



Engaging Millennials Working in Customer Service in Finland

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Abstract

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<p>This bachelor's thesis examines how to engage Millennials. The aim of this thesis was to investigate the motivations, needs, and expectations of Millennial employees working in customer service in Helsinki.</p> <p>The theoretical part of the thesis consists of employee engagement theories and the characteristics of Millennials. It further focused on the Employer Value Proposition and motivation theories, presenting Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Finally, the theory part examined different employee engagement strategies for Millennials. The data was collected from different sources, such as books, e-books, journals, articles, and statistical databases.</p> <p>The empirical part of the study was based on qualitative methods. Personal in-depth interviews with Millennial employees were conducted to collect the data. The sample consists of younger Millennials (ages between 26–30) who are working face-to-face with customers in Helsinki. Qualitative thematic analysis was used in analysing the collected data.</p> <p>The key findings of the research suggest that Millennials value especially good work culture and their co-workers. Building relationships with people at work is important, so managers should invest in building team spirit. Meaningful job and finding a purpose motivate Millennials the most along with low hierarchical managers who listens to them. Flexibility in terms of autonomy and possibility to influence their time off and vacations will further engage Millennial employees working in customer service jobs.</p>
Key words Human Resource Management, Employee Engagement, Millennials, Motivation, Employer Value Proposition

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1 Introduction

This is a research-based bachelor's thesis for the degree program in International Business in the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The major specialization of the author is Human Resource Management (HRM).

This chapter introduces the reader to the topic of this thesis. The premise of this research is to understand what Millennials' motivations, needs and expectations are to be able to successfully attract, engage and retain them.

It further presents the background of the topic, why it is important and relevant. The research question (RQ) and the investigative questions (IQs) are presented with the overlay matrix. Delimitation of this thesis helps to clarify the topic scope and focus areas. Finally, this chapter explains the benefits of this thesis for different stakeholders and presents the key concepts of the topic.

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework of the topic to clarify the scope of the topic and a few sources to be used in the theory part of the research. The final chapter of this thesis plan introduces the reader to the research methods, including data collection and analysis methods.

1.1 Background

This thesis is about employee engagement. It focuses on exploring and understanding the motivations, needs, and expectations of Millennial employees working in retail customer service in Helsinki. With this thesis the author aims to find out what motivations, needs, and expectations are crucial to attract, engage, and retain especially Millennial employees who work face-to face with customers.

High level of employee engagement is beneficial both for the employee and the employer. Highly engaged employees increase the profitability of an organization. As they are productive, performance is up to 16 times better compared to unengaged employees. The increase in the organizational profitability also increases the stakeholder value. High engagement has a positive impact on customer satisfaction, quality of work, and the stress levels of the employees. This means less errors, absences and sick leaves, and better retention rates, leading to reduced recruitment costs and risks. (Sale & Jones 2019, 6–7.)

There is a lot of research data and studies showcasing correlation between employee engagement and customer satisfaction (Kruse January 2014). However, the author could not find any research on specifically considering Millennials on that regard. Also, today customer service is a broad concept, and the interactions between customers can take place in a variety of ways. That is why this

thesis focuses on the customer service happening face-to-face within the retail industry. When employees are working directly with customers, the importance of high level of employee engagement is essential, as disengagement could lead to poor customer service experience (Gartner 2021).

With these benefits of higher employee engagement, organizations, employers, and the employees themselves would benefit from this thesis as it investigates and presents theories and experiences of Millennials and how to engage them in the workplace. The delimitation of the topic focusing on Millennials increases the relevance and topicality as Millennials are three times bigger than the generation X, people born between 1965–79 (Ng, Lyons & Schweitzer 2012, 3). That means that they are already the biggest generation in the workforce and are expected to cover up to 75% of the workforce by 2025 (Timmes June 2022).

Focusing on Millennials in the customer service within retail will help employers and managers who want to improve especially their customer satisfaction, although high levels of employee engagement have positive aspects in other areas of the business as well. However, the most important aspect of this research is to understand Millennials, as they are a huge part of the labour force, but at the same time they are demanding. Bruce Tulgan describes Millennials as “The most high-maintenance workforce in the history of world...and likely to be the most high performing” (Tulgan 2016, 1).

This thesis will be at great value for the author as they specialize in the human resource management. This thesis will demonstrate the professional knowledge and competence of the author regarding international business in the field of HRM. It additionally reflects the author’s professional interests and aspirations and so it helps deepen the knowledge and skills needed in the future career path.

1.2 Thesis Topic

This thesis aims to present an overview of how to attract, engage, and retain Millennials in Helsinki working face-to-face with customers in retail. The main research question is “What are the motivations, needs, and expectations of Millennials from current and prospective employers?” The outcome will present the key aspects that companies need to consider, offering recommendations of how to attract, engage, and keep their Millennial employees based on their motivations, needs, and expectations. Further research of the presented topic will be carried out with the help of three investigative questions as follows:

IQ 1. What are the attributes that Millennials value the most when they evaluate their current or prospective employers?

IQ 2. What are the most essential motivation factors for Millennials?

IQ 3. What strategies do Millennials find useful in engaging them?

Table 1: Overlay matrix

Investigative Questions (IQs)	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1. What are the attributes that Millennials value the most when they evaluate their current or prospective employers?	Employee Value Proposition, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Characteristics of Millennials	Theory, Qualitative in-depth interviews with Millennial employees	4.1 5.1 5.4
IQ 2. What are the most essential motivation factors for Millennials?	Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivation, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg, Characteristics of Millennials	Theory, Qualitative in-depth interviews with Millennial employees	4.2 5.2 5.4
IQ 3. What strategies do Millennials find useful in engaging them?	Engagement Strategies, Characteristics of Millennials	Theory, Qualitative in-depth interviews with Millennial employees	5.3 5.4

1.3 Delimitation

This thesis focuses on the engagement of Millennials who are born between the years of 1981–1996 and who are working in the customer service in Helsinki area. It focuses on employees who are working face to face with customers daily in their job. With the delimitation it will not consider customer service workers who are mainly communicating with customers by phone, email, internet, or other channels, because of the special nature of face-to-face customer service.

The nature of work has changed and its more common in younger generations to switch jobs more frequently. In many cases the retention strategies begin with workforce planning and recruitment. This research will explore the motivation, needs, and expectations of Millennials to help attract, engage, and retain them. The research scope has been limited to first investigating the

characteristics of Millennials to get a good basis for the investigative questions resulting in recommendations for the organizations and managers to take advantage of.

1.4 International Aspect

The international aspect of the thesis is covered as the interviewees' nationalities are not limited or predetermined. Also experiences from employees working at international companies are included. Throughout the theory the author will carry out the research with international perspective and the analysis of the interviews consider both local and international aspects and how the results can be interpreted in international context.

1.5 Benefits

This thesis will benefit many companies including their managers, employees, customers, and HR department. Companies who struggle with low engagement or retaining their employees can get new insights of the benefits and tools for high level engagement of Millennials. More engaged staff will also benefit with satisfied and skilled co-workers leading to better results and more satisfied customers. Especially during this time when there is a shortage of workers in many industries, employers will benefit from this research to help them address this problem and act for better employee engagement.

This research also has a great opportunity for the author to learn more about Millennials' values and motivation, in the context of employee engagement. This thesis represents the true interest and career aspirations of the author, and thus will be a great a sample of expertise for future employers.

1.6 Key Concepts

Millennials are the generation born between 1981 to 1996 (Cambridge Dictionary s.a.a). They are also referred as the Generation Y.

Employee engagement is about "investing oneself at work, being authentic in the job, and delivering one's work performance with passion, persistence, enthusiasm, and energy" (Byrne 2022, chapter 1).

Retention is "the percentage of employees remaining in the organization. High levels of retention are desired in most job groups." (Phillips & Connel 2004, 2.)

An employee value proposition (EVP) "is part of an employer's branding strategy that represents everything of value that the employer has to offer its employees" (SHRM s.a.).

Intrinsic motivation refers to “the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external products, pressures, or rewards.” (Ryan & Deci 2000, 56.)

Extrinsic motivation “is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation thus contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than its instrumental value. (Ryan & Deci 2000, 60.)

2 Engaging Millennials

This chapter presents the theoretical part of this research. First a theoretical framework of engaging Millennial employees is presented. Following more detailed explanation and different theories of employee engagement. Then following with the special characteristics of the Millennial generation, engagement strategies for Millennials are presented. With the help of the investigative questions the main theories and concepts are delimited to the topics presented in the figure below.

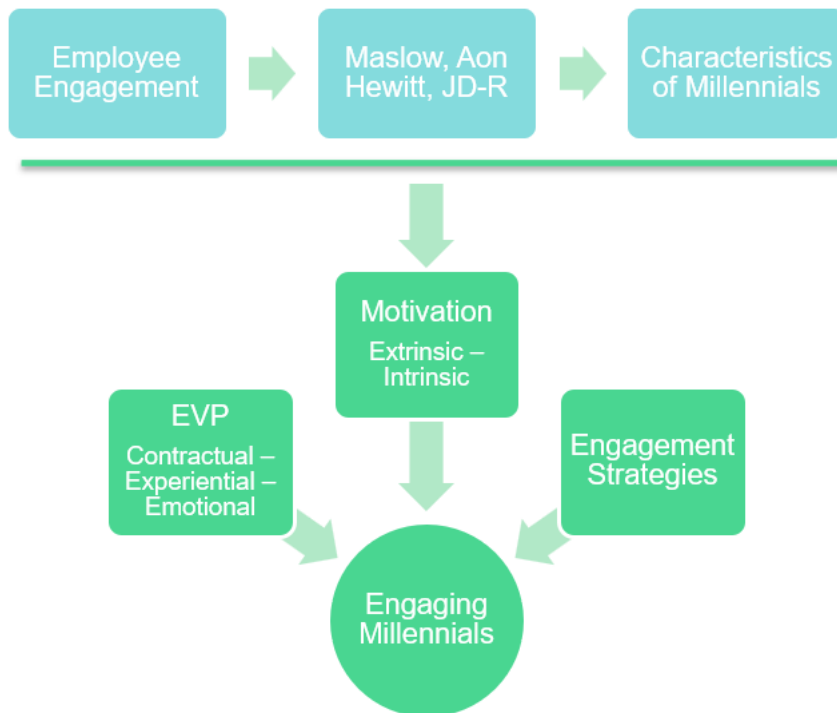


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

The theoretical framework illustrated in the figure 1 above presents the main concepts of the theoretical part of this thesis. It starts with defining employee engagement with different theories; Maslow's hierarchy of need, Aon Hewitt's employee engagement model and the JD-R model. After that special characteristic of the Millennial generation is investigated and presented. Based on the research and scope of the thesis, three main topics EVP, motivation and engagement strategies are then examined with the help of the investigative questions. These will give a good basis for the empirical part of the thesis.

2.1 Defining Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is defined in many ways so there is no one single valid definition for it. The concept was first introduced by William Kahn (1990, 692). He states that employee's physical, cognitive, and emotional contributions influence their experience but also their work. According to

Albrecht (2010, 4) one of the most popular definitions is by Schaufeli, describing engagement as “a positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption”.

The purpose of employee engagement is clear. It benefits both the employee and the organization they are working at. Multiple positive connections have been found through studies between engaged employees and organizational outcomes. Some examples of these include:

- employee performance
- profitability and productivity
- employee commitment and retention
- safety
- service climate
- customer loyalty

(Albrecht 2010, 11; Markos 2010, 92.)

2.2 Employee Engagement Theories

As it is important to identify the benefits of employee engagement, especially for the management, it is crucial to understand the drivers and the barriers to it. Before that, more deeper understanding of the employee engagement is best explained with some theories and frameworks linked to it.

Aon Hewitt’s Engagement Model focuses on the drivers of employee engagement. It emphasizes the employee experience and identifying the areas needing improving considering employee engagement. The purpose is for the employers to get the best picture of what their employees need and what are the areas that need more focus to improve business results.



Figure 2. Aon Hewitt's Engagement Drivers Model (adapted from Aon Hewitt 2011, 7)

Aon Hewitt's model has 6 categories that all influence engagement as presented in figure 2. Quality of life includes physical work environment and work-life balance. In addition to policies and practices, company practices also cover performance management, brand alignment, company reputation, and diversity. Total rewards consist of pay, benefits, and recognition. Opportunities refer to career opportunities and training and development. People-category includes senior leadership and managers, but also colleagues, valuing people, and customers. (Aon Hewitt 2011, 7.)

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model was first introduced in 2001 and have since developed to its current state. Originally the theory started from researching burnout, where different job demands and resources were linked to work environment and its impact on exhaustion.

The essence of the theory is that how job and personal resources with job demands impact job performance (Tummers & Bakker 2021). In this theory all job characteristics are divided into two categories, job demands and resources. Resources has been divided further into job resources and personal resources as seen in the figure 3 below.

Job demands include all the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects requiring effort, and thus come with a cost. These include for example work pressure and emotionally challenging customer encounters. Whereas job demands consist of aspects requiring effort, job resources are all the functional aspects that are needed to succeed in the work. Job resources refer to autonomy, skill variety, feedback, and opportunities to grow, for example. (Bakker & Demerouti 2017, 273).

Job demands and resources are followed by strain and motivation as shown in the figure 3. High motivation impacts job performance positively, whereas strain has a negative impact on performance. High motivation leads to job crafting which then contribute to resources, increasing motivation even further. While Job strain could lead to self-undermining as well as poor resources. This could increase the feeling of higher job demands an aggravate the cycle.

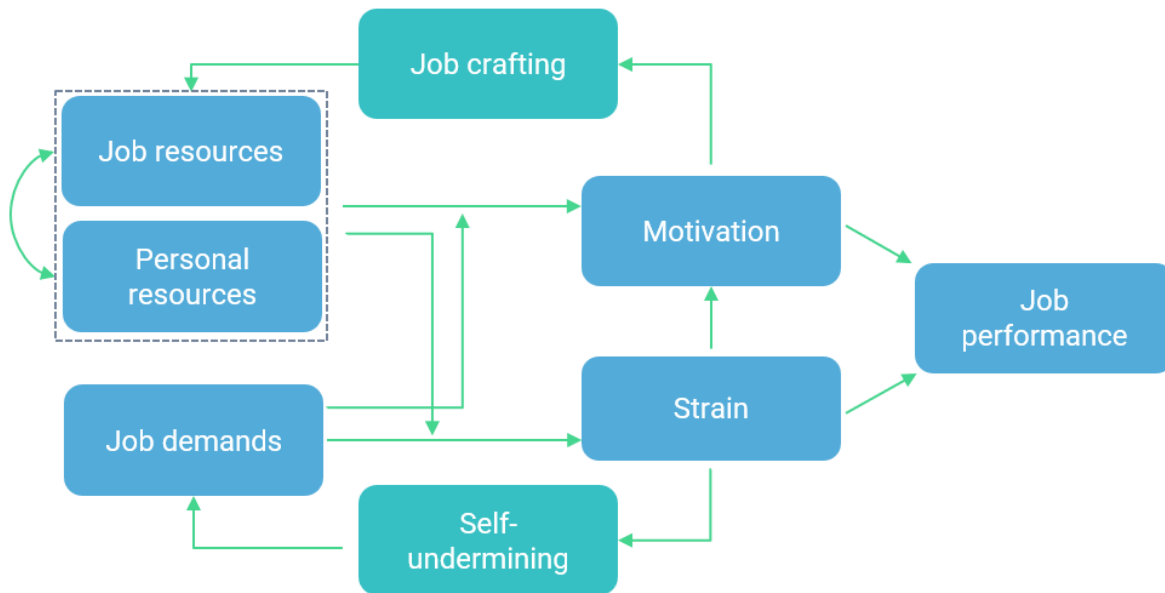


Figure 3. The Job Demands–Resources Model (adapted from Bakker & Demerouti 2017, 275)

Even though this model is not made specifically for employee engagement, it is a valid tool to identify and assess all the aspects of job demands and resources. In this way it is possible to make needed changes considering motivation and strain to achieve a high level of engagement leading to high performance.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is a motivation theory, but it is relevant to introduce at this chapter as it is widely used also in work-life settings and linked to employee engagement as well. The original motivational theory, also referred to the hierarchy of needs consists of five elements that are needed to succeed in holistic motivational satisfaction of individuals; physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. (Maslow 1987,15–22.)

Physiological needs, as the name suggests, refer to all the basic human needs. These include water and food. The second need in the hierarchy is safety, which includes security, stability, protection, and freedom from fear for example. The third need, belonging and love, meaning affection, friends, family, society and so on. The fourth need in the pyramid is esteem. That refers to self-respect and desire for things such as competence, strength, confidence, recognition, status,

importance, and appreciation. The final need is self-actualization which means that people feel fulfilled when they are utilizing their full potential doing what they love and is meaningful for themselves. (Maslow 1987, 15–22.)

In figure 4 below the relation between motivational theory has been visualized to explain it in the work life context, leading to high employee engagement. Although, as mentioned before, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory, it is easily applicable in the engagement context. Motivation does not equal engagement, but these are highly intertwined. According to an estimate by Sale & Jones (2019, 17), motivation accounts for up to 70% of employee engagement. Motivation will be investigated in more detail later.

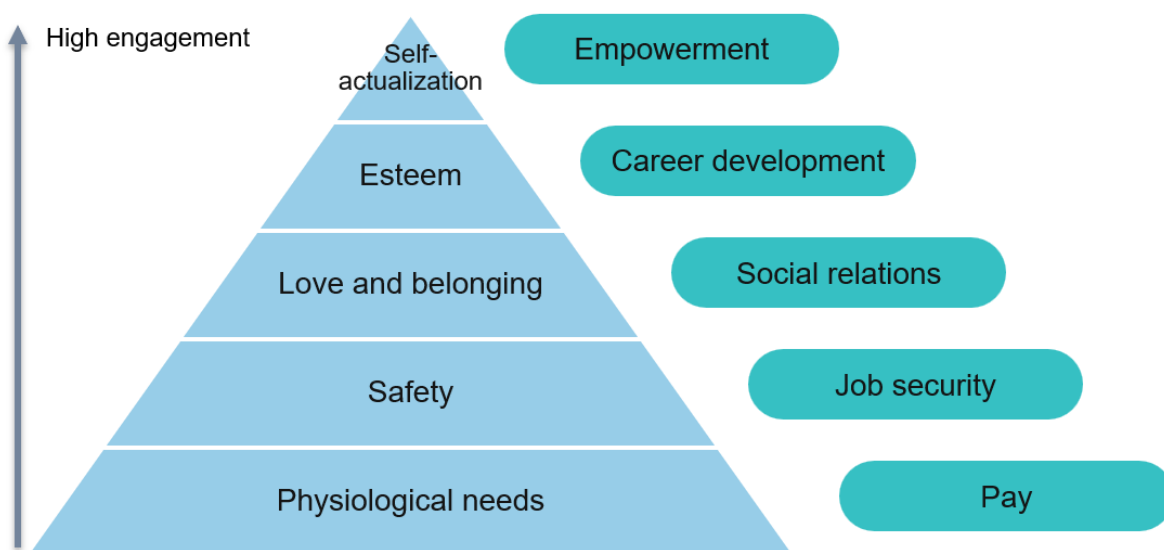


Figure 4. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in Relation to Engagement (adapted from Herrity 24 October 2022; Maslow 1987, 15–22)

Going upwards in the pyramid in figure 4, starting with physiological needs. In work context this is usually linked simply to pay. The safety need could mean the same things at work as in Maslow's theory explained above, but in addition to physical safety, it also refers to psychological safety. The feeling your job is secure and stable. The fear of layoffs or other cuts will reduce the sense of safety. Love and belonging in the workplace translate to social relationships. These include the feeling of belonging, social activities, and teamwork. To satisfy esteem needs, people need status, recognition, appreciation, which can be accomplished with things such as career development, growth, or achieving results. Self-actualization means that employees are trusted, encouraged, and empowered to achieve those things meaningful to themselves. (Herrity 24 October 2022; Maslow 1987, 15–22.)

2.3 Barriers to Employee Engagement

After looking into the drivers of employee engagement, it is also important to investigate the possible barriers to engagement. Sale & Jones (2019, 14–17) suggest that there are four main barriers to employee engagement. These barriers are lack of management involvement, shortage of resources, egoistic managers, and the status quo.

The lack of management involvement is an issue, because if the management is operating differently from the rest of the staff, it will be noticed. At that point there is no reason for employees to give any extra effort or commitment if they feel the management is not onboard with the engagement practices. This also emphasizes the need for strategic implementation of employee engagement, to be fully utilized in the whole organization, not just being an HR department's responsibility. (Sale & Jones 2019, 14.)

Another notable barrier is the shortage of resources, such as time, money, people, or knowledge. In many cases the typical no-answer is justified by lack of time, the right people, tight budgets and so on. One solution to this resource problem is to include employees in the process. Ask for their opinion and initiatives for solving the resource issue. This act of involvement alone could then lead to more engagement, which is the goal. (Sale & Jones 2019, 14–15.) The lack of resources is also a questionable justification, as “employee engagement is critical for, and an important element in, the success of organizations” (Al Mehrzi & Singh 2016, 831). More specifically, engagement affects performance, productivity, and customer service (Al Mehrzi & Singh 2016, 833).

The third barrier is the ego-driven people, especially the managers. Sale & Jones (2019,15) argue that it comes an issue when managers are too selfish and instead of committing and contributing to the common good for the organization, they are too focused to pursue their own interests. Similarly, Al Mehrzi & Singh (2016, 833) state that leaders who provide too little appreciation, recognition, and feedback are promoting disengagement as these employees have less trust in management.

The last barrier to employee engagement is the status quo or inertia (Sale & Jones 2019, 17). This means that the mentality of the organization is that things are done in a way, and there is no point in changing that. This part has a direct link to organizational flexibility and decision making. Another clear indicator of the importance of organizational flexibility is that it is a requirement for success (Carrasco, Angeles & Marroquin-Tovar 2016, 565).

2.4 The Millennial Generation

For this context it is important to understand the generational terms and benchmarks before going further with the special characteristics of Millennials.

The table 2 below illustrates the generations and the main event affecting the form of them.

Table 2. Generational Breakdown (adapted from Ubl, Walden & Arbit 2017, chapter 1)

Generation	Birth years*	Benchmark
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	TV started coming into homes
Generation X	1965–1979	Grew up during the cable TV
Millennials (Gen Y)	1980–1995	Saw the internet coming social for the first time
Generation Z	1996–2010	Grew up with Wi-Fi and smartphones

* Exact birth years vary according to different sources.

Baby boomers refer to the generation born between 1946–1964, the same year when the television started to become more common in households. **Generation X** (born between 1965–1979) grew up during the beginning of cable TV. **Millennials** (born between 1980–1995) grew up when the internet become social. **Generation Z** (born between 1996–2010) grew up on smartphones and Wi-Fi.

The Millennials are a large demographic, and, in some countries, they have already become the largest generation surpassing baby boomers. In 2020, Millennials in the UK hold the first place with population of around 14.26 million, as baby boomers came second with the population of approximately 14.14 million people (Office for National Statistics UK 2021). Respectively in 2020 there were around 72.26 million Millennials in the US, making it the largest generation, where as baby boomers came in second with the population of about 70.68 people (US Census Bureau 2021). In India, Millennials make up more than 50 percent of the country's workforce (Malloy 2018, 29).

There are seven specific characteristics of Millennials introduced by Wilson & Gerber (2008, 30–32); special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, achieving, pressured, and conventional.

Special and sheltered refer to the upbringing and childhood of Millennials, as they were wanted, cared for, celebrated, and they received more attention as children compared to older generations (Wilson & Gerber 2008, 30–31). Similarly, Tulgan (2016, 5–8) argues that Millennials are confident and self-possessed due to them being an “over-supervised generation”. Their self-esteem and validation were common concerns in their childhood. Their team-orientation also trace back to their childhood, when group work and egalitarianism became more widespread (Wilson & Gerber 2008, 31).

Millennials are an achieving generation that is driven by external motivators (Wilson & Gerber 2008, 31). In support of this view, Millennials value gaining status and money more than boomers (but still less than gen X) and compared to generation X they are more likely wanting to become leaders (Ng & al. 2012, 8). As Millennials are ambitious and achieving, they are also pressured as they strive to develop rapidly in their careers. This contributes to increased stress, anxiety, and depression (Wilson & Gerber 2008, 31–32; Ng & al. 2012, 11). Conventionality in relation to family is a common feature among Millennials. They value their parents and siblings and more likely live near relatives than gen Xers (Wilson & Gerber 2008, 32; Ng & al. 2012, 8).

PwC (2011) conducted a survey of over 4 000 Millennials across 75 countries. The report of the survey highlights few features, attitude, and expectations of the generation.

(Dis)loyalty – Millennials can be loyal but only if they gain something of it as well. Majority (54%) of the respondents answered that they expect to have 2 to 5 employers in their careers whereas quarter answered six or more. (PwC 2011.)

Work-life balance – 95 percent of the respondents state that work-life balance is important to them. Personal learning and development were the first choice of benefit from their employer followed by flexibility. Cash bonuses came third. (PwC 2011.)

Career development – Millennials are ambitious and want to proceed in their careers quickly. 56 percent of the respondents say that with their current employer they could proceed to the top level. Over competitive salary (44%), 52 percent answered that career progression was the most important aspect in employers’ attractiveness. (PwC 2011.)

Leadership – Millennials prefer a mentor or a coach helping with their personal career development. They value recognition and encouragement, but also clear goals and regular feedback. (PwC 2011.)

Employer brand – Millennials value good employer brand and responsibility. 88 percent of the respondents said they look for employers with CSR values equivalent to their own values. 86 percent would think about quitting if the values would not align with what was expected. (PwC 2011.)

2.5 Employer Value Proposition

Although the focus in this thesis is not employer branding, it is still relevant to investigate the employer value proposition (EVP) as a theoretical framework to identify the aspects Millennials value. Employer brand is an “approach to recruitment and retention that involves internally and externally promoting a clear view of what makes an organization uniquely attractive as an employer” (Kepeler & Papenfuß 2022). This can be reached by utilizing the EVP framework.

As defined in the key concepts, EVP “is part of an employer's branding strategy that represents everything of value that the employer has to offer its employees” (SHRM s.a.). So, it is tightly linked to employer brand because it is also perceived as part of a recruiting strategy and how to “sell” the job and the employer to the employee. It is also important to acknowledge, that EVP not only external strategy to recruit the best talent, but also to engage and retain them. It also plays a huge role in competitiveness when properly used.

Following Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Mercer (2018) has created a modified version of it to illustrate the desired EVP. According to Maslow's theory (1987, 17–18), once the basic, physiological need are satisfied, a higher need in the hierarchy emerges. As long as the lowest need remains unsatisfied, it is dominant. If you are hungry and cold your priority is to find food and shelter before you seek for love or friendship. Following Maslow's theory, the same applies in work life. Even though all the areas in EVP needs to be considered for it to be effective, the basic needs must be met first before moving into more meaningful and fulfilling aspects and engagement.

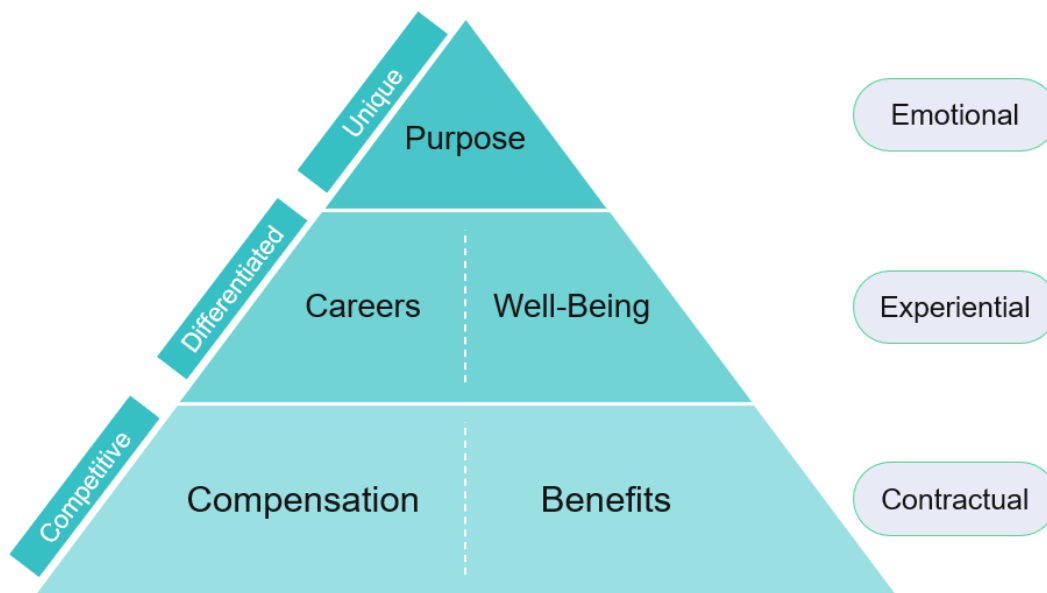


Figure 5. Employer Value Proposition (adapted from Mercer 2018)

The figure 5 above illustrates the hierarchy of employer value proposition. On the left side there are the stages of competitiveness regarding the employer brand, and on the right, there are the three main categories of the EVP.

Employees' basic needs are met with the contractual category, including compensation and benefits. These alone could be quite competitive, but not enough on their own. The second category of the EVP hierarchy are the experiential needs including careers and well-being. This stage allows the employer to be differentiated from the competitors. The final stage is emotional meaning offering and allowing the employees to find purpose. In that stage the fulfilment allows to communicate the uniqueness of the employer to stand out from the others. (Mercer 2018.)

To cover the EVP more thoroughly and why it is meaningful in regards of employee engagement. Firstly, a successful EVP contributes to attracting talent, employee engagement and retention. The EVP should include the reasons why employees would want to commit to a particular organization. (Bussin 2018, 93.) Above is presented a model of EVP framework, but there are more than one, as is surely to be expected.

Similarly, to the previous framework, Lamoureux presents five key elements of the EVP. These are **remuneration**, such as salary and incentives which refers to the compensation in the figure 5. **Benefits** include healthcare, insurance, and recognition programmes. **Affiliation** refers to work environment, transparency, trust, and organizational commitment and **career** includes training, job security, personal growth and development, and opportunities for advancement. These two can well be interpreted as belonging to the middle of the pyramid in the figure 5. The final element of

the EVP according to Lamoreux is **work content**. This could also be placed in the figure above, meaning the same as purpose, as it includes meaningfulness, autonomy, challenge, and variety. (Bussin 2018, 94.)

There are few specific things especially Millennials want in regards of EVP. Roula Amire from Great Place to Work suggests that Millennials want purpose, clear expectations from management, fairness, and work-life balance (Amire 18 July 2022). According to a survey by Deloitte (2022) the top three reasons Millennials chose a new job were good work-life balance, learning and development opportunities, and high salary or other financial benefits.

2.6 Motivation Theory

Perhaps the most known motivational theory is Maslow's motivational theory, the hierarchy of needs which was presented earlier in the context of engagement theories. This is a good example on the multidimensionality of the theory, as it can be interpreted from several angles.

In recap, the theory was illustrated with a pyramid, as it is a hierarchy of five categories of needs. The essence of Maslow's theory is that the first need must be satisfied before the second one emerges, starting from the bottom of the pyramid. At work the first need would be things such as pay and for example the certainty that you will keep your job. After those needs are satisfied, next need in the hierarchy emerges.

Another motivational theory which is very well-known and suitable in the working life is Herzberg's (Two Factor) Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Herzberg focused his research on job satisfaction and motivation in the workplace (Kurt 17 October 2022). The theory consists of two factors, Motivators and Hygiene factors. Motivators are intrinsic factors which increase job satisfaction, whereas hygiene factors are extrinsic, which, according to this theory, will not increase job satisfaction, but will prevent dissatisfaction (Osemeke & Adegboyega 2017, 167).

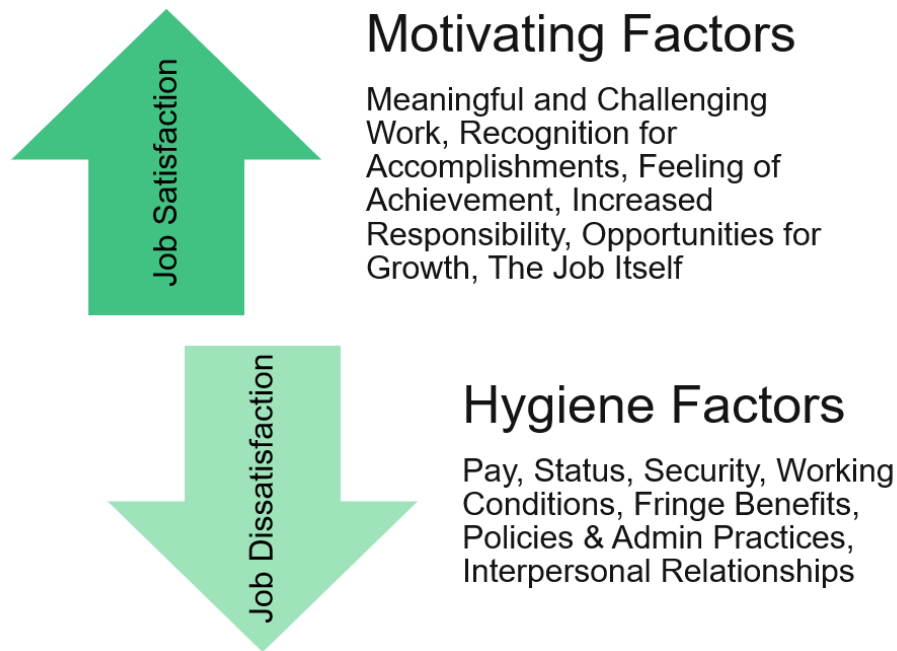


Figure 6. Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory (adapted from Kurt 17 October 2022)

Herzberg's theory proposed that the two factors are not dependent of each other. As stated, "Extrinsic factors only permit employees willingness to work while intrinsic factors will decide their quality of work" (Osemeke & Adegboyega 2017, 167).

The figure 6 above presents the two factors and examples of them. Hygiene factors i.e., extrinsic factors include pay, status, security, working conditions, fringe benefits, policies and admin practices, and interpersonal relationships (Kurt 17 October 2022). The theory suggests that the lack of these factors can lead to job dissatisfaction of employees. However, meeting all the hygiene needs will not guarantee job satisfaction or higher motivation, but additionally motivators are needed for better satisfaction, performance, and productivity (Osemeke & Adegboyega 2017, 167). Motivators i.e., intrinsic factors include meaningful and challenging work, recognition for accomplishments, feeling of achievement, increased responsibility, opportunities for growth and the job itself. (Kurt 17 October 2022).

Herzberg's and Maslow's theories are different, but they also have many similarities. They differ in the hierarchy and the relation between each factor. Maslow (1987, 15–22) suggest that the needs must be satisfied in order according to the hierarchy, because only once the bottom need has been met, the next emerges. Herzberg's theory on the other hand suggests that "the intrinsic and extrinsic factors are independent towards each other" (Osemeke & Adegboyega 2017, 167).

The similarities in these theories are that the intrinsic motivators are the drivers towards employee engagement. In Maslow's (1987, 15–22) hierarchy in the bottom there are pay, safety, and social

relations. Accordingly in Herzberg's theory, the extrinsic motivators include pay, security, interpersonal relationships, and so on (Osemeke & Adegboyega 2017, 167). These are important and needed for avoiding dissatisfaction. But when the goal is to improve satisfaction, performance, and engagement, development opportunities, empowerment, recognition, meaningful and challenging work is needed.

To achieve the motivating factors, such as increased responsibility, recognition for accomplishments, growth opportunities and so on, an appropriate management style is essential. When it comes to leadership, Millennials prefer coaching or mentorships over rigid hierarchies (PwC 2011). They value autonomy, rewarding based on results, not working hours, and teamwork over structured hierarchies. (PwC 2011).

In his article, Terence Malloy suggests five tips for managing Millennials. The first tip is to ask and observe what motivates them. This highlights the importance of differences between individuals and not making assumptions. The second one is creating a good working environment linked to their immersion with technology. Millennials need technology to be efficient and prefer their workspace to be more relaxed. Third tip is to create more personal relationships with them for example through mentoring. Promoting strong work ethic is the fourth tip in managing Millennials. Millennials tend to measure work ethic by impact or the result not so much on the time spent. This encourages managers not to only communicate expectations clearly, but also to demonstrate them. The final tip for managers is to increase the use of new technologies and social channels and letting the Millennials utilize them to the best of their ability. (Malloy 2018, 30–31.)

2.7 Engagement Strategies for Millennials

Considering the special characteristics of Millennials there are some strategies that organizations can use to engage their Millennial employees.

Jan Ferri-Reed have suggested five strategies to increase Millennials' engagement. The first part is to offer **comprehensive onboarding**. It allows the employees to get the "big picture" of the company, and what is the role of their job in that. A comprehensive onboarding includes introduction to the history, culture, products, and mission of the company. In addition, socialization opportunities, using mentors, presentations, and learning and development opportunities are parts of successful onboarding. (Ferri-Reed 2010, 32.)

The second part is similar to Malloy's suggestion of good working environment with more relaxed space. Ferri-Reed argues that "**cool**" **workplace** contributes to engagement. Millennials seek for dynamic, interesting, challenging, and fun workplace with open workspaces, technology, flexibility, and socialization opportunities. (Ferri-Reed 2010, 32.)

Challenging the Millennials is the third management strategy. This is tied to their expectations of receiving recognition. Success in special assignments and projects will allow for genuine praise and a sense of achievement. (Ferri-Reed 2010, 32.)

The fourth strategy is **re-framing coaching**. This refers to Millennials' challenges to receive constructive feedback. They are accustomed to receiving praise, so defensive responses may occur with constructive feedback. This requires involving them in the problem solving, balance constructive and positive feedback, and follow up their corrected behaviour. (Ferri-Reed 2010, 32–33.)

The fifth and final strategy is to **plan a career path**. As Millennials want to move up the ladder quickly, presenting the steps needed to get in the top will be an essential tool to engage them. (Ferri-Reed 2010, 33.)

Addressing quite similar strategies, there are ten engagement strategies proposed by Holmberg-Wright, Hribar & Tsegai (2017, 16–21), including (1) mission and vision, (2) learning, (3) communication, (4) teamwork, (5) diversity, (6) feedback, (7) flexibility, (8) leadership, (9) ethics, and (10) work-life balance.

Mission and vision of the company are important to Millennials, and it is essential that they are clearly expressed, and the members of the organization are working towards them. This is linked to Millennials' desire to have a purpose and make a difference in the world. Once the mission and vision are clearly expressed, they will find purpose on what they are doing, and could find creative solutions to reach there. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 16.)

Learning and personal growth will keep Millennials interested in their jobs. Job sharing, cross training, and other development possibilities work well. Perhaps a little surprisingly the tech-savvy generation value interaction with others, so face-to-face training and events could be recommended alongside e-learning. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 16.)

Communication helps understand Millennials and makes them feel heard. They also value honesty and integrity in which communication is the key. What is important is that the communication cannot be a one-way street from top to bottom, as Millennials want to form relationships to managers. In addition to personal, face-to-face interactions, chat, or text offer quicker response and could help with effective relationship building. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 16–17.)

Teamwork is something Millennials have been used to and will expect from work as well. As much as they want to build relationships with managers, they also want to connect with their co-workers. Millennials are taught to recognize others' contributions and believe that collaborative work leads to success. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 17–18.)

Diversity in workplace and teams is expected by Millennials. They think that diverse representation will result in different viewpoints and solutions and thus be a strength for the team and organization. They perceive diversity as something more than just race or gender. They also think of diversity on terms of different experiences, backgrounds, and perspective. These aspects give millennials the opportunity to learn as they work in diverse environments with different viewpoints. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 18.)

Feedback is extremely important to Millennials. They want instant feedback about their performance and will not settle only for annual reviews. Linked to the communication mentioned above, they want ongoing conversations, and preferably on how to do better, with a focus on their strengths. Constant feedback will allow them to learn and develop and instant feedback will be received when working in teams. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 18–19.)

Flexibility in its different forms is becoming more normal and of course is also expected by Millennials. Especially in decision making, when Millennials are allowed to take risks and make their own decisions, their innovativeness and motivation increases resulting in higher engagement. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 19.)

Leadership styles that Millennials prefer are mentoring and coaching. As mentioned also in the communication part, Millennials want to have a good relationship and communication with their managers. They want to be encouraged and trusted. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 20.)

Ethics is something that organizations need to consider more than before. Millennials are interested in sustainability and social responsibility. Millennials want to work in a company with shared values, and some feel that the success should be measured by larger purpose than just profits. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 20.)

Work-life balance is crucial as Millennials do not want to spend all their time at work. 40-hour week is more than enough for them. They also want their performance to be measured by more than just hours worked and prefer looking at the outcomes more than hours spent. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 21.)

From the perspective of this research focusing on the customer service roles in retail, there are few strategies that can be highlighted for further research to find out if they do have significant impact on employee engagement. These strategies include career opportunities, regular feedback, teamwork, and flexibility, which are most relevant regarding this research.

3 Research Methods

This chapter presents the research methods used in the thesis. In the first subchapter the research design is introduced with the research questions. The second subchapter covers the methods used in the research. Following third and fourth subchapters that explains how the data is collected and how to assure the reliability and validity of the research. Finally, data analysis of the research will be discussed.

3.1 Research Design

In this thesis the author conducted personal in-depth interviews of Millennial employees who are working face-to-face with customers. The figure 7 below presents the research design of the empirical part of this thesis. The research has only one phase and with the planned design the author was able to collect the required data to answer the investigative questions. The phase illustrated in figure 7 consists of the Millennial respondents participating in the in-depth semi-structured interviews (data collection), to collect primary data. Following analysing the data with chosen method to finally answer the three investigative questions.

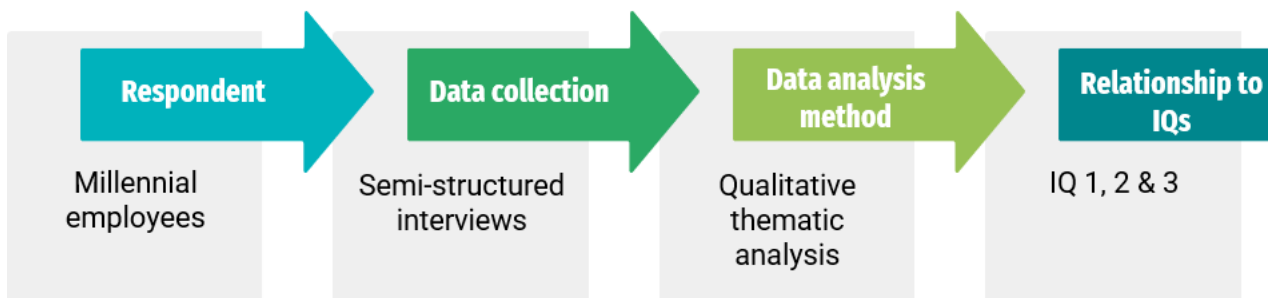


Figure 7. Research design.

The purpose for this research was to answer to the following investigative questions:

IQ 1. What are the attributes that Millennials value the most when they evaluate their current or prospective employers?

IQ 2. What are the most essential motivation factors for Millennials?

IQ 3. What strategies do Millennials find useful in engaging them?

3.2 Research Methods

Usually, when conducting business research, either quantitative research, qualitative research, or a combination of those, called mixed methods research is being used (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill

2016, 164). Qualitative research focuses on meanings and the relationships between them, so it has an emphasis on words, not numerical data. (Bryman & Bell 2015, 392; Saunders & al. 2016, 168).

Qualitative research was used in this thesis. This is an exploratory theory-driven research as existing theories and concepts were used. The qualitative method works well with the topic since the purpose is to investigate how to engage Millennials. Qualitative research is applied when the goal is to gain understanding and meaning of a topic or a phenomenon. Qualitative research provides more subjective but also more in depth analyse as compared to quantitative research methods. (DJS Research s.a.)

The possible risks involved in this research was that with semi-structured interviews, comparing the results might be difficult as the interview does not follow a certain structure strictly, but is more flexible (QuestionPro s.a.). Some concerns about qualitative research are that it could be too subjective, it is difficult to replicate, the findings could not be generalized and the difficulties to indicate transparency (Bryman & Bell 2015, 413–414).

3.3 Data Collection

The data was collected from in-depth semi-structured interviews with Millennials. The respondent pool consisted of Millennials working in (face-to-face) customer service in Helsinki within retail. Using semi-structured interviews, the author had created an interview framework with themes and questions for the participants. In this research a purposive sampling was used. Purpose sampling is used when the purpose is not to sample participants randomly. The purpose is to sample participants who are relevant to the research. (Bryman & Bell 2015, 430–433.)

Minimum sample size in non-probability sampling is 5 to 25 participants, when semi-structured interviews are conducted (Saunders & al. 2016, 297). In this research the goal was to get ten respondents, and the minimum number to get enough data was 5. The author asked 10 people to participate and in the end 9 interviews were held.

The interviewees were invited to participate by sending them an email or another kind of message or calling them. Own connections such as current or previous co-workers, other students, and acquaintances were used. The criteria to participate in the interviews was that the interviewee must be born between 1981 and 1996, and to be working in face-to-face customer service job in Helsinki.

The interviews were held one to one either face-to-face, or via Teams-meeting. Before starting the recording, the interviewer introduced the topic and the purpose of the interview for the interviewees

and asked for permission to record the interviews. Privacy was also ensured, and they were told that all responses would be reported anonymously, and that no individual respondent or their employers could be identified.

The interviews were recorded, and the interviewer also took notes during the interviews. The interviewer followed the framework made for the semi-structured interviews, but asked additional questions, if it was relevant for the study. After the interview all the recordings were transcribed, and the data was then categorised for the analysis part.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity in this qualitative research are ensured by assessing those both externally and internally. External reliability refers to the replicability of a research and external validity reflects how well the results can be generalized. Internal reliability means the researchers' agreement on their observations and the internal validity reflects the connection between the researchers' observations and the generated theory. (Bryman & Bell 2015, 400.)

As some of the reliability and validity issues were already arisen by the nature of the qualitative research, they usually are not applicable in the same way as in quantitative research. That is why alternative criteria, trustworthiness, and authenticity, have been used for assessing qualitative research. (Bryman & Bell 2015, 399–400.)

3.5 Data Analysis

To be able to present the results, the data was analysed after the interviews. This research used a deductive approach in data analysis. In deductive approach the researcher will use already existing theory as a basis for the process. This allows exploring theories and applying theoretical frameworks to form the research question from there. (Saunders & al. 2016, 569–570.)

After the interview recordings had been transcribed, the author started to go through the data by one theme and question at a time. A thematic analysis was used at this stage. Some benefits of using thematic analysis are that it is allows flexible, systematic, and accessible approach. This is applicable both in bigger sets of data, but also smaller ones offering rich explanations. (Saunders & al. 2016, 579.)

4 Data and Results

This chapter presents the data collected and the results. The data was collected from younger Millennials working in customer service jobs in Helsinki. All the respondents have specific experience in retail, and their ages were between 26- and 30-year-olds which further delimited the sample size. The results will be presented with direct quotations from the respondents to get their voice heard, more specifically to find out their needs, expectations, and motivation. In addition, statements based on the results by the author will be presented. Total of nine personal in-depth interviews were conducted which was enough data for this research. After the ninth interview some aspects emerged clearly to allow interpretations to be made.

In this chapter the results will be presented theme by theme by subchapters. First the expectations and values will be presented, following their needs and motivation.

4.1 Expectations and Values of Millennials

The respondents were asked to name 3 attributes they value most in an employer. Different attributes were mentioned, including training opportunities, job rotation opportunities, flexibility, pays well, fairness, honesty, benefits, approachable, appreciation, listening, values, and transparency. The figure 8 below presents the top 5 attributes, that were named more than once.

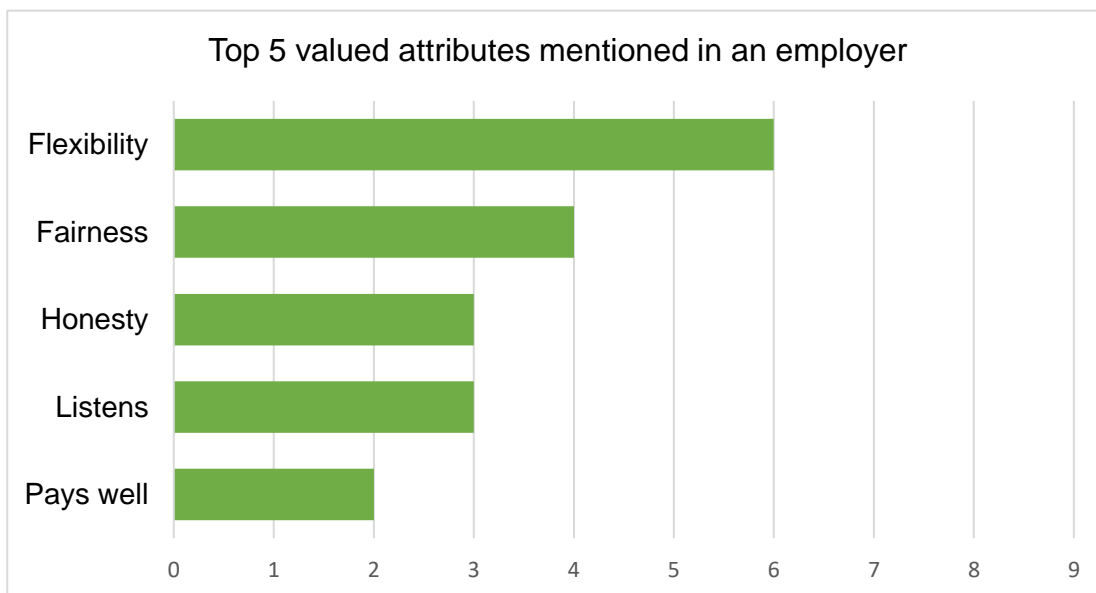


Figure 8. Top 5 attributes valued in an employer

Flexibility was the most named attribute the respondents answered. In second they want fairness, and in third came honesty and listening. In fourth place was good pay.

There were also some similarities when asked what kind of flexibility they expect from their employer. One interviewee said: "I try to be as flexible as I can, so when I ask for a day off, it really is important to me, and I expect that my employer does what they can to make those wishes happen". Another respondent also values flexibility in their shifts and their way of performing tasks: "I appreciate if my wishes are heard when it comes to vacation days and shifts. I also would like to have "free hands" in doing the tasks and not follow a specific way of doing things if my own methods work better for me." Also, a few respondents mentioned the daycare situation, but their opinions were slightly different. Regarding the shifts, both said that they appreciate that they don't have to do evening shifts. But the other one thinks that the employer should adjust to the opening hours of the daycare and offer shift that works with that. The other one thinks that the daycare should be the flexible party: "The employer cannot influence the opening hours of the daycare, so if my working hours require it, I have to find a different daycare for my child with extended opening hours."

As to what they like most about the company they are working at currently, almost everyone mentioned their team or coworkers among other things. The answers also included the job itself, helping people, relaxed atmosphere, job is not that hectic or busy, versatility, good benefits, and the company values. These answers gave a good look into their personal values along with the valued employees' attributes listed above.

When it comes to teamwork the results show that teamwork itself is not that essential. But when Millennials do work in teams or with others, the team spirit, atmosphere and getting along is important. The respondents were asked if they prefer working alone, in pairs or in teams, and no one said that they want to work in teams specifically, but versatility was highlighted. "Preferably alone, but it's nice to have a balance so you can also work in a team or with someone. Variety is nice", said one respondent. Many of the respondents mentioned that their focus is better alone but like to work in pairs. One said: "In different ways. Mainly in pairs, but when I'm alone I focus better." Another interviewee replied: "Depends on the task. Alone if I need to think so that I can focus better as the other one won't make their own suggestions. But it is nice to work with a coworker and gossip at the same time".

As stated before, teamwork on its own it is not essential, but good social relationships at work are. The interviewees were asked how important social relationships at work are to them. "Very important. It influences job satisfaction and when you spend half of your life at work it is so important", said one responded. Another one replied: "Very. I cannot tolerate toxic environment and I would leave if that was the case." Also sharing things with coworkers was mentioned multiple times.

To be more specific, almost all the respondents did not find it necessary to find close friends to hang out with outside the work, but for a few of them it would be a nice bonus. “I don’t expect us to be close friends and hang out outside of work, but to have a good team is important. I like to share things with my coworkers, and I love recreational activities”, said one interviewee. “It’s enough to get along at work but I hope that some colleagues would also become friends”, another one said.

They were also asked if they would take a job with a bad work culture but a higher salary, or a lower salary with an ideal work culture. Every one of the respondents would choose an ideal work culture over higher salary. “Lower salary. Because it is important to get along well and that everyone is treated well”. “The latter. Since you spend most of your waking hours at work, it would be sad if it affected the rest of your life.”

Some speculation did arise from one respondent as to how big the differences in pay and work culture would be: “I would choose an ideal work culture with lower pay. But it depends how big the differences would be. If I got like €10,000 a month I would tolerate even a toxic culture, but of course that is not realistic”.

Similarly, they were asked to choose between a higher salary, but no career opportunities and meaningful challenges and a lower salary, but good career opportunities and meaningful challenges. This divided the opinions approximately in half. As shown in figure 9, five respondents would choose a lower salary. This indicates that good work culture is extremely important to Millennials, and all the respondents would choose less pay than to compromise on the work culture. Whereas good career opportunities and good pay have more divided opinions of which one is more important than the other.

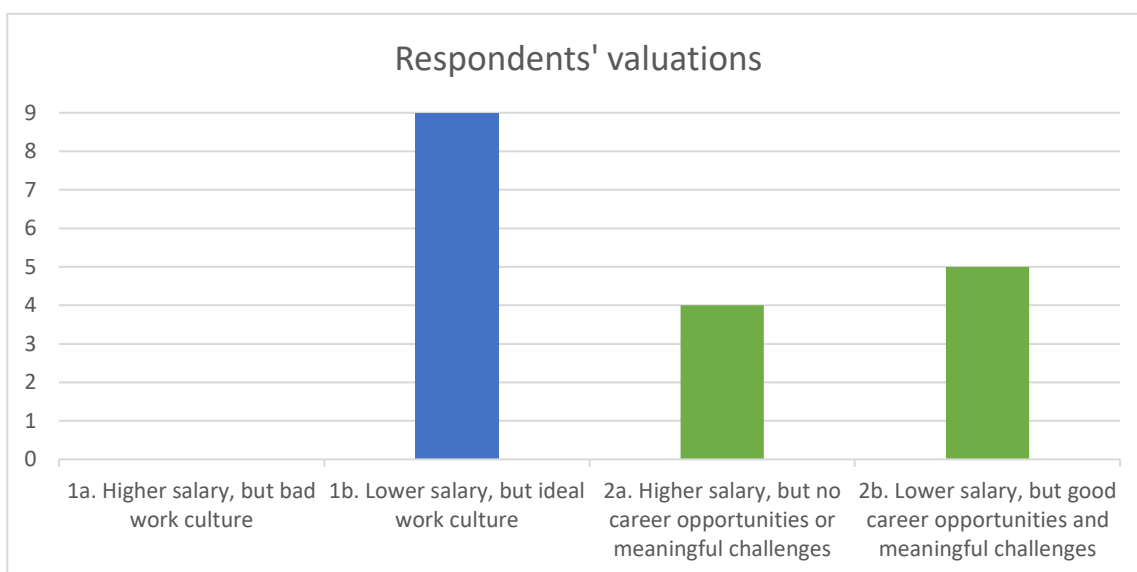


Figure 9. The importance of higher or lower pay in relation to other factors

Finally, regarding the expectations and values of Millennials they were asked some questions to explain what attracts them personally to a prospective employer so much that they would switch employers. Here are some thoughts of the respondents “Good team would make me consider switching employers, also if I got more salary”, “More money and easier job and also better benefits as current benefits are really good”, “more interesting tasks but then I would need to know that they have a good team also, and the culture is good and aligned with my values”. Based on the discussions better salaries came up frequently in the discussions, but at the same time they would not want to compromise on other aspects, such as good work culture or benefits.

4.2 Motivational Needs of Millennials

The interviewees were asked what motivates them to go to work every day. All except for one included money to their answer. But no one answered money alone, so there were other motivators as well. Interesting and meaningful jobs, coworkers and good environment, clear structure to the day, helping people, and feeling of accomplishment were also mentioned. In addition to money helping people or meaningfulness and having a structure to the day were most often mentioned.

Because of the money being mentioned most often regarding the motivation to go to work, it was interesting to see that when given different options, the money was the least important factor. Using the modified version of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs in the theory part, the interviewees were asked to rank the given needs in order of importance. The needs were pay, secure job, good team/co-workers, career development opportunities, and meaningful job. All but one of the respondents ranked the meaningful job as most important and the one who did not, ranked it the second most important. It was by far the most unanimous answer. Considering all the answers, the overall ranking for the needs from most important to least goes as follows:

1. Meaningful job
2. Team/Co-workers
3. Secure job
4. Pay
5. Career development

When asked what would increase their motivation, again, most common answer included money, but other factors were mentioned as well: “Overall to see the work you have done for example when the shelves are filled and the store is neat”, “More money would motivate even though I’m quite happy with it now, and also to have the workplace closer to home”. One person feels that the employer could not do anything to motivate them more: “To increase... I can’t think of anything. I have kind of intrinsic motivation, so if I feel I’m not doing something meaningful and reaching my full potential there’s nothing my employer can do about it.” The same respondent admits that a pay rise would give a temporary boost but would not work in the long run. Based on the discussions

and some of the contradictory results in the importance of pay the interpretation is that it is quite difficult to name something that would motivate you if you have not thought about it a lot. Two of the respondents brought up the current world situation and the increasing inflation worrying them. So, it might also be linked to the ongoing inflation that money brings security and that is something people need at this time.

For the respondents it was easier to name things that would decrease their motivation. Bad environment or coworkers, not being able to affect work shifts, lower pay, lack of appreciation, not listening, injustice, inflexibility, bad leadership, incompetence, and bad communication from management are decreasing factors.

Feedback was one thing that arose as important for Millennials in the theory part, but with the results from the interviews the role of feedback played quite a small role. This is clearly a special characteristic in the retail industry because the nature of the job does not require that much guidance. But in line with the theory, positive feedback was something that the respondents would want.

A respondent said: "I don't expect that much feedback because in this job you don't get it that much, and if you do it mostly bad. Of course, then you could develop but mostly it is discouraging and not motivating". "If you screwed up really bad then it's OK to get negative but in a way that it's not shaming", was stated by another respondent. "Getting feedback during onboarding is important, but after that it's more important to ask how you are, and how things have gone. Yearly appraisals are enough for me but of course if something has been done really well then, it's nice to hear earlier".

5 Conclusions

This chapter covers the main findings and discussion of the results. First presenting the conclusions of the main findings regarding the research question “What are the motivations, needs, and expectations of Millennials from current and prospective employers?”, with the help of each investigative question reflecting them to the theory covered. Then presenting some recommendations and discussing the reliability and validity of this research. Finally, the recommendation for further research and the reflection of the authors personal learning will be discussed.

5.1 Employer Attributes Valued by Millennials

The first investigative question was “What are the attributes that Millennials value the most when they evaluate their current or prospective employers?”. This question was investigated in the chapter 2.6 using the EVP framework. Lamoureux presents five key elements of the EVP. These are *remuneration*, such as salary and incentives, *benefits* include healthcare, insurance, and recognition programmes, *affiliation* referring to work environment, transparency, trust, and organizational commitment, and *career* including training, job security, personal growth and development, and opportunities for advancement, and *work content*, meaning the same as purpose, as it includes meaningfulness, autonomy, challenge, and variety. (Bussin 2018, 94.)

It was suggested that especially Millennials want purpose, clear expectations from management, fairness, and work-life balance (Amire 18 July 2022). Based on the findings Millennials top 5 rated attributes they value in an employer were flexibility, fairness, honesty, listening, and they pay enough. Based on this fairness is clearly something they expect in an employer, both in current and prospective.

Purpose is something that the findings also strongly support. When asked what they like most in their current employer, there were a few main findings that were discussed the most: doing the job itself or helping people and their teams/co-workers. So, Millennials do want purpose in their life by doing something that is meaningful for them. Especially their co-corkers are important to them. And this does not mean that they specifically want to work in teams, as they rather have some variation, and are pleased to work alone when the job requires a lot of focusing. But when they do spend time and work with their colleagues, they need to get along, because they will not tolerate a toxic culture and would rather choose a lower pay than a bad work culture.

Remuneration is also supported with these findings, especially when considering a prospective employer. Most commonly more money would be something to make the Millennials consider

switching an employer, but also a good team and interesting/meaningful tasks were popular answers.

5.2 Essential Motivating Factors for Millennials

The second investigative question was “What are the most essential motivation factors for Millennials? In chapter 2.6 Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory was introduced. It includes two factors and examples of them. Hygiene factors i.e., extrinsic factors include pay, status, security, working conditions, fringe benefits, policies and admin practices, and interpersonal relationships (Kurt 17 October 2022). The theory suggests that the lack of these factors can lead to job dissatisfaction of employees. However, meeting all the hygiene needs will not guarantee job satisfaction or higher motivation, but additionally motivators are needed for better satisfaction, performance, and productivity (Osemeke & Adegboyega 2017, 167). Motivators i.e., intrinsic factors include meaningful and challenging work, recognition for accomplishments, feeling of achievement, increased responsibility, opportunities for growth and the job itself. (Kurt 17 October 2022).

When the respondents were given the opportunity to tell what motivates them, the most common answer was money. But none of them answered it alone, and there were other common motivators as well. Meaningfulness, helping people, the job, feeling of accomplishment, and good environment. The intrinsic factors (meaningfulness, the job, feeling of accomplishment) could be difficult for the employer to influence if the employee is “in the wrong job”. The most important extrinsic factors for Millennials include money, good environment, and relationships.

In chapter 2.2 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs described the motivational needs of employees in a workplace. The idea of the theory was that only once the lowest need in the hierarchy is satisfied the next one emerges. Following the hierarchy, the priority should be pay, following by secure job, social relations, career development and empowerment. (Herrity 24 October 2022; Maslow 1987, 15–22.) However, when asked to put these needs in order of importance the results did not follow the same structure, indicating that the needs in the hierarchy could emerge in whatever order, depending on the person. With the findings from the interviews the order was from most important to least: meaningful job, team/co-workers, secure job, pay, and career development.

5.3 Useful Engagement Strategies for Millennials

The third and final investigative question was “What strategies do Millennials find useful in engaging them? In chapter 2.7 some useful engagement strategies for Millennials were studied. Based on the research there were a few strategies highlighted for further research to find out if they do have significant impact on Millennials. These strategies include career opportunities, regular feedback, teamwork, and flexibility.

It was stated that Millennials want to move up the ladder quickly, so presenting the steps needed to get in the top will be an essential tool to engage them. (Ferri-Reed 2010, 33.) Based on this research the career opportunities did not play such a big role for people working in the retail jobs. It did compete with higher salary, but all in all the results indicate that even with offering great career opportunities, it would not be enough to engage or retain them if for example better work culture could be found somewhere else.

Regular feedback was the other strategy that was highlighted as important for Millennials. In the theory, it was stated that Millennials want instant feedback about their performance and will not settle only for annual reviews. They want ongoing conversations, and preferably on how to do better, with a focus on their strengths. Constant feedback will allow them to learn and develop. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 18–19.) The findings did not support this statement in full. The interviewees did prefer positive feedback but mostly they said they do not need it constantly. They were happy with annual reviews, but mainly getting a “good job” would be satisfying for them. This might have to do with the special nature of work they are doing. When in customer service in retail, there are not that many things you need guidance in. The need for frequent feedback arises only in the onboarding phase.

In chapter 2.7. flexibility was presented as an important engagement strategy. It was said that flexibility, especially in decision making, when Millennials are allowed to take risks and make their own decisions, their innovativeness and motivation increases resulting in higher engagement. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 19.) As presented in the results, flexibility was the most named attribute that Millennials value in their employer. Supporting the theory, the Millennials interviewed want to have flexibility in their way of doing tasks, but also with their shifts and vacation times.

The chapter 2.7. also presented teamwork as something Millennials have been used to and will expect from work as well. As much as they want to build relationships with managers, they also want to connect with their co-workers. Millennials are taught to recognize others' contributions and believe that collaborative work leads to success. (Holmberg-Wright & al. 2017, 17–18.) This was visible also in the results, that Millennials do want to connect with their team, but working as a team is not that critical for them.

Finally, an important engagement strategy that was highlighted during the interviews was listening. Millennials want to be heard and often they also do have ideas for improvement. Open communication with low hierarchy is the key in this. They value managers how are approachable and want to listen, but at the same time be like one of the team members.

5.4 Recommendations

Reflecting the theory part investigated and the research results in the research question “What are the motivations, needs, and expectations of Millennials from current and prospective employers?” here are some recommendations for managers of how to engage your Millennials working in the customer service jobs:

- Invest in team spirit in and outside the workplace. Millennials expect to create connections, have fun, and share personal things with their co-workers.
- Listen to them. Be open for suggestions and improvements. What makes them satisfied and interested? They do not expect all the issues to go away, but they need to be heard.
- Lead with example. Millennials do not want to take orders and work under a strict hierarchy. They want their managers to be one of them, showing by example, and not only telling how things are done.
- Be flexible. Offer them as much autonomy as possible and be curious of new ways of working.
- Provide them with adequate compensation. If pay raise is not possible, think of bonuses, paid time-off and other benefits.

5.5 Reliability and Validity

The validity of this research was ensured by drafting the interview questions and framework carefully. It was modified and updated based on feedback received until the questions were formed in a way that they provide relevant and valid data to answer the investigative and research question. Before starting to conduct the interviews, the interview was tested with a volunteer to see if the questions were clear and providing reliable data. In semi-structured interviews, there was also a possibility to ask specifying questions to ensure the validity.

One weakness of qualitative research is how to assess reliability. External reliability refers to the replicability of the research, and it is difficult to meet this criterion. (Bryman & Bell 2015, 400). Especially when conducting semi-structured interviews, the interactions are impossible to repeat in the same way. In qualitative research reliability is often assessed by assessing trustworthiness. (Golafshani 2003, 601). The trustworthiness was ensured by carefully and consistently planning, collecting, and analysing the data, and with clearly presenting the methods in this thesis.

5.6 Further Research

This research investigated the employee engagement of Millennials in the customer service roles within the retail industry. On this research the focus was on the Millennial employee's needs and expectations. It is difficult to analyse how well their needs, motivations and expectations meet in real life. Sometimes people could think that some things would make them more motivated and more engaged, but that might not happen. As it is important to listen to the employees and investigate and analyse this from their perspective there is a recommendation for further research.

This topic of how to engage Millennials, could be looked at from another perspective. This time the focus could be on the managers' experiences or the HR department's practices. In this way this research could be analysed in the context of how well these practices and engagement strategies suggested work in different work settings. Another perspective or idea for further research would be to compare these strategies applied to different generations.

5.7 Reflection on Learning

This project was interesting and challenging. The topic reflects real interests and perhaps career aspirations in the areas where the author intends to develop a career in the future. Doing this thesis allowed the author to learn many new things in project management, research, and new things in human resource management, especially in employee engagement. When doing research, the beginning is the hardest part and requires a lot of attention to detail. Once the foundation has been carefully laid, the rest of the research becomes much simpler. Clear delimitation and objectives are essential. As for the project management it is very important to think of and prepare to things beyond your control. When planning the schedule for the project it is important to draft enough time for each stage leaving room for possible changes. Doing this thesis after all the studies and work placement enabled also the author to have all the possible knowledge in the research area and found it to be extremely useful.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Framework

Current Status

- How satisfied are you with your current employer on a scale of 1-10? Why?
- Why did you choose to work here?
- What do you like the most about the company that you currently work with?
- What were your expectations when you joined this company? To what extent were those expectations met?
- Do you see yourself working at your current employer in a year from now? / For how long?

Values

- What are the top 3 attributes that you value the most in an employer?
- Would you rather choose a challenging job with good career opportunities and lower pay or a job with higher pay and benefits but no career opportunities and meaningful challenges?
- How do you feel about your work-life balance? / What kind of flexibility from your employer you value?
- How important social relationships at work are to you?
- Do you prefer working alone/in pairs/in teams?

Expectations

- What do you want the most when you start a new job?
 - o Sufficient onboarding
 - o Expectations and goals are clearly set
 - o I'm provided all the information needed to do my job
 - o I'm given reasonable goals and timelines
 - o Good leadership
- Would you take a job with a bad work culture but a higher salary, or a lower salary with an ideal work culture? Why?
- What could your current company change about your job, your team or their culture to engage you?

Motivation

- How would you define success in your career?
- Do you want to move forward in your career? Why?
- Do you feel like you have a clear path to reach your goals? How important that is for you?
- What motivates you to go to work every day?
- What is something that would increase/decrease your motivation?
- What would a prospective employer offer to get you to switch employers?

Needs

- How would you rank the following needs in order of importance (1=most important 5 =least important)?
 - o Pay
 - o Secure job
 - o Good team/ co-workers
 - o Career development opportunities
 - o Meaningful job

- How often/when do you expect feedback?
- What kind of employee engagement strategy would you expect from your company? / What would you like your employer to do to make you more committed to your job? (e.g. career opportunities, regular feedback, teamwork, and work-life balance)