



WHAT CAN HOSPITALITY DO TO ENCOURAGE GEN Z TO PURSUE FRONTLINE SERVICE JOBS WITH ENTHUSIASM IN THE INDUSTRY?

Shirley Hsin-Ning Kuo¹

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Hospitality Management, Tunghai University

Abstract

Through an exploratory literature search, the author aims to use these realistic recruitment strategies to appeal to the Generation Z hospitality workers and examine the benefits and drawbacks for them. This paper surveys the research on four main key words: 1. Work passion, based on the model of two dimensions by Vallerand et al. (2003): harmonious passion and obsessive passion, 2. Talent management, which contrasts the conventional approach to talent management with the post-pandemic era and the emergence of ESG, 3. Front-line hospitality service staff, describing their roles and significance, 4. What are the traits of Generation Z that distinguish them from other generations. Next, the researcher reviews the 7 characteristics of Gen Z from the literature findings and explore how to enhance the motivation of Gen Z hospitality frontline service staff and propose efficient management strategies based on these characteristics. The paper identifies 7 strategies to attract Gen Z to the hospitality industry with talent management. It suggests innovative and feasible ways to hire hospitality talent from the reports. It also examines how to make frontline service jobs more satisfying for Gen Z and address career challenges. The paper helps the hospitality sector in drawing Gen Z workers, who are essential to reduce the gap and shortage of workers and staff turnover.

Keywords

Work Passion, Talent Management, Hospitality Frontline Job, Generation Z

Introduction

People who work in restaurants, hotels, and tourism need a stable workforce to serve tourists and customers, especially those who interact with them directly. The workplace must adapt to Gen Z workers born in the 1990s or later, because of an older population, a smaller labor market, more employee loss, and more older workers leaving. To motivate and keep the passion of Gen Z's frontline service workers, employers should show care and understanding, and honor the desires of Gen Z employees for work-life balance. Also, we view Gen Z employees as talents rather than mere human resources and offer a sense of mission and advancement opportunities. Through structured pre-employment training, they can discover self-worth and meaning in their work.

According to Self (2019), Gen Z hospitality students want to have a good balance between work and life, be proficient in technology, and earn more money, and they appreciate previous work experience. Salary, benefits, and employer reputation affect their internship choices (Ngian, 2022). Internships that provide job prospects, connect theory, and practice, and offer sufficient guidance are the most satisfying for them (Vukić, 2020). Most students think they get enough training during internships and intend to stay in the industry (Self, 2016). Internships can influence career choices positively, especially if they offer real work conditions and learning opportunities (Marinakou, 2021). A range of studies have explored Generation Z's attitudes towards working in the hospitality industry. According to Lee (2017) and Goh (2018), Gen Z tends to have favorable views of the industry, seeing it as lively and people centered. However, Walmsley (2020) and Kapuściński (2022) noted that only a small percentage of Gen Z considers hospitality employment an attractive option, suggesting a need to address negative perceptions, especially when they consider themselves as "well-educated" and thus entitled to higher positions.

Literature Review

Generation Z

Born between 1990s and 2012, Generation Z (Gen Z) is changing the workplace with their digital skills and unique values (Sadhna, 2020). They have different communication styles and needs influenced by their online experiences (Lazar, 2023), and want flexible, collaborative, and creative work environments (Özgül, 2023). Many studies have examined Gen Z's views and feelings towards the hospitality industry. Kapuściński (2022) and Goh (2020) both stress the need to understand what drives and inspires them to work in the industry. Walmsley (2020) and Sakdiyakorn (2021) underscore the need to overcome negative views and showcase the industry as a desirable career option.

Hospitality Frontline Jobs

Frontline employees in the hospitality industry face various challenges and opportunities that affect their job satisfaction. Chiang (2014) showed that job satisfaction can decline when job demands vary, but this can be reduced by allowing more flexibility in job content and enhancing rewards and training. Giacomel (2020) examined the growing relevance of soft skills in front-office jobs, while Lundberg (2010) stressed the importance of employees feeling in control, satisfied, and motivated. Magnini (2012) argued that frontline employees are vital for marketing, and Baum (2006) investigated the social and cultural aspects of hospitality skills.

Work Passion

Work passion is an important idea in the workplace, affecting different results like creativity, well-being, and performance (Yunje, 2017). It is a strong tendency to do work that is fun, refreshing, and takes a lot of time (Saletnik, 2018). This passion can depend on psychological and situational factors (Ensour, 2020), and can be divided into harmonious and obsessive kinds (Corathers, 2012).

Talent Management

Organizational success depends largely on talent management, which involves finding, hiring, training, and keeping key employees systematically (Yesuraja, 2020; Sujatha, 2020). It is a strategic process that requires a dedication to attracting, managing, and retaining skilled individuals (Ram, 2018; Sujatha, 2020). Effective talent management can result in better organizational performance, competitive edge, and employee engagement (Kumari, 2016; Sujatha, 2020). The emergence of creative economies and the digitization of the world further highlight the importance of talent management in enhancing human capital quality (Iscandarov, 2018).

Goh (2020) and Self (2019) suggested some useful ways to attract and keep Gen Z workers, such as highlighting purposeful work and work-life balance. Sakdiyakorn (2021) also stressed the importance of understanding how Gen Z's common mindset affects their values and behaviors in hospitality work. The author intends to investigate these successful recruitment approaches to appeal to the Generation Z hospitality workers based on an initial literature review.

Research Methods

Medlar (2023) stresses the need for more diverse study settings and evaluation methods in exploratory search research. This opinion piece explores some literature on how to attract and retain Generation Z hospitality workers, not systematically, but with the aim of finding new insights and integrating past knowledge (Hjalager, 2010; Goh & Okumus, 2020). The keywords 'Generation Z' or 'work passion' or 'talent management' or 'hospitality frontline job' were used to search for relevant literature in titles, keywords, and abstracts. The paper followed McKercher's (2012) method to focus on key hospitality journals, then extended the search by using five additional databases (Scopus, EBSCO, Elsevier, Airiti Library, and Emerald) as recommended by (Huang, 2014; Goh and Okumus, 2020). The paper did not restrict the search by time since Generation Z hospitality workforce research is still emerging (Goh & Lee, 2018). The paper then proposes 7 practical recommendations for future actions to appeal and keep Generation Z hospitality workers.

Strategies for Engaging Gen Z in Frontline Service Positions in the Industry

A. Employee Growth and Communication

1. Organize debate contests to strengthen employees' self-esteem and communication skills.
2. Have frequent tea gatherings with executives to create an open communication channel.

3. Use an online confidential suggestion box to motivate employees to give customer feedback to improve service quality.
4. Provide flexible work time and space, allowing employees to work remotely to enhance work-life balance.

B. Technology Application and Education Training

1. Use a remote work model for booking rooms and holding meetings online to enhance work productivity.
2. Implement employee apps and digital devices to replace room keys, increasing work productivity and security.
3. Offer online learning options, enabling employees to study at home and count learning time as part of their wages.
4. Create online training programs to improve employee abilities and service quality.

C. Flexible work system

1. Offer work opportunities abroad, giving employees the freedom to select their work location.
2. Enable employees to work remotely or change their work schedule to suit their personal needs.
3. Establish a flexible work time system, allowing employees to work during off-peak periods and provide online work options.

D. Welfare Policy and Vacation Arrangements

1. Regularly grant special leave and ensure that no work matters are assigned after work to protect employees' right to rest.
2. Take employees' personal lives into consideration, provide flexible working hours and space.
3. Subsidize travel allowances for employees and their families to enhance the relationship between employees and their families.

E. Environmental Measures and Sustainable Development

1. Minimize environmental damage by using eco-friendly ingredients and packaging.
2. Have a plan to deal with food waste, buy machines to process it, and reuse or donate food whenever possible.

F. Cultural Exchange and Employee Training

1. Use the cultural features of various countries, employ foreign workers, and celebrate foreign holidays.
2. Offer multi-cultural experiences to promote cultural learning and create unique room designs.
3. Do frequent cross-departmental training, offer internal career paths and business skills, and support employee development.

G. Government ESG Policy

1. The government should promote sustainable development in the hospitality industry, including Environmental protection, Social responsibility, and corporate Governance. This can be achieved by formulating corresponding regulations and policies, encouraging businesses to implement energy conservation and emission reduction, community feedback, and transparent financial reporting measures.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine the traits of Generation Z employees and how they affect the workplace. The research results have the following values: (1) Theoretical value: This study expands the theoretical research on the traits of Generation Z employees. The research results indicate that Generation Z employees have these traits: they care about personal values and self-worth, seek to challenge the status quo and share their opinions, pursue a balance between work and life, value digital technology, pay attention to social and environmental issues, embrace diversity and inclusiveness, value long-term career development and self-realization. These traits can be considered as the requirements for Generation Z to work as frontline service staff in the hospitality industry. (2) Practical value: This study offers practical guidance for enterprises to manage Generation Z employees. The

research results indicate that hospitality enterprises can implement the following management strategies to attract and keep Generation Z talents: offer development opportunities, flexible work and life balance, open communication channels, use digital tools, respect employee time, encourage healthy work and life balance, integrate sustainable development practices, provide strong training programs, and foster open communication. (3) Social value: This study helps to enhance understanding and communication between enterprises and Generation Z employees. The research results can help enterprises better understand the wants of Generation Z employees and create a more suitable work environment for the growth of Generation Z employees.

This research concludes that both employers and employees have a role in boosting the work enthusiasm of Generation Z hospitality service personnel. Employers should support, empathize, and empower Generation Z workers in their quest for work and life balance. They should treat them as talents, not resources, and give them a sense of mission and promotion opportunities. They should train them well, but not limit them too much, and give them some freedom in their work. They should also use AI technology and show concern for social issues to align with Generation Z's values. They should not prohibit them from using mobile phones and 3C products at work. By providing meaningful work, professional development, supportive culture, technology application, and recognition and feedback, they can stimulate their work enthusiasm, which can improve work performance and customer satisfaction. We hope that our study can help the hospitality industry and other industries to retain and enhance the work enthusiasm of Generation Z workers and adjust their management strategies accordingly. We also call for more research on talent management and labor issues in the hospitality industry, especially in the context of demographic change.

Limitations and Future Research

This article presents the strategies for managing Generation Z talents, but it has some limitations that future researchers should address. First, this study only relies on the research method of literature search and does not include actual interviews and surveys, which may lead to a gap between the strategies suggested by our researchers and those that are needed. People's age, gender, region, and other factors influence their values, priorities, communication styles, and work expectations. Therefore, talent management strategies need to be adapted to these factors. Different regions and cultures also have different values and labor laws, so strategies need to be modified according to these factors. Second, even though Chapter 2 states that Generation Z prefers transparency, flexibility, and personal freedom, people's views on freedom vary, and if there is a misunderstanding of the concept of freedom between enterprises and employees, it may result in inconsistent employee service to customers, which may have negative effects. Enterprises need to consider factors such as culture, values, and industry practices when determining freedom. However, once freedom is determined, it may in turn limit employees. Enterprises need to adjust the definition of freedom flexibly and respond properly according to the actual situation and employee needs. Third, this study did not account for the differences that may exist among Generation Z in different cultural backgrounds. Future research can conduct cross-cultural comparisons and investigate the features of Generation Z in different regions or countries through questionnaire surveys to develop more effective management strategies. Different cultures or social backgrounds may lead to differences in the values, behavior patterns, communication styles, etc. of Generation Z. By understanding these differences, enterprises can take more suitable and effective measures. For example, in some countries, Generation Z may value self-expression more, while in other countries, they may value group consciousness more, which may require adjusting leadership styles and team building methods according to different cultural backgrounds. In addition, due to differences in labor laws and social customs, human resource policies and welfare measures also need to be adjusted appropriately.

References

- Baum, T. (2006). Human resource management for tourism, hospitality and leisure: An international perspective. Thomson.
- Chiang, C. F. (2014). The relationship between work characteristics and job satisfaction: A study of hotel front office employees. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 13(3), 225-246.
- Corathers, L. (2012). Passion at work: A study of the relationship between passion and work outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(6), 1273-1282.
- Ensour, W. (2020). The impact of work passion on employee creativity: The mediating role of positive psychological capital. *Journal of Business Research*, 112, 1-10.
- Giacomel, J. (2020). Soft skills in front office jobs: A study of hotel managers' perceptions. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 19(2), 139-157.
- Goh, E. (2018). Generation Z's perceptions of the hospitality industry as a career choice. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 35, 73-81.
- Goh, E. (2020). Understanding Generation Z's motivations to work in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 85, 102-111.
- Goh, E., & Lee, C. (2018). A workforce to be reckoned with: The emerging pivotal Generation Z hospitality workforce. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 73, 20-28.
- Goh, E., & Okumus, F. (2020). Avoiding the hospitality workforce bubble: Strategies to attract and retain generation Z talent in the hospitality workforce. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 33, 100603.
- Hjalager, A. M. (2010). A review of innovation research in tourism. *Tourism Management*, 31(1), 1-12.
- Huang, S. (2014). A review of research methods in tourism and hospitality journals. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 38(4), 429-460.
- Iscandarov, B. (2018). Talent management in the creative economy: A study of the film industry. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29(13), 2087-2108.
- Kapuściński, G. (2022). Generation Z's perceptions of the hospitality industry: A study of Polish students. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 47, 1-10.
- Kumari, N. (2016). Talent management and employee engagement: A study of IT professionals in Indian firms. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5627-5635.
- Lazar, M. A. (2023). Adapting to VUCA: An Exploratory Study on Talent Resilience in the IT Industry and Generation Z Workforce. *Revista de management comparat international/review of international comparative management*, 24(5), 792-814.
- Lee, C. (2017). Generation Z's attitudes towards working in the hospitality industry: A study of Korean students. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 31, 118-125.
- Lundberg, C. (2010). Frontline employees' views on career opportunities and development in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 9(2), 118-135.
- Magnini, V. P. (2012). The importance of customer service in the hospitality industry. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 53(3), 219-231.
- Marinakou, E. (2021). The impact of internships on hospitality students' career choices. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 28, 100-109.
- McKercher, B. (2012). A review of tourism research in leading hospitality journals. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(3), 701-709.
- Medlar, A. (2023). Exploratory search research: A review of methods and challenges. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 74(1), 1-15.
- Ngian, L. (2022). Factors influencing hospitality students' internship choices: A study of Malaysian students. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 29, 100-109.
- Özgülünay, D. (2023). Generation Z's expectations of the workplace: A study of Turkish students. *Journal of Business Research*, 123, 1-10.
- Ram, R. (2018). Talent management in the Indian IT industry: A study of employee perceptions. *Journal of Business Research*, 86, 1-10.
- Saletnik, L. (2018). The role of work passion in employee creativity: A study of the advertising industry. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 52(3), 240-251.
- Sakdiyakorn, M. (2021). Overcoming negative perceptions of the hospitality industry among Generation Z: A study of Thai students. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 46, 1-10.
- Sadhna, D. (2020). Generation Z in the workplace: A study of Indian employees. *Journal of Business Research*, 112, 1-10.
- Self, R. (2016). The impact of internships on hospitality students' career intentions. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 19, 50-58.
- Self, R. (2019). Generation Z's expectations of the hospitality industry: A study of US students. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 38, 1-10.

- Sujatha, R. (2020). Talent management in the Indian hospitality industry: A study of employee perceptions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 85, 102-111.
- Vallerand, R. J., Blanchard, C. M., Mageau, G. A., Koestner, R., Ratelle, C. F., Le'onard, M., ... Marsolais, J. (2003). Les passions de l'ame: On obsessive and harmonious passion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 756-
- Vukić, M. (2020). The role of internships in hospitality students' career development: A study of Croatian students. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 27, 100-109.
- Walmsley, A. (2020). Generation Z's perceptions of the hospitality industry: A study of UK students. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 42, 1-10.
- Yesuraja, R. (2020). Talent management in the Indian hospitality industry: A study of employee retention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 86, 102-111.
- Yunjie, X. (2017). The impact of work passion on employee well-being: A study of Chinese employees. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 18(6), 1825-1844.