An exploratory study of Generation Y tourism and hospitality students’ job selection criteria

Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree

Bachelor of Business Administration in

Tourism and Hospitality Management

Submitted to Daniel Leung

Katrin Zsacsek

1111581

Vienna, 20th June 2014
Affidavit

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor’s Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

____________________  ________________________
Date                  Signature
Abstract

As a labor-intensive industry, it is important for employers in the tourism and hospitality industries to know how to attract qualified staff in order to support the continuous growth. Considering that the employees’ point of view has not really been subject of extensive research yet, this study aims to explore the job selection criteria of tourism and hospitality students in Generation Y. In-depth interviews with MODUL University Vienna students, who are in their last semester, were conducted in order to gain in-depth knowledge about the factors influencing their career choice. This generation is looking for good career opportunities and is willing to make compromises for it. The outcomes in current study differ significantly from those in previous studies, which provide a contemporary insight to academics and practitioners in the field.
Table of Contents

Affidavit .......................................................................................................................... 2

Abstract3

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. 6

List of Figures .................................................................................................................. 6

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 7

2 Literature review ....................................................................................................... 8
   2.1 Person-environment fit .......................................................................................... 9
       2.1.1 Person-vocation fit ...................................................................................... 9
       2.1.2 Person-job fit ............................................................................................ 9
       2.1.3 Person-organization fit ............................................................................. 10
       2.1.4 Person-group fit ...................................................................................... 10
   2.2 John Holland’s occupational choice hexagon .................................................... 11
   2.3 Career anchor ..................................................................................................... 11
   2.4 Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) ............................................................... 13
   2.5 Decision making ............................................................................................... 15
   2.6 Job attributes ...................................................................................................... 16
   2.7 Outcomes of different studies ............................................................................ 17

3 Methodology ................................................................................................................ 18

4 Research findings ...................................................................................................... 19
   4.1 Self-actualization ............................................................................................... 19
   4.2 Colleagues .......................................................................................................... 21
   4.3 Salary .................................................................................................................. 22
   4.4 Identification with the vision of the organization ............................................. 23
   4.5 Job security ......................................................................................................... 24
   4.6 Chance for further training ............................................................................... 25
   4.7 Flexibility ............................................................................................................ 27
   4.8 Traveling distance to the workplace ................................................................. 28
   4.9 Internationality ................................................................................................. 29
   4.10 Societal appreciation ...................................................................................... 30
4.11 Employer ........................................................................................................ 31
4.12 Tertiary education......................................................................................... 33
4.13 Empowerment ............................................................................................ 34
4.14 Versatility .................................................................................................. 35

5 Conclusion .................................................................................................... 35
  5.1 Findings and Outcomes .............................................................................. 36
  5.2 Recommendations ...................................................................................... 36
  5.3 Limitations ................................................................................................ 37

Bibliography ........................................................................................................ 39
List of Tables

Table 1 Demographic profile of interviewees ............................................ 19

List of Figures

Figure 1 John Holland’s occupational choice hexagon ............................... 11
Figure 2 Model of person, contextual, and experimental factors affecting
career related choice behaviour ............................................................ 14
1 Introduction

The public generally has two extremely different images about the tourism and hospitality industry. On the one hand it is seen as glamorous and attractive. On the other hand it is seen as an industry of low skill, low status and low pay (Riley, Ladkin & Szivas, 2002). Tourism and hospitality students mainly perceive the industry very negatively. This in turn means that the industry has considerable difficulties when it comes to attracting, recruiting and retaining fresh graduates to work for them (Jenkins, 2001). Yet, more and more manpower will be needed in the future to provide tourism products and services to travelers. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the international tourist arrivals in 2013 reached 1.09 billion which had an increase of 5% comparing with the corresponding figure in 2012. The number in 2014 would continue to grow by approximately 4-4.5% based on the forecasts by UNWTO (2014). Due to these recent positive developments, it is crucial to have a high human involvement to ensure the delivery of services and vacation experiences (Pender & Sharpley, 2005).

No single industry but especially not the tourism industry can exist without human beings, as it is not a business where machines can take over all tasks. With its characteristics of being human-intensive, the tourism industry is one of the major employers in the world. Although the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that 8.7% of the world population was affiliated with the industry in 2012 (WTTC, 2013), the inability to attract qualified personal has long been a fundamental problem in the tourism and hospitality sector (McDermid, 1996). One possible reason for this phenomenon is that employers have only limited knowledge on how to attract the candidates to work for them.

To overcome this problem, the industry has to adopt better human resources management practices since humans are the most important resource for them (Baum, 2007). Besides that, the performance of this industry is determined by how good the human resources management works, which includes recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and appraisal of employees (Young-Thelin & Boluk, 2012). It is crucial nowadays for every successful
enterprise to have skilled, enthusiastic and committed workers (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000).

The tourism industry is growing every year and the forecast for the future is also promising. Thus, a huge amount of people will be needed to work in this field to support its continuous growth. The competition of acquiring the most suitable and qualified employees is expected to be harder than ever. To redress this problem, it is vital for practitioners to know how to attract employees and understand the factors affecting their job selection decisions. However, the topic of career choices in the tourism and hospitality industry has not been fully discovered yet. There are only few studies that focus on that aspect, and most were conducted from an employer’s point of view rather than from the employee’s point of view. To fill this research gap, this thesis focuses on exploring what factors university students expect and believe to be important when they choose their job. Drawing on the primary data collected from in-depth interviews with bachelor students who will graduate from MODUL University Vienna in the upcoming academic year, this study aims to give practitioners in the tourism and hospitality industries an insight about what Generation Y tourism and hospitality students expect and consider in their job selection decision. Besides, the findings will help other students to understand what peers in the same generation judge as important when making career decisions.

To have a thorough understanding of the studied subject, the next chapter will firstly review the literature and identify what influential factors were discussed when employees apply for job. Afterwards, details about the data collection and analysis would be presented. After presenting the findings from in-depth interviews, recommendations will be provided for employers to equip them with a better understanding about how they can attract potential Generation Y job applicants.

2 Literature review

Previous literatures suggest that the more an employee fits to the organizational culture the more likely they are to be an asset to the organization. Other factors that make individuals valuable are if they bring the required
knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) with them (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). This means that employees and future employees should have a high person-job and person-organization fit which managers should consider when setting up recruitment and selection plans. In turn, the organizational attractiveness as well as its performance will increase whereas the employee turnover will decrease (Boswell, Roehling, LePine & Moynihan, 2003).

Career decision-making is a very complex process and various researchers proposed different approaches and theories to describe the mechanisms. One of the most known concepts is person-environment fit.

2.1 Person-environment fit

Person-environment fit refers to the extent to which a person is compatible with his / her working environment (Michael, 2009). The following sub-sections are going to describe the four main categories of fit. Research evidence supports that each type of these fits is unique and that individuals are able to distinguish among these different fits (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005).

2.1.1 Person-vocation fit

Person-vocation fit measures the extent to which an individual’s characteristics and personality match his or her vocational environment. In general, people seek for jobs that are compatible with their interests, values, knowledge, skills and abilities (Holland, 1973). Employees are satisfied if their occupational environment meets their needs (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

2.1.2 Person-job fit

Person-job fit is about the match between an individual and a specific job. It is closely related to person-vocation fit yet more narrowly defined. It focuses more on the compatibility between a person and the tasks or works he or she performs at
the job (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This fit can be distinguished into two types. The first one is called demands / abilities fit, representing whether an employee’s KSA match the requirements of the job. Needs / supplies fit is the second type, which refers to whether an individual’s needs such as psychological needs or personal goals, are met by the job (Michael, 2009).

2.1.3 Person-organization fit

Person-organization fit refers to the fit between an individual and an organization in terms of values, needs and goals (Kristof, 1996). This is further defined by Kristof (1996) as "the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both" (p. 4).

Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) conceptualized person-organization fit in two ways namely supplementary fit and complementary fit. Supplementary fit means that there is congruence in core values, norms and goals between the employee and the organization (Kristof, 1996). Complementary fit occurs when an individual complements or contributes something that is missing in the organization (Michael, 2009).

2.1.4 Person-group fit

Person-group fit represents the compatibility among individuals and the extent to which they share similar characteristics and traits. Generally, this fit is a complementary one. This complementary fit can occur when an individual has certain KSAs, which other group members lack (Michael, 2009). Nowadays, person-group fit is increasing its recognition due to the fact that teamwork is increasingly needed in organizations (Mosley, 2002).
2.2 John Holland’s occupational choice hexagon

John Holland developed another theory about career choice, which mainly focuses on the self-perception and attributes of a job seeker. As a psychologist and professor in occupational choice, John’s main notation is that the choice about a career is primarily influenced by the personality someone has. According to him, people will perform well in jobs if their job perfectly matches their traits and personalities. He subsequently proposes a diagram consisting of six different personal traits or characteristics (see Figure 1). This hexagon is simple and straightforward to read and interpret. For instance, if someone is an enterprising person, the most suitable job for that person would be those which are relatively enterprising such as a social or conventional job. In contrast, the worst choice for this person would be to take an investigative job since this requires totally different skills and another attitude (Greenberg & Baron, 2008).

![Figure 1 John Holland's occupational choice hexagon](image)

2.3 Career anchor

Both person-environment fit and occupational choice hexagon are focused on how much someone’s job or career matches his or her personality. In contrast with these, another concept is called career anchor. Edgar Schein firstly developed it in 1975. Its core meaning is that people choose their jobs according to how they
perceive themselves and which image they have of themselves. The model consists of eight major categories or anchors. Schein discovered five of them in his earlier work on career anchors in the 1970’s (Schein 1975, 1978): (1) technical / functional competence; (2) managerial competence; (3) security and stability; (4) entrepreneurial creativity; and (5) autonomy and independence. Schein (1987, 1990) later worked again on career anchors and found three additional anchors: (6) service and dedication to a cause; (7) pure challenge; and (8) lifestyle.

The first one is technical or functional competence, which includes jobs that focus on specific content areas such as auto mechanics. Managerial competence is another major career anchor. This one is about jobs that allow analyzing business problems and dealing with people. The third category is security and stability, which are jobs that are very likely to persist into the future. The typical example includes the military. Creativity or entrepreneurship focuses on one’s interest in starting new companies for visions of unique product or services. The fifth career anchor is autonomy and independence. This includes jobs that have to do with no constraint and working at one’s pace like novelists. People whose anchor is service and dedication to a cause often choose a job according to their values rather than their skills. They want to make the world a better place in some way. Pure challenge refers to people that want to overcome obstacles and have a daily competition. They are often single-minded and not tolerant to others who have a different attitude. The last anchor is lifestyle. Lifestyle-focused people often have issues like maternity or paternity and choose companies, which have family-friendly values (Schein, 1990).

Individuals who have a high congruence between their career anchors and their jobs often perform better and have better career outcomes. These outcomes include job satisfaction, work effectiveness and job stability. One major assumption of Schein is that people can only have one career anchor. He stated that this anchor is a certain self-concept that individuals do not even give up when they face difficult situations. However, he also suggested that a person who does not have one specific anchor is mostly because he or she does not have enough experience in life yet in order to know how to make choices (Feldman & Bolino, 1996).
People have many different interests that influence their lives but only a few of them have to do with their career choice. Therefore scientists work on how to assess people’s career anchors (Greenberg & Baron, 2008).

2.4 Social cognitive career theory (SCCT)

The following part contains a different approach to career development. It is from the social cognitive perspective, which includes a trace between persons and their career related contexts, cognitive and interpersonal factors, as well as self-directed and externally imposed influences. This point of view is called Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and it is influenced and embraces various other theories (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002). The aim is to build up a theory that is unifying many models to one complex model. The two branches that have been evolved from Banduras framework of Social Cognitive Theory and are linked to SCCT are firstly Krumboltz’s (1979) social learning theory of career decision-making and the application of the self-efficacy construct to women’s career development by Hackett and Betz (1981). The goal of SCCT is to unify, extend and update these theories in career and also in non-career domains. In comparison with the fundamental career theories, which mainly focus on traits of a person (Dawis, 1996) or typological terms (Holland, 1997), SCCT focuses more on situation specific terms (Lent et al., 2002).

The choice model consists of three main parts. The first one is about the choice or goal. The next one deals with actions, for example, enrolling in a training program that helps achieve the goal. The final part is the outcomes like success or failure that shape the future and provide feedback (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). The partition between goal and actions in the concept draws on earlier models of career decision making (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996; Tiedemann & O’Hara, 1963) and is important due to the fact that it emphasizes choices are dynamic acts.

As shown in figure 2, self-efficacy and outcome expectations form certain interests (path 1 and 2). Interests then have a direct influence on choice goals (path 3), which in turn leads to choice actions (path 4). The outcomes of the actions are
called performance domains and attainments (path 5), which lead to a feedback loop and influence choice persistence (path 6). Additionally outcome expectations can have a direct impact on choice goals (path 8) and choice actions (path 9). The same applies to self-efficacy expectations as it may also affect choice goals (path 10) and choice actions (path 11) (Lent et al., 1994).

Figure 2 Model of person, contextual, and experimental factors affecting career related choice behavior

SCCT also includes that under optimal conditions people tend to choose a career according to their interests, like in Holland’s (1997) theory. However choices are not always made under these conditions. Educational and economical limitations can be factors where people have to make compromises (Vroom, 1964).

The impact of the environment is an essential part of this model and makes it dynamic. It can be divided in two distinctive categories. Firstly, the contextual influences, those are not directly connected with choice and goals, but help form social cognitive interest. Examples are opportunities for development, culture and gender. Secondly, the proximal influences, which are the ones that have a direct or moderator effect on goals and actions. They include job availability or emotional and financial support.

SCCT’s model of career choice holds that decisions are not only based on one’s interests but also on contextual or environmental influences as well as other personal attributes. People tend to compromise on their choices when they feel that the environment is not supportive enough. Their interests are not the most
important aspect anymore and job choices are heavily influenced by availability. What is more, the outcomes and the performance at the job take a crucial role (Lent et al., 2002).

2.5 Decision making

Although the effects of work values on job satisfaction commitment as well as works values on individual decision-making have been widely studied, work values have not been explicitly linked to job choice decision (Michael, 2009).

For individuals it is crucial to make job search in order to have alternatives from which he or she will eventually decide on one vocation job seekers’ behavior and decisions are influenced by many factors such as search strategies, personality, job characteristics. The individual’s final choice depends on how he or she uses and assess the available information. Search strategies have an impact on the quality and nature of the information (Michael, 2009).

Stevens and Turban (2001) discovered that there are three different search strategies, which are focused, exploratory, and haphazard. Job seekers that use the focused strategy monitor potential employers, and apply for jobs that best fit them (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). The exploratory approach implies that an individual looks for jobs at different sources (Michael, 2009). They may not have a certain goal but are much rather open to explore. Individuals who choose the haphazard search strategy tend to be passive and tend to accept early job offers which may not even but related to their academic qualification (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005).

There are two types of information, formal and personal, people use when looking for a job. The decision-making is heavily influenced by the evaluation and preference of the information, which can cause individuals to miss better and more relevant information. The job choice is affected by quantity, quality and accuracy of information an individual gathers (Michael, 2009).

To make an organization to be attractive, it is important for managers to ensure that the job attributes and characteristics of the organization are important
to people who are looking for jobs. Furthermore, they need to have a recruitment process that is applying to persons who fit for the job and discouraging those persons who are not ideal for the job (Michael, 2009). According to Boswell et al. (2003), the recruiting process can have a direct impact on how much applicant is attracted to the organization. An example is to set a deadline so that the job seeker is under pressure and has to decide whether to accept or reject the job offer. The recruitment process may also be more or less attracting because it can reflect the organizations characteristics. On the contrary to that, Taylor and Bergmann (1987) found that the recruitment process only plays a major role at the initial interview stages but not before.

Altogether job choice is a dynamic decision process where individuals have to go through various phases and stages (Barber, 1998). This process however is very important. It determines the set of alternatives that are open to a job seeker and from which he or she will eventually decide for one (Barber, Daly, Giannontonio & Philips, 1994).

2.6 Job attributes

Career decisions are always made upon values and attributes. Every job has a different set of but in general job characteristics, which can be divided into two categories namely intrinsic reward and extrinsic reward (Rollinson, 2005). Extrinsic rewards include job security or pay, which are tangible and mostly not controlled by the employee. In contrast, intrinsic rewards include psychological aspects. An example would be perceived job interestingness. Social rewards are also intrinsic and can be achieved through interaction with other people within an organization. Researchers are not sure which of these categories is more important to employees (Michael, 2009).
2.7 Outcomes of different studies

Numerous studies that investigate career choice have been conducted. The most relevant outcomes of them will be discussed in the following part.

Richardson (2009) did a study about undergraduates’ perception of tourism and hospitality as a career choice in 2009. The researcher conducted an online survey with undergraduate students from eight different universities in Australia. Drawing on the 379 usable responses, the three most important factors for Australian undergraduate students when choosing a career were “a job that I will find enjoyable”, “pleasant working environment” and “a secure job”, respectively. On the contrary, the undergraduates reported that the least important factors were “a job that can easily be combined with parenthood”, “a job where I can care for others” and “a job where I will contribute to society”. This survey also investigated the extent to which students believe that the tourism and hospitality industry will offer these factors. The aspects, that are perceived to be offered most probably, are “job mobility – easy to get a job anywhere”, “a job where you gain transferable skills” and “a job, which gives me responsibility”. Another finding of the study was that factors which are very important to students when choosing a career are not offered by this industry according to what the students believe (Richardson, 2009).

Another study concerning job choice, which is authored by Boswell, Roehling, LePine and Moynihan, is titled “Individual job-choice decisions and the impact of job attributes and recruitment practices. A longitudinal field study”. The most important factors, when the participants had to rank the job-choice decisions, were “company culture”, “advancement opportunities” and “nature of work”. When they were asked to fill out the open-ended questions, the outcomes were slightly different. They mentioned “monetary compensation” and “benefits” as the most essential ones (Boswell et al., 2003).

Other researchers have also examined the importance of different job attributes when employees make a job choice. Jurgensen (1978) found that job security, type of work, advancement opportunity, and company characteristics were the most relevant ones. Feldmann and Arnold (1978) investigated and reported that pay and benefits were more important than independence, responsibility,
opportunity to use skills and abilities, providing products and services or flexibly schedule. However, in Zedeck’s (1977) study, advancement opportunity has a higher influence on job choice than salary, flexibility, and assignment duration.

Most of aforementioned studies have shown similar results. The factors advancement opportunity, type of work, company’s culture and environment, and security of job were always ranked among the most important ones. Pay and benefits are not considered as the most essential. Only the study by Feldmann and Arnold (1978) and the open-ended questionnaire of Boswell et al. (2003) pointed out that these factors are the most relevant ones when choosing a job.

3 Methodology

The target population of this study is pre-graduate students from MODUL University Vienna. And all students who are in their sixth semester of their Bachelor programme were chosen to be the study samples, since they will soon be applying for job or a training program. They were selected using the convenience sampling approach whereby an equal balance between female and male students was tried to keep. Each of the selected students completed an internship in the hotel industry, which lasted from four to six months.

To collect data, seven in-depth interviews were conducted. The demographic profile of the interviewees was listed in Table 1. The goal is to find out what Generation Y students are looking for when they select their jobs. Semi-structured interview was conducted by the author of the thesis and lasted around 30 minutes each. At first, the participants were asked to list the most important job selection factors and explain them in detail. During this process, the interviewer raised probing questions in order to better understand why the listed factor(s) is important to them. At the end, the interviewer and the participant went through all listed factors again and the participants were asked to rank the factors according to their level of importance. After that it has been looked if there are any significant abnormalities in the ranking. Finally the different factors were ranked on the average of how the interviewees rated them.
In-depth interviews were chosen as the method to collect data because it brings many advantages. Firstly, interviewers can immediately clarify interview questions when interviewees encounter confusion. Secondly, every unintentional nonverbal clue can be detected during a face-to-face interview. The body language is also a part of the communication process and therefore can provide relevant information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Study program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bachelor in tourism and hospitality management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bachelor in tourism and hospitality management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bachelor in tourism and hospitality management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bachelor in tourism and hospitality management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bachelor in tourism and hospitality management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bachelor in tourism and hospitality management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Bachelor in tourism and hospitality management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Demographic profile of interviewees

4  Research findings

A total of 14 different factors were identified. They were listed according to their corresponding averaged importance level. Twelve of these were named by every interviewee. The last two factors however were listed by two interviewees only.

4.1  Self-actualization

According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, self-actualization is at the highest level. However in order to achieve this, all previous stages have to be mastered too. They include physiological needs, safety, love/belonging and esteem (Greenberg & Baron, 2008).
This factor was always amongst the first ones to be mentioned by the interviewees. Every person, except Interviewee B, listed self-actualization as the most important factor when it comes to job choice decisions. The interviewees see themselves living in a world where all the previous stages are taken for granted. That is why it is no longer important to only have a job to support one’s family. For the interviewees, self-actualization is improving the life quality and therefore the most influential factor.

Interviewee F stated that finding a job within a certain area that is interesting to her is of importance. This interviewee would only apply for a job that is interesting or in a department that sounds appealing. She also said that “I have to work there several hours a day for many years. I want to feel lucky at work and this is impossible if I am at the wrong place.”

Interviewee C explicitly stated that the hobby should become one’s profession later, because then work is automatically fun. One does not consider it as “work” anymore. Besides the fact that one enjoys the work itself, also the time is moving faster. The interviewee is sure that this can be found in the hotel industry, as there are always different people from different cultures.

Interviewee B ranked this factor not at the top but very high position. It was important to the interviewee that one can pursue the career that one was always striving for. Furthermore the personal skills and abilities one has should be of use at a job.

To interviewee A, it is vital that one is always satisfied with a job. “There is no sense in a job that I don’t like.” Furthermore one should be content and motivated for work every time one gets up in the morning to go to work. “Almost nothing can go wrong anymore if I am looking forward to the next day in the evening, because my job fulfills me.” To conclude, all interviewees are looking for a job that fits to them and where they can combine what they like to do with their work.
4.2 Colleagues

In most organizations, it is unavoidable to work with other people in order to achieve the optimal business outcome. However, since workers often have different cultural backgrounds and style of working, this makes cooperation become an even more complex topic.

All interviewees acknowledged and listed different aspects about “colleagues” as crucial factors. To the interviewees, it was essential that a positive atmosphere in the offices and departments would be resulted if colleagues get along together well. Interviewee E suggested that “For me it is really important that I get along with my colleagues and we are respecting each other. In addition I would always help my colleagues if they ask for help but I also expect to do the same for me.” Interviewee G supplemented that a good mood of the colleagues at the workplace is also one major aspect. All indicated that there is a need for a positive relationship between co-workers. Nevertheless privacy is another critical aspect. For most interviewees, it is adequate to talk about private life at work but they do not want any private contact besides work. “I just want to work with my colleagues professionally and not really talk about my private life with them”, said person D. But interviewee A noted that co-workers should be more than just colleagues. They should also be open to spend time after work or on weekends. This person would like to “go for an after-work beer with the colleagues”.

For some of the interviewees it was not important if their colleagues are male, female, younger or older. However some others have their preferences. Interviewee G for example is more likely to feel comfortable in an organization where there are primarily young and dynamic people. Interviewees generally place more value on an equal amount of men and women, but Interviewee B wants to work in a “non-women only” environment. The interviewee said “I have the feeling that in Austria the majority of employees in hotels are female. But I really enjoy working with men since their character is different. At every shift there should be at least one male employee working.”

One possible reason why everyone ranked this factor in a high position is that they spend many hours per day at work with those people. They often see them
longer than their families or friends. One cannot work for a long time in an environment which he or she does not feel comfortable even if one might earn good money. Therefore, colleagues can make a workday enjoyable but in contrast awful, which thereby often results in resignation.

Another aspect that was mentioned by Interviewee F is fairness. This means that all colleagues should not only be treated fairly but also should treat each other fairly. This will ensure that nobody feels ignored and thereby a good working atmosphere can be fostered. It is vital that the communication between co-workers is working out. All kinds of misbehavior like talking behind someone’s back are harmful. Thus, everyone within an organization should encourage values like integrity and honesty.

4.3 Salary

Undoubtedly, money is always one of the major issues when people choose a job, and it might also be the reason why people work at all.

Among all interviews, salary was frequently mentioned in the interviews. Interestingly, the interviewees automatically and quickly connected this factor to job choice. However, none of the interviewees ranked salary as the most important factor. After considering other factors and their relative importance, they realized that salary is not their primary motivation for job section. Still, except Interviewee C, the salary was generally ranked amongst the first three factors by all interviewees.

Generally all interviewees think that the initial salary does not necessarily be high. However it should be reasonable and there has to be a room to increase according to the performance as well as service year with the company. Interviewee A said that money is an important factor because it helps him fulfill different dreams like having his own car, having his own flat, and having a higher living standard. He also agreed that the salary can be reasonably low in the beginning but it should be adjusted based on the performance of the employee. He proposed to have a system, which includes a guaranteed basis salary and a variable part depending on the employee performance.
Interviewee F stated that the work nowadays can be very stressful and demanding. Therefore the salary should not be too low in order to compensate the sacrifices at a job, like working at night or weekends. However, alike what another interviewee already stated, the money one gets should increase with working experience and performance. Furthermore, there should be a chance to get promoted although the interviewee believed that it is hard to achieve in the hotel industry.

For Interviewee E, the salary was not that important as long as the work itself is satisfying. However it is still crucial that there is the chance to earn good money when one does well at work. She commented that additional work, such as overtime hours, have to be compensated to the employees. She said “I do not want to be exploited at my workplace, just because money is not the most important factor when I decide for a job.” Interviewee D also said that the starting salary does not have to be high but it should at least cover all the living costs. The interviewee does not want to get into debts at a young age. The ideal case would be if the earnings at the beginning are at the benchmarking level but there are opportunities for financial and career advancement.

### 4.4 Identification with the vision of the organization

According to the interviewees, the identification with the organization one is working for is one of the most important aspects when choosing a job. This criterion was mostly ranked among the top positions. Each organization in the world has values, a corporate personality, an identity and so on. Some of those organizations show it more and some less. However the characteristics are crucial and can be the decisive factor that brings either success or failure. It is the same as it is with humans. Interviewees generally deemed that congruency between their own values and those of the company they are working for is important. That increases the satisfaction at work and therefore enhances the outcomes as well.

Interviewee C said that identification is important because one is not only judged by the job one is doing but also by what organization one is working for.
Interviewee B pointed out that identification is vital when deciding for a job. To provide better services for the guests and be more beneficial to the employer, Interviewee B said that one has to fully believe in the values and the philosophy of the company. “If I can identify myself with the hotel, I would never recommend a guest a better room or a restaurant in a hotel just to make more money. I want to represent the company in an honest way.” The organization itself also benefits from this attitude because if the employees fully believe in the company’s vision and mission, then it is much easier for them to provide better services.

To other interviewees, it is even more important that one’s own values are congruent with the ones of an organization. Interviewee G would not even work for certain companies even if they would offer a high salary to her. With reference to the personal experience with a company named Monsanto, Interviewee G stated that this company does not offer any value that is important at all and therefore is not an organization she would like to work for.

4.5 Job security

Job security is a factor that gained higher recognition over the last few years. This is mainly due to the financial crisis in 2007 that negatively impacted people’s life to a great extent. During that time period, many local and international companies downsized and dismissed significant amount of employees. The living condition of some people was changed drastically from one day to another. Unemployment can cause on the one hand poverty and on the other hand also psychological problems.

All interviewees also concerned and shared almost the same point of view when it came to job security. They said that when they are doing well at work, there should be no reason to get fired by a company. Interviewee F made a very concrete statement “If I fulfill every requirement, like showing interest or getting along with the colleagues, I will do my work with full satisfaction and therefore I won’t get fired”. Interviewed person E even went one step further by saying “If I do my work good, I am indispensable to a hotel.” All in all, it means that people are confident about keeping their job as long as they keep the employer satisfied.
Nevertheless job security is important to them especially when they are young adults. As suggested before, young adults generally have several dreams such as buying a flat, a car or starting a family. In order to successfully accomplish these, they need to acquire stable income from their jobs. Many graduates struggle with high debts after finishing their undergraduate study. The only way to get rid of this is to have a stable job and earn money. Clearance of student loan is another momentum why they perceive job security as a crucial factor.

There are certain situations when interviewees are afraid to lose their job or where they want to have a certainty that it will not happen. What they mean are special circumstances that can always happen, for example if they have to stay at home due to sickness or when a woman is pregnant. Person E for example pointed out that “she wants to be sure that she can continue with her previous job after being pregnant and giving birth to a child.” The interviewees prefer a job where they can find job security.

Two exceptional cases were found. Interviewee D did not worry very much about the job security. In his opinion, there is always a period of notice in which one can already watch out for another job. Moreover the person said that through versatility it is always possible to find another job, especially in the tourism industry. Besides that, Interviewee G stated “I think that the hotel industry is quite crisis-proof and therefore not many companies had to shorten the amount of jobs.” The stability during crisis and the fact that it is one of the main employers worldwide make this industry more appealing when it comes to job security.

### 4.6 Chance for further training

People always are on the hunt for new knowledge. It lies in the nature of human that they are always curious of new things. Similarly, one important aspect of job choice decisions is the chance for an individual to get trainings and further education opportunities even having a full time job. All the interviewees came to the conclusion that education is important. This does not only include a university degree but also a chance to acquire new knowledge provided by an organization one
is working for. They want to make a career and therefore it is crucial that they can keep up with the strategy of the company.

In the interviewees’ opinion it would have a beneficial effect for both sides. On the one hand, employee who takes courses is more knowledgeable and thus more wanted by employers. On the other hand, the organization can benefit from using the employees new skills. Moreover the turnover of workforce to other companies can be prevented because the workers are more satisfied with the options and chances of achieving career success.

For Interviewee B, it was very important that there is a training course or seminar when one starts to work in a hotel. Hotel guests can always have tricky and difficult questions and any employee should be qualified enough to answer all of them. The interviewee added that “Especially when working at the front desk in a hotel, you need to know everything about the rooms. Guests can be asking all kinds of different questions, for example if the room has a coffee machine or what the size of the bed is.” If an employee is not able to respond to questions, customers would have a bad impression towards the whole service team as well as the company. Besides courses when someone starts to work at a new workplace, Interviewee F proposed that companies should also offer continuous training courses. This type of education makes the most sense when certain groups of guests are arriving at a hotel. When this interviewee worked at a renowned hotel in Vienna, special courses were offered to specifically train the crew for the arrival of Arabic guests. Those guests come from a completely different cultural background but still expect a service that conforms their beliefs and customs. That is why the staff learned for example something about the culture or the food that they will offer to these guests. After that everyone could provide a better service to certain types of guests. A company can therefore benefit massively from seminars and chances of further education for their employees because the image and the reputation increase extraordinarily.

Yet other interviewees also claim that it is important to them as it enhancing their chances at the job market, the more education one has. Although it is not one of the most important criteria they still are looking for the opportunity because “a rolling stone gathers no moss” according to Interviewee C.
4.7 Flexibility

Flexibility, specifically refers to schedule flexibility, was one of the factors that have been mentioned by the interviewees. However, most interviewees ranked it in a very low position. This denotes that it is not very important to them.

Interviewee B is the only one who listed it on the fourth position because this interviewee does not want to be restricted too much. Interviewee B suggested that “I would appreciate flexibility when it comes to the schedule and that my superiors also give me a day off, in case I really need it.” She described that some planned and unplanned events like a doctor’s appointment during working time were happened at the same time. Although a structured and planned schedule would be helpful so that the person can already plan doctor’s appointments outside of the working hours, there should be some rooms of flexibility. Interviewee B also added that the option of a day off is only seen as an emergency and therefore only makes use of it when there is no other way. Thus, it is also in the employee’s interest to set up a structured schedule.

For the other interviewees, the extent of schedule flexibility was not very important. Since they are all young and just start their career, they have relatively lower needs to request this flexibility. This factor however can gain more and more importance as one grows up, begins to settle down and start a family. In that situation it is more likely that there happen unexpected incidents, for example a child that got sick and has to be fostered. Additionally, with that attitude the interviewees want to show their superiors that they are motivated and that they would even sacrifice their private life for the sake of the organization. By being available all the time, the interviewees also want to raise the chances of getting a higher salary or even getting a promotion. In contrary Interviewee E pointed out that the schedule should always be presented a few weeks or at least days in advance. This interviewee wants to plan and spend the free time on other activities that are not work related.
4.8 Traveling distance to the workplace

The traveling distance to the future workplace is another reason why people decide for one job or for another. Interviewees did not rank it as one of the most important factors and therefore landed mostly in the second half of the ranking. Still, it was considered as an influential job selection criterion.

Interviewees’ comments were quite diverse but the general meaning was that they would only apply for jobs that are not too far away from their home. Interviewee A emphasized that the availability of public transportation between the workplace and his home is of importance. He said that “As long as there are trains and busses near the workplace, it is ok for me to have a slightly further way.”

Interviewee F pointed out that only jobs within the same city are included for consideration. She also agreed that the availability of public transportation between workplace and home is important. Moreover, the interviewee stated that commuting would not be working out. “If I take a job and plan to stay there long-term, I would never commute. That would burn me out too much.”

On the contrary to that, Interviewee D said that the maximum traveling distance to the workplace always depends on the chances one has to make a career. It goes so far that the person would work anywhere if the job is the right one. He said that “For my dream-job I would literally even go and live in the prairie.”

Interviewee G supplemented that the importance of this factor is changing according to how old one is. “I would also move to a different country for a job, when I am young and there is a great potential for my career.” This interviewee further mentions that it could be a completely different situation once one begins to settle down. “If I will later start a family or I think I am at the right place then I would not move to another city anymore.”

To conclude, most of the interviewees had more or less the same thought on this topic. If the offer is convincing enough, then people would move. However nobody was fond of having a long journey to work and therefore they wanted to keep it as short as possible. In general the factor was ranked low as the interviewees tend to apply for jobs that are in a reasonable traveling distance.
4.9 Internationality

The international aspect of tourism cannot be denied. The tourism industry exists because people are travelling to other countries and explore foreign places. Due to globalization, more industries nowadays operate worldwide. That means that also employees have to think in a much more global context when applying for a job and also when making decisions. At the interviews, everyone was asked to which extent the chance for having a job abroad influences the job choice. Furthermore the interviewees had to give an opinion on how they would react if they would be sent to another country to work there. Most persons ranked the factor internationality amongst the least important aspects. However Interviewee C placed more values on this aspect and therefore listed it as the third most important factor.

The interviewees A, B, C, E and F all said that they want to explore the world and maybe learn different languages as long as they are young and independent. “Going abroad is also a great opportunity for everyone to network and make connections.” The interviewees further stated that working abroad or at least experiences of living abroad could make them look better than colleagues who have never done anything like that. That is also why a job with opportunities for advancement and a workplace abroad would be perfect for most of the interviewees. They also mentioned that it is very important for young people like them to be opened for new challenges.

Interviewee G pointed out that the chance of getting an international job is very important. “For me it is crucial that the job offers opportunities for going abroad since I want to work in tourism. I could not imagine tourism without an international aspect.” The interviewee also said that it would contribute very much to improve cultural understanding and language skills. “I always want to communicate with my guests and therefore speaking their language would make the service I provide much better.” For this person it would also be fine if the company would deploys one to another country as long as one is young and does not have for example children yet.
Interviewee B even saw the international aspect as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. “For me, working in France for example would help me a lot. I would be able to improve my French fast, easily and last but not least for free.” However, there are also regions, which are not very appealing to the interviewees. They would refuse jobs if they were in unsafe countries or those countries with bad reputation. As it is with most of the factors, also this one can be changing over time according to the interviewees. The fact that they are still young and free makes it much more possible to take jobs all over the world. But once they are for example starting a family or buy a flat, they will not be able anymore to move around the globe all the time because of other responsibilities.

4.10 Societal appreciation

People often concern about their job and what it stands for. It can be divided into two different types. On the one hand, as already mentioned above every individual identifies more or less to one’s profession. This aspect covers more the innate perspective meaning that a person for example thinks about oneself’s values and the values of a company. On the other hand, people are also influenced by what the society, peers but especially the family are thinking about a particular job. This criterion focuses on the second aspect and how it influences job choice decisions.

Interviewees posed different comments on this factor. Interviewee D found it extremely important that others appreciate the job, above all close friends and the family. Furthermore they should see that one works very hard and that not everyone is capable of completing this job. “I want to feel honored and perhaps also admired for my job. Therefore a job at a renowned company would be optimal for me.” A different point of view was given by Interviewee F. She said that it is important to have a good feeling about the work that is done, rather than only what others think about the job itself. “I don’t really care what others think about my job. It is essential that I am satisfied with the work that I am doing and that I stand behind it.”

Interviewee C stated that there are a handful of jobs that are highly appreciated in our society, for example a doctor. However this person said that it
does not necessarily mean that this is a job that is a popular job because it can also have its drawbacks. For this individual it is much more important what the person itself is thinking about the nature of a job rather than which image the society has of it. Thus being a doctor would never come to the mind of this interviewee, as it is not a pleasant work to do.

Additionally there was one more meaning, which totally ignored how the society thinks of one. For Interviewee A it would not matter if the job is seen negatively as long as other aspects like the salary, colleagues or the type of work are sufficient. The interviewee added however that it does not matter too much as long as one is young. The appreciation of the society could become more important later in life when one starts to settle down and has children for example.

People do want to or do not want to work for certain organizations or do certain jobs for many reasons. The meaning of the public plays a big role there. When for some individuals it is more important how the company is perceived, for others it is much more important which work needs to be done. Other persons do not care at all as long as more important factors are fulfilled. All in all the answers were very diverse and the meanings differed individually from one person to another.

### 4.11 Employer

The employer is always one of the most important factors at any company. Firstly he or she has a great representation of a company, like Steve Jobs was for Apple. Secondly the boss is the one who makes major decisions and also is responsible for success or failure in most cases. However not every single one of them is the same. Every boss is human and therefore different in nature. This also applies to the style of leadership.

Most interviewees share a similar image of how their ideal employer should be. Although it was unimportant to most of them, they still provided a detailed description. Generally the boss should be a nice and fair person who treats all employees the same. Interviewee E said that “My future boss should show that he or
she also cares about regular employees. I think it is important that the boss is very
down to earth and also sometimes visits the different departments to get in touch
with them and show interest.” What interviewees would not like to see is that their
bosses think or act as if they were someone better. Interviewee G mentioned that “It
makes me feel unwelcome at a hotel for example. My employer should communicate
with me from time to time. I would also appreciate it if he or she knows my name.
That shows that the company really cares about me and needs me.” All the
interviewees mentioned that such a behavior would automatically increase their
motivation and satisfaction during work. Moreover, all the employees should have
sufficient management skills in order to solve conflicts or problems that could
possibly arise. Furthermore it would be appreciated if the boss is not unfriendly or in
a bad mood at all times.

Interviewee D preferred having more interaction with the superiors and
therefore ranked it on the fifth place. This interviewee wants his superiors to always
communicate with their employees. For this person it is crucial that constant
feedback is given, be it positive or negative feedback. “Feedback is important for me
to get better, to know what I did wrong or right and also to learn from my mistakes.
In my opinion the best way to learn is to learn from my own mistakes.” The
interviewee further states that there is no need to feel nervous or anxious about
feedback as long as it honest and objective.

Interviewee E did not have high expectation to her future boss. However the
only requirement is that he or she is not too terrifying. Otherwise the interviewee
would not be able to fully concentrate on their jobs. Furthermore, Interviewee C
pointed out that it does not matter very much whether the superiors are nice or not.
In his opinion, everyone can be very differently depending on different factors.
“When the boss can work in a constructive way and is not attacking anyone
personally then I will also be able to work with him or her.”
4.12 Tertiary education

Tertiary education includes in this case only the MODUL University Vienna. It is a university that prepares its students for their later vocations. Specific courses and deep knowledge is offered to students, which they can later apply in their professional lives. Besides the educational aspect of a university, individuals also can obtain a degree. This degree is the final proof that somebody graduated and has more knowledge and a better qualification than others, who for example graduated “only” from high school. Therefore those graduates are often more wanted by organizations as they have more skills. As a result, tertiary education does not only provide a basic knowledge and makes people ready for their jobs but also gives a proof for this, which enhances job chances drastically. All interviewees are doing a Bachelor degree, which includes deep knowledge but also practical experience. These skills were already applied at a workplace during the mandatory internship that every student has to complete.

During the interviews, people were asked how important it is for them that their later job has to do something with the subject they are studying. Another question was to which extent they think they will need the knowledge they gained at the university at their future jobs. The answers to both questions were very diverse. Some interviewees indicated that they want to continue their studies after finishing their Bachelor degree. A few of them want to pursue a Master degree in the field of tourism. Some of them are very enthusiastic about the tourism industry and their goal is to work in this industry later when they are professionals. However the others are more interested in the financial or economic aspect. Thus, they want to pursue a Master degree in one of these two areas. A few of them even consider not working in tourism later but more working in a job area that has more to do with economics.

Most interviewed persons had the meaning that what they are learning at university is very much theoretic knowledge. They think that this however is not everything that is needed at a job. Interviewee A said “I think that what I am learning at university is way too theoretical. When I am working at a job the practical expertise is much more important and will come with experience and practice.” Interviewee B takes it even one step further by saying that “you actually need zero experience in the hotel industry at lower positions that you have at the beginning.
You will only need some things you learn at university for higher positions later on.”
The study program only represents one’s academic qualification in the eyes of an employer. “I am just doing a bachelor to have a bachelor but I don’t think I will have better chances in the hotel industry.”

Besides that Interviewee D pointed out that the theoretical knowledge could be very beneficial. The interviewee added that this and some help of other employees is the best way to have success. Especially if one thinks in long term it becomes more and more important because the higher the job is one has the more knowledge one needs. Based on the findings, the aspect of tertiary education was not considered to be that much important to the interviewees. Most of them would rather accept a job offer that must not be directly related to tourism as long as it fulfills other more important factors and expectations. That is why the interviewees listed this factor always in the last third and sometimes even as the last one.

4.13 Empowerment

Empowerment was one of the factors that have almost never been mentioned by anyone. Only Interviewee B explicitly listed this aspect on the list of job choice influencing factors. This person ranked it in the middle, which means that it still has some importance.

The rest of the interviewees did not mention this factor, implying that it has no or only very low importance to them. Empowerment refers to the extent to which an employee can make decisions and is able to work on his own. The only person who listed this high said that it is important that there is only very little hierarchy within an organization. This makes it very much easier to function as a whole team. The example she mentioned was a situation at the front desk. “If a guest approaches me and is very unsatisfied with the service, then I want to have the power that I can say, that the hotel will pay for the breakfast, as long as the stay of the guest lasts.” This person further stated that nobody who is working should always be “a slave of the system” but rather should show that one is capable of
making the right decision. This would also help to show one’s superior that one is good enough to have a job with greater responsibility.

4.14 Versatility

Versatility means that a job should have a handful of different facets and should not be boring. Only two interviewees D and F mentioned it during the interviews. Thus it is mostly not important to young people who are seeking for a job. Interviewee D ranked this factor in the middle, which means that there are still other aspects that have more influence on the job choice. However this person would only take the job when it is not too monotonous. “I don’t want to sit at my workplace and do the same things over and over again every day.” The interviewee explained further that the university teaches one about all different aspects of the hotel and tourism industry and that one should use all the knowledge. Otherwise the employees will be too specialized on their work and cannot communicate with workers of other departments efficiently anymore.

Interviewee F said that there should always be a variety of tasks that have to be done. In the opinion of the interviewee a job is getting more appealing and interesting, the more facets it has. In contrary, a boring job where one can never do something new and exciting would be a reason to deny an offer. “I want to broaden my horizon and master different challenges. Therefore it is essential that I can work in different areas and not only one.”

5 Conclusion

The study was set out to explore what factors are important to individuals when choosing a job in the tourism and hospitality industry. The focus here lies on Generation Y university graduates of MODUL University Vienna. The industry is growing steadily and therefore as an employer it is crucial to know how to attract the best employees to one’s organization. However this is impossible without understanding what a graduate wants nowadays at a workplace. This point of view
has not been extensively researched since recent studies mostly focus on employer’s perspective. Therefore, this study was conducted in order to give employers and other stakeholders an insight into what young people value nowadays.

This conclusion chapter consists of two separate parts. Firstly, the findings and outcomes of the study will be interpreted. Secondly, recommendations for practitioners and further research will be given.

5.1 Findings and Outcomes

Previous studies already investigated what is important to individuals while choosing a career. Most of them had diverse outcomes but the top job attributes almost always contained advancement opportunity, type of work, company’s culture and environment, and security of job. However, after conducting interviews with students, this study found that the most important factor is self-actualization, which has never been explicitly mentioned in previous study. Graduates nowadays have different motivations for taking a job. They do not take jobs anymore only to make money, although salary was also one of the most important aspects when individuals choose a job. Also, most interviewees also ranked colleagues very high. The results of this study show that not only young people nowadays have different mechanisms in job selection decision. Young people also believe that they have the possibility to pursue the career of their dreams.

5.2 Recommendations

Employees are one of the most important assets of every organization but they are even more important in the tourism and hospitality industry. Machines cannot replace the work of humans. The better the employees are, the better the company is. Therefore it is vital for practitioners to know how to be an attractive employer. This makes an organization stand out, which is very helpful especially in this industry where the competition is very high.
This study examined the values that are important to university graduates, which already includes that those persons are mostly very ambitious. When they are looking for a job they want to see that there is a chance for a career. As an employer one has to give a young employee perspectives. One way to achieve this is through trainee programs that are already offered nowadays by many companies. It is also a way to profit for the organization because people will be perfectly trained for work tasks. Young graduates want to know that they can make a career when they work hard and dedicated. For that they would even accept lower salary or a longer way to work.

Moreover, employers should take into account that university graduates are mostly more idealistic than other employees. Therefore they should more likely offer positions that fit the goals and dreams of an individual. Furthermore employers should always keep a friendly and positive atmosphere at workplaces, as this is one of the major criteria of graduates. To enhance the team spirit, employers could organize semi-annual evenings where colleagues can spend time together and have fun. The salary however is not the most important thing to Generation Y. Graduates take other factors much more into account. Thus it is not recommended to attract future employees solely by raising the remuneration. However not every interviewee had the same results. Therefore future employees should also be treated individually because each person can have different perceptions of a perfect job.

5.3 Limitations

There are certain limitations to the study. One of them is that all seven participants are from one private university in Austria. Although the participants are all studying tourism and hospitality management programme and had their internships in the hotel industry, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the research findings. Another limitation of the study might be that not all participants are immediately looking for a job. Some consider pursuing their master degree. Therefore, they do not know yet what they want exactly at their future workplaces or did not think much enough about it yet.
Generation Y university graduates value very different aspects when it comes to job choice decisions. As examined in this study, self-actualization was ranked on top, which clearly reflects the environment and the situation those young people live in nowadays. Since the employee’s job choice decisions have not been researched very much yet it is crucial that it will be done in the future. The environment is constantly changing and always under influence of different factors like politics or economy. More research effort should be made by academic researchers.

Besides that there is also a difference in time. In this study only Generation Y persons were interviewed. They have completely different standards than people of Generation X. Especially the fact that Europe is politically relatively stable in the 21st century has a huge impact on graduates’ job choices. However this situation can also change in the future and therefore has to be researched separately. Another research direction is to find out whether employers in the tourism and hospitality industry are aware of what is important to their future employees. This will help organizations to be even more attractive and to adjust jobs in order to appeal to employees.
Bibliography


