprenticeships and a Structured Career. These are shown below. The narrative and analysis for each sub theme follows after each respective table of participant perceptions.

Co-operation is the first sub-theme and is discussed below following the participants perceptions in Table 32.

Table 32 Theme Seven – Training – Sub Theme Cooperation

| Theme Seven – Training & Development | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Cooperation | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *I want to make it a success with regards to turn some of the challenges and negatives into positives with the things I can influence. That could be staff retention possibly and the relationships, trying to ensure people work in a cooperative and collaborative manner whereas before I got here there wasn’t the degree of cooperation that there is now* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *You look after the People by training them and the training is phenomenal within McDonalds. No other business I know is as competitive compared to McDonald's and no one I know has training like McDonald's do. We really look after their people and because we look after our people it brings attraction and attraction talks and one becomes ten, ten becomes a hundred and that's how the brand is.* |
| 30 | SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T | *I think Training and Development is important so me and my colleague are in charge of training. We give new starters time to do the E-Learning and I think that's really important and we help them with their training and they come to us and talk about their training.* |

Training and development was referred to by over fifty percent (eighteen out of thirty-six) of the participant population as a theme that they perceived influenced their own performance. Co-operation was the first sub-theme theme that emerged from the participants within the overarching theme of training and development. Viewpoints here were shared across both company and franchised restaurants with a common thread of training being an important factor in personal development and performance. Moreover, longer serving employees felt that this facet was equally as important as a newer employee to the brand. The perception was alluded to by participant 2, a People Manager and recent external hire into an organisation, who said *trying to ensure people work in a cooperative and collaborative manner whereas before I got here there wasn’t the degree of cooperation that there is now.* Clearly the implication here was that she had made a difference at the outset and her perception of what collaboration can be is taken from her external experiences which she can bring to her new role. However, the sentiment is echoed by a long serving senior manager who commented *You look after the People by training them and the training is phenomenal within McDonalds.* He then alluded to the aspect of being together and working together in order to bring people up to a level where everyone can be a success. Another shift manager, participant 30, also said *we help them with their training and they come to us and talk about their training* which referred to the collaboration the staff, senior and junior, expect and appreciate from the brand and how it tackles training matters. These participant perceptions are shown in Table 32.

A second sub-theme of training and development that emerged was Education and Apprenticeships. This is discussed below.

Table 33 Theme Seven – Training – Sub Theme Education & Apprenticeships

| Theme Seven – Training & Development | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Education & Apprenticeships | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *Internships, education to develop to become a shift manager and to go higher* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *So, I'm a second assistant and I get a work-based pension, I get health benefits, I get 6-weeks holiday, I get a university degree course and this development is very important for me and I get employee discounts* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *Training and development yes. I started 1-year ago and I became a crew trainer 6 months afterwards and now I'm going to get promoted to being floor manager so it depends on you a lot but they are looking for achieving people* |

A third (twelve out of thirty-six participants) referred to education and apprenticeships as a lever that they perceived could enhance their performance. The personal developmental aspects of what the brand offers each employee came through as a strong message and some combined this with their own aspirations. For example, participant 21 said *it depends on you a lot but they are looking for achieving people.* She alluded to the fact that education was available and the McDonalds brand would give more opportunity if the individuals wanted to progress. Other individuals recognised the opportunity McDonalds offered by way of apprenticeships and progression. Participant 17 said *I get a university degree course and this development is very important for me* whilst participant 7 commented *education to develop to become a shift manager.* These perceptions are summarised in Table 33.

The co-operative nature of the workplace, education and training that participants perceive they gain from working for McDonalds tied into the third sub-theme of having a structured career. This is now discussed below.

Table 34 Theme Seven – Training – Structured Career Progression

| Theme Seven – Training & Development | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Structured Career Progression | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *For myself I expect progression. I don't want to be a crew member forever and I want to get somewhere and my is to aim is to progress. It’s not like it’s a part-time thing for me as I'm investing my time for years. I don't want to be a crew member the whole time and I want to get somewhere and be happy about it if that makes sense so for myself I expect progression* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *We are here to give them a career and the development of training and to get them where they want to be. Or if they want to use us as a steppingstone to go somewhere else we're quite happy to do that and we will get out of them what we need while they're working for us and at university and studying and they're giving us what we want and they get what they need the with regards to the skills in life they need to take on somewhere else and supporting them financially at the same time* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *I'm talking to the managers at the moment and hopefully shift management is the next step.  I don't really have to stay behind because I can do on my training on my phone* |

Aligned with the education that McDonalds offers individuals, the participants perceived career progression to be something they wanted to achieve and was possible within the McDonalds workplace. Six participants talked about the structured nature of career development, which they felt the brand offered them. Follow up interview questions and probing developed the term ‘structured’ even further. The participants perceptions emerged as one of the brand offering a career plan for everyone, with the roles and levels being clearly laid out and transparent. The career journey that participants described was one in which every employee can clearly see what they can aspire to with hard work. Interestingly, it appeared a stronger feeling was elicited within the employees who had recently joined the brand or had been employed less than five years. For example, participant 9 had been employed a year within a franchised organisation and said *for myself I expect progression.* She then went on to say *It’s not like it’s a part-time thing for me as I'm investing my time for years.* Her feeling was clear that her expectation was that the brand offered her a clear and structured career path ion return for her efforts. Participant 33 had a similar feeling when he said *I'm talking to the managers at the moment and hopefully shift management is the next step.* A sense of the reciprocal relationship between employer and employee was apparent. The participants were expecting a structured career path in return for their efforts at work. Table 34 outlines these participant perceptions.

In summary, seventeen participants recognised the importance of training and development as a separate theme. Just under fifty percent of the population sampled commented that they perceived their personal training and development plan would influence their ability to perform. Participants perceived a positive relationship between their performance levels and having received more training. The feeling was that by having more knowledge they were able to perform better. The co-operative nature of the training relationship was also recognised by nine participants. Participants perceived that McDonalds would deliver upon their promises as long as the employees did their part too. This reciprocation of the brand promise emerged as a theoretical concept within this theme. Participants suggested that training and career progression which McDonalds offered every one of them would only be taken away if they did not commit to their roles, performing and delivering at the level expected of them.

Section 5.3 analysed employee perceptions on influences over their own performance. The research now examines the potential reasons employees may leave their employment (Section 5.4).

## Aggregate Dimension Three - Intention to Leave

The third aggregate dimension explored the influence of the employer brand on an employee’s intention to leave their employ. Themes relating to this third aggregate dimension emerged as Relationships (Theme Eight), Employer Issues (Theme Nine) and Personal Feelings (Theme Ten). The overall data structure of this Aggregate Dimension is shown in Appendix K and the associated themes are discussed in Sections 6.4.1 – 6.4.3.

### Theme Eight - Relationships

Theme eight looked at the perceived relationships between the employee and the employer and how this relationship may affect the employee’s intention to leave. Two sub themes emerged which were no job involvement and perceived supervisory support. The thematic map for Theme eight is shown in Figure 14.

Sub Theme One

No Job Involvement

Sub Theme Two Perceived Supervisory Support (PSS)

Figure 14 Theme Eight thematic map – Relationships

The following tables 35 and 36 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of no job involvement and perceived supervisory support and are shown below. The narrative and analysis for each sub theme follows after each respective table of participant perceptions.

Table 35 Theme Eight – Relationships – No Job Involvement

| Theme Eight – Relationships | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – No Job Involvement | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *I think working here you do your job when you get respect for doing a job. For me personally if someone says thank you please or well done just doing your job that's what makes it the biggest thing because you can be the biggest brand you have to respect everybody and I think we always do that quite well* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *I get stressed out if I have had a hard day, stressed too at busy times, busy hours if the shift isn't going as well as I would like it to. This happens if the team are not functioning like a team normally and are not involved with what they are doing* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *I remember a few months ago I wasn’t doing allot and now I am a new crew trainer I have more stuff to do and more responsibility. I like being given stuff to do and getting your hands dirty* |

Eleven participants talked about the lack of job involvement as a perception they had. They associated job involvement with their interaction with colleagues and how this manifested itself within their working day. In turn this involvement and association with their role appeared to have an influence of how they felt about staying within the organisation. For example, participant 33 felt that the lack of involvement for him was detrimental and said *I remember a few months ago I wasn’t doing allot.* He seemed much happier when he went on to say *now I am a new crew trainer I have more stuff to do and more responsibility and I like being given stuff to do.* This individual really wanted to be appreciated and deliver what he felt he could to the best of his ability. Participant 13 said that he got very stressed when *the team are not functioning like a team normally.* This concept of being involved with colleagues and the job itself came across in the sentiment from participants at all job levels and within both franchised and company owned restaurants. A third of the participants perceived that the more involved they were with the role in hand, the less they wanted to leave. These perceptions and comments are reflected in Table 35. Combined with job involvement was a perception of supervisory support, which is examined below.

Table 36 Theme Eight – Relationships – Perceived Supervisory Support

| Theme Eight – Relationships | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Perceived Supervisory Support | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *It is the mixture of how your superiors treats you and it depends on how the people you work with treat you and that way the mood changes and* *you think about leaving and then after that you just say it was just a bad day* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *there was a little bit about 5 years ago when the other franchisee ran the restaurant and before the current franchisee took over. He still looked after me but the way they ran the stores was no good.  I used to set up the whole store every single day. That was about the way the previous owner ran it to the ground big time I'm and he was letting go so he didn't care* |
| 28 | SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T | *I worked in Aldershot drive-thru before it got franchised and I handed in my notice.  I didn't like the way the business manager ran the restaurant and I didn’t like my time there and I handed in my notice and they offered to transfer me here.* *Yes, it was entirely because of that relationship. He picked on me all the time and I didn’t want to waste my time being in that environment* |

Twenty of the thirty-six participants mentioned supervisory support as a factor in their thinking regarding leaving their employ. This theme emerged from all levels of employee and was alluded to from employees from both company and franchised restaurants. However, it did appear that this pool of participants were employees who had been with their employer for five years or less. This could be attributed to a suggestion that the longer serving employees, who are typically from a company background originally, have become more accepting of how they are treated. Participant 8 said *it is the mixture of how your superiors treats you* and sometimes *you think about leaving.* The inference was that these key relationships with superiors had an over ridding influence on the employees thinking about potentially leaving. Other participants made a clearer distinction regarding one relationship with a superior. For example, participant 28 said he wanted to leave specifically due to this one relationship by saying *Yes, it was entirely because of that relationship.*Interestingly, the perception of the treatment from superiors was not only confined to staff but also to the owners, the franchisees. This perception percolated down to a crew member when participant 15 commented that she was disillusioned and wanted to leave based on the way the franchisee ran the restaurant. She said *there was a little bit about 5 years ago when the other franchisee ran the restaurant and before the current franchisee took over.* Her feeling of wanting to leave was reinforced when she further commented *He still looked after me but the way they ran the stores was no good.*These perceptions are captured in Table 36 above.

In summary, twenty-seven participants recognised that it was their relationships with staff and colleagues that influenced their own job involvement and potentially their intention to leave. The more involved the individuals appeared to perceive they were with the role, the less they wanted to leave. Moreover, the key relationships with direct superiors had a very important influence on their mindset and intentions to remain employed within a particular organisation. The research evidenced examples of this perception being put down to a bad day in some situations. However, other participants alluded to examples where the relationship was too unpleasant and onerous, with no perceived supervisory support. In this situation, the individual’s intention was to leave the organisation.

### Theme Nine - Employer Issues

This theme explored employee perceptions of how issues at work with their employer may affect their intention to leave. Examples of employer issues emerged from the participant interviews and were classified into sub-themes. Three sub-themes emerged which were a critique culture, negative McDonalds hierarchy and poor communication. The thematic map for theme nine is shown in Figure 15.

Sub Theme One

Critique Culture

Sub Theme Two

Negative McDonalds Hierarchy

Sub Theme Three

Poor Communication

Figure 15 Theme Nine Thematic Map – Employer Issues

Tables 37, 38 and 39 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of critique culture, negative hierarchy and poor communication and are show below. Narrative and analysis follows the table for each respective sub-theme.

Table 37 Theme Nine – Employer Issues – Critique Culture

| Theme Nine – Employer Issues | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Critique Culture | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *Staff and customers. Picking faults in everything, not the bosses, just the other staff sometimes you want to just get on with it and people are just picking holes in things for the sake of it. If you want to say something, say it at the person's face and not behind their back* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *It is a critique culture. Yes, it is a culture of being negative and I think the whole hierarchy just wears people down after a while. The businesspeople are not seeing it when the business keeps on growing, growing, growing and I don't think they realise if you've done these quarters of growth it's a lot harder than what it used to be. People are saying that the whole culture in terms of employment with the millennials, has all changed. They work completely differently, the new generation and have not got the same level of commitment* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *In McDonald's you are only measured by your last result and that is quite disappointing. I think it's quite a blame culture as well and for me that is the only negative. When you look at other Industries it's not the same* |

A third (twelve) of the participants alluded to a critique culture, some using this terminology directly whilst others making an inference that the culture was blame and critical in its nature. It was suggested that this cultural feeing had an influence of their intention to leave the employment. Examples of references made to this ranged from franchised through to company restaurants. However, a separate underlying current emerged that this critical culture was more prevalent within company owned restaurants. This could suggest that the employee relationship with a franchisee, as it is their own business, can be forged differently. Moreover, in a franchised operation the franchisee is a layer of protection between the employees and the corporation and it could be argued that in this instance the employees are not exposed to this aspect of criticism. Interestingly, the feeling of this culture was stronger with the more senior employees who felt the pressure to perform. For example, participant 25 who is a Business Manager was very clear when he said *It is a critique culture.* One of his fellow Busines Managers, participant 26, also mentioned *In McDonald's you are only measured by your last result and that is quite disappointing. I think it's quite a blame culture as well and for me that is the only negative.* Both of these individuals have long standing service with the corporation and work for company owned restaurants. It appeared that this feeling was business as usual for them and they both talked about thinking about leaving on a regular basis but as yet had not followed through with their intent. From a more junior employee perception, participant 18 also recognised this culture when he said *people are just picking holes in things for the sake of it.* The overwhelming feeling from the participant perceptions suggested that this critical disposition was ingrained within the fabric of the McDonalds culture. Further, these participants talked about this negative feeling and how it influenced their intention to leave on a daily basis. These participant perceptions are summarised in Table 37.

This critique culture was explored further during the research interviews. Participants developed a further perception of the negative hierarchy. This was a distinct sub-theme as participants made direct reference to the corporation management who oversee both franchisees and corporate restaurants.

Table 38 Theme Nine – Employer Issues – Negative Hierarchy

| Theme Nine – Employer Issues | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Negative Hierarchy | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *I think the bureaucracy around the corporation can have a negative impact on the speed at which things can happen* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *When the hierarchy come into the restaurant because they're very demanding and* *they don't see the inside picture of a franchisee* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *Yes,* *McDonalds has not fully changed.* *The way I know it if a hierarchy comes in it always starts with a negative so they will show you 80% negative and 10% positive even if you've had a really good visit. It's still 80% negative and we work on those negatives to make sure we don't make the same mistakes the next time. But to do that you pass on the negative to the rest of the staff and that puts them off a little in a way.* |

Eight participants alluded to this perception of a negative corporate hierarchy. This was a separate sub-theme that participants felt influenced their thinking about leaving. A recently recruited individual, participant 2, had already observed this when she said *I think the bureaucracy around the corporation can have a negative impact on the speed at which things can happen.* To be put into context, she had come from a financial services background and was used to things happening at a faster pace. However, her observation was of a negative impact on employees if the pace were slow as no positive enhancements would ever be implemented. Two longer serving participants had similar feelings. Participant 3, who had worked for the organisation for over 30 years across both franchised and company owned restaurants said in response to having any negative feelings toward the brand *when the hierarchy come into the restaurant because they're very demanding.* She was very much of the opinion that the corporation staff who visit restaurants bring the mood down and act in an audit capacity, looking for things to pick up upon as their role is that of brand protector. She went further to say *they don't see the inside picture of a franchisee* referring to the way they conduct themselves when on site. Participant 25 acknowledged there was allot of rhetoric about companies being more people friendly but he said *McDonalds has not fully changed.* He went on to say *the way I know it if a hierarchy comes in it always starts with a negative so they will show you 80% negative and 10% positive even if you've had a really good visit.* The participant perceptions are summarised in Table 38.

Combined with these negative participant perceptions was the third sub-theme of poor communication.

Table 39 Theme Nine – Employer Issues – Poor Communication

| Theme Nine – Employer Issues | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Poor Communication | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *If I am not communicated with there's been times especially working in the store when I felt like in the High Street and I feel a bit in the dark sometimes because the person above me doesn't cascade down as much as I think and I feel like I should be trusted to be able to run the restaurant* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *My superior was under motivated, so knowing what to do for starters and the job description for second was tough. I wasn't aware what I needed to do and it wasn't communicated properly, coming and setting your own to-do lists and hoping for the best* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *yes, when I felt left behind and not communicated with by my team in the moments, I needed it the most* |

Poor communication was referenced by eight participants out of thirty-six. They perceived it influenced their intention to leave. The communication issues evidenced came from senior management, as experienced by the intended recipients of the information. Participants perceived the communication often did not reach the intended audience and targets. Assistant managers had the strongest feelings on this subject matter as they were always tasked with key responsibilities in running the restaurants and needed to be kept up to speed with real time information. For example, participant 5 made note of not being given the information he required if he is expected to step in and run the restaurant efficiently when he said *I feel a bit in the dark sometimes because the person above me doesn't cascade down.* Participant 17, a fellow assistant manager, had a similar feeling when he commented *I wasn't aware what I needed to do, and it wasn't communicated properly.* Table 39 outlines these participant perceptions.

In summary, an overall feeling emerged from the participant interviews of a cultural negativity from within the corporation and workplace. This perception of a negative employer brand image clearly had an adverse effect on employees wanting to stay employed by their respective restaurants. This feeling emerged as being stronger within company owned restaurants where the corporation staff had more direct control over day-to-day activities and the franchisee was not a ‘buffer’ between the corporation and the employees. Interestingly, this negative feeling was present within franchised owned restaurants but at a lesser level. When probed further, participants alluded to the fact this feeling may be subdued as a result of the franchisee sitting between the corporation staff and his/her own employees, corroborating the interpretation of this research. It was clear that employees working within franchised restaurants saw the franchisee as a layer of ‘protection’ and in turn, this negated to some extent their negative brand perceptions. These negative participant perceptions emerged as having a negative influence over intention to leave. Further, employees recognised that poor communication and a lack of clarity of what is expected of them, often leaves them feeling more inclined to leave their employment.

### Theme Ten - Personal Feelings

Theme ten explored participant perceptions of why they may want to leave their restaurants. The interviews focused on participants personal feelings and what underlying reasons they perceived may influence their decision making to leave. Two sub-themes emerged which were identified as work-life balance and the stress and pressure of the role. The thematic map for theme ten is shown in Figure 16.

Sub Theme Two Stress & Pressure

Sub Theme One Work-life Balance

Figure 16 Theme Ten Thematic Map – Personal Feelings

Tables 40 and 41 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of work-life balance and stress & pressure and are shown below. Narrative and analysis for each sub theme follows after each respective table.

Table 40 Theme Ten – Personal Feelings – Work Life Balance

| Theme Ten – Personal Feelings | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Work-Life Balance | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *Health and life balance. I think the thing that worries me is if myself and my wife had a family and there is not the time. There isn't a balance and as we said earlier the 24-hours doesn't allow for a balance of the intensity of work. It's always there so for me just looking at peers and friends who have just had kids, he's moved to a 7 till 2 job Monday to Friday. I mean I've never had weekends off consistently in my whole life even when I was in head office so I am giving allot up. I don't play hockey and things like that so just that balance and if it's stops me having the balance it's different like a new store opening as I know that’s 3 months of hard work that's not the problem is when you don't see an end to it and that balance* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *Normally it's when I've been doing 6am starts all week. Feeling really tired from* *having a child as well and I feel like is it worth it? It just took its toll. I can get a job in the evenings and maybe do things a different way. Where do you get tired you have to think that I chose these hours and I like doing this and I have to remind myself that I wanted to do this* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *It's my work life balance.* *You know when it hits the fan you got to be there but when something is working your swing that round and what you get out of it what you put into it so the more you put in the more you get out at the end of the day.* *But now I've got the store where it needs to be and now my work life balance is very good now* |

Work life balance was a strong sub theme that emerged from the participant interviews. Twenty-four participants referred to this term in a positive way. However, eleven participants viewed this balance as inequitable and had feelings that may influence them leave the organisation unless the situation changed. From the interviews, it seemed that the more senior employees felt this imbalance more. This was suggested this could be due to the workload and responsibility they carry for delivering a service often within a 24-hour environment. Participant 1 said *there isn't a balance and as we said earlier the 24-hours doesn't allow for a balance of the intensity of work.* The feeling was the individuals always had to be available and this was never the case pre 24-hour operations, which is now the normal business as usual for the majority of McDonald’s restaurants.This feeling was reinforced by 9 who said respectfully *it just took its toll* and *having a child as well and I feel like is it worth it?* However, another Business Manager, participant 16, whilst acknowledging that the work life balance was a very important factor in his personal life said *You know when it hits the fan you got to be there* and went further to say *now I've got the store where it needs to be my work life balance is very good.* He had thought about leaving he remarked but was able to *with the support of his franchisee, address the situation and create a more stable working platform*. These perceptions of work-life balance are represented in Table 40.

Participants further alluded to feelings of stress & pressure as a separate perception which is now discussed.

Table 41 Theme Ten – Personal Feelings – Stress and Pressure

| Theme Ten – Personal Feelings | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Stress and Pressure | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 6 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Yep.* *Sometimes it's due to stress. So if it was, for example,* *at Christmas time when it's constantly busy and you feel like you can't even catch your breath because there is always cars, always customers and I feel like oh my god I would just love to sit in an office or when it comes to times* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *pressure and stress make me think about leaving and here's a stressful job sometimes yes maybe it seems easy but it's not that easy working here so you have to love what you're doing and after that you have to work hard* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *yes, there are sometimes**. I get stressed out if I have had a hard day, stressed too at busy times, busy hours if the* *shift isn't going as well as I would like it to. This happens if the team are not functioning like a team normally* |

Nineteen participants out of thirty-six referenced the term stress and pressure. Specifically, when asked what factors may make them feel inclined to leave their employment, these participants referred to the stress and/or pressure of the role having a significant influence over their decisions. This sub-theme was evidenced from participants within both company and franchised operations and within all levels of employee. Participant 6 said she felt like leaving *Sometimes it's due to stress.* However, she went on to say that she felt this stress more at certain times of the year and said *at Christmas time when it's constantly busy and you feel like you can't even catch your breath.* The stress she felt was sporadic and irregular. Participant 8 said that *pressure and stress make me think about leaving* and commented that you have to remind yourself that you love your job and what you do in order to stay. Participant 13 remarked that he had thought about leaving when *I get stressed out if I have had a hard day, stressed too at busy times, if the shift isn't going as well as I would like it to.* He did concede that this was the way any normal day went and when he sat back and thought about what he was doing he realised he really liked what he did within McDonalds. Table 41 summarises these perceptions.

Twenty-three out of thirsty six of the participants interviewed perceived either a poor work-life balance and/or the stress and pressure of the role. They suggested that this may influence their decision over time to leave their employment with McDonalds. Interestingly, one of the more senior managers had said that he wanted to leave but through his relationships and support from his franchise, was able to resolve this situation and create a workable employment base for himself. Further, seven of the more junior staff appreciated that the stress and pressure of the role was always present and part of the job. They commented that this was cyclical and was more severe at certain times of the year, for example Christmas.

## Aggregate Dimension Four - Levels of Commitment

This forth aggregate dimension explores the influence of employer branding on the commitment level of employees. Emergent themes relating to this fourth aggregate dimension were People Practices (Theme Eleven), Recognition (Theme Twelve) and Brand Culture (Theme Thirteen). The overall data structure of this Aggregate Dimension is shown in Appendix K and each theme is separately analysed in the following sections 6.5.1 – 6.5.3.

### Theme Eleven – People Practices

Theme eleven explored the participants perceptions of their employers’ people practices and how they perceived these influenced their commitment to the brand. Three sub-themes emerged and were labelled as progressive, fairness and pastoral care. The thematic map for theme eleven is shown in Figure 17.

Sub Theme Two

Fairness

Sub Theme One

Progressive

Sub Theme Three

Pastoral Care

Figure 17 Theme Eleven Thematic Map – People Practices

Tables 42, 43 and 44 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of progressive, fairness and pastoral care and are shown below. Narrative and analysis for each sub-theme follows after each respective table.

Table 42 Theme Eleven – People Practices – Sub Theme Progressive

| Theme Eleven – People Practices | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Progressive | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *I think they have better people practices and better development opportunities that attracts a lot of people which you don't get in other fast-food companies from my experience. You don't get that in the KFC because there's a loyalty to it and people buy into the idea and I enjoy working with the people because it's a people business and you're working hard with the same people, the good people and people that you like* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *Because it's giving opportunity to everyone. You can start from the bottom and reach the top and it depends on how good you are. It offers you flexibility and they pay good money* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think the level of the systems we have here for training and learning and progression is much better.  That is why you have got a lot of people that started in McDonald's as Mcjobs and we understand that. We are here to give them a career and the development of training and to get them where they want to be. Or if they want to use us as a steppingstone to go somewhere else we're quite happy to do that and we will get out of them what we need while they're working for us and at university and studying and they're giving us what we want and they get what they need the with regards to the skills in life they need to take on somewhere else and supporting them financially at the same time* |

Twenty-nine participants referred to the term people practices when interviewed. McDonalds as a company and in in all the literature and internal branding hails itself as a people company and this message is always reinforced through seminars, general emails and training. It is therefore of no surprise that this message appears to have resonated with the employees. This theme was carried across both company and franchise restaurants and additionally talked about at a senior management level and also at the entry level of employee. With twenty-nine employees alluding to the term people practice, twelve of these perceived the brand as a progressive employer. Participant 1 said *they have better people practices and better development opportunities*and then referenced this back to the fact that other fast-food companies do not offer the same development or opportunity. This individual had worked with three of McDonalds competitors so had this experience with which to comment. The feeling that McDonalds do offer what they say they can come through strongly and they do deliver on their brand promise that they will develop individuals who want to progress. Participant 21 echoed this feeling when she said *You can start from the bottom and reach the top* referencing the equal opportunities company that McDonalds is whilst appreciating the progressive nature of the business. Further, participant 26 supported this viewpoint by suggesting that the combination of excellent training systems, support and a flexibility to develop those who want to be developed exists. He also realised that people would utilise those life skills either within or outside McDonalds, and McDonalds was progressive enough to accommodate all types of individuals. He said *We are here to give them a career and the development of training and to get them where they want to be* in recognition of this progressive culture. Table 42 summarises these perceptions.

This progressive nature of McDonalds was perceived by employees as having an influence over their commitment to the brand. Moreover, the way employees are treated at work was evidenced from the interview findings and a sub-theme of fairness emerged from the research.

Table 43 Theme Eleven – People Practices – Sub Theme Fairness

| Theme Eleven – People Practices | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Fairness | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *Because of the employee’s flexibility and treating employees with respect and fairness* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *The only place the gives people a chance and it's inclusive and doesn't discriminate between people. They give you a chance to prove yourself and prove you can do something with your life* |
| 19 | CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *They seem very fair as an employer. In their Attitudes for example, they have backed me up when I have got issues with customers* |

Forty two percent (fifteen out of thirty-six) of participants talked about the concept of fairness as a perception of the employer brand. These individuals talked about a company that treated employees with fairness and one which they liked working for. This perception was stronger from the hourly paid employees and less senior managers. This suggests that this sub-theme resonated with the general employee population within the organisation who have a perception of how fairly the management treat them during their day-to-day activities. Moreover, this feeling appeared more prevalent within employees with less service tenure. Evidence emerged that this could be as a result of the new generation of younger employees having more perspective on what they expect in return for working for an employer and not being afraid to voice their opinion. When probed further during the interview process, it became evident that the new generation of Millennial employees in terms of their respective ages, appeared to have more confidence to talk about their feelings. In response to being asked about what factors influenced employees being committed to the brand, participant 7 said *treating employees with respect and fairness* was a major aspect of employment and what he looked for in an employer. Participant 19 commented they *seem very fair as an employer* corroborating the general feeling from the group. This concept of fairness appeared to be linked to the progressive nature of the company, with participants feeling that the brand allowed anyone to be successful mand to progress as long as they wanted to. Participant 18 encapsulated these thoughts by saying *They give you a chance to prove yourself and prove you can do something with your life.* Table 43 summarises the participant perceptions of fairness.

The third sub-theme of pastoral care is analysed below.

Table 44 Theme Eleven – People Practices – Sub Theme Pastoral Care

| Theme Eleven – People Practices | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Pastoral Care | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *they always understand me, I have the hours I want, I work on stations that I can work because I have some health problems and they always understand me. I have a holiday whenever I need to. If I ever have something on my mind, I can talk with the manager's which is very good because they always understand* |
| 10 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 1, 9, F/T | *Personally, it's because I know the Business Manager and his wife and they've been helping me a lot because I recently got married and they have given me the hours and they give me that because of my marriage and that helps me a lot* |
| 29 | CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T | *I just want in the future a good position and higher pay.  If we have any problems the managers always telling us what we can do and sometimes we have a review in McDonald's and do we have any complaints and it's really open and supportive* |

The sub-theme of being supportive and of a company interested in its people, emerged from the employee perception of pastoral care. This perception was recognised by a quarter of the sample population and was more evident from within the younger, non-managerial employees who talked about looking up to their more experienced, and longer-serving managers for guidance and support. This is not surprising as the diverse and young workforce McDonalds employs clearly identifies with this need to be looked after and supported in the workplace. For many employees (twelve within the sample population) this is their first job so unsurprisingly, this supportive need and perception is one which may relate back to the sub-theme of McDonalds being family orientated (Section 5.2.3 - perceived employee benefits). Participants talked about a nurturing culture, participant 8 saying *If I ever have something on my mind, I can talk with the manager's which is very good because they always understand.* This was further supported by comments from participant 29 and 10 respectfully saying *it's really open and supportive* and *Personally, it's because I know the Business Manager and his wife and they've been helping me a lot.* There definitely appeared to be a connection between the employees and who they worked for with a strong sense of wanting to be looked after and supported. Table 44 summarises participant perceptions of pastoral care.

In summary, participants perceived that the employers people practices influenced how committed they felt towards the brand. Evidence emerged from fifteen participant interviews that the brand was indeed fair and gave opportunities to the employees within the business. It was also perceived by 25% of the population as being nurturing and listening to their needs. Conversely, the inference was that the majority of participants had the opposite and negative association with fairness and pastoral care the brand offered them. In both scenarios, the participants alluded to a greater intention to leave if they felt they had been unfairly treated or had not been given the support they expected from their employers.

### Theme Twelve - Recognition

This theme explored the participants perceptions of how workplace recognition influenced their personal commitment to the brand. Two sub-themes emerged which were encouragement & appreciation and autonomy & independence. The thematic map for theme twelve is shown in Figure 18.

Sub Theme Two Autonomy & Independence

Sub Theme One Encouragement & Appreciation

Figure 18 Theme Twelve – Recognition

Tables 45 and 46 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of encouragement & appreciation and autonomy & independence and are shown below. Narrative and analysis for each sub-theme follows each respective table.

Table 45 Theme Twelve – Recognition – Sub Theme Encouragement & Appreciation

| Theme Twelve – Recognition | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Encouragement & Appreciation | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *For me personally if someone says thank you, please or well done for just doing your job that's what makes it the biggest thing because you can be the biggest brand you have to respect everybody and I think we always do that quite well* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I feel positive towards the brand but the brand for the most part has always treated me well. I've had my own ups and downs but the brand in itself has treated me well. I have been sent on 5 or 6 courses and with each of them* *I've got recognition and reward for doing them and being a manager in itself there's a lot of rewarding thing that comes with this job* |
| 6 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *I feel positive towards the brand because for me McDonald's changed my life because when I came to the country, I had no idea where to go and where to work. But because McDonald's is so flexible with the people they hire from all sorts of countries and all sorts of backgrounds more or less this was my only option but at the same time it was the best option I had because with the qualifications I had I couldn't really go anywhere else other than restaurants. Because I love the restaurants and because I'm a trained chef but I wouldn't work in a restaurant, this is as close as It gets so, I feel I made a really good choice* |

Nineteen of the thirty-six participants interviewed referred to the term recognition. They explained how being recognised by another colleague or manager made them feel. This appreciation and encouragement the participants perceived had a positive influence and made them feel better about themselves and working for the brand. From the research findings, the suggestion was that encouragement and appreciation had a positive influence on brand commitment. The perception of this recognition was evident throughout all levels of seniority of staff and across the three restaurant locations, both company owned and franchised. Participant 4 commented *personally if someone says thank you, please or well done for just doing your job that's what makes it the biggest thing.* This feeling was echoed by participant 5 who talked about feeling positive about the brand, when asked interview question number seven, and said *I've got recognition and reward for doing them* discussing the courses he had attended. These perceptions are summarised in Table 45.

Within the McDonalds working practice framework, an element of autonomy and independence was recognised by the participants which is discussed below.

Table 46 Theme Twelve – Recognition – Sub Theme Autonomy & Independence

| Theme Twelve – Recognition | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Autonomy & Independence | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *A lot of recognition. I believe like from myself or from Doug or the other members of management like you sent an email the other day about a visit and everyone came up to me and said well done, you really took charge just said everything was working well that was very professional and I like that kind of recognition I think that's good* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22,12, P/T | *When I am left to show what I can do and achieve* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think I do that naturally so I think about myself and my reputation.  I take it as the way to do things I don't wait for consultants or someone telling me to do this or that because I think for example if I want to do something for my people I will do it because I think it's the right thing to do and I'm not waiting for someone to tell me to do it and this is when a consistent performance comes in* |

Eleven participants discussed this perception of autonomy and independence as part of being recognised within the workplace. The inference was that the more independence and autonomy they felt they were given, the more recognition they perceived they had. This sentiment appeared stronger at the senior management level, with longer serving employees. The suggestion from the research findings was that as these individuals have the responsibility for the staff and running of the restaurant, they are the individuals who want to show what they can deliver and liked to be left alone to perform. For the more junior staff and crew, the roles are more defined and prescriptive and by definition have less responsibility, making it potentially harder to stand out. This was a common perception across both company and franchised owned restaurants. For example, participant 5 wanted to be recognised and clearly stated this when he said he liked *A lot of recognition.* He went further to say he felt good about himself when he was able to deliver what he knew he could and commented *and everyone came up to me and said well done, you really took charge* signalling to him he had the autonomy to run the restaurant as he wanted and had been recognised for doing a really good job. He said he really liked this level of responsibility which motivated him to try to go the extra mile and push for more. Participant 12 also made reference to being given the autonomy and space to get on with her job when she simply said she can deliver more w*hen I am left to show what I can do and achieve.* These perceptions describing autonomy and independence are summarised in Table 46.

In summary, recognition is evidenced to be a significant theme from the research findings and one which influences the commitment of employees to the McDonalds brand. Participants liked being recognised and this in turn positively influenced their commitment and performance. Being appreciated and encouraged was the initial perception that emerged. This in turn made the participants feel wanted and motivated them to go the extra mile. Further, and interestingly, when the employees perceived they were being given more autonomy and independence they associated this with receiving increased levels of recognition. The inclination emerged that in both circumstances, increased recognition was a perception of increased commitment to the brand and potentially a lever that influenced employees exhibiting organisational citizenship behaviour and going the extra mile.

### Theme Thirteen - Culture

Theme thirteen explored the participants perceptions of how the culture of the brand influenced their commitment to the brand. Two sub-themes emerged from the research findings in relation to the McDonalds culture which were fun and fast paced. The thematic map for theme thirteen is shown in Figure 19.

Sub Theme Two

Fast Paced

Sub Theme One

Fun

Figure 19 Theme Thirteen – Culture

Tables 47 and 48 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of fun and fast-paced and are shown below. Narrative and analysis for each sub-theme follows after each respective table.

Table 47 Theme Thirteen – Culture – Sub Theme Fun

| Theme Thirteen – Culture | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Fun | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *I expect to have a fun shift.  I know it's a good progression so it's not a massive onslaught having to do this and that. They say to you if you can do that they'll step you up to the next level and there is online training and stuff* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *I think the working environment in McDonald's is something that makes it fun.  The people culture in McDonald's as well is really great and we are good at keeping and attracting people to the system* |
| 31 | SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T | *I like working with people and it's a very social environment.  I go out with a few of them but not many because they are a little youngster and I'm older. I like getting on with different age groups and I like coming out here mixing with the customers as well. I like it a lot and its great fun* |

The theme of brand culture has previously been referenced in a different context in relation to a participant’s intention to leave. With reference to theme thirteen the participants were specifically asked what they liked about the working for the brand and how they would describe the culture. From the findings, two prominent sub-themes that grouped these thoughts together were labelled as fun and the fast-paced nature of the brand. Interestingly, participants from across both company and franchised restaurants, differing service lengths, age and gender referenced these similar perceptions.

Thirty-one of the participants talked about the culture in terms of a perception they felt influenced their commitment to the brand. Twenty-five participants recognised fun as a cultural element of their working environment. Having enjoyment and fun at work seemed to equally apply to the younger and older employees alike. Further, this concept was alluded to from both full-time and part-time employees and from senior management and crew. Participant 20 said *I expect to have a fun shift* suggesting that this expectation was set even before she set foot in the workplace. Participant 25 related the fun aspect of his role back to the people he worked with by saying *the working environment in McDonald's is something that makes it fun.* A longer standing senior manager, participant 31, also mentioned that she liked getting along with all the different ages of the people she worked alongside and stated *I like it a lot and its great fun.* Table 47 summarises these perceptions in relation to the sub-theme of fun.

The second sub-theme participants evidenced was the fast-paced nature of the workplace.

Table 48 Theme Thirteen – Culture – Sub Theme Fast Paced

| Theme Thirteen – Culture | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Fast paced | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *The restaurant keeps you busy. I don't think I like to do office work like sitting at a computer doing some stuff I would get too bored. I like being on the floor helping out. It's always busy, it's always hectic and even when it's quiet you are still stocking up or getting ready for a busy period or speaking to customer's or speaking to crew. You have always got something to do so never a dull moment* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *It's because I enjoy McDonalds and I've always enjoyed retail. I was on really good wages at Tesco's but I've always enjoyed the retail sector. It is the speed and I like to be busy* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *I like to be fast paced. I like to be active. I like to be constantly doing things.  if I find that I'm not doing things I kick myself that I've got nothing to do* |

Eighteen participants out of thirty-six interviewed all referenced the fast-paced nature of the workplace to a greater or lesser degree. The stronger feeling for this sub-theme was evidenced and more vocalised from the non-management population and across both company and franchised restaurants. This finding was intuitive as it is reasonable to assume the type of ownership should have little effect on the nature of what each restaurant does and the pace it has to work at to fulfil customer demand. Participant 14 said *it's always hectic and even when it's quiet you are still stocking up or getting ready for a busy period.* Participant 15 offered *it is the speed and I like to be busy.* This was supported by participant 17 said *I like to be fast paced; I like to be active. I like to be constantly doing things.* This is interesting as both participant 15 and 17 recognised what the culture offered them and recognised that it fitted in with what they liked to do. These perceptions are summarised in Table 48.

In summary, emerging perceptions of what brand culture means to participants was evident in over half of the sample population. Within this cultural theme, two-sub themes stood out as fun and fast-paced. Participants felt McDonalds was demanding in the pace one had to work at but at the same time, it was a fun place to work. Employees seemed to want to enjoy where they worked and at the same time realised that the brand was demanding, as the nature of fast-food retail was non-stop and constantly busy. Interestingly, five participants linked their own perceptions and personal work styles back to the cultural environment of the McDonalds brand. These individuals appreciated they liked to be busy and the style of the workplace suited them. In this sense, they made a connection between the culture of the brand and how connected they felt by virtue of wanting to be busy themselves. A fast-paced environment will not suit everyone so it was a very interesting insight to how several participants thought.

## Aggregate Dimension Five - Flexibility Construct

This fifth Aggregate Dimension looks to explore the extent to which perceived flexibility of the employer brand influences an employee’s commitment to the brand and their intention to leave. Two themes emerged within this fifth aggregate dimension which were what is flexibility (Theme Fourteen) and Hygiene factors (Theme Fifteen). The overall data structure of this Aggregate Dimension is shown in Appendix K and each theme is separately analysed Sections 6.6.1 – 6.6.2.

### Theme Fourteen – What is Flexibility?

Theme fourteen explored the participants perceptions of how employer flexibility may affect their commitment to the brand and intention to leave. Two sub-themes emerged which were hours of employment and social capital. The thematic map for theme fourteen is shown in Figure 20.

Sub Theme Two

Social Capital

Sub Theme One

Hours of Employment

Figure 20 Theme Fourteen – What is flexibility

Tables 49 and 50 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of hours of employment and social capital and are shown below. Narrative and analysis for each sub theme follows after each respective table.

Table 49 Theme Fourteen – What is Flexibility – Sub Theme Hours of Employment

| Theme Fourteen – What is Flexibility | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Hours of Employment | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *Employment, well-chosen hours of the staff* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *They told me and what I have seen myself is that we are one of the most flexible in terms of hours or in terms of taking time off as we can always find other people to cover that shift. I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life. Other fast-food brands are harsher and less lenient on flexibility and they won't be as flexible as we can be and I think that is very important as a brand and as an employer and is especially very important to the employees* |
| 29 | CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T | *I also like the flexible hours. When I just started, I couldn't work that much because my husband's far away. He's in the army so the benefits are that they are very understanding. When I started I only used to work 5 hours so now my daughter goes to school full time and they gave me more hours so they are very flexible and they teach us that the more we learn they'll give us an increase in pay and responsibility* |

The theme flexibility was mentioned by thirty participants and referenced fifty-eight times during the interviews. This topic emerged as an important perception that participants attributed to the brand. During the interview process the participants defined the term flexibility in different ways, but an overarching sub-theme emerged which related back to flexibility of hours. Twenty-six participants talked about hours of work as their meaning of flexibility. Interestingly, this theme crossed both hourly paid and salaried paid employees. This was unexpected as the hourly paid employees who clock in and out maybe seen to have more benefit in flexible shift patterns. However, the salaried paid employees suggested they recognised this theme with the flexibility of working patterns they were also given. The concept of flexibility emerged across both franchised and company owned restaurants, full time and part time employees, male and female and long and short serving service length employees. Participant 3 stated *Employment, well-chosen hours of the staff.* This individual was a long serving employee who related the hours chosen for the staff to reflect what they wanted to work, and she felt the family nature of the brand allowed for this flexibility and consideration. Participant 5 had a similar viewpoint saying *I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life* and *we are one of the most flexible in terms of hours.* Participant 5 went further by saying that he felt we are as flexible *as we can be and I think that is very important as a brand and as an employer and is especially very important to the employees.* This identification with flexibility was clearly a major theme in participants perceptions of how they saw the brand and what it meant to them. This was recognised by participants as being movable as well. In this sense the employer allowed employees to alter their hours if their circumstances changed. This was demonstrated by participant 29 who said *When I started I only used to work 5 hours so now my daughter goes to school full time and they gave me more hours so they are very flexible.* These perceptions of the hours of work are summarised in Table 49.

The second sub-theme highlighted the participant perceptions of their social background and what needs each grouping perceived they had, in relation to working for a flexible employer.

Table 50 Theme Fourteen – What is Flexibility – Sub Theme Social Capital

| Theme Fourteen – Flexibility Construct | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Social Capital | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *I'm working around my son's schedule and my partner's hours as well. I'm on a guaranteed hours contract of 30 hours a week* *but I only do certain shifts* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *You are a* *student and you want to come part-time; we can accommodate that. If you want to come and ask for more hours, we will be able to accommodate that, it's just the way our business works* |
| 31 | SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T | *It's like last week now my mums had a hip replacement and she helps with my childcare.* *So last week I did all school hour shifts because that fitted in round the school because my mum couldn't look after the children* |

Sub-theme two emerged from further interview probing of the participants. Evidence from the findings emerged that sixteen participants identified themselves with a subgroup within the framework of working hours. What became clear was a social capital structure that each participant related back to their own situation. For example, participant 21 said *I'm on a guaranteed hours contract of 30 hours a week*. These findings evidenced a perception of one size not fitting all and within the flexibility of hours that participants view that McDonalds affords them, there is another stratum of flexibility and order. Not every employee is on a guaranteed hours contract and the decision to do so is based on the employee’s needs, availability and personal circumstances. This concept of a ‘social capital’ level of flexibility was alluded to by the sixteen participants across both franchised and company run restaurants and at all job levels. Participant 21 developed the flexibility construct further when she said *but I only do certain shifts* recognising that she is able to have the benefit of flexibility and also a weekly work pattern which is fixed for her specifically. Other examples of this social flexibility emerged as a benefit for working mums and students and this was perceived by participant 26 and 31 respectfully when they said if you are a *student and you want to come part-time; we can accommodate that* and *So last week I did all school hour shifts because that fitted in round the school.* This feeling evidenced that participants recognised the flexibility McDonalds affords them within their shift patterns and working hours. Moreover, the emergent the sub-theme of the brand welcoming different backgrounds, ages, nationality and circumstances of their employees was clear. These perceptions of social capital flexibility are summarised in Table 50 above.

In summary, the theme of flexibility was referenced by eighty-three percent of the sample population indicating that the participants recognised this to be an integral part of the employer brand offering. Flexibility to employees meant the number of hours they could work and how they could regularly change this to suit their lifestyle and circumstance. In reference to working hours, participants perceived the employer brand as flexible, accommodating and reasonable. Flexibility in terms of working hours was further developed into a second sub-theme of social capital. Within this sub-theme, the evidence suggested that participants recognised the differing social groups, for example students, parents, staff with disabilities, and appreciated the flexibility the brand afforded these groups above and beyond movable hours of working.

### Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors

Theme fifteen explored the participants perceptions of how certain hygiene factors influenced participants commitment to the brand. From the research findings, two sub-themes emerged which were proximity and the role being just a job. The thematic map for theme fifteen is shown in Figure 21.

Sub Theme Two

Just a Job

Sub Theme One

Proximity

Figure 21 Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors

Tables 51 and 52 represent the participant perceptions within each sub-theme of proximity and the role being just a job and are shown below. Narrative and analysis for each sub-theme follows after each respective table.

Table 51 Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors – Sub Theme Proximity

| Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Proximity | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *I live about 2 miles away from the restaurant and I walk to work which takes me about an hour and a half every day* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *It was just that I live near Romney and there were no jobs as it's the middle of nowhere so when I passed my driving test it was one of the few places that was advertising and it was the pay and the accessibility* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *Is the environment and easy to get to* |

Proximity and location was a sub-theme that emerged from the participant interviews. Eleven out of thirty-six participants identified that their proximity to their workplace had played a factor in deciding to work for the brand. This is interesting as it predicates any other benefit the brand may give the employee. Firstly, the employees have got to be able to get to the specific restaurant location and this ease off accessibility influenced employees in different ways. For example, participants that could drive a car had differing perceptions that those who had transportation issues or were reliant upon parents to drive them to work. Sixteen out of the thirty-six participants referred to this theme as an important perception they identified. The ease of accessibility was simply stated by participant 15 when she said *I live about 2 miles away from the restaurant and I walk to work.* When probed further it transpired that this individual did not drive and was into her fitness regime so the location of the restaurant suited her lifestyle whilst at the same time satisfying her need to exercise. Participant 18 supported this viewpoint by saying that the restaurant was *easy to get to.* A Business Manager, participant 16, commented that it wasn’t until he passed his driving test that he was able to apply to work at McDonalds. Where he lived was fairly remote and there were no jobs nearby. He said when *I passed my driving test it was one of the few places that was advertising* and went on to say that the *accessibility* made it a viable proposition for him as a place to work. Proximity appeared to be a stronger theme for the younger population who clearly viewed travelling longer distances as not an option. Participants 15 and 18 lived within a five-mile radius of their workplace and represented the population when they said living nearby to work is a consideration for them. Participant 16 was only able to travel further distances when he was able to drive, have access to a car and become independent. These perceptions evidencing proximity are summarised in Table 51.

Interestingly, the location of the restaurants was a perception that the participants evidenced as being an important consideration. The independence some had with being able to drive made working for the brand possible. Others who happened to live close by to a McDonalds restaurant chose to work there as it was convenient. This aspect of being just a job is evidenced below.

Table 52 Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors – Sub Theme Just a Job

| Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub Theme – Just a Job | | |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *Firstly, I just needed a job, that's why I came here. At first it was more of a school leaving job. I needed to find a job and I had family in the past that had worked for McDonald's and I thought I'd start at McDonald's and see where it takes me* |
| 19 | CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *A job firstly.  I have had a number of different jobs and it's something I haven't done before so it's different.  This is the first retail one* |
| 31 | SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T | *I started as a 16-year-old that just wanted to get through college and some extra pennies* |

Just under fifty percent of participants interviewed referenced the fact that when they started with the brand, they only saw a temporary situation and not longevity of service. Interestingly, this theme emerged from all ages of employees, service lengths and across franchised and company run restaurants. This was suggestive of the brand being able to accommodate a variety of backgrounds, allot of which were entering into the employment market for the first time. Moreover, due to the flexible nature of the brand as previously alluded to, this applied to both full and part time employees. Participant 17 said *firstly, I just needed a job* and participant 31 supported this feeling by saying *I started as a 16-year-old that just wanted to get through college.* In both references the participants were very open about applying to the brand because of hearsay and what other people had told them, parents, friends, as to the flexibility of a role with the brand and fact that McDonalds is always recruiting for employees. Interestingly, participant 19 viewed the role as a change, having never worked in retail, and recognised that one’s background was not a prohibitive factor in gaining employment with McDonalds. He said *and it's something I haven't done before so it's different, this is the first retail one.* His expectation was just to try something different within food retail and when probed, didn’t really mind which retailer he worked for. Participant 17 further stated that he had the same initial outlook when he said *I thought I'd start at McDonald's and see where it takes me.* He is now an employee with thirteen years’ service and an Assistant Manager. These perceptions are summarised in Table 52.

In summary, participant perceptions of location to the workplace and only working at McDonalds because it was convenient was evident from the research. Proximity to work influenced employees, particularly those who could not drive themselves and were reliant upon alternative means of getting to work. This perception was evidenced from the sixteen to twenty-year-old participant population. Further, and combined with location, first-time job seekers who could not drive felt that they would work anywhere and McDonalds was just a job. The emerging evidence suggested the role was convenient and local and as such fulfilled the participants immediate needs. The researcher interpreted this as no great surprise as the candidate pool McDonalds recruits from is normally a younger workforce who are seeking, more often than not, their first job. These sub-themes evidence a perception that attracted the individuals to the brand initially and are still important as a consideration for the participants.

# Discussions and Analysis

## Introduction

This chapter provides discussion and analysis of the data by Research Questions (RQ) I – V and addresses each research question systematically, with reference to the aggregate dimensions and thematic analysis as outlined within Chapter 6. Participant perception in the form of their comments are referenced within each Research Question (RQ). **All the participant vignettes are shown by theme in Appendix M.** The discussions are ordered by each Research Question (RQ) I – V and the Aggregate Dimensions and their associated themes are discussed within each RQ to which they relate (Section 7.2 to Section 7.6). The chapter summary (Section 7.7) concludes this penultimate chapter.

## Research Question I: How does employer branding affect task performance within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom?

Section 7.2 offers a discussion of the findings relating to ***Research Question I.***In order to ascertain what the participants perceived this influence on task performance was, their understanding of the term ‘employer branding’ was first established. Secondly, the definition of task performance as a day-to-day job activity was explained to each participant and their perceptions of how the brand influenced their performance was documented. Section 7.2.1. established the understanding of employer branding to the participant population and Section 7.2.2 assessed the influence of each theme on task performance.

### What participants understood by the term employer branding

To assess RQ 1, this research first had to establish what the participants understood by the term employer branding. The research findings evidenced a new definition of the term employer branding for the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) industry within the United Kingdom. This is postulated at the end of this discussion (Section 7.2.1) and after the participant perceptions have been discussed. The literature review (Chapter 2) indicated several definitions of the term employer branding (Chapter 2, Table 3). For the purpose of this research the definition was adopted as proposed by (Lievens and Slaughter, 2016). The external employer brand is a synonym for employer image management whereas the internal employer brand corresponds to the organisation’s identity e.g. an insider’s mental representations of attributes related to an organisation as an employer. This definition includes the external and internal thinking behind an employer’s image and identity.

**Theme One, sub-theme One,** identified that participants’ perceptions appeared to strongly associate with the values the employer was perceived to have (Section 6.2.1) and this appeared to concur with their own values and aspirations. Moreover, and more importantly it appeared aligned to their job role. For example, Participant 2 said that the term meant to her a *respected and trusted* employer. She went further to suggest that the brand demonstrated consistency and quality when she said *as a product it is consistent and has quality*. This is an interesting view as she discussed the brand from an external viewpoint, whilst defining the brand at the same time. This individual’s position within the organisation is that of as a People Manager within the Human Resources Department. Her focus is that of attracting and retaining staff from the available talent pool in the external marketplace. Participant 4 re-enforced this viewpoint when he stated: *Employer branding is for me the bigger the employer then the bigger the brand. People know McDonalds as soon as they seen the Golden Arches straight away. People know McDonalds and have great knowledge of the brand because it’s so popular. People trust McDonalds that’s why they come and spend their time with us. The employer needs to ensure it has the best values and strategies and keep their employees happy to ensure their brand stays at the top.* Participant 35 concurred by saying *it is a theme used to describe the company’s popularity and intentions. It also explains the value the company gives to its employees, its altogether and how the company looks after its people.* These research findings evidence that the perception participants have of the McDonalds employer brand can be evidenced back to the symbolic meaning they perceive the ‘Golden Arches’ represents. Participants perceived the brand to be globally recognised, market leading, caring, systematic, flexible, trusted and respected. Further, from the research it emerged that participants felt a positive relationship with the brand and what it could potentially offer them. This is corroborated from the literature, as research has confirmed the key role of existing employees and potential applicants initial impressions of organisations as employers (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003). Other research revealed that the initial organisational attraction was influenced by applicants perceptions of job and organisational characteristics such as pay, location, development or organisational structure (Turban and Keon, 1993; Cable and Graham, 2000). From the participants general perception, as evidenced from the findings, emerged a theme that related to the symbolic meaning of the organisation and supported the proposition offered by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) that initial impressions do relate to perceptions of the McDonalds golden arches and the employer brand. Interestingly, participants offered a perception that the employer brand had an internal and external meaning. This was both unexpected and perceptive as they clearly distinguished between what they felt customers thought about the organisation and their own experiences from working within it. Moreover, this supports the definition this research adopted and as offered by Lievens and Slaughter (2016) and extended support for another existing definition as postulated by Berthon *et al.* (2005). For example, within **Theme One, sub-theme Two,** participant 11 stated: *It refers to a way to describe an employer in terms of their values and what they stand for. McDonald’s brand often shows to be very employee and customer driven. By being very employee driven it can give the brand a good reputation as a good employee to work for. For customers it gives the reputations they want the be the ‘best loved restaurant company.* The participants clearly recognised a difference between the meaning of internal and external employer branding. Further, most employees are also customers and when interviewed most of them looked at the brand from both aspects, as if they were both. Interestingly, participant 11 added *by being very employee driven it can give the brand a good reputation as a good employee to work for. For customers it gives the reputations they want the be the best loved restaurant company.*

Participants also perceived trust and respect from the employer brand, as suggested by several scholars (Dell *et al.*, 2001; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004) who postulated a position of a brand being recognised and trusted.

From the analysis and participant perceptions, a new extension to the definition of employer branding arose from additional participant perceptions of the McDonalds brand. Emerging themes were evidenced of the brand being a fast-paced and flexible environment. **Theme One, sub-theme Three,** identified this when participant 17 said when he was asked what the brand meant to him *it’s the environment. I like to be fast paced. I like to be active. I like to be constantly doing things. If I find that I'm not doing things I kick myself that I've got nothing to do. So, this sort of environment is down my expert route and I enjoy the first base scenario and the people.* Similarly,participant 4 said *I think I think we are very flexible, and we make the hours to work around your life* and this feeling was echoed bythe vignettes from the participants in Appendix M. From the data it is evident that flexibility appears to be a perception that is synonymous from an employment perspective, with McDonalds.

Further, participants described the McDonalds brand as systematic and consistent. This supports an offering by Noe and Wilk (1993) which suggests that employees perceive three types of benefits which are personal, job and career resulting in participation with the brand. These emergent perceptions, supported by contributions from the extant literature, led to the following new definition of employer branding for the QSR industry within the United Kingdom:

*The term employer branding within the QSR industry within the United Kingdom refers to an external image that is globally recognised, trusted and respected by its customers. The internal employer brand is fast-paced, flexible, team focused, progressive and perceived as offering excellent training within a family orientated environment.*

Research findings now established the influence of this new participant definition upon employee task performance. This is discussed in Section 7.2.2.

### The influence of Employer branding on task performance

The research evidence established the new definition of employer branding as discussed in Section 7.2.1. The influence that participants felt the employer brand had on their task performance varied depending upon the theme in question. It is argued that the overall culture of the organisation influenced the performance of employees within the McDonalds restaurants, supporting an offering from (Ratnasari and Sutjahjo, 2020). The literature defined task performance as *‘the accomplishment of duties and responsibilities associated with a given job’* (Milich *et al.*, 1989). The following emergent themes of ownership, money, non-monetary, flexibility, training and teamwork are all participant perceptions which are now discussed in relation to their influence over employee task performance.

#### Ownership

Firstly, evidence emerged suggesting that restaurant ownership, as perceived by twenty three out of thirty-six participants, had no effect on their task performance. Participants recognised working for McDonalds as a brand, regardless of who owned the restaurant they worked in. Interestingly, within the group, eighteen participants were hourly paid. When probed further, the perception was that at their level they were not exposed to any ownership conflicts and as such had no basis to differentiate any potential influences. For example, within **Theme two, sub-theme One** participant 25 when asked if ownership affected his performance said *I don't think so. It is pretty similar with a different focus, different management practices. I don't think it's that much different. I guess the franchises are more financially driven.  I feel like they've got tighter controls and different expectations depending on the franchisee. I think it’s just different things, so I don't think working for a company or franchisee is different as its just working for different people and that's what it's all about.* Similarly participant 1 said when asked if ownership affected his performance *I don't think it does. I don't think it has a bigger part to play in people's retention and performance and no I don't think it has anything to do with that. As I said that you're going to earn the same money elsewhere but I think it's the people and the environment. I don't know if it comes to the brand. I think it comes from the leadership of the team and the focuses of those teams, the balance or results against customer satisfaction. Happy customers equal happy crew and things like that and there's more to it than just the McDonald's Golden Arches.* Both these participants perceived that the ownership had any influence over their day-to-day (task) performance.

Conversely, thirteen participants perceived that ownership type did affect their own working style and potential performance. These individuals were more senior and longer serving employees who had responsibility for running the restaurants. The inference was that at their level they had more exposure to the ownership structure. For example, participants from corporate owned restaurants emphasised the controlling nature of the franchisor, the McDonalds Corporation. Participants working within franchised restaurants felt that even though there was rigour and control, a more entrepreneurial spirit was allowed to flourish, and they had more flexibility to be themselves and explore new ideas. **Theme Two, sub-theme Two** highlighted the dependency and difference between franchised and company owned restaurants when participant 2 stated *As I said, working for a franchisee is wholly different than working for the corporation. I think it’s a very controlling environment when working for the corporation and not that much opportunity to use your initiative.* Participant 3 reinforced this viewpoint when she said *it's not so much the brand it's the company you work for I work for a franchise and this company. I feel totally different as I work for Renz restaurants not for McDonald's and I feel that there are two different things in the way things are approached as a franchisee. It's the family atmosphere whereas the company dictates to you as an employee more and it might be dictated to the franchisee more (from the company) but not to the staff if that makes sense.* The extant literature revealed limited research within this area of corporate governance and ownership structures within fast food restaurants. That said, one paper was uncovered and these research findings do support this offering from Sorenson and Sørensen (2001) who suggest that managers within each ownership type chose between two types of learning: exploitation and exploration. Exploitation is the incremental improvement of existing routines by using standard practices passed down. Exploration is the development of new routines that allows restaurants to adapt to new and localised markets. The mechanisms of command and control, via the franchisor through company owned restaurants lead managers within these to exploit routines. Conversely, entrepreneurs that act as franchisees look to explore sometimes at the expense of exploitation. The participants perceptions supported these observations, particularly participants who had worked within both environments. They clearly felt more freedom within the franchisee owned environments to express themselves and be able to explore new ways of working. Further, participants perceived that there is an interdependence between ownership structures and the successful brand will need the right mix of company and franchised restaurants to maximise performance. However, there was no evidence that either type of ownership had influence on performance overall.

#### Monetary Incentives

Secondly, no evidence emerged from the research findings to support those of Locke *et al.* (1980) or Stajkovic and Luthans (2001) as they purported that work performance and productivity increased by 30% after the introduction of monetary rewards. In fact, no evidence emerged which supported either greater performance or a desire to work harder for the brand as a result of monetary incentives. **Within Theme Three, sub-Theme Three**, only ten participants alluded to pay separately, and it was only to mention the level of remuneration. Participant 26 said *I think it's first of all you got the pay is better than actually anywhere else from what I know.* Similarly, participant 14 stated, when asked what motivated him to come to work, *money. Additionally, we have a rewards scheme, like a bonus scheme for the managers and hitting targets you get a nice pay-out for the year we get recognition.* However, the emerging evidence supported the view postulated by Aguinis *et al.* (2013) who stated that monetary rewards can have positive and less desirable effect on firm-level performance as no evidence emerged from participant perception that the pay had any influence on their performance. This supports this offering as postulated by Spekle and Verbeeten (2014) and Kunz (2015). Most participants recognised non-monetary rewards as having influence on how they performed. This is discussed in Section 7.2.2.3.

#### Non-Monetary Incentives

Conversely, twenty-four participants suggested their performance was influenced by non-monetary rewards the employer brand offered them. **Theme Three, sub-theme Four** identified that seventeen participants focused on other benefits and non-monetary rewards they felt they achieved by virtue of being employed by the brand which related to benefits above and beyond purely money. There was a diverse perception of what non-monetary benefits were on offer and this applied to both franchised and company owned restaurants. For example, participant 14 said *We get breakpoint cards so you can get some free food or drink when you are on break. You might get free points and if you do a good job and you hit your targets for the day you get given a breakpoint card for when you're next in so you can have some extra food and if you do a really good job you can get like a meal reward.* Participant 20 corroborated this when he said *the people are the reason that attracted me here are very friendly and it does take a special person to work at McDonald's I find because it has to be someone who could deal with happy customers, angry customers, and certain situations. You get a lot of people that can't cope with those situations.  I find that people who work here are normally quite happy, smiling, and laughing.* Both viewpoints supported the existing literature and the proposition offered by Luthans and Youssef (2004) who suggested that employees draw their social capital from multiple sources, which is not just monetary in value. The participants evidenced employer branding influencing task performance, both directly through created connections and contacts and indirectly through enriched social support and enhanced psychological well-being. Further, this influence was evidenced as being related to their understanding of what the brand meant to them with regards to the definition. Specifically, the themes of flexibility, being well-trained and working within a team- orientated, family-based environment emerged as having a correlation with task performance.

#### Flexibility

Flexibility is referenced by participants within the definition of employer branding and as an employee benefit (Section 6.6, Aggregate Dimension V) and factor that influences their performance. Within **Theme Three, sub-theme Five**, participant 31 refers simply to *Flexibility and work life balance.* Participant 4 and 16 were more direct with their interpretation of this as an employee motivator and stated this from the outset. Participant 16 said *It's my work life balance and you know when it hits the fan you got to be there but when something is working your swing that round and what you get out of it what you put into it so the more you put in the more you get out at the end of the day.  But now I've got the store where it needs to be and now my work life balance is very good now.* Participant 4 added *I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life and things like that. You take holiday pay and if things happen, they are very fair to you so if you need time off for example, they can allocate this and things like that.* Further within **Theme Fourteen, sub-theme One,** participant 31 also says*I like the flexible hours. When I just started, I couldn't work that much because my husband's far away. He's in the army so the benefits are that they are very understanding. When I started I only used to work 5 hours so now my daughter goes to school full time and they gave me more hours so they are very flexible and they teach us that the more we learn they'll give us an increase in pay and responsibility.*

Within this context, participants recognised that the brand was able to offer each individual tailored hours of employment, to suit their circumstances and personal situation. This was seen as a positive brand offering by these participants. For example, some employees were on guaranteed hour contracts which meant they had a minimum number of hours they would be given every week. Interestingly, even though flexibility was referenced by the majority of employees, the findings offered no direct support for increased performance as a result of these arrangement. However, the findings do support a proposition offered by De Menezes and Kelliher (2017) stating that flexible working arrangements, formal or informal, can lead to positive employee attitudes which may contribute indirectly to employee performance.

#### Training & Development

The qualitative findings supported the proposition offered by Nordhaug (1989) who suggested that there are benefits and rewards of training and professional development which may influence organisational performance. Participant perceptions reflected this view with perceptions suggesting the employer brand was very strong in terms of personal development. They perceived that this training helped them deliver their day-to day roles effectively. Training and development was referred to by over fifty percent (eighteen out of thirty-six) of the participant population as a theme that they perceived influenced their own performance. Co-operation was the first sub-theme theme that emerged from the participants within **Theme Seven, sub-theme One**. Viewpoints here were shared across both company and franchised restaurants with a common thread of training being an important factor in personal development and performance. For example, participant 21 said *training and development yes. I started 1-year ago, and I became a crew trainer 6 months afterwards and now I'm going to get promoted to being floor manager so it depends on you a lot but they are looking for achieving people.* This was further reinforced by participant 17 who added *I'm a second assistant and I get a work-based pension, I get health benefits, I get 6-weeks holiday, I get a university degree course and this development is very important for me and I get employee discounts.* Moreover, this approach is reinforced in a study by Espinoza *et al.* (2018) who postulated that the development of employee training programmes significantly reduces high rates of staff turnover and any costs associated with recruitment are therefore reduced accordingly. **Theme Seven, sub-theme One** identified this for example, when participant 17 recognised the importance of training to his performance when he said *You look after the People by training them and the training is phenomenal within McDonalds. No other business I know is as competitive compared to McDonald's and no one I know has training like McDonald's do. We really look after their people and because we look after our people it brings attraction and attraction talks and one becomes ten, ten becomes a hundred and that's how the brand is.* In addition, the research findings supported the views of Bergenhenegouwen (1996) who offered that organisations which place emphasis on training and development achieve an improvement in the organisations level of performance and the creation of a competitive advantage. Participant perception clearly evidenced the structured nature of career progression of the employer brand.

The inference that emerged from the participant interviews suggested that the training and development given by the McDonalds (the employer) has a reciprocal relationship with employee performance levels. The suggestion that emerged was that the more training given to the participants, the better they perceived they would perform their daily tasks. Further, McDonalds would continue to employees training and deliver on their promises as long as the employees performed at work to a satisfactory level. The concept of a brand promise was emerging as an underlying theme which required a two-way exchange of deliverables and a psychological contract between the employer and employee to be established (Chapter 3, Section 3.1).

#### Teamwork

The findings evidenced teamwork as a perception of the employer brand and having an influence over employee performance. Further, evidence emerged which supported a proposition offered by Paullay *et al.* (1994) who said that teamwork is a good predicator of levels of performance. Participants perceived that without teamwork there would be chaos within the working environment as the team has to work together in order to deliver a consistent, fast and friendly service every day. The participants genuinely perceived that they worked harder within the team environment of McDonalds. A quarter of participants (nine out of thirty-six) appeared to associate a stronger level of performance when they worked collaboratively with colleagues. **Theme Five, sub-theme One** identified that the stronger examples recognised came from participants within franchised restaurants which is interesting as this may relate back to participant feeling around being more family and people orientated than company restaurants. Perceptions were interesting, for example, participant 15 said *if we don't work together it will just be chaos every day.* Similarly, this feeling was corroborated by participant 16 who commented *You get to work with your friends you get to see them on a daily basis you get to work when it suits you and that's probably why it stands out now and it's all about procedure, people working together, operations and it's all about our culture in the restaurant.* The enjoyment people felt when interacting more with each other was clear as a motivator for a better performance.

Further, participant perception was that the employer brand had a family-based and people orientated approach. The participants interviewed talked about being satisfied within the workplace as the organisation cared about their quality of life. **Theme three, sub-theme two** evidenced these perceptions. For example, participant 3 said *Yes, you do you get a family environment and other benefits are that they (the staff) look up to certain people and take them on as a parent and guiding relationship*and participant 13 corroborated these feelings when he said *More like a family restaurant is fast food but it's also like a family place.* This perception of the brand made the participants try harder at work and inferred that that these satisfied employees would deliver a higher level of performance. This perception was borne out throughout the participant interview process and this emergent theme of positive employee relations is thought to impact aggregate-level performance through effects on worker motivation and productivity, supporting a proposition offered by Bowen and Ostroff (2004).

Discussions now follow-on extra role performance or going the extra mile, otherwise known as Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). This is discussed in Section 7.3.

## Research Question II: How does employer branding affect organisational citizenship behaviour within a franchised, fast food environment within the United Kingdom?

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) can be defined as an individual’s contribution in the workplace that goes beyond role requirements and contractually rewarded job achievements (Organ and Ryan, 1995). The research explored what participants perceived influenced them to go above and beyond in the workplace. Evidence emerged that being treated fairly and respectfully and being encouraged and supported by their employer positively influenced their organisational citizenship behaviours. Evidence of being happy in the workplace was also referenced as a perception the employees felt enabled better performance. Combined with these perceptions of employer branding influencing Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), participants also referenced their own determination and work-ethic. These emerging themes are now discussed individually in Sections 7.3.1 – 7.3.4.

### Encouragement and Happiness

Research findings supported a proposition offered by Konovsky and Pugh (1994) that positive, beneficial actions directed at the employees by the organisation and representatives (such as a warm and fun culture, staff rewards and parties, and a creative environment) contribute to a higher value exchange relationship. The participants suggested that a positive environment was a strong perception they associated with the McDonalds brand which positively influenced their extra-role performance, relationship and commitment to the brand. **Theme Twelve, sub-theme One** highlighted the participant perceptions. For example, participant 4 stated *for me personally if someone says thank you, please or well done for just doing your job that's what makes it the biggest thing because you can be the biggest brand you have to respect everybody and I think we always do that quite well.* Adding to this participant 5 said *I feel positive towards the brand but the brand for the most part has always treated me well. I've had my own ups and downs but the brand in itself has treated me well. I have been sent on 5 or 6 courses and with each of them I've got recognition and reward for doing them and being a manager in itself there's a lot of rewarding thing that comes with this job.* This perceived encouragement the participants alluded to was seen by them to push them to go the extra mile and to influence their extra-role performance. Combined with this theme, findings also suggested that employee happiness may influence higher levels of employee performance at work. The participants suggested that when they felt happy and were encouraged, they perceived they performed well. For example, happiness was seen as a factor that could help to encourage and precipitate determination to a greater or lesser extent. **Theme Six, sub-theme Two** highlighted these perceptions. Participant 4 stated *For me and my role as an assistant I get sent more targets and things like that and when you hit your target it's a real bonus and I feel very happy.* Participant 9 corroborated this by saying *when you get encouragement or just recognised if someone can recognise that you put in the work and you're doing it harder than you normally would and they mention you're doing a really good job it makes you happy.* This supports literature on happiness in the workplace as purported by Gavin and Mason (2004) who postulate that happiness at work can lead to various positive organisational outcomes and contribute to increased organisation success and commitment. The findings also went further and support the idea that happiness can influence higher levels of performance and work engagement supporting an offering by Money *et al.* (2009).

### Self-Esteem

A second emerging theme participants referenced was self-esteem. **Theme Six, sub-theme Three** highlighted these perceptions. In twenty examples documented, the individuals felt their self-esteem had benefited as a result of working for the organisation. These individuals talked about the pride they had working for the organisation and how they are overachieving as a result of this. For example, participant 9 stated *for a start, like self-esteem because before I started working here there was a stigma about working with McDonalds because everybody looks down upon you because it is fast food. But having worked here I love working here and I have made so many good friends and the management here very encouraging. They are always trying to push us to improve or get promoted and pushing all the crew to getting promoted whereas where I was working before, I was put down and put in your place. Whereas here everything is encouraged, and my self-esteem has shot up for me since I started working here.* Further supporting these perceptions, participant 17 said *because I care. I care more than I did say a year ago because I felt a year ago, I didn't have the support from my superiors as I didn't know what I was doing wrong or what I was doing right. Now I have that new superior who knows what they're talking about and what their expectations are from myself. I am now always trying to look to achieve and he has supported me throughout.* These findings strongly support a proposition offered by Pierce and Gardner (2004) that organisation-based self-esteem (the degree to which an individual believes him/herself to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member) and a person’s self-concept or self-evaluation can also influence employee performance. Further, employees may act in a manner that is consistent with increased employee performance (OCB). The participants cited examples that would suggest they had aspirations of wanting to perform at a higher level in return for the perceived enhanced self-esteem they would receive from their peers and managers. Interestingly, a further emergent theme was a positive relationship between high levels of self-esteem and motivation to perform better and go the extra mile (OCB). Conversely, the findings suggested that low self-esteem resulted in a self-protecting motivation or "damage control" to withhold efforts to justify a low performance. This supported the proposition suggested by Korman (2001).

### Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

The supportive nature of the employer brand was evidenced from the participant interviews. **Theme Eight, sub-theme Two** highlighted the participant perceptions. The Findings support a proposition offered by Settoon *et al.* (1996) suggesting that this social interaction and exchange can be looked at on two levels, one between the organisation and the employees and the other a more focused dyadic relationship between the employees and their superiors. For example, participant 8 said *it is the mixture of how your superiors treats you and it depends on how the people you work with treat you and that way the mood changes and you think about leaving and then after that you just say it was just a bad day.* Participant 28 supported this perception when he stated *I worked in Aldershot drive-thru before it got franchised and I handed in my notice.  I didn't like the way the business manager ran the restaurant and I didn’t like my time there and I handed in my notice and they offered to transfer me here. Yes, it was entirely because of that relationship. He picked on me all the time and I didn’t want to waste my time being in that environment.* The relationship between crew members and the managers was referenced during the participant interviews and formed a strong pillar that the participants perceived either bonded them together or did not. This finding supports a suggestion that employees form a global belief concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. It has been labelled perceived organisational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). With reference to the participant interviews, the perception was that McDonalds was supportive and caring with respect to the employees. This strong sense of support was evidenced by managers across all the locations, company and franchised, as these managers realised that without the support of their team, they were unable to deliver what is required in order to do their own jobs. Moreover, this highlighted the importance of employees job attitudes and supported a proposition offered by Organ and Ryan (1995) who found that job attitudes are robust predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour. Further, (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000) proposed that an altruistic spirit can be evoked by organisational commitment and employees with altruistic spirit might produce citizenship behaviours that deliver extra-role value to the customers and colleagues and the employee goes the extra mile. Examples of brand citizenship behaviours are helping behaviour, brand consideration, brand enthusiasm, sportsmanship, brand endorsement, self-development and brand advancement (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). The findings evidenced examples of these altruistic behaviours with participants saying that they helped colleagues regularly, stayed behind at work without being asked, did additional tasks that they did not need to perform and went above and beyond as a matter of course in their daily routines.

Further evidence from the findings supported the proposition that organisational rewards can improve the employee perceptions of POS because the employee will make a good contribution above and beyond if their treatment is perceived to be fair (Muchlish, 2020). In turn, he argued that the additional support given to the employee increases their commitment.

The importance of creating organizational citizenship behaviour within the organisation is to maximise efficiencies and increase employee productivity. The suggestion is brand citizenship behaviour leads to higher customer satisfaction and this is an important consideration for the purposes of this research study within a fast-food, customer centric environment.

### Employee Determination

A final consideration of brand influence on organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) was the perception of employee determination. Participants referenced the term ‘determination’ which they felt explained their personal drive and desire to go the extra mile. Upon discussions during participant interviews, this perception of determination emerged as a motivator to achieve above and beyond. **Theme Six, sub-theme One** highlighted these participant perceptions. For example, participant 18 who has a disability stated *I try to put myself out and I just carry on going. Determination to prove I can do something that other people say I cannot do. A Lot of people do not realise that I have the strength of two arms in one arm and they do not realise.  I push myself to the limit and over that limit because of my disability and I want to prove people wrong.* Similarly, participant 26 said *I think I do that naturally so I think about myself and my reputation.  I take it as the way to do things I don't wait for consultants or someone telling me to do this or that because I think for example if I want to do something for my people I will do it because I think it's the right thing to do and I'm not waiting for someone to tell me to do it and this is when a consistent performance comes in.* Interestingly, in some instances as noted, this was a desire to prove others wrong who believed they could not deliver on a particular task. These findings support a proposition as offered by Gagné and Deci (2005) which suggests that employee motivation is on a continuum from controlled to autonomous motivation; The more autonomy the employees felt they had, the better they would perform. The research evidenced that when participants were left alone to get on with it and show what they can do, they were at their best. Further, this recognises that an employee’s self needs, and determination does not necessarily differ from that of the organisation, because the participants suggested that they seek to fulfil their personal, often non-monetary, needs such as autonomy or recognition. This offers further theoretical support for the offerings of De Baerdemaeker and Bruggeman (2015) and Segers *et al.* (2008).

The influence of employer branding on task and organisational citizenship performance has been discussed in Sections 7.2 and Section 7.3 above. The role of the reciprocal exchange or psychological contract that exists between employer and employee is now discussed in Section 7.4

## Research Question III: What is the role of the psychological contract on the relationship between employer branding, employee behaviour and performance

The psychological contract (PC) is an individual’s belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between a person and another party; there is a belief that a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations (Blau, 1964; Rousseau, 1989; Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). These concepts of social exchange (Blau, 1964) have long been used by organisational researchers to describe the motivational basis behind employee behaviours and the formation of positive employee attitudes (Levinson, 1965). The findings support this relationship as offered by Blau (1964) and Baruch and Rousseau (2018) stating a that a reciprocal relationship exists between each participant and their employer, namely McDonalds. The participants perception suggested they receive economic and socioemotional support from their organisation (money and non-monetary rewards) and in turn they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organisation with hard work. There is seen to be basic ‘rules of exchange’ and the findings support this proposition as offered by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005). The lens of the psychological contract offers a consistent way of looking at the reciprocity of exchange and the psychological contract itself supports this two-way relationship between employer and employee Robinson *et al.* (2004).

All of the thirty-six participants perceptions elicited an understanding of a perceived relationship between themselves and their employer. This research used the theoretical concept of the psychological contract (PC) as a ‘lens’ to view the relationship of employer branding with employee performance and behaviour. Participants either had a positive or negative perception of what aspects of the brand influenced their behaviour or performance. Using the PC as a lens to explore these relationships enabled emerging perceptions to be captured during the interview process. The findings evidenced several emerging themes that explored the role of the psychological contract. Perception was that as long as McDonalds delivered on their brand promise, participants had positive feelings of brand ownership and felt more engaged with the organisations people practices, recognition schemes and organisational culture. Participants evidenced themes that the researcher has interpreted as having influence alongside the psychological contract. These are discussed in Section 7.4.1 – 7.4.6.

### Beneficial Actions

The research findings support the suggestion that positive, beneficial actions directed at the employees by the organisation and representatives (such as a warm and fun culture, staff rewards and parties, and a creative environment) contribute to a better relationship between employer and employee, a proposition offered by Konovsky and Pugh (1994). The successful brands, for example McDonalds, consistently deliver on the inherent promise of the brand and a strong employer brand makes people more committed and want to work there (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). The findings support this premise with the majority (twenty nine out of thirty-six) of participants suggesting that the greater the support, fairness and opportunities given to them by the employer, the more committed they perceived they would be to the organisation. **Theme Six, sub-theme Three** highlighted participant perceptions. For example, participant 17 suggested that his level of care had increased when his relationships had improved with his superiors and they understood him better by saying *I am now always trying to look to achieve.* Further participant 25 supported this viewpoint by saying *I guess its pride and we have a ranking. We compare ourselves against other restaurants and we look at our previous results and we always want to be better.*

Further, **Theme Thirteen, sub-theme One** highlighted that positive actions as directed by the employer to the employee do influence the psychological contract (PC) and the level of reciprocal exchange between parties. For example, participant 25 stated *I think the working environment in McDonald's is something that makes it fun.  The people culture in McDonald's as well is really great and we are good at keeping and attracting people to the system.* The implication was that the way he was treated and the perception of fun he has at work made him engage with the company. Participant 31 had similar perceptions when she stated *I like working with people and it's a very social environment.  I go out with a few of them but not many because they are a little youngster and I'm older. I like getting on with different age groups and I like coming out here mixing with the customers as well. I like it a lot and its great fun.* Interestingly, an extension of the psychological contract is called brand psychological ownership. The participants suggested that the psychological experiences from McDonalds influenced their positive brand attitudes, such as feelings of ownership towards the corporate brand and altruistic spirit towards brand-related activities. These findings offer support to the proposition by Chiang *et al.* (2013) stating that employer branding is believed to positively influence attitudes and behaviours of employees. This increased sense of reciprocal exchange leads to organisational citizenship behaviours and employees going above and beyond.

### People Practices

Twenty-nine participants out of thirty-six referred to the term people practices as a perception they felt connected them to the organisation. **Theme Eleven People Practices,** highlighted this reciprocal obligation and exchange, identifying the influence of the psychological contract in this employee/employer relationship. For example, participant 1 said *I think they have better people practices and better development opportunities that attracts a lot of people which you don't get in other fast-food companies from my experience. You don't get that in the KFC because there's a loyalty to it and people buy into the idea and I enjoy working with the people because it's a people business and you're working hard with the same people, the good people and people that you like.* Additionally, participant 7 said because *of the employee’s flexibility and treating employees with respect and fairness you feel a sense of commitment to the organisation.* This suggests that this sub-theme resonated with the general employee population within the organisation who have a perception of how fairly the management treat them during their day-to-day activities. This was further corroborated by participant 18 when he said *McDonalds is* *the only place the gives people a chance and it's inclusive and doesn't discriminate between people. They give you a chance to prove yourself and prove you can do something with your life.*

McDonalds as a company, in all its internal and external marketing literature and internal branding material, hails itself as a people company and this message is always reinforced through seminars, general emails and training. It is therefore of no surprise that this message has resonated with the employees who perceive a strong sense of obligation to the organisation in this respect. Participants suggested McDonalds offered them excellent opportunities and career development. Examples given suggested you can start at the bottom and reach the top, indicating an organisation that does not discriminate and everyone could succeed if they wanted to put in the effort. The findings indicate that participants perceive a positive psychological connection with McDonalds people practices and associate this perception with their own development, individual growth and ability to progress within the organisation. This supports a proposition offered by Bergenhenegouwen (1996) suggesting organisations which place emphasis on development and training can achieve an improvement in the organisations level of performance. In this sense, the role of the psychological contract was to act as an enabler in the relationship between the participant and their perceptions. Evidence suggests that employees who are satisfied with their development will be more committed to the organisation and perceive more organisational support than managers who are less satisfied with employee development. This concurs with an offering from Tansky and Cohen (2001).

### Job Satisfaction influences Life satisfaction

Interestingly, developing the role of the psychological contract further, it has also been suggested that life satisfaction can cause job satisfaction but not vice-versa (Judge *et al.*, 2001). This implies that job satisfaction cannot influence the participants life outside the workplace. However, this research evidenced findings that contradict this, suggesting that employees perceive that job satisfaction does indeed add to their overall well-being and can influence life satisfaction. The majority of participants felt they benefited outside work from being happy and satisfied within the workplace. For example, they suggested that it was the non-monetary factors that McDonalds offers them that enriches their life generally. **Theme Three, sub-theme Four** highlighted the workplace influencing an employees’ personal life. For example, participants employed by the brand related to benefits above and beyond purely money that made them feel good outside the working environment. There was a diverse perception of what non-monetary benefits were on offer and this applied to both franchised and company owned restaurants. Participant 20 said *the people are the reason that attracted me here are very friendly and it does take a special person to work at McDonald's I find because it has to be someone who could deal with happy customers, angry customers, and certain situations. You get a lot of people that can't cope with those situations.  I find that people who work here are normally quite happy, smiling, and laughing.* He related the stresses of the role with having to employ a certain type of person and went further to suggest that the brand attracts a happy natured workforce, both in and outside work. Participant 4 supported this viewpoint by saying *I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life and things like that. You take holiday pay and if things happen, they are very fair to you so if you need time off for example, they can allocate this and things like that.* This is a clear contribution to employer branding theory and postulates that participants are more focused upon non-monetary rewards within the fast-food sector; In placing a higher emphasis upon these non-monetary rewards, employees perceive they are satisfied both in and outside the workplace.

### Fairness

Participants suggested that they were more committed to the brand if they perceived they were being treated fairly and with respect. **Theme Eleven, sub-theme Two** highlighted the participant perceptions that supported this viewpoint. For example, participant 18 encapsulated these thoughts by saying *They give you a chance to prove yourself and prove you can do something with your life.* Further,participant 19 commented they *seem very fair as an employer* corroborating the general feeling from the group. These qualitative findings examined and supported the proposition of fairness as a theme, as postulated by Dinç (2015). Findings revealed the participant perception of fairness was influenced by the psychological contract and the reciprocal relationship they felt they had with McDonalds. These findings concur with Social Exchange Theory (SET) which suggests that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties and the actions of one party lead to a response or action by the other party (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Further, participants spoke about pastoral care and the support of the organisation influencing their own commitment to the organisation. A quarter of participants felt that McDonalds understands them and is open and supportive and they perceive a psychological connection with the organisation. Interestingly, this perception supports a proposition offered by several scholars (Moideenkutty *et al.*, 2001; Loi *et al.*, 2006; Dinç, 2015) suggesting that this support and pastoral care enhances the relationship between the employee and employer based on the perception of fairness and the employees own commitment to their organisation.

### Recognition

Recognition was a separate theme to emerge as being of psychological significance. The qualitative findings revealed that nineteen of the thirty-six participants wanted to be recognised and appreciated for their efforts at work. Their perception was that this recognition made them feel better about themselves and as a result felt a stronger connection with the brand. These perceptions indicated a positive relationship between employee recognition and commitment to McDonalds. Types of recognition evidenced were varied. For example, six participants commented on the nature of someone saying please and thank you. **Theme Twelve, sub-theme One** highlighted these perceptions. Participant 4 commented *personally if someone says thank you, please or well done for just doing your job that's what makes it the biggest thing.* Additionally,participant 5 said *I feel positive towards the brand but the brand for the most part has always treated me well. I've had my own ups and downs, but the brand in itself has treated me well. I have been sent on 5 or 6 courses and with each of them I've got recognition and reward for doing them and being a manager in itself there's a lot of rewarding thing that comes with this job..* This directly supports a proposition as offered by Blanchard and Nelson (1994) stating that when you ask employees what has the most impact on their commitment and performance they will say it is a personal, spontaneous and sincere thank you for a job well done. Interestingly, this also supports the proposition as laid out by Brun and Dugas (2008) who suggested that there is a need for recognition practices and this is felt by the workforce, regardless of status or profession of the employees. Ten participants further commented upon their training, saying that they have been recognised as a result of going on courses as laid out for them, as part of their development. In this instance, the participants were recognised within the public organisation as a result of promotions, progression and status. These findings support the proposition as offered by Bradler *et al.* (2016) who stated that the public recognition of employees, if given personally and in small groups, does appear to provide and increase in the employees positive commitment to an organisation and in turn an increase in performance. Lastly, the findings support the suggestion postulated by Luthans (2000) stating that business leaders need to look to increase the recognition schemes of their employees if they are to see better productivity, motivation and higher staff retention within their respective organisations.

### Culture

Developing the role of the psychological contract further, thirty-one of the participants talked about the culture in terms of a perception of the brand, with twenty-five and eighteen participants respectively mentioning fun and fast-paced as two emerging themes. Specifically, participants talked about the working environment and how this generated a positive psychological feeling and association with the brand. Moreover, there emerged a positive correlation with this brand culture and the desire to experience fun. **Theme Thirteen, sub-theme One** highlighted these participant perceptions. For example, participant 25 related the fun aspect of his role back to the people he worked with by saying *the working environment in McDonald's is something that makes it fun. The people culture in McDonald's as well is really great and we are good at keeping and attracting people to the system*. A longer standing senior manager, participant 31 stated *I like working with people and it's a very social environment.  I go out with a few of them but not many because they are a little youngster and I'm older. I like getting on with different age groups and I like coming out here mixing with the customers as well. I like it a lot and its great fun.* Interestingly, this finding supports a proposition offered by Konovsky and Pugh (1994) stating that positive and beneficial actions directed at employees, such as a warm and fun culture, can contribute to a stronger employee and employer relationship. Further, the findings concur with the suggestion that humour in the workplace can assist with team creation, as postulated by Holmes and Schnurr (2005). The participants recognised that the fun aspect of their working environment meant that they felt more engaged with the organisation and enjoyed being at work. This supports a proposition offered by Plester and Hutchison (2016) suggesting that fun is a specific workplace value.

The second cultural influence participants referenced was the fast-paced nature of the organisation. This was evidenced by eighteen participants. Interestingly, the perception was a positive correlation between the hectic nature of the workplace and what they personally liked to do. This fast-paced culture appealed to them as they all said they liked to be busy and they liked this aspect of their working lives. This finding supports a proposition as offered by Vancouver and Schmitt (1991) that says a higher level of organisational fit with each person’s aspirations reduced any intention to leave and increases organisational commitment. This evidence reinforced McDonalds delivering on its brand promise and honouring the psychological contract. Moreover, evidence from a proposition by Kumar *et al.* (2012) who studied the fast-food sector in Malaysia, suggested that individuals hired under an organisation culture fit, will exhibit greater organisational citizenship behaviour and go the extra mile. The participant reflections exhibit these perceptions and corroborate this proposition.

## Research Question IV: How does employer branding influence employee’s intention to leave within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom?

Intention to leave feelings occur when there is violation of the psychological contract (PC). This is when an employee perceives a sense of wrongdoing, deception and betrayal and the employer fails to honour the perceived psychological contract between them. This contact violation was evidenced within the sample population and findings supported a proposition as offered by Rousseau (1989) stating that there would be an increased tendency for employees to leave in this situation. The researcher was keen to develop an understanding of why this happens, supporting a proposition offered by (Kuean *et al.*, 2010) stating that it is very important to establish the reasons that makes people leave their jobs because it enables you to estimate intention to leave behaviours in advance and take measures against them. Further, the findings also supported the notion of brand ownership, as purported by Chang *et al.* (2012) stating that employees are more committed, less likely to leave and their relationship is enhanced with the organisation through the foundation of employer branding.

The qualitative findings evidenced the various circumstances employees perceive they may want to leave McDonalds. The emergent themes from the research findings were no job involvement, poor organisational support and relationships, a critique culture, poor communication, poor work-life balance and stress & Pressure. These themes are discussed in Sections 7.5.1 – 7.5.7.

### No Job Involvement

In the first instance, the participants discussed the lack of job involvement they potentially had with the organisation. Thirty-one percent of employees talked about the notion of job involvement and how much they liked the work and being given tasks to do. **Theme Eight, sub- theme One** highlighted these participant perceptions.For example, participant 13 said *I get stressed out if I have had a hard day, stressed too at busy times, busy hours if the shift isn't going as well as I would like it to. This happens if the team are not functioning like a team normally and are not involved with what they are doing.* Similarly*,* participant 33 felt that the lack of involvement for him was detrimental and said *I remember a few months ago I wasn’t doing allot.* He seemed much happier when he went on to say *now I am a new crew trainer I have more stuff to do and more responsibility and I like being given stuff to do.* This individual really wanted to be appreciated and deliver what he felt he could to the best of his ability. These finding support a proposition as offered by Chonko (1983) who suggested that job involvement could be seen as a type of socialisation which emphasises hard work, diligence and initiative. However, the participants talked about their perception of a detachment from their job, which they suggested could influence them to leave the organisation. In this instance the lack of job involvement had a negative influence on their relationship with the organisation. This finding also supports the proposition offered by Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) and Du Preez and Bendixen (2015) stating that if you made an occupation attractive the employee would not want to leave and may go the extra mile. Further, the participants talked about the support and training the organisation gives them and their perception of the brand itself. This perceived organisational support (POS) as first suggested by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) and more recently by Tuzun and Kalemci (2012) is corroborated from these research findings and states that the individuals who recognised a perception of high level of POS would be less likely to leave the organisation. Conversely, Ahmad and Daud (2016) state that there is a significant relationship between the level of support, training and development and an employee’s intention to leave. The nature of the supportive organisation, as evidenced by the participant findings, engenders employees to feel an obligation on adopting some additional roles as helping others out within the organisation, and exhibiting OCB attitudes. This supports a further offering by Shanock and Eisenberger (2006) suggesting this obligation does in fact exist.

### Perceived Supervisory Support

Participants alluded to the relationship and support they received from their supervisors as having influence on their intention to leave the organisation. **Theme Eight, sub-theme Two** highlighted this when participant 8 said *it is the mixture of how your superiors treats you and it depends on how the people you work with treat you and that way the mood changes and you think about leaving and then after that you just say it was just a bad day.* The inference was that these key relationships with superiors had an over ridding influence on the employees thinking about potentially leaving. This perception was a common theme in fifty-five percent of participants and was referenced from within all the restaurant locations. Interestingly, it did appear that this emergent theme was more strongly exhibited from a pool of participants who had been with McDonalds five years or less. This could be attributed to the fact that the longer serving employees, who are typically from a company restaurant background originally and then became franchised, have become more accepting of how they are treated. Participant 15 reinforced this perception when he said *there was a little bit about 5 years ago when the other franchisee ran the restaurant and before the current franchisee took over. He still looked after me but the way they ran the stores was no good.  I used to set up the whole store every single day. That was about the way the previous owner ran it to the ground big time I'm and he was letting go so he didn't care.* In either case, the findings supported the proposition as offered by Maertz Jr *et al.* (2007) stating a significant negative relationship exists between perceived supervisory support and intention to leave; the less support the higher the intention to leave an organisation.

### Critique Culture

A third of all the participants (twelve out of thirty-six) alluded to their perception of a critical and negative culture exhibited by McDonalds hierarchy. This was a clear emergent theme that influenced their decision to leave the employment. Interestingly, this perception of this critical culture was more prevalent within company owned restaurants. This theme may suggest that the employee relationship with a franchisee, as it is their own business, can be forged differently. Moreover, in a franchised operation the franchisee is a layer of protection between the employees and the corporation and it could be argued that in this instance the employees are not exposed to this hierarchical criticism. Combined with being more prevalent within Company owned restaurants, this perception was stronger from senior employees who said they felt pressure to perform and as such were open to more criticism. **Theme Nine, sub-theme One** highlighted this feeling when participant 25 who is a Business Manager was very clear when he said *It is a critique culture. Yes, it is a culture of being negative and I think the whole hierarchy just wears people down after a while. The businesspeople are not seeing it when the business keeps on growing, growing, growing and I don't think they realise if you've done these quarters of growth it's a lot harder than what it used to be. People are saying that the whole culture in terms of employment with the millennials, has all changed. They work completely differently, the new generation and have not got the same level of commitment.* One of his fellow Business Managers, participant 26, also said *in McDonald's you are only measured by your last result and that is quite disappointing. I think it's quite a blame culture as well and for me that is the only negative. When you look at other Industries it's not the same.* These findings support a proposition offered by MacIntosh and Doherty (2010) who suggest that the atmosphere of an organisation is the most meaningful cultural dimension to impact job satisfaction. This embodies being friendly, upbeat and welcoming. They postulated that this type of negativity led to a lack of connectedness (violating the psychological contract) and this had significant influence on intention to leave.

### Poor Communication

Twenty two percent of the participants perceived that poor communication was a factor that influenced their intention to leave. They suggested that not being kept informed by the management of what was expected of them was frustrating and engendered a perception of being disconnected with the organisation. **Theme Nine, sub-theme Three** suggested that poor communication influence intention to leave. For example, participant 5 made note of not being given the information he required if he is expected to step in and run the restaurant efficiently when he said *If I am not communicated with there's been times especially working in the store when I felt like in the High Street and I feel a bit in the dark sometimes because the person above me doesn't cascade down as much as I think and I feel like I should be trusted to be able to run the restaurant.* Further, participant 17 said in support of this viewpoint *my superior was under motivated, so knowing what to do for starters and the job description for second was tough. I wasn't aware what I needed to do and it wasn't communicated properly, coming and setting your own to-do lists and hoping for the best* and participant 22 echoed this feeling by saying *yes, when I felt left behind and not communicated with by my team in the moments, I needed it the most.* These communication findings support a proposition offered by Probst *et al.* (2010) that communication is an important predicator of job satisfaction. The findings further support Vermeir *et al.* (2018) that communication is negatively correlated with intention to leave.

### Work-Life Balance

Work life balance is referred to in Section 7.6 as a positive employee perception. However, in this context eleven out of thirty-six participants had the opposite perception and viewed the work-life balance as inequitable and a having a strong influence on leaving McDonalds. **Theme Ten, sub-theme One** highlighted participant perception.For example,participant 1 said*Health and life balance. I think the thing that worries me is if myself and my wife had a family and there is not the time. There isn't a balance and as we said earlier the 24-hours doesn't allow for a balance of the intensity of work. It's always there so for me just looking at peers and friends who have just had kids, he's moved to a 7 till 2 job Monday to Friday. I mean I've never had weekends off consistently in my whole life even when I was in head office, so I am giving allot up. I don't play hockey and things like that so just that balance and if it's stops me having the balance it's different like a new store opening as I know that’s 3 months of hard work that's not the problem is when you don't see an end to it and that balance.* Further, participant 9 said *Normally it's when I've been doing 6am starts all week. Feeling really tired from having a child as well and I feel like is it worth it? It just took its toll. I can get a job in the evenings and maybe do things a different way. Where do you get tired you have to think that I chose these hours and I like doing this and I have to remind myself that I wanted to do this.* This evidence supports a proposition offered by Noor (2011) suggesting that work-life conflicts have a positive correlation with high intention to leave. Further, the findings also support Deery and Jago (2015) who suggest that work-life balance does have an important role to play in intention to leave rates, depending upon the employee perceptions. The participants interviewed suggested that their negative work-life balance perceptions were a function of which restaurant they worked in and alluded to the 24-hour nature of McDonalds. They suggested that within these busy and hectic environments and in-keeping with the UK fast-food sector being available 24/7, the balance was lost.

### Stress and Pressure

Further interview discussion showed that nineteen participants perceived stress and pressure influenced their intention to leave. The participants alluded to the increasing workload and the nature of working hours which are more common now within McDonalds (24-hour operations). This finding supports a proposition offered by Wibowo (2012) stating a positive and significant correlation exists between workload and job stress. Evidence emerged that participants perceive stress when things are not going as they would like and/or they are not being treated as they want to be. **Theme Ten, sub-theme Two** highlighted these participant perceptions. For example,participant 6 said*Yep. Sometimes it's due to stress. So if it were at Christmas time when it's constantly busy and you feel like you can't even catch your breath because there is always cars, always customers and I feel like oh my god I would just love to sit in an office or when it comes to times.* Similarly,participant 8 said *pressure and stress make me think about leaving and here's a stressful job sometimes yes maybe it seems easy but it's not that easy working here so you have to love what you're doing and after that you have to work hard.* This was reasonable to be expected and supported an offering by Suarthana and Riana (2016) stating that this psychological contract violation has a significant influence on job stress; in turn job stress had a positive influence on intention to leave. Additionally, the employees felt that when McDonalds did not act in the desired manner, from the perspective of a balanced exchange relationship (the psychological contract), their contract had been breached. They perceived this led to a higher level of stress, contributing to their intention to leave. This concurred with contributions offered by ASAD (2017) and Ishtiaq and Zeb (2020).

### Proximity and Just a Job

Proximity was mentioned by eleven of the thirty-six participants as a factor that influenced their decision to remain working for the brand. This is interesting as it predetermines any potential benefits McDonalds can offer, as a starting point for employee engagement. Participants perceived that the ease with which they can get to the restaurants plays an important part of their decision-making process. **Theme Fifteen** **sub-theme One** highlighted participant perceptions. For example, participant 15 said *I live about 2 miles away from the restaurant and I walk to work which takes me about an hour and a half every day.* Similarly*,* participant 16 expressed the same viewpoint about the location of the role being an important factor when he said *It was just that I live near Romney and there were no jobs as it's the middle of nowhere so when I passed my driving test it was one of the few places that was advertising and it was the pay and the accessibility.* There appears to be limited research within the extant literature which can either support or refute this finding. However, the findings do support the proposition as offered by Dalton *et al.* (2013) which suggested that the distance between home and the workplace was negatively associated with commuting.

Lastly, fifty percent of participants (eighteen) interviewed referenced the fact that when they started with the brand, they only saw a temporary situation and not longevity of service. Interestingly, this theme emerged from all ages of employees, service lengths and across franchised and company run restaurants. This was suggestive of the brand being able to accommodate a variety of backgrounds and developing over time an engaged workforce through strong employer branding. The findings support the proposition offered by two scholars Turban and Keon (1993) and Cable and Graham (2000) stating the initial organisational attraction was influenced by applicants’ perceptions of job and organisational characteristics such as pay, location, development or organisational structure. Interestingly, from **theme Fifteen sub-theme Two** participant perceptions of their role being just a job also emerged. For example, participant 17 said *Firstly, I just needed a job, that's why I came here. At first it was more of a school leaving job. I needed to find a job and I had family in the past that had worked for McDonald's and I thought I'd start at McDonald's and see where it takes me.* Concurring with this perception,participant 19 said *A job firstly. I have had a number of different jobs and it's something I haven't done before so it's different. This is the first retail one.* Lastly,these eighteen participant perceptions evidenced from the findings also linked being just a job with a monetary bias influenced their decision to work for the brand in the first instance. If any of these circumstances changed, the perception was that the employees would leave.

## Research Question V: What benefits do employees perceive they derive from the brand?

Section 7.6 evidences participants perceptions of the employee benefits that McDonalds offers. Interestingly, several themes that have been discussed previously in Sections 7.2 – 7.5 were also perceived as an employee benefit and have also been referenced in this Section. Each of these emergent themes is discussed drawing on the findings and analysis from Chapter 6.

The employee benefits participants referenced was their perception of the employer brand. Perceived organisational benefits such as McDonalds being globally recognised, a market leader, progressive and systematic were benefits they felt could influence their employability and image externally. Other benefits identified were internally facing. These were money and non-monetary items which participants perceived related to their internal day-today activities and well-being. These themes are discussed in Sections 7.6.1 – 7.6.3.

### A Globally Recognised and Trusted Brand

The findings evidenced participant perceptions that McDonalds was a globally recognised and trusted brand. A proposition offered by App *et al.* (2012) relates this organisational success to the perception of the employees. Further, this supports the definitions as offered by Dell *et al.* (2001) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) stating that the brand is a set of attributes and values that employees perceive they would gain through their employment with a particular organisation. Further, these qualitative findings indicate that participants acknowledged perceived benefits from working for the company, as a result of the brand McDonalds and what this could offer them in their careers and life aspirations. **Theme Four, sub-theme One** highlights these perceptions. For example, participant 2 said *I think its status and positioning in global brands makes it appear that it stands out* whilstparticipant 25 said *McDonald's is a very well-known brand throughout the world as a fast-food chain. I think it's very big with families and Kids especially around the world and the symbol McDonald's is very famous and eighty or ninety percent of the population of the world knows about it.* Corroborating both perspectives,participant 36 stated *It is a well-known brand that is instantly recognisable by people across the world. People love the brand and everything that they do. The brand offers great customer service and competitively priced products.* These perceived benefits are not to be confused with direct employee benefits such as money and non-monetary rewards and are subtly different. These benefits are evidenced as being life, image and employment opportunity as a result of working for the brand itself. This supports the concept offered by Foster *et al.* (2010) who purported that employer branding primarily addresses potential and existing employees and in this sense it is a sub-brand of the corporate brand.

### Monetary Benefits – a reciprocal exchange

The findings support the proposition purported by Long and Shields (2010) that suggest money is a motivator of attracting and retaining talent, because it helps meet basic needs such as food and shelter. **Theme Three, sub-theme Three** evidences this feeling when participant 14 stated *Money and additionally, we have a rewards scheme, like a bonus scheme for the managers and hitting targets you get a nice pay-out for the year we get recognition.* Moreover*,* participant 19 simply said *Money and a sense of achievement.* Corroborating his colleagues, participant 26 stated *I think it's first of all you got the pay is better than actually anywhere else from what I know.* However, even though participants saw money as a clear employee benefit, evidence emerged that suggested monetary incentives often have either a negative or no relationship on employee performance within the QSR industry in the UK. This supports an offering by Spekle and Verbeeten (2014) and Kunz (2015). The clear perception was that money was not as important as non-monetary employee benefits which are discussed in Section 7.6.3.

### Non-Monetary Employee Benefits

These findings support an offering by Wong (2014). In her studies of the best-of- the-best employees in Canada, she identified several categories that could represent these non-monetary benefits which were professional development, social and psychological, work-life, symbolic and personal involvement. The qualitative findings of this research mirror these observations. The emerging evidence suggested that non-monetary rewards were a more important benefit McDonalds offered each participant. Twenty-four participants suggested they were more focused upon non-monetary rewards within the McDonalds environment. **Theme Three, sub-theme Four** clearly highlights participant perception in relation to non-monetary rewards to corroborate the findings. For example, participant 14 said *We get breakpoint cards so you can get some free food or drink when you are on break. You might get free points and if you do a good job and you hit your targets for the day you get given a breakpoint card for when you're next in so you can have some extra food and if you do a really good job you can get like a meal reward.* This directly spoke about a non-monetary system and talked about earning points from the break-point system which is an incentive-based system based on good performance. Adding to this feeling participant 26, a Business Manager, focused upon progression as a great benefit to employees. He suggested that McDonalds caters for individuals who want to progress within the system or others that merely use the brand as a means of earning money and as a steppingstone to further their own experience and career. He stated *I think the level of the systems we have here for progression is much better.  That is why you have got a lot of people that started in McDonald's as Mcjobs and we understand that. We are here to give them a career and the development of training and to get them where they want to be. Or if they want to use us as a steppingstone to go somewhere else we're quite happy to do that and we will get out of them what we need while they're working for us and at university and studying and they're giving us what we want and they get what they need the with regards to the skills in life they need to take on somewhere else and supporting them financially at the same time. Training and you know what we're not very good at advertising benefits.  Pay and flexibility of work for example. You are a student and you want to come part-time; we can accommodate that. If you want to come and ask for more hours, we will be able to accommodate that, it's just the way our business works.* The evidence suggested a string sense of a perceived benefit above and beyond money alone.

#### The working Environment

In the first instance, **theme Three, sub-theme One** suggested that participants had a very positive perception of what the brand offered them in terms of their working environment and the data set evidenced a strong suggestion this was important to these participants. The participants perceived the environment they worked within as an organisational benefit they derived from working for the brand. Section 7.3.1 discussed a proposition offered by Konovsky and Pugh (1994) that positive, beneficial actions directed at the employees by the organisation and representatives (such as a warm and fun culture, staff rewards and parties, and a creative environment) contribute to a higher value exchange relationship. Participant 8 said *So, I love working here. I always love McDonald's food and I'm happy that I work here with nice people, nice managers, nice crew members and what can I say, a nice environment and nice and friendly customers.* Similarly participant 17 suggested *Is the environment. I like to be fast paced. I like to be active. I like to be constantly doing things. If I find that I'm not doing things I kick myself that I've got nothing to do. So, this sort of environment is down my expert route and I enjoy the first base scenario and the people.* This was corroborated by participant 29 who also commented *I love the environment and the people and interacting with customers and you get to know them so if you give your customers a good service that makes me feel good and if I make some customer happy with what I do I feel good and my manager is happy as well.*

#### Work-Life Balance

Secondly, the research findings suggested that participants strongly associate an employee benefit to be the work-life balance the organisation affords them. This was an emerging perception within **Theme Three, sub-theme Five** and evidenced when participant4 said*I think I think we are very flexible, and we make the hours to work around your life and things like that. You take holiday pay and if things happen, they are very fair to you so if you need time off for example, they can allocate this and things like that.* Supporting this participant 16 said *It's my work life balance.* *You know when it hits the fan you got to be there but when something is working your swing that round and what you get out of it what you put into it so the more you put in the more you get out at the end of the day.  But now I've got the store where it needs to be and now my work life balance is very good now.* Moreover, the findings from the qualitative interviews suggested that twenty-four participants were more focused upon non-monetary rewards within the McDonalds environment. This supports the existing literature and the proposition offered by Luthans and Youssef (2004) who suggested that employees draw their social capital from multiple sources.

#### Flexibility

Thirdly, flexibility was referenced by participants within the definition of employer branding and as an employee benefit (Section 7.2). Within this context, participants recognised that the brand was able to offer each individual tailored hours of employment, to suit their circumstances and personal situation. This was seen as a positive brand offering by these participants. **Theme Fourteen** **sub-theme One** highlighted the participant perceptions. For example, participant 3 stated *employment, well-chosen hours of the staff.* Further,participant 5 said *They told me and what I have seen myself is that we are one of the most flexible in terms of hours or in terms of taking time off as we can always find other people to cover that shift. I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life. Other fast-food brands are harsher and less lenient on flexibility and they won't be as flexible as we can be and I think that is very important as a brand and as an employer and is especially very important to the employees*. In addition, participant 29 said *I also like the flexible hours. When I just started, I couldn't work that much because my husband's far away. He's in the army so the benefits are that they are very understanding. When I started I only used to work 5 hours so now my daughter goes to school full time and they gave me more hours so they are very flexible and they teach us that the more we learn they'll give us an increase in pay and responsibility.* The inference was that the employees were able to work the hours they wanted to suit their lifestyle and other commitments, for example, students studying at college.  The findings supported a proposition offered by Baruch (2004) stating that a new form of psychological contract is emerging which employers provide marketable skills through training and development in exchange for effort and flexibility. Moreover, the findings also support the proposition from Gajendran and Harrison (2007) stating that there are positive associations between flexible working arrangements and employee commitment and attitudes. Interestingly, participants referred back to their perception of the family based culture of McDonalds (See Section 6.2.3); this additionally suggests support for a separate proposition purported by Butts *et al.* (2013) stating positive correlations between employee commitment and work-family support mechanisms. This may suggest that the perceived family-based nature, caring for the well-being of employees both inside and outside of the workplace, has a direct link with participants perception of how flexible McDonalds as an organisation really is.

The flexibility construct was recognised by participants as an evolving concept. Some participants pointed out that their working arrangements had changed over time, e.g. becoming a parent, and this flexibility was greatly appreciated as they were still able to work and do their job. Their perception was that they found this satisfying and that they could contribute whatever their changing circumstance was. For example, and within **theme Fourteen, sub-theme Two** participant 21 stated *I'm working around my son's schedule and my partner's hours as well. I'm on a guaranteed hours contract of 30 hours a week but I only do certain shifts.* Supporting this participant 26 said *You are a student and you want to come part-time; we can accommodate that. If you want to come and ask for more hours, we will be able to accommodate that, it's just the way our business works.* The participants additionally recognised that the brand was able to offer each individual specific types of employment, depending upon their personal situation. For example, some employees were on guaranteed hour contracts if their circumstances suited this working arrangement. Interestingly, even though flexibility was referenced by the majority of employees, the findings offered no direct support for increased performance as a result of these arrangement. However, the findings do support a proposition offered by De Menezes and Kelliher (2017) stating that flexible working arrangements, formal or informal, can lead to positive employee attitudes which may contribute indirectly to employee performance.

#### Training and Development

Training and development was perceived as an employee benefit. **Theme Seven** **sub-theme One** highlighted the participant perceptions and reflected this suggesting the employer brand was very strong in terms of personal development and training and this influenced them to want to perform better at work. For example, participant 2 said I *want to make it a success with regards to turn some of the challenges and negatives into positives with the things I can influence. That could be staff retention possibly and the relationships, trying to ensure people work in a cooperative and collaborative manner whereas before I got here there wasn’t the degree of cooperation that there is now.* Reinforcing this viewpoint participant 17 stated *you look after the People by training them and the training is phenomenal within McDonalds. No other business I know is as competitive compared to McDonald's and no one I know has training like McDonald's do. We really look after their people and because we look after our people it brings attraction and attraction talks and one becomes ten, ten becomes a hundred and that's how the brand is.* These perceptions of the participants went further and referenced the emphasis the brand put upon training and development, which supported the views of Bergenhenegouwen (1996). He purported that organisations which place emphasis on development and training achieve an improvement in the organisations level of performance.

#### Social and Psychological

Lastly, participants referenced social and psychological employee benefits they derived from working for McDonalds. For example, twenty participants felt their self-esteem had benefited as a result of working for the organisation. **Theme Six, sub-theme Three** highlighted these perceptions and these individuals talked about the pride they had working for the organisation and how they are overachieving as a result of this. For example, participant 9 said *for a start, like self-esteem because before I started working here there was a stigma about working with McDonalds because everybody looks down upon you because it is fast food. But having worked here I love working here and I have made so many good friends and the management here very encouraging. They are always trying to push us to improve or get promoted and pushing all the crew to getting promoted whereas where I was working before, I was put down and put in your place. Whereas here everything is encouraged and my self-esteem has shot up for me since I started working here.* Supporting this viewpoint participant 17 said*because I care. I care more than I did say a year ago because I felt a year ago, I didn't have the support from my superiors as I didn't know what I was doing wrong or what I was doing right. Now I have that new superior who knows what they're talking about and what their expectations are from myself. I am now always trying to look to achieve and he has supported me throughout. Following on from these perceptions* participant 25 related the personal self-esteem back to how the employees engaged with McDonalds when he said I *guess its pride and we have a ranking. We compare ourselves against other restaurants and we look at our previous results and we always want to be better.*These findings strongly support a proposition offered by Pierce and Gardner (2004) that organisation-based self-esteem (the degree to which an individual believes him/herself to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member) and a person’s self-concept or self-evaluation can also influence employee performance. Further, these employees may act in a manner that is consistent with increased employee performance.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a discussion of Research Questions (RQ) I – V addressing each systematically in relation to the findings outlined within Chapter 6. The discussions are ordered by each of the Research questions (RQ) and the aggregate dimensions are discussed within each section to which they relate respectively (Section 7.2 to Section 7.6). The chapter summary (Section 7.7 concludes this penultimate chapter. The final chapter of this thesis provides conclusion, research contributions, limitations and direction for future research.

# Conclusions, Contributions and Limitations and Direction for Future Research

## Conclusions

The aim of this research proposal was to understand to what extent, if any, employer branding influences an employee’s performance levels (task performance and organisational citizenship performance) and intention to leave. Further, the promises that employer branding attempts to deliver was looked at through the ‘lens’ of the psychological contract between the employer and employee. It is purported from the literature that there is little academic research into the relationship between employer branding and whether firms that use such techniques achieve higher employee and financial performance. A fundamental empirical question is whether firms using brand and marketing disciplines in their human resources (HR) functions achieve better performance; More research is required looking at how employer equity brand building relates to performance (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). Empirical research into violations of the psychological contract between employer and employee (the organisations value proposition or brand promise) is becoming more prominent. There have been considerable studies on the consequences of psychological contract breach (often violation and breach are used interchangeably in literature) (Zhao et al., 2007). However, more research is required to understand the effect of employer branding on an employee’s intention to leave and employee retention (Cardy et al., 2007; Wilden et al., 2010). Further, research could look at the turnover rate and see if retention has increased since the inception of a branding campaign; it is also suggested that research should be conducted into the role of the brand promise and the extent to it being used by employees as a foundation of their psychological contract (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

This thesis is composed of eight chapters. The opening chapter introduced the study, covering background, research purpose, contribution and scope. Chapter 2 reviewed and evaluated literature addressing the extant literature surrounding employer branding. The systematic literature review suggested that existing research in this area predominantly focused on the health sector, teaching, and the public sector and in allot of cases in India, USA, the Middle East and overseas countries. Little research was evidenced in the United Kingdom on the effect of employee branding on employee’s intention to leave and employee performance. Research on Small Medium Enterprises (SME’s) and owner managed business was also scarce. Moreover, no literature was uncovered demonstrating a pragmatic philosophical approach to linking employer branding with employee’s performance and intention to leave within the fast-food sector, particularly in franchised environments within the United Kingdom. Chapter 3 discussed psychological contract as this was the theoretical lens through which this research was performed. Chapter 4 detailed pragmatism as the philosophical position and outlined a qualitative approach to uncover emerging themes. This chapter also evidenced the research design, research sample, questionnaire design, data collection and the pilot study. Chapter 5 provided an outline of the treatment of the qualitative data from applying a single data collection approach. Chapter 6 discussed the findings and analysis of the qualitative findings. Chapter 7 provided detailed discussion and analysis, by Research Question (RQ), relating each thematic finding back to each Research Question (RQ).

Section 8.1.1 now provides a short summary of the qualitative findings and how they specifically address each Research Question I - V. Section 8.2 outlines the contributions to theory (8.2.1) and contributions to practice (8.2.2). Section 8.3 address how the contributions address the Research Gap. Section 8.4 addresses the implications of COVID-19 for this research project. Section 8.5 discusses the research implications. Following on from the research implications, Section 8.6 addresses the limitations of the research, and section 8.7 offers a discussion of possible directions for future research.

* + 1. Qualitative Findings

*Research Question I: How does employer branding affect task performance within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom?*

The overall perception of McDonalds employer branding and the culture created by the brand was evidenced to influence performance. Participants perceived that the McDonalds brand was caring, systematic, flexible, trusted and respected. This perceived symbolism of the Golden Arches and what it represented initially attracted the participants to work for the brand. Participants also recognised the internal meaning of the brand and its influence on how they performed at work. Task performance, or doing the daily job, appeared to be influenced, as evidenced from the findings, by the environment the employees perceived they were working in. The participants suggested that the ‘comfortable’ environment and systematic framework they worked within was a strong perception they associated with the McDonalds brand and a key organisational benefit they derived from working for the brand. They went further to infer this may influence a stronger relationship, better performance and commitment to the brand as a result. This perception was borne out throughout the participant interview process and this emergent theme of positive employee relations and work satisfaction impacted their performance, motivation and productivity. This is supportive of a proposition offered by Bowen and Ostroff (2004). The evidence from the findings enabled a new definition of employer branding to be suggested: *The term employer branding within the QSR industry within the United Kingdom refers to an external image that is globally recognised, trusted and respected by its customers. The internal employer brand is fast-paced, flexible, team focused, progressive and perceived as offering excellent training within a family orientated environment.*

Ownership type was an interesting perception evidenced from the interviews. Even though participants felt that they had more freedom to express themselves within a franchised operation, no evidence was found that a company owned, or franchised restaurant had any influence on performance.

Further, non-monetary rewards had significant influence on employee performance whereas no evidence was found that suggested monetary rewards had influence at all. Non-monetary rewards took the form of perceived benefits as flexibility, training and teamwork.

*Research Question II:* *How does employer branding affect organisational citizenship behaviour within a franchised, fast food environment within the United Kingdom?*

The emerging themes from participant perceptions from the research suggested that employer branding influenced the second type of performance called organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). The research found that employees formed a global belief concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cared about their well-being. This perceived organisational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002) suggest that the participants felt an obligation on adopting some additional roles as helping others out within the organisation and exhibiting OCB attitudes. This reciprocal relationship, the psychological contract, suggest that an obligation does exist between the employee and the employer to go above and beyond. This supports a further offering by Shanock and Eisenberger (2006). Further, the participants talked about the perceived ‘internal branding’ as making them feel positive about themselves and enhancing their own self-esteem. In turn, they felt that this influenced their performance. This supports a proposition offered by Pierce and Gardner (2004) that organisation-based self-esteem (the degree to which an individual believes him/herself to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member) and a person’s self-concept or self-evaluation influences employee performance. Further, employees may act in a manner that is consistent with increased employee performance. The findings highlighted the importance of employee’s job attitudes, happiness and self-esteem and the participant perceptions supported this proposition with attitudinal examples of helping colleagues, staying behind at work without being asked and going above and beyond as a matter of course in the daily routines. The suggestion is that this brand citizenship behaviour would lead to higher customer satisfaction, supporting a proposition offered by Organ and Ryan (1995) who found that job attitudes are robust predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour. In addition to the organisational influences discussed, the participants referenced their own self-determination as a further explanation for why they wanted to go the extra mile.

*Research Question III: What is the role of the psychological contract on the relationship between employer branding, employee’s behaviour and performance?*

The findings suggest that the psychological contract (PC) has an influence on the relationship between the employee’s performance and behaviour, and employer branding. The PC is the ‘lens’ through which participants make their own judgements about what the employer brand offers them. Each employee has a set of expectations they perceive to be derived from working for the brand. The research findings evidence that the employers brand promise to deliver upon these obligations influences the employee’s behaviour, performance and intention to leave. Participants perceived that the McDonalds brand promised fairness, respect, flexibility, perceived organisational support, perceived supervisory support, training and progression. Further, the fun, fast-paced culture appealed to them, with interview discussions talking about their own fit and involvement, supporting the offering by He *et al.* (2014) who argued that this social exchange is critical in developing organisational identification (OID). Participant perception supported the psychological ownership of the brand and as such greater commitment which participants evidenced was enhanced through organisational support (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004). In this way, the research findings suggest that employer branding positively influence attitudes and behaviours of employees (Chiang *et al.*, 2013).

*Research Question IV: How does employer branding influence employee’s intention to leave within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom?*

The research evidenced that the participants perception of McDonalds employer branding is a promise to deliver on a set of certain obligations (being flexible, supportive, offering attractive and involved roles to do, communicating with the staff and recognising their achievements). The employees (participants) in turn reciprocate and deliver their own obligations, for example, performing their role in a professional manner whilst at work. At any time, and once this contact is violated, the suggestion is that this breakdown of trust will influence the employees intention to leave, supporting a proposition postulated by Moroko and Uncles (2008). In addition, failure to honour this contract creates a sense of wrongdoing, deception and betrayal with pervasive implications for the employment relationship and an increased tendency for employees to leave (Rousseau, 1989). A lack of job involvement, lack of support, overly critical hierarchy, poor communication, poor work-life balance and stress were all perceptions the employees had that influenced their intention to leave.

The interview findings also suggested that initial employer branding and marketing of the attractiveness of the role within the organisation appeared to influence participant intention to leave. The less attractive the role is perceived to be, the greater the intention to leave supporting a proposition offered by Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) and Du Preez and Bendixen (2015). This stated the need to make an occupation attractive, despite its potentially low-paying character, that the employee would not want to leave and as such go the extra mile. Furthermore, poor communication was a factor that was also perceived to influence intention to leave. The participants suggested that not being kept informed by their supervisors of what was expected of them and what they were meant to be doing was frustrating and engendered a perception of being disconnected with the organisation. These communication findings support a proposition offered by Probst *et al.* (2010) that stated that communication with executives is an important predicator of job satisfaction and staying connected with the organisation. The findings further support Vermeir *et al.* (2018) that communication is correlated with intention to leave. Further, the findings also support Deery and Jago (2015) who suggest that work-life balance does have an important role to play in intention to leave rates, depending upon the employee perceptions. The participants interviewed suggested that their negative work-life balance perceptions were a function of where they worked and alluded to the 24-hour nature of McDonalds. Within these busy and hectic environments and in-keeping with the UK fast-food sector of always being available, 24/7, the balance was perceived to be lost. Another emerging theme was training and development.

Other examples of a perceived brand promise that employees felt McDonalds makes related to the themes of training and development and recognition. Participants stated that they expected a certain level of training and career progression and if this did not materialise, they would feel that promise had been violated. This supports a proposition by Ahmad and Daud (2016) stating that there is a significant relationship between the level of training and development and an employee’s intention to leave. Further, the findings support the suggestion postulated by Luthans (2000) stating that business leaders need to look to increase the recognition schemes of their employees if they are to see better productivity, motivation and higher staff retention within their respective organisations.

*Research Question V: What benefits do employees perceive they derive from the brand?*

Employees perceive they derive several benefits or organisational rewards from the McDonalds brand. As evidenced from participant interviews, the emerging themes categorised these benefits as organisational prestige (symbolic), monetary, non-monetary, developmental, progression, social and psychological exchange, positive work-life balance, and personal involvement and recognition. This contributes to extant literature as offered by Wong (2014).

Firstly, the qualitative findings suggested participants perceived the McDonalds brand to be globally recognised and a trusted brand. They went further to say they felt that this enabled the brand to attract and retain its talent. This supports the definitions as offered by Dell *et al.* (2001) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) stating that the brand is a set of attributes and values that employees perceive they would gain through their employment with a particular organisation.

From a monetary perspective, participant perception supports the proposition purported by Long and Shields (2010) that suggest money is a motivator of their initial attraction because it helps meet their basic needs such as food and shelter. Participants talked about being just a job initially, the proximity being convenient and earning some extra pennies. However, as an ongoing incentive to stay within the organisation money was evidenced as having no influence.

Further, the findings concur with those of Tansky and Cohen (2001) stating that the employees who are satisfied with their development will be more committed to the organisation and perceive more organisational support than managers who are less satisfied with employee development. Participant perceptions reflected this view with perceptions suggesting the employer brand was very strong in terms of personal development and training and this influenced them to want to perform better at work.

Social and psychological benefits emerged as themes the participants perceived in relation to teamwork and pastoral care. A strong sense of support was suggested from the managers across all the locations, company or franchised, as they realised that without the support of their team they are unable to deliver what is required in order to do their own jobs. The findings indicated support for a proposition offered by Paullay *et al.* (1994) who suggested that teamwork is a good predicator of levels of performance. Participants perceived that without teamwork there would be chaos within the working environment as the team has to work together in order to deliver a consistent, fast and friendly service every day. The participants purported a perception of working harder within a team environment and openly stating that this was a benefit of working for the brand. Further, a quarter of the sample population of younger, non-managerial employees talked about looking up to their elder managers for guidance and support. They felt that the company understands them and is open and supportive and they perceived a connection with their organisation which really benefited them. Interestingly, this perception supports a proposition offered by several scholars (Moideenkutty *et al.*, 2001; Loi *et al.*, 2006; Dinç, 2015) suggesting that this support and pastoral care enforces the relationship between the employee and employer based on the perception of fairness and the employees own commitment to their organisation.

Participants perceived that flexibility was a work-life balance benefit that they expected to always be present. This supported the proposition from Gajendran and Harrison (2007) stating that there are positive associations between flexible working arrangements and employee commitment and attitudes. Interestingly, participants referred back to their perception of the family-based culture of McDonalds (See Section 5.2.3, page 78); this additionally suggests support for a separate proposition purported by Butts *et al.* (2013) stating positive correlations between employee commitment and work-family support mechanisms.

Lastly, participants suggested that on some occasions when they were left alone to get on with it and show what they can do, they were at their best. This supports De Baerdemaeker and Bruggeman (2015) and Segers *et al.* (2008) who recognised that the employee’s self needs and determination does not necessarily differ from that of the organisation, because the participants suggested that they seek to fulfil their personal, often non-monetary, needs such as autonomy or recognition. Further, participants suggested that when they felt happy and were encouraged, they perceived they performed well. This supports extant literature on happiness in the workplace as purported by Gavin and Mason (2004) who postulate that happiness at work can lead to various positive organisational outcomes and contribute to increased organisation success and commitment.

## Contributions

The research study offers contributions to theory, methodology and practice. Specific contributions are discussed in relation to the franchisee and the franchisor, as each have slightly different implications for the business owner and operator specifically operating McDonalds restaurants.

### Theoretical contributions

The research offers four main contributions to employer branding theory and methodology related to understanding the employee’s perceptions of employer branding.

1. The extension of the definition of employer branding as perceived by the participants interviewed. Firstly, the findings from the participant interviews support the suggestion by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) that the symbolism of the McDonalds Golden Arches played an important part in them wanting to work for the brand. The findings also went further to support the proposition that the term employer branding had both internal and external meaning. This supported respective definitions from Lievens and Slaughter (2016) and Berthon *et al.* (2005) who both described and internal and external element of employer branding. Participant perceptions suggested that the McDonalds brand was systematic and consistent. In addition to participants perceived a progressive, caring and flexible organisation. Moreover, the qualitative findings suggested participants perceived the McDonalds brand to be globally recognised and a trusted brand. This supports the definitions as offered by Dell *et al.* (2001) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) stating that the brand is a set of attributes and values that employees perceive they would gain through their employment with a particular organisation. Participants as they perceived that McDonalds was fast paced and fun. A new definition of employer branding relating to the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) industry in the UK is suggested as follows: *The term employer branding within the QSR industry within the United Kingdom refers to an external image that is globally recognised, trusted and respected by its customers. The internal employer brand is fast-paced, flexible, fun, team focused, progressive and perceived as offering excellent training within a family orientated environment*
2. The findings contributed to theory by evidencing that job satisfaction does influence life satisfaction. This directly contradicts the proposition as offered by Judge *et al.* (2001) stating that life satisfaction can cause job satisfaction but not vice-versa. These research findings suggest that employees perceive that job satisfaction does indeed add to their overall well-being and can influence life satisfaction. The emerging perception was that the participants felt that McDonalds was a very people orientated, caring and nurturing company and as such, they benefited outside of the workplace by virtue of feeling satisfied at work. The participants interviewed talked about being satisfied within the workplace which they perceived made them try harder at work. They felt that if they were satisfied at work, they would deliver a higher level of performance. This perception was borne out throughout the participant interview process and this emergent theme of positive employee relations and work satisfaction is thought to impact performance as it influences worker motivation and productivity. This is supportive of a proposition offered by Bowen and Ostroff (2004). The relationship with crew members and the managers was referenced during the participant interviews and formed a strong pillar that the participants perceived either bonded them together or did not. This finding supports a suggestion that employees form a global belief concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. It has been labelled perceived organisational support Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) and the findings suggest that the participants interviewed shared this belief and perception.
3. Flexibility was perceived as a strong employee benefit offered by McDonald’s. This newly discovered employee benefit was the strongest participant perception from the research findings. This specifically related to McDonalds as a consequence of the zero hours contract engagement structure between employer and employee. The construct of flexibility is argued to be synonymous with a QSR restaurant offering employment within the UK and as such a contribution to employer branding theory. Moreover, these findings supported a proposition offered by Baruch and Rousseau (2018) stating that a new form of psychological contract is emerging which employers provide marketable skills through training and development in exchange for effort and flexibility. Further, there was found to be support for the proposition from Gajendran and Harrison (2007) stating that there are positive associations between flexible working arrangements and employee commitment and attitudes. Interestingly, participants referred back to their perception of the family-based culture of McDonalds (See Section 5.2.3); this additionally suggests support for a separate proposition purported by Butts *et al.* (2013) stating positive correlations between employee commitment and work-family support mechanisms. Moreover, the findings support a proposition offered by De Menezes and Kelliher (2017) stating that flexible working arrangements, formal or informal, can lead to positive employee attitudes which may contribute indirectly to employee performance.
4. A methodological contribution was evidenced as the researcher found no other qualitative study within the fast-food sector in the United Kingdom has been undertaken specifically relating to employer branding, employee performance and intention to leave. The only other relevant study on employer branding by (Wong, 2014) was a mixed methods approach and focused on best-of-the-best companies in Canada.

### Contribution to practice

The research contributes to practice be suggesting five main exploratory areas for owners of fast-food organisations, and indeed franchised operations to consider. The research suggests that these findings can be applied to any franchised operation in the UK market or abroad but note that the study was conducted in the United Kingdom. These messages are:

1. For franchisors (owners of franchised operations) to consider the make-up of their own estate. This is important as a ‘blended; mix of franchised and company owned operations enables a blended learning style of exploration and exploitation, thus benefiting the control the franchisor requires but at the same time the generation of new ideas
2. Franchisees should develop processes that enhance employees lives as the findings suggested that job satisfaction does influence life satisfaction (Judge *et al.*, 2001)
3. Recognition schemes need to be developed as these will enhance employee identification with the organisation, reduce staff turnover and reduce staffing costs
4. A continual expansion of staff training and development was suggested as this has a positive effect of organisational identification (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018)
5. Provision of good managerial support, provision of a welcoming environment which in turn develops a good work-life balance is a focal point for business owners. This will ensure organisational values are spread amount employees and reduce staff turnover, and hence business cost (Zorlu, Ali and Baytok, 2019)

By providing a mechanism for quick service restaurants (QSRs) to understand how employer branding influences employee performance, developing best practice in QSRs from the learnings from participant interviews that may provide a better ability to manage employee intention to leave and understanding how the employer brand may help QSR businesses engage and manage the retention and performance of their employees more effectively. With the above summary practical contributions in mind, this research offers practical contributions to the franchisor (Section 8.2.2.1) and the franchisee (Section 8.2.2.2).

#### Franchisor

The implications for the franchisor come through understanding the position of the franchisee and what mechanisms are in place to encourage the development of new ideas. As a by-product of the participant interviews, the franchise owner of the participating restaurant shared thoughts surrounding this topic as he was also interviewed as a senior employee within the business. The corporate governance and rigidity of franchisor ownership could be seen to stifle any expression of new ideas and original thought. The research discussions perceived that other brands outside of McDonalds allow their franchisees to multi-brand and own more than one branded franchise, for example, a franchisee could own several KFC and Starbucks within the same business. This may enable best practice to be shared from each brand and to develop new best practice within each brand, taking the business forward. These thoughts concurred with those from the participant population as there was a feeling of different approaches within company and franchised owned restaurants. A more exploratory approach was felt to exist within franchised restaurants which allowed freedom of expression. This more open structure enabled the development of new ideas and a potential to move the brand forwards at a local level. This develops and supports findings by Sorenson and Sørensen (2001) suggesting a different learning type for franchised and company owned restaurants exists. The findings suggest that a more exploratory learning mechanism would greatly benefit brand development at a local level.

#### Franchisee

The value and relevance of this research for franchisees is many fold. Fundamentally, the research highlighted a valuable extension and contradiction to the extant literature. A theme emerged of job satisfaction influencing life satisfaction. This directly contradicts a previous offering by Judge *et al.* (2001) which is significant and emphasises that the nature of the workplace influencing the participants lives and well-being. With this in mind, a franchisee could develop processes that support and enhance their employee’s lives, potentially influencing commitment and staff retention.

The research indicates that non-monetary incentives are more highly regarded than monetary reward alone suggesting the participants place a higher emphasis upon these perceived employee benefits as a result of working for the brand. In fact, no evidence emerged which supported either greater performance or a desire to work harder for the brand as a result of monetary incentives. The evidence that emerged supported Aguinis *et al.* (2013) and suggested that monetary rewards can have a negative effect on performance and have no relationship with performance at all (Spekle and Verbeeten, 2014). The suggestion is that franchisees should focus on non-monetary rewards and see this as a greater form of recognition for the employees. Non-monetary recognition schemes offering additional holidays, a variety of staff meals, sabbaticals, job sharing or shopping rewards schemes should be put in place and become part of the fabric of the organisation if the franchisee wants to maximise the employees desire to perform at work and engage with the brand.

Essentially, recognition was an emerging theme that the franchisee should embrace, above and beyond monetary or non-monetary rewards alone. The employees perceived a great desire to be recognised, treated fairly and respected within the workplace. Their perception was that this recognition made them feel better about themselves and in turn and as a result, they liked the appreciation and felt a stronger bond with the brand and were less likely to leave. Simple processes should be embedded within the culture and day to day working practices of the business. For example, simple please and thankyous from all levels of staff when engaging with each other goes along way, reflecting findings of Blanchard and Nelson (1994). Furthermore, with an increased sense of recognition, franchisees could see a more productive workforce and higher staff retention within the workforce (Luthans and Youssef, 2004).

Franchisees should continually look to develop and expand their training and development programmes. The resultant positive effect on organisational identification suggests that this type of organisational support is to be encouraged (He *et al.*, 2014). This could be done outside the prescriptive McDonalds training programmes which are mandatory, offering more variety and development opportunities to employees. The research findings indicate that the participants perceive the people practices within their employ as positively associated with their own development opportunities and ability to progress within the organisation. Franchisees should place emphasis on development and training as this concurs with literature findings that employees who are satisfied with their development will be more committed to the organisation (Tansky and Cohen, 2001). Further, there is a significant relationship between the level of training and development and an employee’s intention to leave, making this investment wholly worthwhile (Ahmad, Shaw, Bown *et al.*, 2016).

Franchisees should ensure that their organisation structure is able to offer enough supervisory support and pastoral care to its employees. The franchisees managers should enhance their employees fit to the organisation, offering a positive climate and ensuring the workplace is harmonious and sharing in its culture. An offering by Zorlu *et al.* (2019) suggested that in this way, the organisational values will be spread amongst all employees who are more inclined to put in the extra effort to adapt to the organisational culture. Further, the employee perceives that the organisation rewards enhanced performance. Additionally, employees that felt the organisation was supportive and caring were less likely to leave, corroborating the findings of Tuzun and Kalemci (2012). This supervisory support and the nature of how this is communicated with employees is also of great significance. The employees perceived that a lack of communication and sense of not knowing what they are meant to be doing engendered a perception of being disconnected with the organisation. There was a strong sense that poor communication is correlated with intention to leave (Vermeir *et al.*, 2018).

The culture of each franchised organisation should be welcoming, fun and warm. Participants reported that the environment they worked within went along way to bonding them to the organisation and gave them a perception of being more committed to the company. The franchisee should strive to make the environment as welcoming, warm and fun as possible, directing a positive message to all employees which reflects and supports the findings of Konovsky and Pugh (1994).

The employer and franchisee should continually look to enhance and embrace the work life balance and flexible working arrangements for all of their employees. As the research suggested, employees recognise the value of being on a zero hours contract and this needs to remain in place as a business benefit in order that franchisees can offer the flexibility employees want. This reflects the findings of Gajendran and Harrison (2007) who suggested that flexible working arrangements can influence positive employee commitment and attitude towards the employer. Furthermore, the employee’s perception of the work-life balance and their appreciation of it strongly suggest that this should be a focus area for management within the organisation. If offered and managed correctly, the perception was that it would enhance the employees performance supporting the offering by (De Menezes and Kelliher, 2017). The importance of this work-life balance should not be underestimated and was widely recognised by the employees, reflections findings by Wong (2014).

## How the contributions addressed The Research Gap

The systematic literature review identified research gaps which this study has set out to address. The research questions (RQ) in Section 1.3, Table 1, were formulated based on these emergent gaps which are discussed briefly below in relation to the research contributions.

**The first Research Gap asked how employer branding influenced employee performance.** These research contributions addressed RQ I and RQ II.

The contributions evidenced that job satisfaction does indeed influence life satisfaction and further, that when employees feel satisfied in the workplace, they deliver a higher level of performance. This finding directly contradicted previous suggestions by Judge *et al.* (2001).

Further, the ownership of the restaurant, company or franchised, was also perceived to influence employee performance. Thirteen participants perceived that ownership type did affect their own working style and potential performance. These individuals were more senior and longer serving employees who had responsibility for running the restaurants, so their perception was that they were exposed to the effects of owners and/or senior McDonalds hierarchy to a greater extent.

Non-monetary rewards were seen to influence employee performance. Twenty-four participants suggested their performance was influenced by non-monetary rewards the employer brand offered them. This supported the existing literature and the proposition offered by Luthans and Youssef (2004) who suggested that employees draw their social capital from multiple sources, which is not just monetary in value.

The culture of the organisation was also seen to influence performance. Research findings supported a proposition offered by Konovsky and Pugh (1994) that positive, beneficial actions directed at the employees by the organisation and representatives (such as a warm and fun culture, staff rewards and parties, and a creative environment) contribute to a higher value exchange relationship. The participants suggested that a positive environment was a strong perception they associated with the McDonalds brand which positively influenced their extra-role performance, their organisational identification and relationship and commitment to the brand. This further supports an offering from Ratnasari and Sutjahjo (2020) stating that the overall culture of the organisation influenced the performance of employees, in this case within the McDonalds restaurants.

Lastly, the work life balance and flexibility perceptions the participants offered do support a proposition offered by De Menezes and Kelliher (2017) stating that flexible working arrangements, formal or informal, can lead to positive employee attitudes which may contribute indirectly to employee performance.

Further evidence from the findings supported the proposition that organisational rewards can improve the employee perceptions of POS because the employee will make a good contribution above and beyond if their treatment is perceived to be fair (Muchlish, 2020). In turn, he argued that the additional support given to the employee increases their performance levels.

**Research Gap two looked to explore how employer branding influenced an employee’s intention to leave.** These research findings addressed RQ III and RQ IV. The role of the psychological contract (PC) and potential violations that occur influence the employee’s intention to leave.

The research suggested that more research is required to understand the effect of employer branding on an employee’s intention to leave and employee retention (Cardy et al., 2007; Wilden et al., 2010). Several contributions from this research helped to establish the perceived influence of employer branding on an employee’s intention to leave.

The findings supported the proposition as offered by Maertz Jr *et al.* (2007) stating a significant negative relationship exists between perceived supervisory support and intention to leave; the less support the higher the intention to leave an organisation. This is linked with the participants perception that as employees, they form a global belief concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. It has been labelled perceived organisational support Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) and the findings suggest that the participants interviewed shared this belief and perception. The higher the perception, the less likely employees are to leave an employ.

Secondly, this research supports the proposition offered by Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) and Du Preez and Bendixen (2015) stating that if you made an occupation attractive the employee would not want to leave and may go the extra mile. Participants clearly suggested that when they are engaged with their role, and find it interesting, they are less likely to look elsewhere.

Thirdly, participants perception was that when they were not communicated with in a timely and positive manner, they felt disassociated with the organisation and less likely to look outside the organisation for a new role. This directly supports an offering by Vermeir *et al.* (2018) who stated that communication is negatively correlated with intention to leave.

Finally, the findings suggested that job stress had a positive influence on intention to leave. Employees felt that when McDonalds did not act in the desired manner, from the perspective of a balanced exchange relationship (the psychological contract), their contract had been breached. They perceived this led to a higher level of stress, contributing to their intention to leave. This concurred with contributions offered by ASAD (2017) and Ishtiaq and Zeb (2020).

**The third Research Gap was looking to establish what area of the employer brand carries the most value for employees?** This study looked at the employee benefits and expanded these along the thinking of Wong (2014). These contributions address RQ V which identified benefits employees perceive they gain from the brand.

First and foremost, the findings from this research study enabled an extension of the definition of employer branding as perceived by the participants interviewed. The date exploited from the participant interviews support the suggestion by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) that the symbolism of the McDonalds Golden Arches played an important part in them wanting to work for the brand. The findings also went further to support the proposition that the term employer branding had both internal and external meaning. This supported respective definitions from Lievens and Slaughter (2016) and Berthon *et al.* (2005) who both described and internal and external element of employer branding. Further, the definition (Itam *et al.*, 2020) states that the employer brand is the combined effect of branding and HRD practices of a company as the employer, which is unique and distinct to both potential and existing employees. The research findings enabled an extension and a new definition that adds meaning to the values of what evolves from the participant perceptions. These emergent perceptions, supported by contributions from the extant literature, led to the following new definition of employer branding for the QSR industry within the United Kingdom:

*The term employer branding within the QSR industry within the United Kingdom refers to an external image that is globally recognised, trusted and respected by its customers. The internal employer brand is fast-paced, flexible, team focused, progressive and perceived as offering excellent training within a family orientated environment.*

The qualitative findings of this research mirror these observations that led to this new definition. The emerging evidence suggested that non-monetary rewards were a more important benefit McDonalds offered each participant. Twenty-four participants suggested they gained more value and perceived benefits from non-monetary rewards within the McDonalds environment. These non-monetary employee benefits were perceived by the participants in several forms.

Firstly, participants perceived the environment they worked within as an organisational benefit they derived from working for the brand. Section 6.3 discussed a proposition offered by Konovsky and Pugh (1994) that positive, beneficial actions directed at the employees by the organisation and representatives (such as a warm and fun culture, staff rewards and parties, and a creative environment) contribute to a higher value exchange relationship.

Secondly, findings suggested that participants strongly associate an employee benefit to be their work-life balance. This was a strong theme from the interviews where twenty-four participants suggested they were more focused upon non-monetary rewards within the McDonalds environment. This supports the existing literature and the proposition offered by Luthans and Youssef (2004) who suggested that employees draw their social capital from multiple sources.

Thirdly, flexibility was referenced by participants within the definition of employer branding and as an employee benefit (Section 6.2). Within this context, participants recognised that the brand was able to offer each individual tailored hours of employment, to suit their circumstances and personal situation. This was a positive brand offering by these participants. The inference was that they were able to work the hours they wanted to suit their lifestyle and other commitments, for example, students studying at college. The findings supported a proposition offered by Baruch (2004) stating that a new form of psychological contract is emerging which employers provide marketable skills through training and development in exchange for effort and flexibility. Moreover, the findings also support the proposition from Gajendran and Harrison (2007) stating that there are positive associations between flexible working arrangements and employee commitment and attitudes. Interestingly, participants referred back to their perception of the family based culture of McDonalds (See Section 6.2.3); this additionally suggests support for a separate proposition purported by Butts *et al.* (2013) stating positive correlations between employee commitment and work-family support mechanisms. This may suggest that the perceived family-based nature, caring for the well-being of employees both inside and outside of the workplace, has a direct link with participants perception of how flexible McDonalds as an organisation really is.

The flexibility construct was recognised by participants as an employee benefit and one that evolves. Some participants pointed out that their working arrangements had changed over time, e.g. becoming a parent, and this flexibility was greatly appreciated as they were still able to work and do their job. Their perception was that they found this satisfying and that they could contribute whatever their changing circumstance was. The participants additionally recognised that the brand was able to offer each individual specific types of employment, depending upon their personal situation. For example, some employees were on guaranteed hour contracts if their circumstances suited this working arrangement. Interestingly, even though flexibility was referenced by the majority of employees, the findings offered no direct support for increased performance as a result of these arrangement. However, the findings do support a proposition offered by De Menezes and Kelliher (2017) stating that flexible working arrangements, formal or informal, can lead to positive employee attitudes which may contribute indirectly to employee performance.

Training and development was perceived as an employee benefit. Participant perceptions reflected this suggesting the employer brand was very strong in terms of personal development and training and this influenced them to want to perform better at work. Perceptions of the participants went further and referenced the emphasis the brand put upon training and development, which supported the views of Bergenhenegouwen (1996). He purported that organisations which place emphasis on development and training achieve an improvement in the organisations level of performance.

Lastly, participants referenced social and psychological employee benefits they derived from working for McDonalds. For example, twenty participants felt their self-esteem had benefited as a result of working for the organisation. These individuals talked about the pride they had working for the organisation and how they are overachieving as a result of this. These findings strongly support a proposition offered by Pierce and Gardner (2004) that organisation-based self-esteem (the degree to which an individual believes him/herself to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member) and a person’s self-concept or self-evaluation can also influence employee performance. Further, these employees may act in a manner that is consistent with increased employee performance.

## Research Findings in relation to the COVID-19 worldwide Pandemic

The COVID-19 crisis, a newly discovered coronavirus, is an infectious disease. Coronaviruses, which can affect humans as well as other mammals and birds, were first identified in 1965, and since then they have been responsible for several disease outbreaks. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), for example, emerged in China in 2002-2003 and then spread to almost 30 countries in Asia, Europe and both North and South America. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, a cough, shortness of breath, and general fatigue. Most people infected with the disease do not require any specialist medical treatment. However, people aged over 70 and those with underlying medical conditions, may be prone to serious illness, and in some cases the virus may prove to be fatal (Jones and Comfort, 2020). The virus spreads between people directly or indirectly, via small droplets when someone with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or exhales. Directly, when a person coughs, or exhales and the droplets are inhaled by another person, and indirectly when the droplets settle on objects or surfaces, which can infect another person who touches these objects or surfaces with their hands and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. The World Health Organisation ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)) has offered guidance on how to deal with the virus but battle against the virus has predominantly been fought at a national level. The NHS and medical authorities have struggled to provide appropriate numbers of beds and treatment facilities for seriously ill patients, to mobilise medical and care staff to treat patients and to provide personal protection equipment for those staff. Public policy and legislation designed to limit the spread of the disease has been dominated by restrictions on the general movement of people, namely lockdown, and the closure of many businesses (Jones and Comfort, 2020).

Subsequently, and within the current framework of this worldwide pandemic and crisis, these research findings have implications for the hospitality sector in the United Kingdom. With a number of measures in place to flatten the COVID-19 curve such at stay at home orders, travel and mobility restrictions and community lockdowns, many hospitality businesses have shut down temporarily or gone out of business completely as demand for their services has significantly decreased (Bartik, Bertrand, Cullen *et al.*, 2020). Interestingly, McDonalds, within the quick service restaurant (QSR) sector in the UK, has been allowed to remain open for take outs and home delivery orders, via Uber Eats and Just Eats. Similarly, KFC, Dominos and other fast-food outlets have remained open as well.

The challenge for the hospitality sector and academic scholars looking at this sector is how to focus research to provide solutions to several critical questions facing the industry sector. For example, what customers perceptions are about patronising the establishments during COVID-19? Further, if customers are not ready to return, what will make them want to return? (Gursoy and Chi, 2020). Further, another study assessed that with over 43% of retail outlets closed, employment has fallen by over 40% (Bartik *et al.*, 2020).

The findings from this research can be mapped back to several critical areas of relevance during the current crisis.

**Firstly**, this research evidenced very clearly that the employees perceived that the employer, McDonalds, cared about their well-being. At this current time, this perception is even more important as McDonalds staff are being asked to work the frontline every day, whilst other retailers are closed. How the company treats the staff and puts systems in place to ensure staff well-being and safety is of paramount importance. The staff will view this as part of the brand promise and expect the company to do the right thing and look after them. Hospitality organisations generally are now expected to make significant changes to their operations in the new COVID-19 world, to ensure employees and customers health and safety and in turn, through demonstrating excellent procedures enhance customers willingness to return to the businesses (Gössling, Scott and Hall, 2020). Currently, research from the Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management suggests that over 50% of customers will not want to dine in a restaurant immediately. Moreover, even when dine in is opened back up and travel restrictions are lifted this will not bring customers back immediately (Gursoy and Chi, 2020).

**Secondly**, the findings highlighted employee perception of the systematic nature of McDonalds and the consistent nature of the organisation within the QSR sector in the UK. Under COVID-19 conditions, the operational importance of social distancing, wearing facemasks correctly, sanitising high-touch surfaces, and employee training on safety and well-being are critical aspects both customers and employees expect from an organisation (Gursoy and Chi, 2020). McDonalds systems are very prescriptive and formulaic and as such the organisation is well placed to excel in these areas in the current crisis.

**Thirdly**, the findings of this research suggested that employees perceived McDonalds to be a progressive organisation, and this added to the new definition of the employer brand for McDonalds and the QSR market within the UK. In terms of technology, Mcdonalds leads the way in the use and development of mobile ordering, voice activated kiosks, app development and artificial intelligence (AI) within the sector. For public safety reasons, these findings now suggest that development of how AI can be used for service delivery and how AI impacts employees, customers and operations is now of critical importance.

**Fourthly**, the findings suggest that the employee’s perception of McDonalds is a fair and supportive employer that does the right thing. This has been demonstrated by the organisation using the Government Furlough scheme (staff pay protection policy) to great effect and setting up a flexible furlough scheme so that staff who are worried about coming to work, poorly or shielding can still work whilst getting their remuneration supported when at home. The findings support the employee perception of strong systems and communication Mcdonalds has demonstrated during the pandemic.

In conclusion, it will be the sustainability of the hospitality industry that defines how the sector recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. From previous research, academics have suggested that research into sustainability within the hospitality sector was underdeveloped (Ertuna, Karatas-Ozkan and Yamak, 2019) and additionally have looked into exploring the origins of sustainability within the sector (MacKenzie and Gannon, 2019). Moreover, it has also been suggested that sustainability will be fundamental in re-establishing and potentially strengthening, the relationship between hospitality industry and the natural and social capital on which it ultimately depends (Jones and Comfort, 2020). Socially, and at a local level, cafes and restaurants are places that provide a meeting place for millions of people every day and as such are places of importance top local community life. These hospitality experiences people enjoy could be seen as important to defining their own identity.

It should be noted that whilst COVID-19 continues to cause major worldwide disruption, there are mechanisms in place, for example the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are designed to achieve a more sustainable and resilient future (Jones and Comfort, 2019). However, Liverman (2018) argues that economic growth and sustainability can only be achieved at the expense of the environment. Further, Cohen (2020) postulates that the crisis has produced an outcome, namely a transition to sustainability, that policy makers have been pursuing for some time. He goes further to say that within the hospitality sector, businesses may need to change their traditional business models which are built around high volumes of customers, and often low-cost labour. However, Jones and Comfort (2020) suggest there is little enthusiasm within the industry to effect such a transition.

Lastly, from a theoretical perspective, it has been suggested by Iyer and Jarvis (2019) that much of the testing and theory development has only taken place in hypothetical experimental scenarios. However, two issues do merit mention. Firstly, the COVID-19 crisis poses a challenge for stakeholder theory as companies making decisions are under severe financial pressure. Secondly, the crisis questions if sustainable development is possible as mainstream thinking discourages focusing on any alternatives (Amsler, 2019). Commentators have emphasised that sustainable development must become the focal point within the hospitality industry. For example, one commentator, (Chang, McAleer and Ramos, 2020), postulated a new 10-point charter for tourism, travel and hospitality to return to normality. The measures discussed surrounded social distancing, event management, the traceability and security of supply chains and the welfare and safety of the staff.

## Research Implications

This research offers four contributions to employer branding theory and methodology related to employee performance and intention to leave. These are detailed in Chapter 8, Section 8.2.1 and briefly summarised here:

1. A new definition of employer branding relating to the QSR industry within the UK. The definition is *employer branding with reference to the QSR industry within the United Kingdom refers to an external image that is globally recognised, trusted and respected by its customers. The internal employer brand is fast-paced, flexible, team focused, progressive and perceived as offering excellent training within a family orientated environment*
2. The findings contributed to theory by evidencing that job satisfaction does influence life satisfaction. This directly contradicts the proposition as offered by Judge *et al.* (2001) stating that life satisfaction can cause job satisfaction but not vice-versa.
3. Flexibility was evidenced as a new employee benefit. This newly discovered employee benefit was the strongest participant perception from the research findings and contributed to brand literature, adding to the benefits as postulated by (Wong, 2014). Further, this contribution supports Baruch and Rousseau (2018) who stated that a new form of psychological contract is emerging which employers provide marketable skills through training and development in exchange for effort and flexibility.
4. A methodological contribution was made by offering a single source, qualitative investigation into the influence of employer branding on employee performance and intention to leave in the fast-food sector within the United Kingdom.

Practical contributions offered advice for the franchisor and franchisee, progressing understanding about how employer branding influences employee performance and intention to leave within the quick service restaurant (QSR) sector in the United Kingdom. A clear distinction was recognised between the learning styles of company owned and franchised restaurants. A more exploratory approach was felt to exist within franchised restaurants which allowed freedom of expression. This more open structure enabled the development of new ideas and a potential to move the brand forwards at a local level. This develops and supports findings by Sorenson and Sørensen (2001) suggesting a this different learning type for franchised and company owned restaurants. It could be argued that a more exploratory learning mechanism would greatly benefit brand development at a local level.

At the franchisee level, evidence emerged supporting the significance of non-monetary rewards compared to monetary rewards. Franchisees should look to adopt a variety of recognition programmes to reward success and achievements. The evidence from the research suggested that employees perceive an increased commitment to the brand and potentially greater performance based on such recognition structures being in place and administered consistently (Luthans and Youssef, 2004).

Training and development should be embraced by franchisees as employees perceive this to be significant to their own progression, performance and intention to leave. The participants perceived training was part of McDonalds brand promise and as such they expect to receive well run programmes continuously. An employee’s intention to leave may be influence by a continuous, well-structured training regime.

The research offered advice regarding the organisational structure of the franchised organisation. The suggestion would be to have strong supervisory support in place for the employees to ensure they get the support they need. Combined with this, the organisation should be warm and welcoming, and embrace a good work-life balance particularly surrounding employee flexibility as this will enhance employee commitment, performance and attitude towards the employer Gajendran and Harrison (2007). The outcomes of this research offer directions for future research (Section 8.7), which follow a discussion of the limitations.

* 1. Limitations

An important aspect of rigorous and thorough academic research is to acknowledge limitations. For each limitation discussed, a reference is provided which highlights a peer reviewed published journal paper highlighting the same limitation within their study.

1. The research was conducted as a convenience sample, a single source of date and within one branded fast-food organisation within the United Kingdom. Further, this sample and research is cross sectional and may benefit from a wider sample, and a research technique that was longitudinal in nature. The use multiple sources to incorporate observations, documents, videos and a quantitative element in a mixed methods approach could be adopted and increasing the targeted sample size may help.
2. The study looked at a target population across three restaurants, within three areas of the same organisation. Therefore the studies could only report upon the specific region, managerial and non-managerial positions, participants and job positions (Bebe, 2016). The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other service industry and in different location since different industry and location have different perspective (Kalidass and Bahron, 2015).
3. The power dynamics of the interviewee and interviewer relationship in one’s own organisation will need to be explored and fully understood in order to mitigate any risks and validity in information. It can be argued that the interview data only represents an interviewees perspective at a point in time and the interviewee gifts answers as influenced by the imbalance of personal power and authority. Much has been written on the influence of the asymmetrical power distribution in qualitative interviews (Anyan, 2013; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) and it is suggested that interviews cannot be one sided (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Further, because the interviewer sets the stage, controls the script and setting the interviewer seems to have direct control over the interviewee (Haworth, 2006).
4. In the qualitative analysis, there was a need for interpretation by the researcher of information gained from the management interviews and material review. While some answers to questions were direct and obvious, others were not. As well, some conditions of the employer branding process were not directly mentioned by interview participants but were reflected through their descriptions of scenarios, decisions, or actions. The researcher had to make sense of the information and draw patterns and inferences from them. Even with the triangulation of data, there would be some degree of subjectivity injected into the formation of the conclusions, which means that one could not be fully certain of the accuracy, thus also validity, of the conclusions (Wong, 2014)
5. The researcher’s roleshould include statements about past experiences and comment on the connection between the researcher and participant. In this study, the researcher is studying their own organisation (sometimes called backyard research (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992) and so potential compromises may arise. However, this research did employ multiple validity strategies to create reader confidence in the accuracy of the findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).
6. Further, research involving peers and colleagues has received relatively little consideration in the literature to date. There are difficulties associated with interviewing participants with whom the researcher has a pre-existing and ongoing relationship in the same organisation. However, to ensure ethical conduct, strategies can be used to mitigate negative situations such as practising reflexivity, trust and rapport building, self-disclosure and confidentiality (McDermid *et al.*, 2014).

In addition to the six limitations discussed, Appendix B evidences the researcher position. Overall, the limitations of this study do not detract from the meaningful and rigorous original contributions.

* 1. Directions for Future Research

In response to calls from Suikkanen (2010) future work could explore the concept of employer branding in practise with experimental research, by carrying out extensive surveys or arranging focus groups to understand which practical methods may affect staff performance and retention.

Additionally, future researchers are suggested to expand the research framework by adopting data envelopment analysis (DEA). This may compliment the research within this study by exploring the efficiency of employees with employer branding (Ahmad and Daud, 2016).

The findings have emerged from a study of one globally recognised brand within the quick service restaurant (QSR) industry within the United Kingdom. Future research should extend this to other brands within the QSR industry within the UK to see what effects employer branding may have upon performance and intention to leave across a wider sample population of the industry.

A fundamental empirical question is to whether firms using brand and marketing disciplines in their human resources (HR) functions achieve better performance. More research is required looking at how employer equity brand building relates to performance (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). Empirical research into violations of the psychological contract between employer and employee (the organization’s value proposition or brand promise) is becoming more prominent. There have been considerable studies on the consequences of psychological contract breach (often violation and breach are used interchangeably in literature) (Zhao et al., 2007). However, more research is required to understand the effect of employer branding on an employee’s intention to leave and employee retention (Cardy et al., 2007; Wilden et al., 2010). Further, research could look at the turnover rate and see if retention has increased since the inception of a branding campaign; it is also suggested that research should be conducted into the role of the brand promise and the extent to it being used by employees as a foundation of their psychological contract (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

Practically, research should focus on matters that increases employee perception of organisational support (Zorlu *et al.*, 2019). The resultant implications are employees perceiving that the organisation recognises and rewards enhanced performance. The clear benefits here need to be explored as they could result in increased productivity, performance and financial benefits for the organisation.

Further, both theory and our qualitative interviews highlight the relationship between employer branding and employee retention. Psychological contract theory has provided insights into how mutual expectations between the employer and employee develop, and how employer brand signals influences the human capital life cycle (Wilden *et al.*, 2010). In this way, future research should explore these relationships in more depth to explore and understand the potential triggers of contact violation in order to suggest realistic and practical ways to manage these violations within the QSR industry. Moreover, Research is needed on the factors that foster psychological contracts that meet the goals of individuals and their respective managers, team members, and other stakeholders under conditions of uncertainty and change (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018).

To conclude, the key message from this research is the ability of the QSR industry to manage their employer brand and keep their brand promises with staff, in order to engender the correct atmosphere and levels of support to discourage intention to leave and maximise employee performance. The researcher hopes that the original contributions of this research to both theory and practice will aid the advancement of understanding employer branding and the influence it has on employee performance and intention to leave, stimulating further research within this complex field.

1. Interview Matrix

**The matrix represents how each interview question looks to address the requirements in each research question. The symbol X in the matrix, for example the intersect of interview question number 8 and research question number 2, is identifying that interview question 8 is attempting to address the research goals of the second research question. The research questions are tabulated at the bottom of the matrix and the interview questions are listed on the interview question schedule (separate document).**

| Interview Questions | Research Questions | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | I | II | III | IV | V |
| 1 | X | X |  | X |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  | X |
| 3 | X |  | X |  | X |
| 4 | X |  |  |  | X |
| 5 | X |  | X |  | X |
| 6 | X | X | X |  |  |
| 7 |  | X | X |  | X |
| 8 |  |  | X | X | X |
| 9 |  | X | X |  |  |
| 10 |  | X |  |  |  |
| 11 |  | X | X |  |  |
| 12 |  |  | X | X |  |
| 13 |  |  | X | X |  |

**Research Questions (RQ)**

1. How does employer branding affect task performance within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom?
2. How does employer branding affect organisational citizenship behaviour within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom?
3. What is the role of the psychological contract on the relationship between employer branding, employee behaviour and performance?
4. How does employer branding influence employee’s intention to leave within a franchised, fast-food environment within the United Kingdom?
5. What benefits do employees perceive they derive from the brand?
6. **The Researcher Position**

The research methodology adopted is that of an action research and as such has placed great importance on the position of the researcher. Specifically, motivations and biases that might influence the collection or generation of results or interpretation of the findings (Benton and Craib, 2011).

The researcher completed a BSC in Geology and Management in 1988. He also undertook an MBA in 1994 and professionally trained as a Chartered Accountant and management Consultant with a leading consultancy in the City. Upon completion of his MBA he moved into investment banking and then international recruitment and executive assessment. More recently, after a career break and selling his recruitment company, the researcher has moved into the fast-food sector as a franchisee.

Throughout this process the researcher became interested in how to improve running an owner operated business and what factors could be manipulated and organised to maximise efficiency and returns. Within the fast-food sector it was apparent that staff turnover was very high and the performance of employees very varied and often unreliable. What was needed was an exploration of the factors that led to employee commitment and a higher level of job satisfaction. The question led back to the perception of what the brand stood for and how employees responded to the environment and what was expected of working for the brand.

The researcher has considerable experience of recruitment processes, assessing employees and interviewing techniques and running his own business. The motivation of the research gives rise to several areas of bias. As an owner operator careful consideration has to be given to personal bias when interviewing and any presumptions made by the researcher about potential relationships and observations.

An action research methodology is useful in this approach as it seeks to find practical approaches to the research questions, qualitatively validating the conceptual model of employer branding and how it affects performance, behaviour and intention to leave.

The self-funding nature of this research removed several potential biases imposed by funding bodies. Ethical considerations of this research are evidenced in Chapter 7.

1. **Interview Questions – with literature review justification**

Pilot study

**Q1: What does the brand McDonalds mean to you?**

*The literature review identified employer branding as a new term (Ambler and Barrow, 1996) and suggested that the term was not clearly defined or understood within the literature. In terms of setting the scene the interviewer must establish what employees think the brand McDonalds means to them and actually how this may affect their employment within Renz Restaurants Limited, T/A McDonalds.*

**Q2: What attracted you to the McDonalds brand?**

*The literature review identified employer branding as a new term (Ambler and Barrow, 1996) and suggested that the term was not clearly defined or understood within the literature. In terms of setting the scene the interviewer must establish what employees think the brand McDonalds means to them and actually how this may affect their employment within Renz Restaurants Limited, T/A McDonalds.*

**Q3: How do you think McDonalds stands out as an employer of choice within the UK fast food industry?**

*The literature review highlighted that it may be useful to have a desirable employer brand to attract and retain employees (Willock, 2005). Further, in order to attract the best talent, it is postulated that employers should hold themselves out to be the employer of choice (Ewing et al., 2002). The inclusion of this research question may help to clarify how the McDonalds brand promotes the organisation in this light.*

**Q4: What employment benefits do you think McDonalds gives you as an employee?**

*The literature review identified several employment benefits for example, monetary, developmental, and work-life, that relates back to the employees perception of what the brand may offer them (Wong, 2014). The inclusion of this question is looking to understand what each employee feels the brand offers them in their everyday workplace and employment.*

***Psychological Contract***

**Q5: What are your expectations when working for the McDonalds brand?**

*From the literature review it is suggested that employees believe certain things about particular brands, and as such, depending upon what they actually receive when working for a particular company, they may feel more disposed to work harder (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).*

**Q6: What do you think the company gives you in return for your efforts at work? (follow up probing question - do you think this is fair?)**

*The literature review identified established theory in terms of the psychological contract (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). This question is looking to see what each employee feels the company gives them in return for undertaking their work. In addition, with follow up questions such as how and why, it may be possible to establish how strongly attached to the company each employee is.*

***Job Satisfaction/attitudes***

**Q7: What do you like about working for McDonalds?**

*From the literature review it is suggested that strong employer brands make people want to work there (Moroko and Uncles, 2008) and a set of beliefs bind the parties together in a set of reciprocal obligations (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). The inclusion of this research question may help to clarify what McDonalds delivers as oppose to what it promises (Q5) to each employee. This may help in establishing the feeling of strength of the psychological contract and what this actually means in practice for each employee.*

**Q8: Do you feel positive towards the brand? If so why?**

*The literature review identified the concept of brand psychological ownership in which the employee feels positive thoughts towards the brand and may adopt an altruistic spirit towards brand related activities (Chang et al., 2012). The inclusion of this research question may uncover the contextual factors that affect employee’s organisational commitment.*

**Q9:Do you feel negative towards the brand? If so why?**

*The literature review identified the concept of brand psychological ownership in which the employee feels positive thoughts towards the brand and may adopt an altruistic spirit towards brand related activities (Chang et al., 2012). The inclusion of this research question may uncover the contextual factors that affect employee’s organisational commitment.*

***Performance***

**Q10: How do you think you perform at work? (follow up probing questions – how, why, examples)**

***NOTE: Then explain day to day stuff, filling out forms, making products, taking meat off the grill, what tasks do you really like doing? Apart from day-to-day stuff when I talk about extra performance I mean staying behind after work to help colleagues when you have clocked out or due to go home.***

**Q11: Day to day, what elements of your role do you feel satisfied with?**

*From the literature review it is suggested that task performance is an antecedent of job satisfaction (Wright et al., 1994). The inclusion of this question is looking to explore how an employee feels about their day-to-day activities and what they feel makes them satisfied in their daily routine.*

**Q12: What activities do you perform above and beyond your job role? When do you feel more inclined to go the extra mile at work?**

*From the literature review it was identified that organisational citizenship behaviour is a consequence of organisational commitment (Peterson et al., 1995). Further, it was found that employees having an altruistic spirit may be more inclined to produce behaviours that deliver extra-role performance to customers and colleagues (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The inclusion of this research question is looking to explore what feelings employees have when they are inclined to exhibit these behaviours.*

**Q13: How committed are you at work? (follow up - do you feel committed at all? Examples)**

*From the literature review it is postulated that a strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved with, and enjoys membership of the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1996). This research question will look to explore how the employee feels committed and when they feel a strong sense of involvement with the company.*

***Intention to leave***

**Q14: Are there times when you have ever thought about leaving this job? When? (We all think about leaving our job at some stage)**

*The literature review identified that training staff in internal branding activities may encourage employees to stay within the organisation (Punjaisri et al., 2009). Moreover, firms that follow an implicit employer branding model seem to have a higher retention rate, establishing the firms identity strongly in the mind of the employee as an employer (Dell et al., 2001). This research question is looking to explore what employees feel about staying in employment within the business. Further, it will detail what potential influences they raise as important to them as part of their commitment to the organisation.*

**Q15: What factors make you think about leaving McDonalds?**

*Violations in the psychological contract or misinterpretations as a result of unmet expectations can result in employees being more likely to quit (Cable et al., 2013). It is also suggested that e*mployee *messages that fail to adequately provide a realistic job preview will contribute to intentions to quit and higher employee turnover. In addition, the employer brand presents information that contributes to the psychological contract between employer and employee (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The inclusion of this research question will explore what feelings may trigger an employee’s intention to leave McDonalds.*

**Q16: What else can you tell me about your work at McDonalds?**

Interview questions - salaried paid employee’s additional questions only

**Q17: How do you think employer brand affects employee performance and retention?**

*The positive influence of employer branding upon employee performance is mainly self-reported by organisations representatives without any adequate verification (Martin, 2008). It has also been suggested that affective employer branding initiatives may not directly affect employee or organisational performance but rather affect the mediators of employee performance e.g. satisfaction, engagement; this is then assumed to positively influence employees work efforts, behaviours and performance (Ostroff, 1992).*

**Q18: What do you think the company gives employees in return for their efforts at work?**

*From the literature review it was identified that job satisfaction leads to higher levels of organisational commitment (Johnston et al., 1990). This question will help to extend the investigation on how contextual factors may influence senior employee commitment to the company as their shadow will spread a positive mood that will filter down the organisation. This is supported by another author who suggests that a positive mood can also lead to behaviours of protecting the organisation, making constructive suggestions, developing oneself and spreading goodwill (George and Brief, 1992).*

1. **Interview Questions – with literature review justification**

Main Research Phase

**Q1: What do you understand by the term Employer Branding?**

*The literature review established that this term has many different definitions. IT was first introduced by Amber and Barrow in 1996. Table 3, p.16 details the many different versions of what employer branding could mean. From a research perspective understanding what participants thinks will aid theory development in this area.*

**Q2: What does the brand McDonalds mean to you?**

*The literature review identified employer branding as a new term (Ambler and Barrow, 1996) and suggested that the term was not clearly defined or understood within the literature. In terms of setting the scene the interviewer must establish what employees think the brand McDonalds means to them and actually how this may affect their employment within Renz Restaurants Limited, T/A McDonalds.*

**Q3: How do you think McDonalds stands out as an employer of choice within the UK fast food industry?**

*The literature review highlighted that it may be useful to have a desirable employer brand to attract and retain employees (Willock, 2005). Further, in order to attract the best talent, it is postulated that employers should hold themselves out to be the employer of choice (Ewing et al., 2002). The inclusion of this research question may help to clarify how the McDonalds brand promotes the organisation in this light.*

**Q4: What employment benefits do you think McDonalds gives you as an employee?**

*The literature review identified several employment benefits for example, monetary, developmental, and work-life, that relates back to the employees perception of what the brand may offer them (Wong, 2014). The inclusion of this question is looking to understand what each employee feels the brand offers them in their everyday workplace and employment.*

**Q5: What do you think the company gives you in return for your efforts at work? (follow up probing question - do you think this is fair?)**

*From the literature review it is suggested that employees believe certain things about particular brands, and as such, depending upon what they actually receive when working for a particular company, they may feel more disposed to work harder (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).*

*The literature review identified established theory in terms of the psychological contract (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). This question is looking to see what each employee feels the company gives them in return for undertaking their work. In addition, with follow up questions such as how and why, it may be possible to establish how strongly attached to the company each employee is.*

**Q6: What do you like about working for McDonalds?**

*From the literature review it is suggested that strong employer brands make people want to work there (Moroko and Uncles, 2008) and a set of beliefs bind the parties together in a set of reciprocal obligations (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018). The inclusion of this research question may help to clarify what McDonalds delivers as oppose to what it promises (Q5) to each employee. This may help in establishing the feeling of strength of the psychological contract and what this actually means in practice for each employee.*

**Q7: Do you feel positive towards the brand? If so why?**

*The literature review identified the concept of brand psychological ownership in which the employee feels positive thoughts towards the brand and may adopt an altruistic spirit towards brand related activities (Chang et al., 2012). The inclusion of this research question may uncover the contextual factors that affect employee’s organisational commitment.*

**Q8:Do you feel negative towards the brand? If so why?**

*The literature review identified the concept of brand psychological ownership in which the employee feels positive thoughts towards the brand and may adopt an altruistic spirit towards brand related activities (Chang et al., 2012). The inclusion of this research question may uncover the contextual factors that affect employee’s organisational commitment.*

**Q9: How do you think you perform at work? (follow up probing questions – how, why, examples)**

*From the literature review it is suggested that task performance is an antecedent of job satisfaction (Wright et al., 1994). The inclusion of this question is looking to explore how an employee feels about their day-to-day activities and what they feel makes them satisfied in their daily routine.*

*NOTE: Then explain day to day stuff, filling out forms, making products, taking meat off the grill, what tasks do you really like doing? Apart from day-to-day stuff when I talk about extra performance I mean staying behind after work to help colleagues when you have clocked out or due to go home.*

**Q10: What activities do you perform above and beyond your job role? When do you feel more inclined to go the extra mile at work?**

*From the literature review it was identified that organisational citizenship behaviour is a consequence of organisational commitment (Peterson et al., 1995). Further, it was found that employees having an altruistic spirit may be more inclined to produce behaviours that deliver extra-role performance to customers and colleagues (Podsakoff et al., 2000). The inclusion of this research question is looking to explore what feelings employees have when they are inclined to exhibit these behaviours.*

**Q11: How committed are you at work? (follow up - do you feel committed at all? Examples)**

*From the literature review it is postulated that a strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved with, and enjoys membership of the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1996). This research question will look to explore how the employee feels committed and when they feel a strong sense of involvement with the company.*

**Q12: Are there times when you have ever thought about leaving this job? When? (We all think about leaving our job at some stage)**

*The literature review identified that training staff in internal branding activities may encourage employees to stay within the organisation (Punjaisri et al., 2009). Moreover, firms that follow an implicit employer branding model seem to have a higher retention rate, establishing the firms identity strongly in the mind of the employee as an employer (Dell et al., 2001). This research question is looking to explore what employees feel about staying in employment within the business. Further, it will detail what potential influences they raise as important to them as part of their commitment to the organisation.*

*Violations in the psychological contract or misinterpretations as a result of unmet expectations can result in employees being more likely to quit (Cable et al., 2013). It is also suggested that e*mployee *messages that fail to adequately provide a realistic job preview will contribute to intentions to quit and higher employee turnover. In addition, the employer brand presents information that contributes to the psychological contract between employer and employee (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The inclusion of this research question will explore what feelings may trigger an employee’s intention to leave McDonalds.*

**Q13: How do you think employer brand affects employee performance and retention?**

*The positive influence of employer branding upon employee performance is mainly self-reported by organisations representatives without any adequate verification (Martin, 2008). It has also been suggested that affective employer branding initiatives may not directly affect employee or organisational performance but rather affect the mediators of employee performance e.g. satisfaction, engagement; this is then assumed to positively influence employees work efforts, behaviours and performance (Ostroff, 1992).*

*From the literature review it was identified that job satisfaction leads to higher levels of organisational commitment (Johnston et al., 1990). This question will help to extend the investigation on how contextual factors may influence senior employee commitment to the company as their shadow will spread a positive mood that will filter down the organisation. This is supported by another author who suggests that a positive mood can also lead to behaviours of protecting the organisation, making constructive suggestions, developing oneself and spreading goodwill (George and Brief, 1992).*

1. **Participant Information Sheet (Interviews)**

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: INTERVIEWS

**Study Title:** The effect of employer branding upon employee performance and intention to leave

**Researcher:** Mr Renato Raho **ERGO number**: 52361

**Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research.**

**If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.**

**What is the research about?**

My name is Mr Renato Raho a PhD researcher at the University of Southampton, UK. I am kindly requesting your participation in a study regarding the impact of the employer brand on employee performance and intention to leave within the fast-food sector. If you consent to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part is a recorded interview, which will last between 30 and 45 minutes. Personal information will not be released or viewed by anyone other than researchers involved in this project. A debriefing statement will be given to you on completion of this study. This study is self-funded by the researcher.

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are in the employ of Renz Restaurants Limited, T/A McDonalds Restaurants, and as such are part of the target audience for this study.

**What will happen if I take part?**

You will take part in a recorded interview, which will last between 30 and 45 minutes. Confidentiality of your data will be ensured at all times.

**Are there any benefits in my taking part?**

The research seeks to explore the perceived relationship between the McDonalds brand and how employees perform at work and if they want to leave that employment.

**Are there any risks involved?**

There are no risks in taking part in this study.

**Will my participation be confidential?**

All responses are treated as confidential and in no circumstances will responses from individual participants be identified. the names of participants will be charged prior to publication of results to ensure anonymity.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

Participation is voluntary and refusal to take part in this study involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

**What happens if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint you may wish to contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058) [rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk)

**Where can I get more information?**

If participants have further questions about this study, they may contact the principal investigator, Mr Renato Raho at [r.m.raho@soton.ac.uk](mailto:r.m.raho@soton.ac.uk)

**Data protection Privacy Notice**

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, ‘Personal data’ means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University’s data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page>).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf>

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University’s policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason (lawful basis) to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the ‘Data Controller’ for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 3 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

1. **Consent Form (Interviews)**

**CONSENT FORM: INTERVIEWS**

**ERGO Number: 52361**

**Study Title:** The effect of employer branding upon employee performance and intention to leave

**Researcher:** Mr Renato Raho

**ERGO number**: 52361

Participant identification number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Data Protection***

***Please initial in the space provided if you agree with each statement.***

*I give consent for this interview to be recorded. By taking part in this interview I give consent to the researcher to use the data for academic research purposes only. My participation is voluntary  
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*I understand that information collected during my participation in this study will only be used for the purpose of this study and be stored on a password-protected computer. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw (at any time) for any reason without my participation rights being affected \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Participant Print Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Signature : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Date : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Researcher Print name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

**I understand that should I withdraw from the study then the information collected about me up to this point may still be used for the purposes of achieving the objectives of the study only.**

1. **Interview Questions - Pilot Study**

**Each participant was asked the following questions.**

Q1: What does the brand McDonalds mean to you?

Q2: What attracted you to the McDonalds brand?

Q3: How do you think McDonalds stands out as an employer of choice within the UK fast food industry?

Q4: What employment benefits do you think McDonalds gives you as an employee?

Q5: What are your expectations when working for the McDonalds brand?

Q6: What do you think the company gives you in return for your efforts at work? (follow up probing question - do you think this is fair?)

Q7: What do you like about working for McDonalds?

Q8: Do you feel positive towards the brand? If so why?

Q9:Do you feel negative towards the brand? If so why?

Q10: How do you think you perform at work? (follow up probing questions – how, why, examples)

Q11: Day to day, what elements of your role do you feel satisfied with?

Q12: What activities do you perform above and beyond your job role? When do you feel more inclined to go the extra mile at work?

Q13: How committed are you at work? (follow up - do you feel committed at all? Examples)

Q14: Are there times when you have ever thought about leaving this job? When? (We all think about leaving our job at some stage)

Q15: What factors make you think about leaving McDonalds?

Q16: What else can you tell me about your work at McDonalds?

Q17: How do you think employer brand affects employee performance and retention?

Q18: What do you think the company gives employees in return for their efforts at work?

1. **Interview Questions - Main Research**

**Each participant was asked the following questions.**

Q1: What do you understand by the term Employer Branding?

Q2: What does the brand McDonalds mean to you?

Q3: How do you think McDonalds stands out as an employer of choice within the UK fast food industry?

Q4: What employment benefits do you think McDonalds gives you as an employee?

Q5: What do you think the company gives you in return for your efforts at work? (follow up probing question - do you think this is fair?)

Q6: What do you like about working for McDonalds?

Q7: Do you feel positive towards the brand? If so why?

Q8:Do you feel negative towards the brand? If so why?

Q9: How do you think you perform at work? (follow up probing questions – how, why, examples)

Q10: What activities do you perform above and beyond your job role? When do you feel more inclined to go the extra mile at work?

Q11: How committed are you at work? (follow up - do you feel committed at all? Examples)

Q12: Are there times when you have ever thought about leaving this job? When? (We all think about leaving our job at some stage)

Q13: How do you think employer brand affects employee performance and retention?

1. **Code Mapping and Iterations**

Two-hundred and four initial codes emerged

ITERATIVE PROCESS

Similarities/differences refined to one-hundred and fifty codes

Thirty-seven initial themes identified

Twenty-two themes removed upon review

Fifteen themes remaining across five aggregate dimensions

2. **Demographic Data**

A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generatedA screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated

A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated

1. **Final Data Structure**

Final Data Structure (Notation from Gioia et al., 2013, p.21)

**1st Order 2nd Order Aggregate**

**Concepts Themes Dimensions**

Definition of Employer Brand

Theme One

What is employer branding?

Internal or external

Customers v employees

Retention & Development

Franchisee ownership

Financially focused

Franchise v Company

Theme Two

Perceived Employee Benefits Theme Three

Work-Life Balance

Pay and rewards

Environment & Safe place

Family based

Perceived Organisational Benefits

Theme Four

Globally recognised Brand

Systematic

Market Leader

Customer Service

Teamwork

Theme Five

Collaboration

Supportive & Friendly

Perceived Personal Factors

Theme Six

Determination

Happiness

Self-Esteem

Training & Development

Theme Seven

Collaborative Approach

Education/apprenticeships

Structured Career Path

**1st Order 2nd Order Aggregate**

**Concepts Themes Dimensions**

Relationships

Theme Eight

No Job Involvement

Perceived supervisory support

Employer Issues Theme Nine

Critique Culture

Negative McDonalds Hierarchy

Poor Communication

Personal Feelings

Theme Ten

Work-life balance

Stress/pressure

People Practices Theme Eleven

Progressive

Fairness

Pastoral Care

Recognition

Theme Twelve

Encouragement & Appreciation

Autonomy & Independence

Culture

Theme Thirteen

Fun

Fast Paced

What is Flexibility

Theme Fourteen

Hours of Employment

Social Capital

Hygiene Factors Theme Fifteen

Proximity

Just a Job

1. **Definition of Themes**

*Theme 1: Definitions of Employer Branding.*

*This theme asked the participants what their understanding was of the term employer branding. The literature review established that this term has many different definitions. The term was first introduced by Amber and Barrow in 1996. Table 3, p.16 details the many different versions of what employer branding could mean. From a research perspective understanding what a participants thinks will aid theory development in this area.*

*Theme 2: McDonalds employer branding - Franchisee versus Company.*

This theme asked the salaried participants if they appreciated any difference between employment within McDonalds owned Company restaurants, franchised restaurants or indeed only recognized working for the employer brand McDonalds. This theme is looking to add insight into the perceptions of the participants to the notion of symbolism of the brand (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003; Lievens and Slaughter, 2016).

*Theme 3: Perceived Employee benefits.*

This theme presents the employee benefits that the participants perceive they are gaining from employment within the McDonalds branded environment. This theme looks at both monetary and non-monetary rewards and can clearly be linked back to the literature and identified concepts (Wong, 2014). However, it should be noted that when employees are promised high amounts of monetary incentives, they can choke as a result of increased fear of failure (Chib *et al.*, 2012). However, it has also been postulated that monetary rewards can have positive and less desirable effect on firm-level performance (Aguinis *et al.*, 2013).

*Theme 4: Perceived Organisational Benefits.*

This theme looks at the benefits the participants perceive the brand name McDonalds gives them in return for employment with the organisation. The key concept within this theme is the ability of the organisation to deliver upon their brand promise (Moroko and Uncles, 2008).

*Theme 5: Teamwork.*

This theme looks at the benefits of teamwork as an aspect of job involvement. It has been suggested that teamwork is a good predicator of levels of performance (Paullay *et al.*, 1994). This may imply that more people orientated organisations emphasise an employee’s quality of life, with the satisfied employee delivery at a higher level of performance. In one study of retail non-professional employees it was found that an employee whop perceives that all workers are highly involved is likely to be a kore satisfied employee (Babin and Boles, 1996).

*Theme 6: Perceived Personal Insights and factors.*

This theme looks at identifying factors like self-esteem, determination and recognition and how these relate to the participants and employee performance. The success of perceived performance is mainly judged by the employees themselves and interpreting participants ideas can help provide a better understanding of when participants perceive they are inclined to go the extra mile and perform better (Organ and Ryan, 1995).

*Theme 7: Training & Development.*

This theme looks at the contribution a structured, well-trained participant perceives his/her career path can be within McDonalds. The benefits of professional development can relate back to theory and how participants evaluate these benefits (Noe and Wilk, 1993). Moreover, training the staff in internal branding activities enhances the employees employment experience and may encourage the employee to remain in the organisation (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018).

*Theme 8: Relationships & Interaction.*

This theme encapsulates the relationships the participants perceive they have with their colleagues within the organisation. This theme contributes to the theory of the role of the psychological contract and potential violations of this contract causing participants to show intent to leave an organisation. A practical contribution is suggested through learnings in how to mitigate against breaking this perceived contract. It has been suggested that a reduction in potential conflict, stress and ambiguity of an employee’s role is reduced by enhanced levels of perceived supervisory support (PSS) (Babin and Boles, 1996). Further, perceived organisational support (POS) is a factor is the employee and employer relationship (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Babin and Boles, 1996; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002; DeConinck, 2010; Newman, Thanacoody and Hui, 2012).

*Theme 9: Employer Issues.*

This theme addresses the perceived role of the organisation within the thinking of each participant and relates this back to violations within the psychological contract, and intentions to leave the organisation. There is a belief that a reciprocal exchange is in place between a promise the organisation has made and consideration for that promise (Baruch and Rousseau, 2018).

*Theme 10: Factors & Pressures.*

This theme looks at the participants perceptions of why they may want to leave an organisation, from a view of how and what they think triggers those feelings. Participant job satisfaction can be defined as a multi-dimensional concept that includes a set of favourable or unfavourable feelings by which employees perceive their job and employment within the organisation (Macneil, 1985b; Moroko and Uncles, 2008; Aziri, 2011). Employees draw their social capital from multiple sources (Luthans and Youssef, 2004).

*Theme 11: People Practices.*

This theme develops the concept that the participants are the organisations key assets. It addresses the participants perceptions of how they are looked after, from a pastoral, career building and fair perspective. This theme develops and contributes to theory that to derive maximum benefit from an organisations core competency it is important to recognise the expertise and skills of employees by also pay underlying attention to motives and qualities of the employees (a competence can be defined as a basic personal characteristic that is a determining factor for acting successfully in a job or situation (McClelland, 1993). Moreover, some organisations which place emphasis on development and training, and give individual competencies a central place in the organisation, rather than hierarchical systems of fixed jobs with associated job descriptions, achieve an improvement in the organisations level of performance and the creation of a competitive advantage (Bergenhenegouwen, 1996). This total approach is attractive to employees who are creative and innovative, want to learn new skills, to have more responsibility and to be continuously adding to their own expertise.

Further, it has been suggested that employees form a global belief concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. It has been labelled perceived organisational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986).

Performance-orientated HR systems are positively related to affective commitment, which in turn enhances firm performance (Gong *et al.*, 2009).

*Theme 12: Recognition.*

This theme looks at the participants perceptions of how they are recognised and the impact this has on their levels of performance within the organisation. (Organ, 1990) OCB

*Theme 13: Culture.*

This theme looks at the participants perception of the culture of the organisation and how employer branding affects their perception of this culture. As (Dell *et al.*, 2001) explicitly argues, the employer brand establishes the identity of the firm as an employer of choice. It encompasses the firm’s values, systems, policies and behaviours towards the objectives of attracting, motivating and retaining the firms current and potential employees.

*Theme 14: What is Flexibility.*

This theme explores the participants perceptions of what makes McDonalds a flexible employer, what this means in reality and why this is so important to each participant. It has been suggested, for example, that life satisfaction can cause job satisfaction but not vice-versa (Judge *et al.*, 2001). In this way, this theme looks to establish new lines of theory where the work organisations need to establish why this construct is critical to employee performance and retention.

*Theme 15: Hygiene Factors.*

This theme explores the factors that participants perceive make up a flexible organisation. This theme contributes by explain the role of the key construct of flexibility within participants perceptions of employment benefits derived from the brand.

1. Participant Perceptions by Theme

| Theme One – Definitions of Employer Branding | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *fast food for me. I think really high standards like market leading. We lead the way to me that's one of the big things and market leading* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *a well-established global brand. As an employer one that is respected and trusted. As a product it is consistent and has quality* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *It means the family environments where I can bring my grandchildren. Friendly, clean and fast food* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *Employer branding is for me the bigger the employer then the bigger the brand. People know McDonalds as soon as they seen the Golden Arches straight away. People know McDonalds and have great knowledge of the brand because it’s so popular. People trust Mcdonalds that’s why they come and spend their time with us. The employer needs to ensure it has the best values and strategies and keep their employees happy to ensure their brand stays at the top* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I would describe employer branding as the given reputation of a certain workplace to a particular demographic outside of our regular customer base, given competitors or potential employees. Employee branding to me is how valued a company is to our staff and potential employees. It is key we show were a brand that is valued so that we can get some of the highest skilled workers possible and retain them whilst training them up through our own internal programs* |
| 6 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *McDonald's as a brand means fun to me as I think about all the fun times I went to McDonald's as a kid. You know when you go out for a night out with your friends you always end up in McDonald's and for some reason it's always related to something exciting and when I went out with my friends its more than just going out for food* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *You can develop and they can help you with your skills and you can go higher as in career wise* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *This is a nice question. So, I love working here. I always love McDonald's food and I'm happy that I work here with nice people, nice managers, nice crew members and what can I say, a nice environment and nice and friendly customers* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *Fast food Efficiency. In and out. The bread and butter. Everyone knows McDonald's* |
| 10 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 1, 9, F/T | *To me I actually like McDonald's. I think it's one of those really good companies around the world that's what I think, that's everything* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *It refers to a way to describe an employer in terms of their values and what they stand for. McDonald’s brand often shows to be very employee and customer driven. By being very employee driven it can give the brand a good reputation as a good employee to work for. For customers it gives the reputations they want the be the ‘best loved restaurant company* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *To not just promote the brand of the business we are in but to also capture the community that you are branding for. Different areas want for different things from the same brand as well as timing for opening to suit recruitment. The branding is not just the products we offer but the whole sense of community that goes with it* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *More like a family restaurant is fast food but it's also like a family place. Other restaurants don’t have the same level of customer service and we deliver better customer service and others it's about the service and quality of food* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Quick, easy and reliable food. A place of work and somewhere quick and easy for food and drink and a good meeting place* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *So much to it really. hot fresh food that's for sure fast and friendly. I think these are the main points, good food, fast and friendly.  I've never had any problems with the brand, McDonald's have always been good to me* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *The meaning of it is quite subjective to me, it's my job that's my livelihood it's something I do well and I want my store to get results and the people that I work with to get recognition. It's almost like a second home* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *Well it's changed so much since I was first employed. I would say back in the day it was more financially focused but times have changed and progressed and I would say it's more about delivering our expertise in what we sell, which is our bulk standard food to customers on a daily basis by providing great service, hospitality and care for not just the people and the environment but for colleagues and everybody else as well* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *A career. As well as independence and a way of life* |
| 19 | CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *A job firstly.  I have had a number of different jobs and it's something I haven't done before so it's different.  This is the first retail one* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *Fast hot food friendly service. Mainly fast food and a nice environment as well. It's a quick way to get a job so if you're desperate for employment I think it offers more opportunities than most places and you can start quite quickly and you haven't got to work a week in hand for example. So, it's a good way to start off by making money quickly in that situation* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *My Second home because I work here. I like being here with my colleagues, friendly and I'm not wasting my time* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Obviously the most loved restaurant in UK and also kid’s favourite* |
| 23 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 6, 5, P/T | *The McDonalds brand means a happy, well run place of work with likeminded people doing what they do. People trust the brand to deliver high quality food time after time* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *The McDonalds brand means to me a global, well organised and strong company. I read the papers allot and I see Mcdonalds always being mentioned as the market leader in one form or another. I imagine that this also has a negative side as people are always trying to put the company down too and find fault. that’s just the way it is* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *McDonald's is a very well-known brand throughout the world as a fast-food chain. I think it's very big with families and Kids especially around the world and the symbol McDonald's is very famous and eighty or 90% of the population of the world knows about it. For me as a person when I started as a teenager it was just getting pocket money but working in McDonald's for the last 19 years has made it different. I think the working environment in McDonald's is something that makes it fun.  The people culture in McDonald's as well is really great and we are good at keeping and attracting people to the system* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *Means to me a career and it means development and progress* |
| 27 | SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T | *Fast food. The most popular fast-food restaurant. Quality food and well-trained staff and clean restaurants* |
| 28 | SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T | *I think it means a family orientated brand. I think everyone younger than mid 50s or 60s remembers the brand in the UK as part of their childhood.  I think classic signature products such as Big Mac so happy meals are those sort of things* |
| 29 | CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T | *McDonalds is an International brand and it means a lot to me because I came from Brunei where we only have two McDonald's. So, when I came here the menus different but the quality is the same in a good way much healthier here* |
| 30 | SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T | *Fast food restaurant that is a popular brand.  It's mainly for the children. It's a very important popular brand* |
| 31 | SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T | *For me it's more like a part-time job that pays the bills and fits in around the kids* |
| 32 | C, H, F, C, S, 1, 2, P/T | *Fast food restaurants. It is one of my favourites. They are very good at employing people from all backgrounds and ages. Finding jobs for everybody and some of the customer experience people are a bit older and it will be hard to find a job but it is easy for them to start here* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *Is the place I can come to work and it's safe and I get paid* |
| 34 | CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T | *I think the term employer branding is the process of creating and maintaining your company’s employer brand. It’s also the identity of the business, it’s what makes your company a good employer. For instant, in this scenario the company’s name McDonald’s itself describes its popularity. Its world known famous brand and people recognise it not only for fast food but also the values it has given to its employees and customers* |
| 35 | SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T | *It is a theme used to describe the company’s popularity and intentions. It also explains the value the company gives to its employees, its altogether and how the company looks after its people.* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *It’s how the employer presents itself to potential employees and current employees. A certain employer may offer certain things others don’t – doing positive things will benefit their image and maybe they are known for looking after their people or doing more things in the community, litter picking, and other activities* |

| Theme Two – Franchisee versus Company Ownership | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *I don't think it does. I don't think it has a bigger part to play in people's retention and Performance and no I don't think it has anything to do with that. As I said that you're going to earn the same money elsewhere but I think it's the people and the environment. I don't know if it comes to the brand. I think it comes from the leadership of the team and the focuses of those teams, the balance or results against customer satisfaction. Happy customers equal happy. Crew things like that and there's more to it than just the McDonald's golden Arches* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *As I said, working for a franchisee is wholly different than working for the corporation. I think it’s a very controlling environment when working for the corporation and not that much opportunity to use your initiative* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *It's not so much the brand it's the company you work for I work for a franchise and this company. I feel totally different as I work for Renz restaurants not for McDonald's and I feel that there are two different things in the way things are approached as a franchisee. It's all the family atmosphere whereas the company dictates to you an employee more and it might be dictated to the franchisee more (by the company) but not to the staff if that makes sense* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *I think it differs for everyone because some people come here to work for money because it's just a job and other people come here and they want to do well and they want to get promoted because they know McDonalds is such a big brand and they want to be a part of and they can work up and up* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I would describe employer branding as the given reputation of a certain workplace to a particular demographic outside of our regular customer base, given competitors or potential employees. Employee branding to me is how valued a company is to our staff and potential employees. It is key we show were a brand that is valued so that we can get some of the highest skilled workers possible and retain them whilst training them up through our own internal programs* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *I really don't know* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *Yes, I didn't really have too much of an opinion before or apart from not getting the job the first time around but that was a long shot when I was underage the first time. I had no opinion workwise on it but McDonald's is like my go to but having worked so I like it a lot more because I know behind the scenes* |
| 10 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 1, 9, F/T | *Personally, it's because I know the Business Manager and his wife and they've been helping me a lot because I recently got married and they have given me the hours and they give me that because of my marriage that helps me a lot. This is why I came to a franchised restaurant* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *It refers to a way to describe an employer in terms of their values and what they stand for. McDonald’s brand often shows to be very employee and customer driven. By being very employee driven it can give the brand a good reputation as a good employee to work for. For customers it gives the reputations they want the be the ‘best loved restaurant company* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *Retention is a hard one but keeping employees engaged, recognised and rewards is the way forward. Franchised restaurants do this better in my opinion. All employees like to feel that they are a part of any business, and making them part of goal’s achieved and direction in the path they wish to travel will benefit not just them but also the employer* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *I feel like people know McDonald's more and get more people working there rather than Burger King or KFC and more people have better opportunities at McDonald's to develop. The franchised restaurants seem to care more than company ones do* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *That I have an independent view I can put onto other people. So I mean when I was maybe a crew member I just listened and you do as you're told but now I've got the knowledge and experience behind me, I can decide what happens and your view of what you want to happen happens* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *It just always has been that way, it’s different within each set up. The fortnightly pay was good but I'm now salaried so I've had to get used to that. They put a couple of us maintenance people on salary to take us away from crew labour because I work in more than one store.  So, there's two maintenance people that are salaried and you've got two that are hourly paid and they only work in one of the other stores each* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *It varies because of the franchise you work with. Different franchisees operate in different ways and on a different basis to others and I'm kind of keeping this completely professional.  Some franchisees in it for themselves and the people that they know rather than the business and some franchisees try and do things by the book and I've worked for both. The franchises that are in it for the business and the band are better than the ones that are in it for self-improvement.  If you get the right franchisee it's a great place to work and the people are motivated because they all want the same thing out of it, to better the brand. I don't think it's so relevant for crew members who wouldn't see the difference* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *With the generation is more the key thing and the age. For myself age wise I class myself as generation Y. There's been a massive jump since the advent of the millennials and the jump has been even more. You come in you get paid, you get told what you are going to do, and in that scenario regardless of who the company is. But now the millennials hits and the press and the news and media start talking about the McJob and that sort of thing* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *I am not 100% percent certain. You get to meet a lot of people and talk to a lot of people.  I'm on a guaranteed hours contract of 30 hours a week so i get flexibility and security of work* |
| 19 | CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *They seem very fair as an employer* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *I knew that it was a good place to work and I had friends that worked here beforehand and the managers that work here and in these sort of places have to be able to help you in life anyway and get the time off so I knew it would be a helpful place to get back to work* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *It's a very nice role and you're working with people that appreciate and recognise your work.  I didn’t get that in a company store* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *I don't think so. It is pretty similar with a different Focus, different management practices. I don't think it's that much different. I guess the franchises are more financially driven.  I feel like they've got tighter controls and different expectations depending on the franchisee. I think it’s just different things so I don't think working for a company or franchisee is different as its just working for different people and that's what it's all about* |
| 27 | SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T | *No, it has no effect on them at all.  The young people just think I have got a job with McDonalds and no I wouldn't say so. I think it used to be and people used to be proud to work at McDonald's and my friends and people who didn't know me when they found out I work McDonald's would say wow* |
| 28 | SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T | *Yes, I think definitely against the other fast-food restaurants.  especially because the hours and the flexible scheduling and our flexibility is better and a lot more flexible than other restaurant brands.  I think it pays better as well and I think Burger King and KFC but we're better pay wise* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *I think it does because the branding and the fact I'm guessing they get more sales than the other fast-food chains.  I've got lots of good staff and they all know their stuff and hygiene* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *It’s how the employer presents itself to potential employees and current employees. A certain employer may offer certain things others don’t – doing positive things will benefit their image and maybe they are known for looking after their people or doing more things in the community, litter picking, and other activities* |

| Theme Three – Perceived Employee Benefits | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *What benefits I said and I guess you can be part of the family, part of a group of people and part of a like-minded bunch of people that want to achieve something* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *well I am employed by a franchisee so I would say the flexibility I want and as my role is within the people team, I am able to take advantage of that flexibility. Although the 24-hour nature of the business can sometimes contradict that* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *Yes, you do you get a family environment and other benefits are that they (the staff) look up to certain people and take them on as a parent and guiding relationship* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life and things like that. You take holiday pay and if things happen, they are very fair to you so if you need time off for example, they can allocate this and things like that* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Like I just said, we have the flexibility and there's always a team behind you or above you and everyone is always there to support you even in the hardest of times I've always thought I've had the full support and that's why I work here* |
| 6 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *The flexible hours and the other benefit are the employee discounts because not many companies do that* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *Internships, education to develop to become a shift manager and to go higher* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *So, I love working here. I always love McDonald's food and I'm happy that I work here with nice people, nice managers, nice crew members and what can I say, a nice environment and nice and friendly customers* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *Free break food. It varies because sometimes you can do a lot of things and work really hard and do extra hours and you'll be rewarded with praise* |
| 10 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 1, 9, F/T | *It's a hard question for me because of the flexibility I guess, for me that's the main thing* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *Mcdonalds Provides amazing opportunities in: Training, activities and progression opportunities. Allot of flexibility within working hours, the more you give the more you get out of it* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *The feeling that you have another family to go to* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *More like a family restaurant is fast food but it's also like a family place* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Money. Additionally, we have a rewards scheme, like a bonus scheme for the managers and hitting targets you get a nice pay-out for the year we get recognition* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Free food. The discounts are very good but I don't really use them.  I don't really go out as an old git now! The wages have always been good and a lot better now than they were 20-years ago.  I get a bonus now but it's not something I've ever worked for. It doesn't really motivate me* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *It's my work life balance. You know when it hits the fan you got to be there but when something is working your swing that round and what you get out of it what you put into it so the more you put in the more you get out at the end of the day.  But now I've got the store where it needs to be and now my work life balance is very good now* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *Is the environment. I like to be fast paced. I like to be active. I like to be constantly doing things. If I find that I'm not doing things I kick myself that I've got nothing to do. So, this sort of environment is down my expert route and I enjoy the fast-paced scenario and the people* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *I am not 100% percent certain. You get to meet a lot of people and talk to a lot of people.  I'm on a guaranteed hours contract of 30 hours a week so I get flexibility and security of work* |
| 19 | CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *Money and a sense of achievement* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *The people. The people are the reason that attracted me here are very friendly and it does take a special person to work at McDonald's I find because it has to be someone who could deal with happy customers, angry customers, and certain situations. You get a lot of people that can't cope with those situations.  I find that people who work here are normally quite happy, smiling, and laughing* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *The points for food are good and the work life balance and flexibility, especially for parents and for students* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Flexibility, initial training, development programs, staff discounts, promotions, life insurance and private pension* |
| 23 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 6, 5, P/T | *Flexibility and great training in business* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *A great salary and rates, pensions, free food, great place to work which is clean and always looked after, friendly staff, and it’s fun and busy* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *They get paid, they get holiday pay too, employee discounts which is pretty good and after 2 years they get Healthcare. I think if someone is serious about working here, McDonalds will treat them well* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think it's first of all you got the pay is better than actually anywhere else from what I know* |
| 27 | SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T | *Well I could list the benefits. Pay is better now. Training is good and work life balance is meant to be better* |
| 28 | SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T | *Flexible holidays mean a lot and holidays allowances is good.  Holiday pay and sick pay too. I know within company restaurants after 3 years you get Private Healthcare. Development and training is very good too. You get a brilliant opportunity to work with people from all different age groups and I think that's a really good thing.  I think it works well and you get recognition with employee of the Month employee of the quarter, and all of those opportunities and I think that progression and our systems are good. The training and all of those systems means a lot* |
| 29 | CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T | *I love the environment and the people and interacting with customers and you get to know them so if you give your customers a good service that makes me feel good and if I make some customer happy with what I do I feel good and my manager is happy as well* |
| 30 | SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T | *We get good benefits like bonuses and it all comes down to the people's support. They get recognised and rewarded if you work hard you get a McFlurry* |
| 31 | SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T | *Flexibility and work life balance* |
| 32 | C, H, F, C, S, 1, 2, P/T | *You get free food and this one specifically has a lot of Nepalese workers and I felt very comfortable working around them* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *I get paid.  I get money off stuff with discount cards at Tesco's.  I get cheap cinema tickets and that sort of thing. I mean it was good too when I was going to college and the balance and some people here have children so it's good so they can balance their time with their families* |
| 34 | CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T | *The company in return gives me value and respect, recognition and promotion. Basically, it fulfils all the promises. All the benefits listed above were given to me. Most importantly the company recognise the hard work and gives you the long-term career path, motivate you to the right direction and support you with your personal development* |
| 35 | SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T | *Training and development, promotions, Hospitality Qualification*  *Flexible working pattern*  *Safe working place environment*  *Value and respect*  *Promotions and Recognition scheme*  *Private health care*  *Pension scheme*  *Service awards*  *Employee discount scheme*  *Holiday pay*  *Performance reviews and Pay rises*  *Free meal at work* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Progression, discounts, apprenticeships etc. there are plenty of things that McDonalds offers to its employees which can be used to benefit you whilst on the job or in your personal day to day life outside of work* |

| Theme Four – Perceived Organisational Benefits | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *Fast food for me. I think really high standards like market leading. We lead the way to me that's one of the big things about the brand* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *I think its status and positioning in global brands makes it appear that it stands out. Its prestigious* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *I think McDonald's is such a well-known brand it's one of the big names, working for this brand and such a big company as I know like McDonald's is a very diverse company* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *The brand McDonald's means to me about delivery and customer service consistency. When you think about McDonald's it's always thinking of the same procedures the same way of doing things every single time the way we interact with customers is always the same but we put a unique spin on it every single time that's what I think is consistency on the level of uniqueness as well* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *I think maybe it's because of the fastest service and the procedures are stricter and people following it and there's more cleaning as in McDonald's and the quality of food is better* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *McDonald's as a brand means fun to me as I think about all the fun times I went to McDonald's as a kid. You know when you go out for a night out with your friends you always end up in McDonald's and for some reason it's always related to something exciting and when I went out with my friends its more than just going out for food* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *I think it does because everyone knows it. I mean everyone knows KFC and whatever but when someone says let’s go out for food I say let's go to the drive thru as its everyone's favourite probably* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *I believe Mcdonalds Brand is a world leader in the food service industry. Mcdonalds is constantly looking to innovate and adapt to become the best loved restaurant company* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Quick, easy and reliable food. A place of work and somewhere quick and easy for food and drink and a good meeting place* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *Fast hot food friendly service. Mainly fast food and a nice environment as well. A market leading brand* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Lovely place to go with family, quiet place to have a coffee, cleanliness and a famous name to be associated with* |
| 23 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 6, 5, P/T | *The McDonalds brand means a happy, well run place of work with likeminded people doing what they do. People trust the brand to deliver high quality food time after time* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *Respect, flexibility, working with people I like and look after me. I also feel that the workplace is my home as I am here allot! It seems to me that the company really cares about the staff and how they are treated* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *McDonald's is a very well-known brand throughout the world as a fast-food chain. I think it's very big with families and Kids especially around the world and the symbol McDonald's is very famous and eighty or ninety percent of the population of the world knows about it* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think the level of the systems we have here for training and learning and progression is much better* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *I think it does because the branding and the fact I'm guessing they get more sales than the other fast-food chains.  I've got lots of good staff and they all know their stuff and hygiene* |
| 34 | CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T | *I think McDonald’s stands out as an employer of choice within fast food industry because of their strong continuous focus on customer service, response to competition, inventing new recipes to attract all age groups, fulfilling customers demand. Famous worldwide* |
| 35 | SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T | *The company gives employees recognition for their hard work. It leads the way in this respect with other fast-food brands as far as I know* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *It is a well-known brand that is instantly recognisable by people across the world. People love the brand and everything that they do. The brand offers great customer service and competitively priced products* |

| Theme Five – Teamwork | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *I think I do a good job. But the tools at times in my role I really must depend upon the 220 staff doing their job and I find all the reasons we spoke we haven't got the length of service and we haven't got the experience. This their means you're making do with people that are not on the level that they used to be that you used to work with and the challenge is there in the development as always but at times you can't get more out of them* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *To be treated fairly, to be supported in terms of learning and development. That could be staff retention possible and the relationships trying to ensure people work collaboratively whereas before I got here there wasn’t the degree of collaboration that there is now* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *My role is to do with people so as long as they are happy I am happy and the rules are followed* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *Because I love my job and I love working here and staying there's 5 or 10 minutes can make someone's whole shift a bit easier. Also helping other people, they will also help you in return* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I really enjoy the interaction with the crew because I was the people lead for a little while and I enjoyed the ROIP systems and something we can see physical process and progress going on in the store* |
| 6 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *you're always working with a team that's another reason why it's never boring you always have someone to talk to* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *I like the friendly environment with the crew and the team I like the flexibility of the hours* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *The environment here, the crew members. I have a lot of friends here* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *I enjoy the people I work with and when the customers aren’t being too horrible, they are half decent as well. As I say, it ticks all the boxes really. I have been here for a while now since August and I think honestly it is the team and everyone I work with that makes it that much easier because when you have friends you want to come to work and spend time with your friends I think you need that a team so I'm very committed absolutely 6 days a week* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *However, my most prominent would be the work I do with my employees. I get a lot of satisfaction in helping people better themselves but also taking care of their wellbeing* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *All employees like to feel that they are a part of any business, and making them part of goal’s achieved and direction in the path they wish to travel will benefit not just them but also the employer* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Working with the crew. I like working with some of the customers. Some can get quite out of hand but most of them are ok most of the crew that I work when I get along with. It’s a great company it's really good working as a team which I really like* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *teamwork we've all got to work together if we don't work together it will just be chaos every day* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *You get to work with your friends you get to see them on a daily basis you get to work when it suits you and that's probably why it stands out now and it's all about procedure, people working together, operations and it's all about our culture, in the operations and in the restaurant* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *If my crew are happy and my managers are happy that is great. I ask myself what I can do to try and make their lives better and more flexible. Is there any development that I can do for them* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *The people. The people that are attracted here are very friendly and it does take a special person to work at McDonald's I find because it has to be someone who could deal with happy customers, angry customers and certain situations. You get a lot of people that can't cope with those situations.  I find that people who work here are normally quite happy, smiling, laughing and they know how to do their job as they are trained properly and that's the best quality about working here are the people* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Goals I have, team I work with, trust my team has in me, tasks I have in order to maintain a safe place to work and keep crew members happy and in constant growth* |
| 23 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 6, 5, P/T | *I will always be the first to help my friends out, as they would do the same for me. I think this teamwork element is something that I have noticed at McDonalds as a really big deal and its part of the working place* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *My main thing is coming in and seeing the people that work for me, the people that I work with. There are people from a different age from 16 years old to 70 years old. It is good to interact with the people and every day, supporting them with a different challenge and you have people issues to booking issues to customer issues and it kind of gives you that little buzz when you successfully deal with those issues and it makes you feel like you have achieved something* |
| 34 | CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T | *Working together as a team, meeting new people. Get to know about different cultures as McDonald’s has a diverse team. I like working together as a team, the team becomes like your family* |
| 35 | SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T | *I like working together as a team, the team becomes like your family. Working together as a team makes everybody’s life easy at workplace, meeting new people. Get to know about different cultures as McDonald’s has a diverse team* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *The people that I work with. I feel that the people that I work with are the biggest motivator for the job, being able to come and work with most of the people that are there just make the job that much better in my opinion* |

| Theme Six – Perceived Personal Factors | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *I think I do my best work when I'm held accountable for something and is on me. I mean an example would be like the brand standard visits (BSVs) we passed and we haven't had the leadership in the restaurant but with me running the restaurants we scored the highest BSV scores you have ever had as a franchisee and that shows I'm rising to that challenge and is something that I do* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *I want to make it a success with regards to turn some of the challenges and negatives into positives with the things I can influence* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *I have a schedule I work but I would work outside those hours if I really had to and it fitted in with me at home. Obviously, there are certain jobs I can do at home which I do and I’m quite happy to do. I want the company to be successful* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *For me and my role as an assistant I get sent more targets and things like that and when you hit your target it's a real bonus and I feel very happy* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I think being present on the floor. I excel when I'm leading on the floor and everybody will see that I'm taking charge* |
| 6 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *I don't like making bad decisions as nobody likes them but I feel like if I make a bad decision that's going to be my next lesson and that's what I'm going to try and avoid next time. Or maybe use the same idea in a different time different ways and make improvements upon him* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *Good and bad feedback so I can improve because I want to be better* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Maybe if I don't have anything to do and nobody will ask me I just do it and I do it because I want to. I like helping people* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *When you get encouragement or just recognised if someone can recognise that you put in the work and you're doing it harder than you normally would and they mention you're doing a really good job it makes you happy* |
| 10 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 1, 9, F/T | *I think I work really hard I do everything they say and I want to learn more* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *I always believe in being the best. I will always go the extra mile for my job as I know that hard work pays off in the long run. I will always do what’s right and I will always do whatever possible to ensure That standards are met. Do whatever need to be done, if that involves learning something new then that is what I would do* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *When I am left to show what I can do and achieve. Teamwork for me is what it is all about. I have never looked at things or a shift as staying behind because you are on a time scale, it is about achieving what is needed and that feeling of achievement that will allow you to go home happy and relaxed* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *All the time. I'm usually an hour 30 minutes late after my shift. If I finish at 2 I won't just walk out because I don't want to feel bad because if I was in their shoes I would feel I would want them to stay and so I am nice to them and always try to help out* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Because the way I was raised. You do for other people what you want to do for yourself. If I can see people are struggling I'm going to help out because if I was running the shift and had people walking out I'll be upset about it so it's a camaraderie and friendship because you don't want to let your friends down* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *I get told off that I've been helping too much sometimes but I can't help myself.  The last 4 or 5 years they actually recognise what I do. I will complain about something but I will go and fix it first and now they see what I can do* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *I would say I always do what I have to do. If I know I've got to stay if I know it's tight with regards to the people for example. So, I don't think going above and beyond is necessarily what ii is, it's just doing your job and if something is bad you need to stay and fix it so is that just going above and beyond or just doing my job* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *Because I care.  I care more than I did say a year ago because I felt a year ago, I didn't have the support from my superiors as I didn't know what I was doing wrong or what I was doing right. Now I have that new superior who knows what they're talking about and what their expectations are from myself. I am now always trying to look to achieve and he has supported me throughout* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *I try to put myself out and I just carry on going. Determination to prove I can do something that other people say I cannot do. A Lot of people do not realise that I have the strength of two arms in one arm and they do not realise.  I push myself to the limit and over that limit because of my disability and I want to prove people wrong* |
| 19 | CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *It's in my nature to do that. I've always been conscientious and sometimes I look back and think why I bothered.  I cannot not care if you know what I mean* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *Normally I come to work to do my job but if it comes to customers and I see them getting angry, when I see someone like that that's what I feel like I can help and use my skills to step in.  I'm a local last I know a lot of the people that come in and that's why I think I can help and calm down situations* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *I'm always doing that, it's just the way I work. I have this energy. If I'm sitting doing nothing my time doesn't go so if I'm doing more jobs or trying to do more stuff time flies and it makes my work even easier* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I don’t mind being moral support when people approach me or to do some cleaning when necessary. Never late, never leave in time, work is a priority for me* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *when I am asked because I want to be seen as a person who helps and wants to do the right thing. It’s important as we all work together all of the time* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *I guess its pride and we have a ranking. We compare ourselves against other restaurants and we look at our previous results and we always want to be better* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think I do that naturally so I think about myself and my reputation.  I take it as the way to do things I don't wait for consultants or someone telling me to do this or that because I think for example if I want to do something for my people I will do it because I think it's the right thing to do and I'm not waiting for someone to tell me to do it and this is when a consistent performance comes in* |
| 27 | SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T | *I do it because of pride in my work. I love my job and I won't let anyone tell me I do a half-baked job. Obviously, it depends on the person who asked me and how I was asked but I would definitely do it. It's all about pride 100% and I won't let anyone tell me that I'm not doing my job properly* |
| 28 | SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T | *Always, if possible when I see an opportunity I always try to.  I always think I really want to succeed in everything I do and the way to succeed is working as hard as possible and putting in the extra effort. I think that's why I got promoted to a shift manager quite quickly because I joined in 2017 and I was a shift manager by 2018. I really knuckle down and try to improve. So, in everything and not just with McDonalds I take pride in what I do. I do in sport and everything I try and do* |
| 29 | CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T | *For me I always want to give my best at work so usually when my husband's over he looks after the child so sometimes I do overnight. I don't mind and because my manager says because you can help out it would be a good help and sometimes people are sick and sometimes, I can do these shifts. I always want to do my best and I can cover them when someone can't come.  I do it because we are like family here. It's not only because of the money I just want to help other people that I work with* |
| 30 | SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T | *I think that recognition is really important and it makes you feel better and motivates people more to work and when people come to work, they feel happy* |
| 31 | SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T | *when I'm speaking to customers is just my personality.  you can't make people just go and talk to customers is the person's personality and you can't make that. That Spark to go and talk to a customer and make everyone feel comfortable is something you can't teach, it's just someone's personality* |
| 32 | C, H, F, C, S, 1, 2, P/T | *I'm quite committed but not as much as other people I would say. I couldn't do really early shifts or lots of shifts, I just do a couple.  It's just a job* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *For me when I come in I just want to make sure I get the job done* |
| 34 | CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T | *I think I always try my best to give customers the best experience I possibly can, because the happy customers are the success of business. Equally I work together as team and look after my staff and fellow colleagues because they are equally part of the success. Happy team will delivery fast and friendly service so if staff are happy the customers will be happy too. I work hard and willing to learn new things and accepts challenges* |
| 35 | SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T | *I always look for additional tasks or lookout for more work. I like learning myself and then training staff the correct procedures as knowledge* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I always try my hardest but am sometimes more motivated when asked to do something by certain people. I also go further with my work in the correct environment and setting* |

| Theme Seven – Training & Development | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *I enjoy training people and the operations and the people. There's nothing better than hitting targets over busy lunch and so peak hours and people sitting on a high Food for Thought which we currently not, which we will fix, and your content you've done your best you have just got to maintain it. That's the bit once you're there keeping up there is the challenge but when you get there it's great* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *I want to make it a success with regards to turn some of the challenges and negatives into positives with the things I can influence. That could be staff retention possibly and the relationships, trying to ensure people work in a cooperative and collaborative manner whereas before I got here there wasn’t the degree of cooperation that there is now* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *I've definitely seen some new starters think that but I believe once they get into the culture and especially if they start going for the crew development scheme the culture around viewing the brand changes* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *Internships, education to develop to become a shift manager and to go higher. The fact that you can go higher and the career development is important to me and I want to progress* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *For myself I expect progression. I don't want to be a crew member forever and I want to get somewhere and my is to aim is to progress. It’s not like it’s a part-time thing for me as I'm investing my time for years. I don't want to be a crew member the whole time and I want to get somewhere and be happy about it if that makes sense so for myself I expect progression* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *Mcdonalds Provides amazing opportunities in: Training, activities and progression opportunities* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *My training, wages paid, hours that suited me when needed, excitement on all shifts worked, problem solving* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Through the people I worked with I was taught to come out of my shell. Talking to people and would I say getting down to the nitty-gritty tasks, I don't mind doing stuff like that* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *The online stuff I don't think it's concentrated as it used to be when you had the old paperwork and the videos you had to watch now it's all a little too easy to skip it, skip the videos and a lot of steps. It's not just as thorough as it used to be. When I was 16 it was repeated and repeated and repeated until you just did it but now you just don't see anything like that. It's just the way I look at it* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *I'm really enjoying watching people grow as people and managers and that’s what I get out of McDonald's* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *You look after the People by training them and the training is phenomenal within McDonalds. No other business I know is as competitive compared to McDonald's and no one I know has training like McDonald's do. We really look after their people and because we look after our people it brings attraction and attraction talks and one becomes ten, ten becomes a hundred and that's how the brand is* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *I know it's a good progression so it's not a massive onslaught having to do this and that. They say to you if you can do that they'll step you up to the next level and there is online training and stuff* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *Training and development yes. I started 1-year ago and I became a crew trainer 6 months afterwards and now I'm going to get promoted to being floor manager so it depends on you a lot but they are looking for achieving people* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Flexibility, initial training, development programs, staff discounts, promotions, life insurance and private pension* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *I think that the brand offers so much to the employees. Training, development, progression and the prestige of working for a global branded business* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *People that work here can see the growth potential and their career progression and when you spend two years doing College, you might be a crew trainer or shift manager and that’s quite a high position for youngsters* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *We are here to give them a career and the development of training and to get them where they want to be. Or if they want to use us as a steppingstone to go somewhere else we're quite happy to do that and we will get out of them what we need while they're working for us and at university and studying and they're giving us what we want and they get what they need the with regards to the skills in life they need to take on somewhere else and supporting them financially at the same time* |
| 27 | SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T | *Training is good* |
| 28 | SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T | *I mean it's really improved my social skills and that's one of the main things that makes me feel positive. My social skills especially talking to customers were non-existent before I did this job and I didn't have it when I first started and I was very shy and I didn't like approaching people at all* |
| 29 | CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T | *They give you a chance and they teach you and I have a lot of patience and so far, we go along like a family here* |
| 30 | SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T | *I think Training and Development is important so me and my colleague are in charge of training. We give new starters time to do the E-Learning and I think that's really important and we help them with their training and they come to us and talk about their training* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *I'm talking to the managers at the moment and hopefully shift management is the next step.  I don't really have to stay behind because I can do on my training on my phone* |

| Theme Eight – Relationships | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *I like things to be consistent I like to know where I stand and things like that and I put the business first and the job the brand the business First all the time. I like that just to be understood and I never do anything on purpose to harm the business and I think sometimes that's not seen* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *if the franchisee left and another franchisee took over as that relationship is really important* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *Yes, you do you get a family environment and other benefits are that they (the staff) look up to certain people and take them on as a parent and guiding relationship* |
| 4 | 1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T | *I think working here you do your job when you get respect for doing a job. For me personally if someone says thank you please or well done just doing your job that's what makes it the biggest thing because you can be the biggest brand you have to respect everybody and I think we always do that quite well* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *When I was put under a lot of pressure, not only by one person but I felt like everyone at the same time, that’s when I thought about leaving* |
| 6 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *When it comes to the people I most like working with. So, let's say it's a really busy shift and we are down on people. If there's someone I get on with really well as a manager I will stay without asking because I know they do the same for me. If it's someone that that I might not get along with all we have very different leadership skills and we tend to clash when we make decisions, then I might not stay because I feel like it wouldn't be a good idea because we would clash and disagree* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *If it happens like unfairness towards everyone* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *It is the mixture of how your superiors treats you and it depends on how the people you work with treat you and that way the mood changes and you think about leaving and then after that you just say it was just a bad day* |
| 9 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T | *If I'm not getting on with the manager but I will try and get on with them anyway. But I am going to do the job and I usually have a level of respect for a manager because they're my superior. But if they do something wrong then my respect goes down, they don't have to earn my respect as they are a manager for a reason so I do give it to them. But if they do something wrong or not very nice and I have no respect for them and it does strain things because if I'm not getting on with the manager and I'm stuck on the shift then I don't want to work with them* |
| 11 | 1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *I get satisfaction from my job in many places. However, my most prominent would be the work I do with my employees. I get a lot of satisfaction in helping people better themselves but also taking care of their wellbeing* |
| 12 | 1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T | *Also, I believe that part of my job role is to be part of every crew members life and be approachable, friendly and knowledgeable. I feel I am not just part of the restaurant that I work in* |
| 13 | SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *I get stressed out if I have had a hard day, stressed too at busy times, busy hours if the shift isn't going as well as I would like it to. This happens if the team are not functioning like a team normally and are not involved with what they are doing* |
| 14 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *At the time we had a different business manager and there were a lot of false promises and promotions getting held back and things not getting done and a pay rise promised that never happened* |
| 15 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *there was a little bit about 5 years ago when the other franchisee ran the restaurant and before the current franchisee took over. He still looked after me but the way they ran the stores was no good.  I used to set up the whole store every single day. That was about the way the previous owner ran it to the ground big time I'm and he was letting go so he didn't care* |
| 16 | BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T | *I've made a lot of friends from McDonald's. The meaning of it is quite subjective to me, it's my job that's my livelihood it's something I do well and I want my store to get results and the people that I work with to get recognition. It's almost like a second home* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *The business manager at the time lacked passion and it was hard to find my position. My superior was under motivated, so knowing what to do for starters and the job description for second was tough* |
| 19 | CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *And the people that I work with are nice as well* |
| 20 | C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T | *They will do their best to make sure I can have a day off or something like that and if I need to have a day off they will go out of their way for their employees which is another thing that I find is good for us as employees* |
| 21 | CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T | *You don't have any problems and everything is all done and I like my business manager but don't tell him that* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Discrimination, bullying, abuse of power over me, favouritism* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *Really well – I think I get on with everyone and they listen if I say something that they agree with or not. It’s a happy and stable place for me to be part of* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *I think it’s just different things so I don't think working for a company or franchisee is different as its just working for different people isn't it and that's what it's all about* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *I think they gave me more than what I expected and they're very fair. This is something that I'm grateful for on a personal level and that is what you expect from your employer. You have worked for them for over 10 years and when I needed something in return, they gave it to me. That is very important to me* |
| 27 | SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T | *You have to be well liked and the managers have their favourites. The next rung up is filled by whomever the managers think they want.  I often feel that other people that could progress that given the chance because they don't fit into the team or line of thought as the other managers or maybe because they are quiet it doesn't mean they're not going to be a good manager and if your face doesn't fit you can't progress here* |
| 28 | SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T | *I worked in Aldershot drive-thru before it got franchised and I handed in my notice.  I didn't like the way the business manager ran the restaurant and I didn’t like my time there and I handed in my notice and they offered to transfer me here. Yes, it was entirely because of that relationship. He picked on me all the time and I didn’t want to waste my time being in that environment* |
| 29 | CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T | *If we have any problems the managers always telling us what we can do and sometimes we have a review in McDonald's and do we have any complaints and it's really open and supportive* |
| 30 | SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T | *So, it helps out the rest of the crew and to help my colleagues so we won't have as much to do. The assistants have a lot of paperwork to do and I want to help them do that so they haven't got so much to do* |
| 32 | C, H, F, C, S, 1, 2, P/T | *I've learnt loads of different skills like handling lots of different people which is different and different routines* |
| 33 | CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T | *I remember a few months ago I want doing allot and now I am a new crew trainer I have more stuff to do and more responsibility. I like being given stuff to do and getting your hands dirty* |
| 34 | CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T | *Yes, I have thought about leaving previously with different Franchisee organisation. I have left the organisation and started worked in this present franchisee organisation. I am happily working here now* |
| 36 | 2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T | *Yes, over the 10 years there have been times that I have wanted to leave, but these are due to specific people and not the job itself* |

| Theme Nine – Employer Issues | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T | *I think it's gone. I don't think there's that loyalty. Look at this as people come in and out. People come back all the time and they're not coming back because it's the golden Arches* |
| 2 | PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T | *I think the bureaucracy around the corporation can have a negative impact on the speed at which things can happen* |
| 3 | CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T | *When the hierarchy come into the restaurant because they're very demanding and they don't see the inside picture of a franchisee* |
| 5 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *If I am not communicated with there's been times especially working in the store when I felt like in the High Street and I feel a bit in the dark sometimes because the person above me doesn't cascade down as much as I think and I feel like I should be trusted to be able to run the restaurant* |
| 7 | SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T | *Yes, because I want to be better and I wasn't good enough and I just felt like everyone was disappointed in me but I wanted to get the training I need* |
| 8 | CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T | *Is the mixture of how your superiors treats you and it depends on how the people you work with treat you and that way the mood changes and you think about leaving and then after that you just say it was just a bad day* |
| 17 | 2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T | *My superior was under motivated, so knowing what to do for starters and the job description for second was tough. I wasn't aware what I needed to do and it wasn't communicated properly, coming and setting your own to-do lists and hoping for the best* |
| 18 | C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T | *Staff and customers. Picking faults in everything, not the bosses, just the other staff sometimes you want to just get on with it and people are just picking holes in things for the sake of it. If you want to say something, say it at the person's face and not behind their back* |
| 22 | 2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T | *yes, when I felt left behind and not communicated with by my team in the moments, I needed it the most* |
| 25 | BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T | *It is a critique culture. Yes, it is a culture of being negative and I think the whole hierarchy just wears people down after a while. The businesspeople are not seeing it when the business keeps on growing, growing, growing and I don't think they realise if you've done these quarters of growth it's a lot harder than what it used to be. People are saying that the whole culture in terms of employment with the millennials, has all changed. They work completely differently, the new generation and have not got the same level of commitment* |
| 26 | BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T | *In McDonald's you are only measured by your last result and that is quite disappointing. I think it's quite a blame culture as well and for me that is the only negative. When you look at other Industries it's not the same* |
| 27 | SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T | *I don't think we treat our people properly and I don't think we respect our young people and when you get to a certain age I think you're pushed to one side anyway which is the way of the world but no I wouldn't want my children to come here* |
| 28 | SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T | *My managers and staff and being picked on me all the time and I don't want to waste my time being in that environment* |

| *Theme Ten – Personal Feelings* | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| *1* | *BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T* | *Health and life balance. I think the thing that worries me is if myself and my wife had a family and there is not the time. There isn't a balance and as we said earlier the 24-hours doesn't allow for a balance of the intensity of work. It's always there so for me just looking at peers and friends who have just had kids, he's moved to a 7 till 2 job Monday to Friday. I mean I've never had weekends off consistently in my whole life even when I was in head office so I am giving allot up. I don't play hockey and things like that so just that balance and if it's stops me having the balance it's different like a new store opening as I know that’s 3 months of hard work that's not the problem is when you don't see an end to it and that balance* |
| *2* | *PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T* | *if the franchisee left and another franchisee took over as that relationship is really important. If I physically had to work weekends and that was made contractual. Illness* |
| *3* | *CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T* | *retirement or poor health* |
| *4* | *1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T* | *I think for me the biggest thing is that I worry I haven't done a good job and then I worry that other people tell me the same* |
| *5* | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *Lots of hours at the time. Late finishes for about two months in a row and I was scheduled to do closes for 2 months and it just took its toll* |
| *6* | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *Yep. Sometimes it's due to stress. So if it was, for example, at Christmas time when it's constantly busy and you feel like you can't even catch your breath because there is always cars, always customers and I feel like oh my god I would just love to sit in an office or when it comes to times* |
| *7* | *SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T* | *Because I felt that I needed More training* |
| *8* | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *pressure and stress make me think about leaving and here's a stressful job sometimes yes maybe it seems easy but it's not that easy working here so you have to love what you're doing and after that you have to work hard* |
| *9* | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T* | *Normally it's when I've been doing 6am starts all week. Feeling really tired from having a child as well and I feel like is it worth it? It just took its toll. I can get a job in the evenings and maybe do things a different way. Where do you get tired you have to think that I chose these hours and I like doing this and I have to remind myself that I wanted to do this* |
| *12* | *1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T* | *Yes of course. Becoming a mother 12 years ago I thought that part time wasn’t for me* |
| *13* | *SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *yes, there are sometimes. I get stressed out if I have had a hard day, stressed too at busy times, busy hours if the shift isn't going as well as I would like it to. This happens if the team are not functioning like a team normally* |
| *14* | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *The whole leaving mindset was caused by one person and he was kind of booted out and replaced with a much better manager. The relationship was not distinguishable between me and the business manager but he was a lovely guy but in terms of the job role he should not have done the job* |
| *15* | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *There was a little bit about 5 years ago when the other franchisee ran the restaurant and before the current franchisee took over. He still looked after me but the way they ran the stores was no good.  I used to set up the whole store every single day. That was about the way the previous owner ran it to the ground big time I'm and he was letting go so he didn't care* |
| *16* | *BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T* | *It's my work life balance. You know when it hits the fan you got to be there but when something is working your swing that round and what you get out of it what you put into it so the more you put in the more you get out at the end of the day.  But now I've got the store where it needs to be and now my work life balance is very good now* |
| *20* | *C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T* | *Normally it's when I've been doing 6am starts all week. Feeling really tired from having a child as well and I feel like it is worth it. I can get a job in the evenings and maybe do things a different way. Where do you get tired you have to think that I chose these hours and I like doing this and I have to remind myself that I wanted to do this* |
| *21* | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T* | *The flexibility of the hours because I'm working around my son's schedule and my partner's hours as well. I think about leaving sometimes as we are working with a lot of teenagers and they all have strange attitudes sometimes* |
| *22* | *2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *Yes. When I felt left behind or aside by my team in the moments I needed it the most* |
| *25* | *BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T* | *To be resolving different problems every day sometimes it gets too much and it can be in terms of people, equipment or customers all the things that we enjoy about the job can overload you so much you think why I am doing this* |
| *26* | *BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T* | *The only time I thought about it was because of pressure from the hierarchy. They expect more and more and more and you say what else can I do? I am doing 6 days: I'm doing 7 days. I'm doing this and I'm achieving all the metrics and KPIs you want and there's nothing else I can do* |
| *27* | *SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T* | *Yes, it was management and one particular lady who pushed me. That was the closest I've come to leaving and it was completely a People issue* |
| *31* | *SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T* | *Yes, before I had the kids and then I fell pregnant with the eldest one. And now it just fits in. I only felt like leaving just to get a different career nothing bad about here* |
| *32* | *C, H, F, C, S, 1, 2, P/T* | *Some of the customers are rude and that makes me think about leaving. Some customers are crazy and he's just trying to ignore it but they never listen to me* |
| *33* | *CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T* | *Yes of course.  you sometimes get bad days.  I'm someone that likes to learn new things so I remember a few months ago I wasn't doing as much and I thought I'd done a lot and I couldn't relearn anymore do what I was doing so now I got a crew trainer I've got more stuff to do it more responsibility I like being given stuff to do and get your hands dirty and doing stuff* |
| *35* | *SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T* | *Yes, I have thought about leaving previously because of my personal problems* |

| Theme Eleven – People Practices | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | *BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T* | *I think they have better people practices and better development opportunities that attracts a lot of people which you don't get in other fast-food companies from my experience. You don't get that in the KFC because there's a loyalty to it and people buy into the idea and I enjoy working with the people because it's a people business and you're working hard with the same people, the good people and people that you like* |
| 2 | *PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T* | *To be treated fairly, to be supported in terms of learning and development. To be paid fairly and work for as company that is inclusive and a company that supports ethical principles, my principles* |
| 3 | *CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T* | *The people and obviously the money that does come into it. But I like working for people and it makes me feel important but I fit in somewhere and this fits in with the hours that have my grandchildren so I get a flexibility mixed with my home life and my work life* |
| 4 | *1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T* | *You know you've done a good job it's the same when you watch other people doing their jobs and you see other people doing their jobs and hitting their targets and you think I've done a good job with training them and that is such a big thing* |
| 5 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *I have been sent on 5 or 6 courses and with each of them I've got recognition and reward for doing them and being a manager in itself there's a lot of rewarding thing that comes with this job* |
| 7 | *SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T* | *Because of the employee’s flexibility and treating employees with respect and fairness* |
| 8 | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *they always understand me, I have the hours I want, I work on stations that I can work because I have some health problems and they always understand me. I have a holiday whenever I need to. If I ever have something on my mind, I can talk with the manager's which is very good because they always understand* |
| 9 | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T* | *For myself I expect progression. I don't want to be a crew member forever and I want to get somewhere and my is to aim is to progress. It’s not like it’s a part-time thing for me as I'm investing my time for years. I don't want to be a crew member the whole time and I want to get somewhere and be happy about it if that makes sense so for me progression is my goal and development* |
| 10 | *C, H, M, Fr, S, 1, 9, F/T* | *Personally, it's because I know the Business Manager and his wife and they've been helping me a lot because I recently got married and they have given me the hours and they give me that because of my marriage and that helps me a lot* |
| 11 | *1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T* | *I believe the company has great progression opportunities for their employee work efforts* |
| 12 | *1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T* | *From the training it gives the staff* |
| 14 | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *Good recognition and I've been promoted through the ranks which hasn't taken too long* |
| 16 | *BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T* | *Now that I find my job is teaching this job to others so I like building people up to my level. I'm really enjoying watching people grow as people and managers and that’s what I get out of McDonald's* |
| 17 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T* | *Now I have that new superior who knows what they're talking about and what their expectations are from myself. I am now always trying to look to achieve and he has supported me throughout* |
| 18 | *C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T* | *The only place the gives people a chance and it's inclusive and doesn't discriminate between people. They give you a chance to prove yourself and prove you can do something with your life* |
| 19 | *CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T* | *They seem very fair as an employer. In their Attitudes for example, they have backed me up when I have got issues with customers* |
| 21 | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T* | *Because it's giving opportunity to everyone. You can start from the bottom and reach the top and it depends on how good you are. It offers you flexibility and they pay good money* |
| 22 | *2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *Goals and support* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *I really like the atmosphere and way that everyone pulls together to get the job done, it’s a bit like a production site and if this doesn’t happen, nothing would ever happen. People here seem to want to work together to make a difference* |
| 25 | *BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T* | *The people culture in McDonald's as well is really great and we are good at keeping and attracting people to the system* |
| 26 | *BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T* | *I think the level of the systems we have here for training and learning and progression is much better.  That is why you have got a lot of people that started in McDonald's as Mcjobs and we understand that. We are here to give them a career and the development of training and to get them where they want to be. Or if they want to use us as a steppingstone to go somewhere else we're quite happy to do that and we will get out of them what we need while they're working for us and at university and studying and they're giving us what we want and they get what they need the with regards to the skills in life they need to take on somewhere else and supporting them financially at the same time* |
| 27 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T* | *I think the company has been very fair with me and I had a very good run with McDonald's* |
| 29 | *CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T* | *I just want in the future a good position and higher pay.  If we have any problems the managers always telling us what we can do and sometimes we have a review in McDonald's and do we have any complaints and it's really open and supportive* |
| 30 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T* | *I think Training and Development is important so me and my colleague are in charge of training.  and we give new starters time to do the E-Learning and I think that's really important and we help them with their training and they come to us and talk about their training* |
| 33 | *CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T* | *Now I have got a crew trainer role and I've got more stuff to do with more responsibility* |
| 36 | *2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *Opportunities to progress I feel is the main one* |

| Theme Twelve – Recognition | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 3 | *CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T* | *But I like working for people and it makes me feel important* |
| 4 | *1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T* | *For me personally if someone says thank you, please or well done for just doing your job that's what makes it the biggest thing because you can be the biggest brand you have to respect everybody and I think we always do that quite well* |
| 5 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *I feel positive towards the brand but the brand for the most part has always treated me well. I've had my own ups and downs but the brand in itself has treated me well. I have been sent on 5 or 6 courses and with each of them I've got recognition and reward for doing them and being a manager in itself there's a lot of rewarding thing that comes with this job* |
| 6 | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *I feel positive towards the brand because for me McDonald's changed my life because when I came to the country, I had no idea where to go and where to work. But because McDonald's is so flexible with the people they hire from all sorts of countries and all sorts of backgrounds more or less this was my only option but at the same time it was the best option I had because with the qualifications I had I couldn't really go anywhere else other than restaurants. Because I love the restaurants and because I'm a trained chef but I wouldn't work in a restaurant, this is as close as It gets so, I feel I made a really good choice* |
| 9 | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T* | *When you get encouragement or just recognised if someone can recognise that you put in the work and you're doing it harder than you normally would and they mention you're doing a really good job you want to make that all the time at that level you are always at* |
| 10 | *C, H, M, Fr, S, 1, 9, F/T* | *The recognition that I like that yes* |
| 12 | *1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T* | *Retention is a hard one but keeping employees engaged, recognised and rewards is the way forward. Franchised restaurants do this better in my opinion* |
| 14 | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *Good recognition and I've been promoted through the ranks which hasn't taken too long so I've gone from crew member to trainee after a certain period of time. I was part-time for the first two years through College and I was doing IT and computing at college and worked up to crew trainer got better and wanted to progress a little further and I'm going on my course to become a shift manager* |
| 16 | *BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T* | *I want my store to get results and the people that I work with to get recognition* |
| 18 | *C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T* | *Determination to prove I can do something that other people say I can't do. A Lot of people don't realise that I have the strength of two arms in one arm and they don't realise.  I push myself to the limit and over that limit because of my disability and I want to prove people wrong and be recognised for my achievements* |
| 21 | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T* | *I get recognised by the Business Manager more because with the franchisee, we don't really see him* |
| 23 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 6, 5, P/T | *I will always be the first to help my friends out, as they would do the same for me. I think this teamwork element is something that I have noticed at McDonalds as a really big deal and its part of the working place* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *All the time. Sometimes when I am tired it’s a struggle but in the main I will always try* |
| 26 | *BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T* | *I think I do that naturally so I think about myself and my reputation.  I take it as the way to do things I don't wait for consultants or someone telling me to do this or that because I think for example if I want to do something for my people I will do it because I think it's the right thing to do and I'm not waiting for someone to tell me to do it and this is when a consistent performance comes in* |
| 30 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T* | *I think that recognition is really important and it makes you feel better and motivates people more to work and when people come to work, they feel happy* |
| 33 | *CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T* | *I want to get someone to say thanks for coming in and that does happen here* |
| 34 | *CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T* | *In return the company gives its employees recognition for their hard work. That recognition never stops as its ongoing e.g. EOM, EOQ, EOY, Restaurant of the year, BM of the year, Ray Kroc awards, service award, and many more. Most importantly company recognise its talent and invest in their personal development. The best example is the promotions, you start as a crew member and can develop yourself up to Business Manager or above to a senior level. All the opportunities are open and available for us to avail* |
| 35 | *SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T* | *The company gives employees recognition for their hard work. It leads the way in this respect with other fast-food brands* |
| 36 | *2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *Able to come into work and if I am praised for the work that I have done, it makes it feel that much better* |

| Theme Thirteen – Culture | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | *BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T* | *The McDonald's brand is so well known. It's always developing myself and doesn't stand still. We are market Leader and things are always changing, for example best burger keeps you on your toes no days the same so you're looking to manage people differently. It's always a surprise something happens you got to then react to it for me it's that keeps you on your toes and keeps you thinking, its challenging* |
| 3 | *CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T* | *I like the friendliness and I like to come to work for a successful company* |
| 4 | *1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T* | *I love the team that I work with. I love the job and serving customers and making their day a better experience but the biggest thing is for me as working with my team and watching your team grow into crew trainers and shift managers for example and things like that* |
| 5 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *Especially when I was a customer before I joined, that all the employees seem to be really happy and that's why I initially joined* |
| 6 | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *McDonald's as a brand means fun to me as I think about all the fun times I went to McDonald's as a kid. You know when you go out for a night out with your friends you always end up in McDonald's and for some reason it's always related to something exciting and when I went out with my friends its more than just going out for food* |
| 7 | *SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T* | *I think maybe it's because of the fastest service and the procedures* |
| 8 | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *I like the team that I have and I'm really happy with it* |
| 9 | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T* | *It's hard when it's busy but it's easy work to learn how to do and I like learning new things that I want to learn everywhere* |
| 11 | *1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T* | *I enjoy that there is no 2 days the same. I am Often in very dynamic situations where decisions have to be made quickly with no hesitation* |
| 13 | *SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *Working with the crew. I like working with some of the customers. Some can get quite out of hand but most of them are ok most of the crew that I work when I get along with* |
| 14 | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *The restaurant keeps you busy. I don't think I like to do office work like sitting at a computer doing some stuff I would get too bored. I like being on the floor helping out. It's always busy, it's always hectic and even when it's quiet you are still stocking up or getting ready for a busy period or speaking to customer's or speaking to crew. You have always got something to do so never a dull moment* |
| 15 | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *It's because I enjoy McDonalds and I've always enjoyed retail. I was on really good wages at Tesco's but I've always enjoyed the retail sector. It is the speed and I like to be busy* |
| 16 | *BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T* | *No day is the same and I've done other jobs and every day is the same and it's boring and you sit at a desk. The fact you have got to do half the job on the floor is very good. To me it's about being with the people and working shoulder to shoulder. You need to be there; it's about being about them as you're not going to get anywhere by sitting in the office sitting behind a desk and I think that is the joy of it. No day is the same as you may get sickness calls when people don’t come in and then everyone then has to work twice as hard but it's how you manage that and then you have the best day you've had and it is seeing that come to life that makes it all worthwhile* |
| 17 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T* | *I like to be fast paced. I like to be active. I like to be constantly doing things.  if I find that I'm not doing things I kick myself that I've got nothing to do* |
| 18 | *C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T* | *McDonald's is a very fast Turnover* |
| 20 | *C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T* | *I expect to have a fun shift.  I know it's a good progression so it's not a massive onslaught having to do this and that. They say to you if you can do that they'll step you up to the next level and there is online training and stuff* |
| 21 | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T* | *The elements that make you speed up the production and I like the responsibility of leading* |
| 23 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 6, 5, P/T | *A fair wage, good hours, a good environment and friends at work* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *I really like the atmosphere and way that everyone pulls together typo get the job done* |
| 25 | *BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T* | *I think the working environment in McDonald's is something that makes it fun.  The people culture in McDonald's as well is really great and we are good at keeping and attracting people to the system* |
| 27 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T* | *The culture is we still take pride and serve good fast food but I think it's very much now take the money Take the Money and more pressure. The hierarchy is having to look after themselves now as well* |
| 28 | *SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T* | *I've made lots of friends and I work with lots of good people which makes it all the time that I work enjoyable* |
| 30 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T* | *Coming here and working I enjoy what I do if I don't expect to get anything back.  I like to get respect but I haven't really thought about that. I wouldn't still be here if I didn't enjoy it and I like the challenges and the people I work with* |
| 31 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T* | *I like working with people and it's a very social environment.  I go out with a few of them but not many because they are a little youngster and I'm older. I like getting on with different age groups and I like coming out here mixing with the customers as well. I like it a lot and its great fun* |
| 32 | *C, H, F, C, S, 1, 2, P/T* | *I feel like everyone else is a lot faster than me and I'm quite slow.  and they still do well even though they're fast. I feel I am less good at handling people and they all know what to say and I'm not sure what to say at the moment but that's just experience* |
| 34 | *CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T* | *Happy team will delivery fast and friendly service so if staff are happy the customers will be happy too. I work hard and willing to learn new things and accepts challenges* |
| 36 | *2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *It’s a good place to work, fast-paced and plenty of great people to work with* |

| Theme Fourteen – What is Flexibility | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | *BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T* | *The biggest is the flexibility and that's always one of the biggest things. Its suitable for everyone, I mean kids studying, parents and it gives you the flexibility to do more hours or less hours. Everyone can get by doing the McDonald's job if they need to and the hours and the things like that and some very successful people pay mortgages and things like that* |
| 2 | *PM, S, F, Fr, S, 1, 10, P/T* | *I have not had retail experience, the location, the opportunity, flexibility, the franchisee* |
| 3 | *CT, H, F, Fr, M, 30, 3, P/T* | *Employment, well-chosen hours of the staff* |
| 4 | *1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T* | *I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life and things like that. You take holiday pay and if things happen, they are very fair to you so if you need time off for example, they can allocate this and things like that* |
| 5 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *They told me and what I have seen myself is that we are one of the most flexible in terms of hours or in terms of taking time off as we can always find other people to cover that shift. I think I think we are very flexible and we make the hours to work around your life. Other fast-food brands are harsher and less lenient on flexibility and they won't be as flexible as we can be and I think that is very important as a brand and as an employer and is especially very important to the employees* |
| 6 | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *I would say the flexible hours because I knew I was going to do something else with it. Firstly, it initially started off as studying and now it's turned into a second job* |
| 7 | *SM, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 3, F/T* | *Because of the employee’s flexibility and treating employees with respect and fairness* |
| 8 | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *We have the option to choose how we work which is very good and it's very flexible with regard to hours. We can have a holiday whenever we need to which is very good because not everywhere is like that so that's very good* |
| 10 | *C, H, M, Fr, S, 1, 9, F/T* | *The hours I've got, the money, yes both* |
| 11 | *1st, S, M, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T* | *Mcdonalds Provides amazing opportunities in: Training, activities and progression opportunities. Allot of flexibility within working hours, the more you give the more you get out of it* |
| 12 | *1st, S, F, Fr, M, 22, 12, P/T* | *Flexible hours to suit not just family members but also college and Uni students, staff discounts and not just within the restaurants but also with other retailers* |
| 16 | *BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T* | *I can work hours that suited me. It was quite flexible in that respect and it was a far more boisterous environment back then and I enjoyed the banter and coming in to see my friends and now I'm a store manager* |
| 17 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T* | *With regard to the crew side of things they get paid holiday, flexibility guaranteed hours contracts* |
| 18 | *C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T* | *You get to meet a lot of people and talk to a lot of people.  I'm on a guaranteed hours contract of 30 hours a week so I get flexibility and security of work* |
| 20 | *C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T* | *I really like the flexible hours so for example if I have to take my son somewhere and I decide I can't make a shift or get it covered; they will help* |
| 21 | *CT, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, P/T* | *I'm working around my son's schedule and my partner's hours as well. I'm on a guaranteed hours contract of 30 hours a week but I only do certain shifts* |
| 22 | *2nd, S, F, Fr, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *Flexibility, initial training, development programs, staff discounts, promotions, life insurance and private pension* |
| 23 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 6, 5, P/T | *Flexibility and great training in business. I have been put on the relevant courses in order for me to become a crew trainer so I am very pleased* |
| 24 | C, H, F, FR, M, 2, 10, P/T | *Respect, flexibility, working with people I like and look after me* |
| 25 | *BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T* | *Flexibility of work.  Well the business is the weekend Friday Saturday Sunday is when the rest of the world goes and rests and that's what we have to put the hours in* |
| 26 | *BM, S, M, C, S, 10, 3, F/T* | *You are a student and you want to come part-time; we can accommodate that. If you want to come and ask for more hours, we will be able to accommodate that, it's just the way our business works* |
| 27 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T* | *Flexibility I had a very young family and I needed to work opposite to my partner who was in the police and he was doing shift work I had to find something with shift work and that was a key Factor* |
| 28 | *SM, H, M, C, S, 3, 5, F/T* | *When I joined it just came out of college and I was in college in Farnborough College and I mean the flexible scheduling and the hours and that sort of thing* |
| 29 | *CT, H, F, C, M, 2, 2, F/T* | *I also like the flexible hours. When I just started, I couldn't work that much because my husband's far away. He's in the army so the benefits are that they are very understanding. When I started I only used to work 5 hours so now my daughter goes to school full time and they gave me more hours so they are very flexible and they teach us that the more we learn they'll give us an increase in pay and responsibility* |
| 30 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 6, 5, F/T* | *I think it does because of the flexible hours and it works around College people's timetables.  as a first job is really good as it works around your timetables and it's really flexible and really good pay* |
| 31 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T* | *It's like last week now my mums had a hip replacement and she helps with my childcare. So last week I did all school hour shifts because that fitted in round the school because my mum couldn't look after the children* |
| 33 | *CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T* | *The fact that I can work anytime I want and I get a good schedule 5 days a week so flexibility.  It's a really good thing that flexibility and balancing around your social life and everything else* |
| 34 | *CT, H, F, Fr, C, S, 1, 3, F/T* | *Flexible working pattern* |
| 35 | *SM, H, M, C, M, 9, 5, P/T* | *I came to England in 2010 from Pakistan, I got promoted within 6 months and had fantastic opportunity. It depends upon your hard work and the brand pays you back if you work hard. It also enables transferability because the knowledge, and work you get means you can work in McDonalds abroad as we do things the same worldwide. I could go back to Lahore and work there and even develop a franchise* |
| 36 | *2nd, S, M, C, S, 4, 3, F/T* | *The flexibility that I could get from my work schedule at the time. The flexibility allowed me to work around my studies when I first started working for the company* |

| Theme Fifteen – Hygiene Factors | | |
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| *Participant* | *Demographics* | *Perceptions* |
| 1 | *BM, S, M, Fr, M, 10, 15, F/T* | *I think things have changed and now it's more short-term. I think people see us as a quick fix, convenient and local and join McDonald's and you hear this allot more now. I think in the past people were happy doing it and can see themselves doing it for a bit longer but you don't get the massively long services now and it's not so common* |
| 4 | *1st, S, M, Fr, S, 7, 2, F/T* | *I knew a few people before I started and they recommended it saying it was a really good local job and when you go to McDonald's it's family-based there's a nice friendly atmosphere in there and I thought working here I can provide that as well to customers who come in* |
| 8 | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *Firstly, I just needed a job, that's why I came here* |
| 9 | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 1, 1, F/T* | *Nothing to be honest. I was at a low point and this job happened to be and I needed a job* |
| 13 | *SM, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *At the start it was just experience to get the first job, that was really all I was trying to do to get a first job. All the other jobs I wanted to go for I need to get some experience first so I came to McDonalds to get that experience to move on* |
| 14 | *CT, H, M, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *They were advertising and I needed the money. One of my friends works in the High Street store and said it's not a bad job, it’s quite easy so I applied* |
| 15 | *C, H, F, Fr, S, 3, 2, F/T* | *I live about 2 miles away from the restaurant and I walk to work which takes me about an hour and a half every day* |
| 16 | *BM, S, M, Fr, S, 12, 15, F/T* | *It was just that I live near Romney and there were no jobs as it's the middle of nowhere so when I passed my driving test it was one of the few places that was advertising and it was the pay and the accessibility* |
| 17 | *2nd, S, M, Fr, S, 13, 20, F/T* | *At first it was more of a school leaving job. I needed to find a job and I had family in the past that had worked for McDonald's and I thought I'd start at McDonald's and see where it takes me* |
| 18 | *C, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T* | *Is the environment and easy to get to* |
| 19 | *CT, H, M, Fr, M, 4, 4, F/T* | *A job firstly.  I have had a number of different jobs and it's something I haven't done before so it's different.  This is the first retail one* |
| 20 | *C, H, M, Fr, S, 5, 1, F/T* | *I went through a rough patch and became homeless and this place gave me a job and it helped me pick myself back up and they gave me the money in my pocket to need what I needed to do* |
| 23 | C, H, F, Fr, S, 6, 5, P/T | *The location as near where I live and the fact that I had other student friends who were working there already. It’s fun, friendly, hectic at times yes, but in the main a good place to work* |
| 25 | *BM, S, M, C, M, 19, 2, F/T* | *For me as a person when I started as a teenager it was just getting pocket money but working in McDonald's for the last 19 years has made it different* |
| 27 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 25, 3, F/T* | *The young people just think I have got a job and no I wouldn't say so. I think it used to be and people used to be proud to work at McDonald's and my friends and people who didn't know me when they found out I work McDonald's would say wow* |
| 31 | *SM, H, F, C, S, 18, 2, P/T* | *I started as a 16-year-old that just wanted to get through college and some extra pennies* |
| 33 | *CT, H, M, C, S, 3, 20, F/T* | *It was easy so I'm going to college in Farnborough. I'm doing my A-levels there but I have finished now. I was living in Hook before but then I came to work here* |

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