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The Perception of Job-related Motivators When Choosing a Career in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry – A Comparative Study Between Polish and Spanish Students

Abstract

The recent rapid growth of the tourism and hospitality industries raises a question about the quantity and quality of the workforce needed in these sectors. In the tourism/hospitality industry, where most services are delivered directly by employees, competitive advantage is primarily attained through people (employees), who are perceived as an integral component of tourism experience. This creates challenges for an industry suffering from high rates of staff turnover, especially of young employees who leave their jobs after graduation, choosing other career paths.

This study presents the job related motivators that students found important when considering their future careers, and investigates the extent to which those motivators can be found in the tourism and hospitality industry. Is the industry able to offer the motivators that will keep the employees willing to choose this particular path? We focus on two groups of potential employees – Polish and Spanish students. The study reveals that both groups generally do not believe that a career in the TH industry offered these motivating factors. We also contrast and compare both groups' perceptions in this area.

Keywords: tourism and hospitality, job-related motivators, students, career

JEL: I23, J20, J24, Z39

Introduction

In the tourism/hospitality (“TH”) industry most services depend on human performance [Kim, Park, 2013, p. 70] and competitive advantage is attained through people. Attracting and retaining well-educated, well-trained, motivated and committed employees is critical [Kusluvan, Kusluvan, 2000, p. 251], but also seems to be a chronic problem for the TH industry worldwide [Lucas, Johnson, 2003, p. 153; Richardson, Butler, 2012, p. 262; Wan et al., 2014, p. 1]. This is particularly connected with Generation Y (young, qualified employees), for whom, according to existing literature, work seems not to be a priority; typically they are not loyal to specific employers and keep their career options open, “here today, gone tomorrow” [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453]. Thus, if TH job characteristics do not align with student preferences and expectations, they will leave the industry or fail to enter it upon graduation. Basing on the current studies it is clear that the topic is important.

Lack of motivating factors is reported among the key reasons leading to high staff turnover and consequent loss of a trained and experienced workforce [Richardson, 2009, p. 383; Kusluvan, Kusluvan, 2000, p. 153]. Thus, the question of the attractiveness of tourism and hospitality careers for the young workers, especially in the context of motivating factors is essential to the industry’s long-term success and development. Yet, to date, only a few studies analyze student perception of their future careers in this industry [Richardson, 2010, p. 7].

This study presents the job-related motivators that TH students found important when considering their future careers, and investigates to what extent they believe the TH offers them. To do so, the author considers the perspectives of Polish and Spanish students.

Poland and Spain were selected for this study based on the expected growth in the travel and tourism sectors of both of these countries, and forecasted talent deficit in the next decade, particularly for employees matriculating at the university/college level [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 28, 31, 32].

The results of the study should contribute to better understanding student expectations and perceptions when considering working in the TH, which must respond with generation Y specific characteristics and therefore new, appropriate human resources management standards development and significant work improvements to attract and retain a well-qualified and motivated workforce.

The contribution of this study stems from the fact that while there is abundant research on the characteristics of generation Y employees, studies on the TH industry are limited [Richardson, Thomas, 2012, p. 3], particularly on the issue of job-related motivating factors for potential employees [Grobelna, Marciszewska, 2015].

As David Airey and Athanassios Frontistis [1997] stated when considering tourism employment, “(...) it would be timely to know more about what potential recruits think about it (...) to provide a basis for attracting the best possible work force” [p. 157].

Human Resource Challenges Faced by Poland and Spain in TH

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) statistics, in 2014 Europe was the most visited region, attracting more than half of all international tourists [Liczba turystów międzynarodowych w 2014 r., 2015]. Increased tourism has been observed in many countries, including Spain, which in 2014 was visited by almost 65 million foreign tourists [International Tourism...] and enjoyed the highest level of net receipts from travel (EUR 35.4 billion) [Tourism Statistics...] in the EU. In Poland, the number of foreign tourists is also constantly increasing, reaching 16 million in 2014, which is 1.3% more than in the previous year [Charakterystyka przyjazdów cudzoziemców do Polski..., 2015].

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reports [Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015. Spain, p. 1, p. 3; Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015. Poland, p. 1, p. 3], the direct contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP in 2014 was 5.6% (EUR58.8bn) in Spain and 1.7% (PLN29.4bn) in Poland. This indicates the importance of the economic activity, which includes hotels, travel agents, passenger transportation services (including airlines) of restaurants and leisure industries, generated by TH in both countries. Moreover, this direct contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP is expected to grow in Poland by 4.5% pa, to 2.0% of total GDP (PLN47.6bn) in 2025, and in Spain by 2.3% pa, to 5.7% of GDP (EUR76.2bn). Additionally, in 2014 the total contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP (including wider effects of investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts) in Spain was 15.2% of GDP (EUR161.0bn); in Poland it reached 4.4% (PLN75.3bn). In 2025, the total GDP share of those industries is expected to be 15.4% in Spain and 4.9% in Poland.

Between the two, Spain, with 260 million tourist accommodation nights in 2014, is among the most popular destinations for non-residents across the EU [Tourism statistics...], making foreign visitors the key for its tourism industry. By contrast, in Poland, although more and more tourists arrive to Poland, domestic tourism still plays an important role in the tourism industry in this country [Turystyka w Polsce w 2014; Charakterystyka przyjazdów cudzoziemców do Polski..., 2015]. Despite these differences tourism can be perceived as an important economic driver of both economies, creating jobs and leading to various social and environmental implications.

Globally, employment in Travel and Tourism accounts for over 100 million jobs and is forecasted to grow [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 8]. This implies an increasing demand for highly qualified employees in this sector. The rising number of tourists worldwide is based on many factors, including the current structural transformation from industry to services and an increasing middle class with resulting changes in consumer demand favoring Travel and Tourism [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 8].

Specifically, the transformation of the Polish economy has strongly influenced the supply of tourism services and led to profound changes in many tourism sectors [Gołembski, 2013, p. 22, 23]. With the growth of tourism in Poland, demand for qualified staff has been rising [Gołembski, 2013, p. 26]. Young people are however traditionally perceived as a primary source of new recruits [Fraser, 2003]. Since TH attracts more younger than average workers, replacement issues, which are often posed by an aging workforce, should be diminished; however, workforce dominated by females, high staff turnover and leakage of talents to other sectors are common [Global Talent Trends ..., 2015, p. 19, 17]. Moreover, the nature of the work in this industry and job characteristics pose a negative image that can be an obstacle to recruitment, reducing the sector's attractiveness for the younger workers. Given declining demographic trends [Fraser 2003, p. 99], young people may have greater employment choices in other sectors.

Research conducted for the WTTC by Oxford Economics shows a serious shortage of qualified people to meet anticipated TH growth over the next ten years [14 million jobs at risk..., 2015]. Industry therefore faces a 14 million job shortfall that could decrease this sector's potential contribution to the world economy by \$610 billion [14 million jobs at risk..., 2015; Global Talent Trends ..., 2015, p. 7].

Both Poland and Spain are forecasted to have a talent deficit over the next decade; for Spain (-0.7), ranking it 23rd of 46 countries included in the analysis that face similar problem; for Poland (-2.7), which places it at the bottom of the list [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 31]. Indeed, Poland is projected to have one of the most acute TH labor deficits (demand grows more than 1 percentage point faster than the supply growth) [Global Talent Trends ..., 2015, p. 29].

This deficit is also revealed by analyzing TH talent demand-supply balance projections in the context of education attainment levels. At the college/university level, Spain and Poland are forecasted to have deficits of (-0.7) and (-3.5), respectively [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 32, 33]. According to feedback from WTTC member companies, these projections may be too pessimistic as applied to Poland [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 34, 35], because "The Travel Tourism market [in Poland] is rather stable and compared to the existing number of schools and faculties related to this area, there is even a slight surplus of potential talents" [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 36].

When assessed against characteristics enabling the development and growth of talent in travel and tourism, referred to as "the enabling environment", Poland and Spain ranked 41 and 33 out of 46 countries analyzed and appointed as important in this process. Overall z-scores for the enabling environment are also below average (-0.28 and -0.15 respectively for Poland and Spain) [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 40]. Poland's low rank has been mostly attributed to problems related to openness, prioritization of the travel and tourism sector and demographics. In Spain, travel and tourism weaknesses stemmed primarily from recruitment competition, as well as low training and industry attractiveness [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 40].

These results may concern young and qualified potential employees. To attract and retain talents in the tourism and hospitality industry, career expectations of graduates need to be better understood.

As cited by Rodríguez-Antón et al. [2013, p. 27], Spain is currently implementing a Tourism Plan 2020 along with the Spanish Tourism Plan for Horizon Year 2020, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 8 November 2007. Under this strategic plan tourist authorities and firms define people as “the Spanish tourist industry’s primary asset” and seek to make tourism a key source of employment and social welfare [Rodríguez-Antón et al., 2013, p. 27]. In this approach “people are bound to become one of the key pillars for tourism model sustainability and a source of Spain’s differentiation as a tourist destination” [Rodríguez-Antón et al., 2013, p. 27].

In the case of Poland, development of competencies and qualifications of TH employees is considered a priority in the governmental document “Tourism Development Program until 2020,” adopted by the Council of Ministers on 18 August 2015 [Program Rozwoju Turystyki do 2020 roku, 2015, p. 36]. The importance of human resources is also emphasized in Poland’s tourism sector marketing strategy for the years 2012–2020 [Marketingowa Strategia Polski..., 2011, p. 56].

The sustainable development of tourism industry has become an engine of the economic growth and social development. However, its rapid growth also raises a question about the quantity and quality of the workforce which may be hampered if the projected talent deficits occur. The current problem of hiring and retaining young qualified employees may further worsen if the industry fails to meet expectations of the youth.

Tourism and Hospitality Industry in the Context of Generation Y Characteristics

The specific characteristics of the TH industry (e.g., low-paid, low-skilled jobs, a negative image, poor management, long unsociable working hours, irregular/inflexible work schedules, high staff turnover, etc.) [Jiang, Tribe, 2009, p. 5; Richardson, Butler, 2012, p. 262; Karatepe, Kilic, 2007, p. 239] and certain Millennial characteristics (e.g., the value of freedom, work-life balance, etc.) [Chen, Choi, 2008, p. 600; Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453; Park, Gursoy, 2012, pp. 1196–1197] may create significant challenges for human resources management in this industry. Those challenges may be ameliorated by Generation Y, which apparently has different work values and job expectations [Kong et al., 2015, p. 150; Lub et al., 2012, p. 566; Richardson, Thomas, 2012, p. 11]. In any event, understanding and meeting workers’ career expectations is an important step in recruiting, retaining and motivating young employees [Kong et al., 2015, p. 148].

Millennials (1981-2000) born of Boomer parents and early X-ers [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 452] are also known as Generation Y (or GenMe) [Park, Gursoy, 2012, p. 1196]. This technologically fluent generation grew up around virtual forms of communications [Lolli, 2013a, p. 357; Lolli 2013b, p. 295], tends to assimilate information quickly and purports to be good at multitasking [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453].

Generation Y employees tend to be ambitious and career-oriented [Kong et al., 2015, p. 148]. Dogan Gursoy et al. [2008] examined generational differences and similarities among hospitality employees and managers and indicated that Millennials value professional development; they desire to improve their skills and knowledge [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453, 456]. Eddy S.W. Ng et al. [2010] investigated the career expectations and priorities of the “millennial” generation, showing that Millennials have high career expectations – they expect rapid promotions and pay increases [Ng et al., 2010, p. 290]. Those authors indicated that more than two-thirds of the respondents (68.5%) expect to be promoted within the first 18 months in their first job [Ng et al., 2010, p. 285]. Similarly, in a study by Andrew K. Jenkins [2001, p. 20], focusing on student expectations and perceptions about the international hospitality industry, he found that students expected to be general/corporate manager ten years after graduating. Paul Barron et al.’s study [2007] showed that in considering a future career in the hospitality industry, students also expected rapid linear promotion along with the need to frequently change jobs [p. 126].

Millennials are comfortable with change [Lub et al., 2012, p. 556]. They change jobs to experience new challenges [Barron et al., 2007, p. 127], as “they like working on things that really matter” [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 456]. They have a low tolerance for less challenging work and perform rather poorly in work which is not stimulating [Ng et al., 2010, p. 283]. In a study comprising 20 hotels from a four-star hotel chain in the Netherlands, Xander Lub et al. [2012] show that the younger generation perceive stimulating jobs as significantly more important than do baby boomers [p. 563]. Jeongdoo Park and Dogan Gursoy [2012] found that Millennials who lose a sense of significance, enthusiasm and challenge tend to leave more often, as compared to the baby boomer generation employees [p. 1200].

It is said that although they are ambitious [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453], Generation Y employees are more strongly concerned with the work-life balance [Richardson, Butler, p. 273]. Millennials seek rapid promotion and development, along with a meaningful and satisfying life outside their work [Ng et al., 2010, p. 281]. They want to enjoy work but do not want it to dominate their entire lives [Barron et al., 2007, p. 121]. This translates into an unwillingness to work during weekends, holidays, late nights and early mornings; they desire flexibility and the freedom to have a life outside their workplace [Richardson, Butler, 2012, p. 273; Richardson, Thomas, 2012, p. 11]. Their priorities are friends and family [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453]. In a study by Simon, Wong and Liu [2009] conducted among TH management undergraduate students in China, students indicated the work values that are the most important for them including achievement, associates and their

way of life which importance may reflect students' emphasis on maintaining control over their lives with less interference from the work [p. 347].

Millennials also value teamwork, collaboration [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453], enjoyable work, and a pleasant working environment [Kong et al., 2015, p. 163]. They would like to be recognized and respected in their work [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453].

Empirical studies indicate that Generation Y present a lower commitment to their organization [Lub et al., 2012, p. 566]. If Millennials are not rewarded at one company, they are likely to move to another offering greater opportunities [Ng et al., 2010, p. 282]; "if they are not happy, they are likely to be 'out of there'" [Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453]. This lack of long-term commitment to the organization can create a significant challenge, especially for the hospitality industry, which already experiences high employee turnover rates [Choi et al., 2013, p. 412].

Most empirical studies also find that Millennials are ambitious and impatient in nature; they "want it all" and "want it now" [Ng et al., 2010, p. 288, 282]. Confidence, passion, self-reliance and independence are among the characteristics they identify when talking about their future careers [Barron et al., 2007, p. 127].

Against this backdrop, it would appear that different TH industry-specific characteristics impact skilled employee shortages [Richardson, Butler, 2012, p. 262]. Young workers either do not enter the industry after graduation or perceive tourism jobs as short-term situations [Jiang, Tribe, 2009, p. 16]. The TH sector's unfavorable job characteristics and poor working conditions are unappealing to students. Prior studies of tourism and (or) hospitality students suggest the following factors may contribute to those negative perceptions:

- stressful and exhausting jobs,
- lack of family life,
- long and unsocial working hours, which for some are not conducive to living a normal life,
- repetitive tasks,
- seasonality and unstable jobs which may affect employees' lifestyle and contribute to a lack of job security in tourism,
- poor salary and benefits, perceived by many as inadequate to maintain satisfactory living standard,
- unsatisfactory/unfair promotions, few career opportunities, etc. [Aksu, Köksal, 2005, pp. 444–445; Barron et al., 2007, pp. 123–124, 126; Jiang, Tribe, 2009, pp. 10–11, 15; Kuslivan, Kuslivan, 2000, p. 261; Richardson, Thomas, 2012, p. 7, 8; Teng, 2008, p. 83].

To continue to grow and develop, the TH industry needs to provide potential employees with an environment that provides an enjoyable, secure job, pleasant working environment, good promotion prospects, high earnings throughout the career, etc. As previously indicated, recent studies show that undergraduate students do not believe that a TH career meets these characteristics [Richardson, 2009; Richardson, Butler, 2012;

Richardson, Thomas, 2012]. This finding shows that there is an important challenge in front of academics and the business sector. The studies of student needs and TH perceptions are, however, limited [Roney, Öztin, 2007, p. 5], and future research is required to better understand their expectations and aspirations taking into account local and international approach [Jenkins, 2001, p. 20].

Methodology

To empirically determine whether the TH industry can meet Polish and Spanish students' expectations, the author selected two higher education institutions located in those countries. The selection criteria involved availability of tourism educational programs and location at a coastal tourist destination. This led us to focus on the Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland and the Galicia Region in Spain. The study was limited to surveying respondents with a similar educational profile. Because of a case study nature of the study, the conclusions may concern only the investigated students.

To assess the importance of motivating factors and the extent to which students believe that the TH industry will offer them, Kovach's job-related motivators were applied [Kovach, 1987]. These job-related motivators identify ten job-related factors perceived as important for motivating employees [Kovach, 1987; Wong, Ladkin, 2008]. It is worth noting that Kovach's job-related motivators have been adopted in previous studies investigating hospitality industry employees, in which the younger generation was also represented in the general group of respondents' pool [Wong, Ladkin 2008, p. 433]. In line with previous studies [Richardson, Thomas, 2012; Richardson, 2010], respondents were asked to answer questions on a three-point scale: (1) "very important", (2) "fairly important", and (3) "not important" to indicate the relative importance of each factors and, again on a three-point scale, to choose: (1) "definitely offers"; (2) "somewhat offers"; and (3) "does not offer" to state the extent to which they believe the TH industry may provide a specific factor.

Data were collected using a paper-based, self-administrated questionnaire distributed to a captive audience (in a classroom), in the controlled environment of formal class time and under the researcher's supervision. It is worth noting that a self-administrated questionnaire is perceived as one of the most popular methods of social research. One of the key advantages involved is that there is no pressure to produce an immediate reply (as compared to an interview), limited likelihood of embarrassment when sensitive questions are asked and a relatively low cost to administer [Gray et al., 2007, p. 127]. The survey instrument was originally prepared in English and then translated into Polish through the back-translation method to ensure translation quality and guarantee equivalence.

Based on the information received from HEIs, a total of 225 questionnaires were distributed to two higher education institutions that participated in the study. Respondents were asked to answer in Polish (in Poland) or English (in Spain) during lecture time, which included all students in class present during the survey execution. Students were informed about their voluntary and anonymous participation in the research. The research was conducted between April and June 2015. The controlled nature of the questionnaire resulted in a total of 168 usable questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 74.67%.

The statistical analysis test for significant differences between study responses included the paired sample t-test and an independent-samples t-tests. The paired t-test was used to compare the means in the case of two groups that are correlated (e.g. when analyzing the differences between the importance of job-related motivators and the extent to which students in each group believe that TH will offer these characteristics; see table 3). By contrast, the independent t-test was used to compare the means between two unrelated groups in terms of the same, dependent variable (e.g., when analyzing differences between the perceptions of students from both groups, Poland and Spain; see table 1 and 2).

Results

Characteristics of the respondents

Female respondents accounted for the majority (83.3%) of all surveyed students; 63.1% of respondents were aged 18–21 years, whereas 36.9% were between 22–25 years old. As indicated above, this age distribution permits an assumption that all study participants fit Generation Y criteria. Among respondents, 58.9% were from a Polish university; 41.1% studied in Spain. 70.2% of participants declared that tourism and (or) hospitality was the first choice of their study; 60.7% of the respondents had no friends/relatives working in the industry. Most students (60.7%) had work experience in the industry (59.4% and 61.6% respectively, for Spanish and Polish students). 67.3% of all study participants confirmed their intention of working in the TH industry after graduation (78.3% of Spanish students; 59.6% of Polish respondents). The remaining ones (32.7%) did not want to do so or were undecided about their careers after graduation.

Importance of job related motivators and student perceptions when choosing a career in tourism and hospitality industry (TH)

The top priorities for Polish and Spanish students as motivating factors in choosing a career (Table 1), are: interesting work, advancement/development, and good working conditions. Polish respondents were also focused on good salary and employer loyalty to employees.

When comparing the importance of motivating factors, there are differences between Polish and Spanish students. Generally, job-related motivators were significantly more important to Polish students than to their Spanish peers (mean difference: +0.20, $t=4.577$, $p\leq 0.001$). Work appreciation, interesting work, good wages, loyalty to employees and job security were also found to be significantly more important ($p\leq 0.05$) for Polish respondents than for Spanish respondents. The two latter ones – loyalty to employees and job security – also generated the biggest differences between the importance means (respectively: +0.58; +35) when comparing Polish and Spanish perspectives.

TABLE 1. Importance of job related motivators when choosing a career. Differences between Polish and Spanish students' perspectives

Job-related motivator	Poland Importance Mean ^a	Spain Importance Mean ^a	Mean differences	t ^b	p
Full appreciation of work done	1.26/(0.465)	1.56/(0.606)	+0.30	3.494	0.001***
Feeling of being involved	1.35/(0.521)	1.42/(0.628)	+0.07	0.750	0.454
Sympathetic help with personal problems	1.82/(0.675)	1.75/(0.628)	-0.07	-0.627	0.531
Interesting work	1.11/(0.347)	1.30/(0.577)	+0.19	2.488	0.014*
Opportunities for advancement and development	1.17/(0.405)	1.32/(0.528)	+0.15	1.948	0.054
Loyalty to employees	1.17/(0.405)	1.75/(0.604)	+0.58	6.982	0.000***
Good working conditions	1.17/(0.405)	1.26/(0.560)	+0.09	1.132	0.260
Tactful disciplining	1.82/(0.560)	1.93/(0.602)	+0.11	1.207	0.229
Job security	1.26/(0.507)	1.61/(0.669)	+0.35	3.632	0.000***
Good wages	1.17/(0.405)	1.43/(0.630)	+0.26	3.058	0.003**
TOTAL	1.33/(0.236)	1.53/(0.312)	+0.20	4.577	0.000***

^a values in parentheses are standard deviations; ^b independent T-Test

* $p\leq 0.05$, ** $p\leq 0.01$, *** $p\leq 0.001$ importance mean value: 1=very important, 2=fairly important, 3=not important

Source: own elaboration.

Comparing expectations (Table 2), Spanish students generally were more likely to believe that the industry would satisfy these important characteristics (mean difference: -0.03, but not statistically significant $p>0.05$). At an individual level, only 1 factor out of 10 was found to be significantly different ($p\leq 0.05$), with Polish students, who were far more likely to believe that the TH industry would offer good working conditions than their Spanish peers. Although the remaining differences are not statistically significant, Spanish students believed that TH industry was more likely to deliver appreciation, sympathetic help, interesting work, advancement/development, tactful disciplining and job security.

TABLE 2. Extent to which students believe a career in tourism and hospitality will offer job-related motivators. Differences between Polish and Spanish students' perspectives

Job-related motivator	Poland TH offers Mean ^a	Spain TH offers Mean ^a	Mean differences	t ^b	p
Full appreciation of work done	1.99/(0.364)	1.88/(0.471)	-0.11	-1.569	0.119
Feeling of being involved	1.72/(0.531)	1.75/(0.553)	+0.03	0.311	0.756
Sympathetic help with personal problems	2.18/(0.560)	2.03/(0.618)	-0.15	-1.668	0.097
Interesting work	1.52/(0.577)	1.49/(0.585)	-0.03	-0.357	0.722
Opportunities for advancement and development	1.83/(0.590)	1.71/(0.666)	-0.12	-1.184	0.238
Loyalty to employees	1.93/(0.539)	1.97/(0.514)	+0.04	0.503	0.616
Good working conditions	1.87/(0.395)	2.04/(0.554)	+0.17	2.388	0.018*
Tactful disciplining	1.89/(0.492)	1.74/(0.610)	-0.15	-1.691	0.093
Job security	1.89/(0.551)	1.88/(0.697)	-0.01	-0.048	0.962
Good wages	2.14/(0.553)	2.19/(0.550)	+0.05	0.543	0.588
TOTAL	1.90/(0.293)	1.87/(0.309)	-0.03	-0.583	0.561

^a values in parentheses are standard deviations; ^b independent T-Test

* $p \leq 0.05$

TH offers mean value: 1=definitely offers, 2=somewhat offers, 3=does not offer

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3 shows that, both groups of students do not believe a TH industry career will offer them job-related characteristics which they consider important (the total gap is -0.57 for Polish and -0.33 for Spanish students). A paired sample T-test in both groups illustrates significant differences. Moreover, in each of the factors (with an exception of tactful disciplining in Spanish and Polish group) importance also has a significantly lower mean than the extent to which students believe a career in TH offers that motivator.

It is also worth noting that there is a significantly greater discrepancy among Polish respondents between their requirements and the industry perception than among Spanish respondents (the gap difference is statistically significant; $t=3.815$; $p \leq 0.001$). This discrepancy is also observed at the individual level. Thus, Polish respondents seem less likely to believe that a TH industry career will meet their important expectations, especially in such aspects as loyalty and appreciation for work done. Only 4 gaps out of 10 were not significantly different when comparing two groups tested.

TABLE 3. Differences (gaps) between importance of job related motivators when choosing a career and extent to which students believe that tourism and hospitality will offer these. Polish and Spanish perspective

Job-related motivator	Poland			Spain			t ^b /result ^c Gap ^d
	Gap	t ^a	result ^c	Gap	t ^a	result ^c	
Full appreciation of work done	-0.73	-12.352	ss***	-0.32	-3.498	ss***	3.764/ss***
Feeling of being involved	-0.37	-5.477	ss***	-0.33	-3.469	ss***	0.353/ ns
Sympathetic help with personal problems	-0.36	-5.122	ss***	-0.27	-3.154	ss**	0.788/ns
Interesting work	-0.41	-6.797	ss***	-0.19	-2.605	ss*	2.383/ ss*
Opportunities for advancement and development	-0.66	-9.116	ss***	-0.39	-3.851	ss***	2.193/ ss*
Loyalty to employees	-0.76	-10.980	ss***	-0.22	-2.491	ss*	4.903/ ss***
Good working conditions	-0.70	-13.234	ss***	-0.78	-7.926	ss***	-0.765/ns
Tactful disciplining	-0.07	-0.980	ns	+0.19	2.335	ss*	2.364/ss*
Job security	-0.63	-8.305	ss***	-0.27	-2.572	ss*	2.762/ss**
Good wages	-0.97	-13.387	ss***	-0.75	-7.242	ss***	1.704/ ns
TOTAL	-0.57	-15.230	ss***	-0.33	-6.811	ss***	3.815/ss***

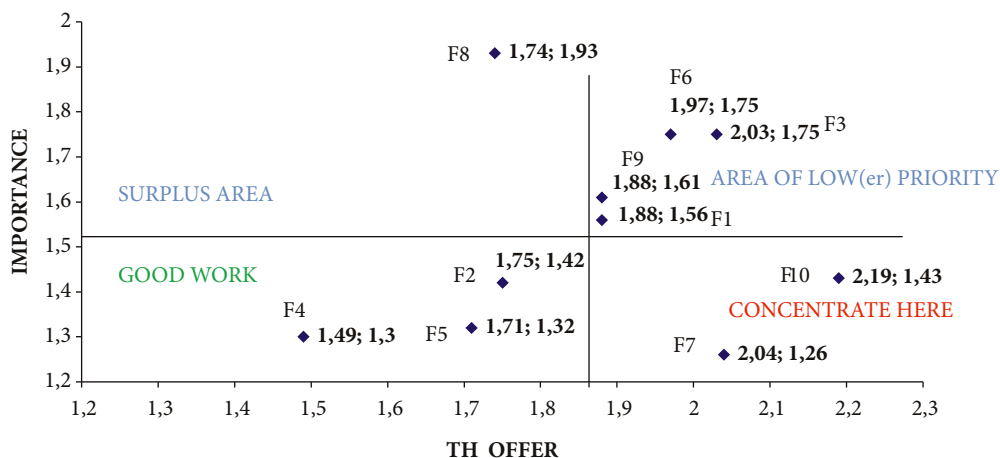
^a paired T-Test; ^b independent T-Test; ^c result statistically significant (ss), result not statistically significant (ns) * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

^d Gap – differences between gaps of Polish and Spanish students

Source: own elaboration.

To better understand the importance of these factors and assess how students perceive whether those factors will be met by TH, a perceptual map is used to visualize the potential gaps [Atilgan et al., 2003, p. 420]. In it, data were presented on a single grid (separate for both groups – Polish and Spanish students), where each factor was plotted according to its importance for students, and the extent to which students believed that it would be met by TH. Dividing lines reflect the overall mean of importance and TH offers. The matrix shows factors located within four properly defined areas related to perceived importance and performance [Faché, 2000, p. 363; Yang 2003, p. 313]. In this study the perceptual maps are modified and interpreted. The top priority are factors located in the area of “concentrate here”; they are of greatest importance for students and are simultaneously perceived by them as being extremely underrepresented by the industry. Thus, to improve the industry perception by students, TH managers should focus primarily on those factors. However, although the area of “concentrate here” and “keep up the good work” are a focus of this study, all factors located in each of the four quadrants should be carefully considered by industry managers who aspire to attract a well-qualified workforce.

FIGURE 1. Perceptual map of Spanish students



(F1) full appreciation of work done; (F2) feeling of being involved; (F3) sympathetic help with personal problems; (F4) interesting work; (F5) advancement and development; (F6) loyalty to employees; (F7) good working conditions; (F8) tactful disciplining; (F9) job security; (F10) good wages

The placement of the dividing lines: overall mean of TH offers and importance: (1.87; 1.53)

Source: own elaboration.

For Spanish students, the perceptual map (Figure 1) suggests that (F7) good working conditions and (F10) good pay merit industry attention. These factors are above the overall mean for importance and below the overall mean for TH perception. Factors located in the area of “keep up good work” are (F2) being involved, (F4) interesting work and (F5) advancement and development. These are very important to student career choice and, although students believe they are more likely to be offered by the industry, these factors also need industry attention to reduce existing gaps between expectations and reality.

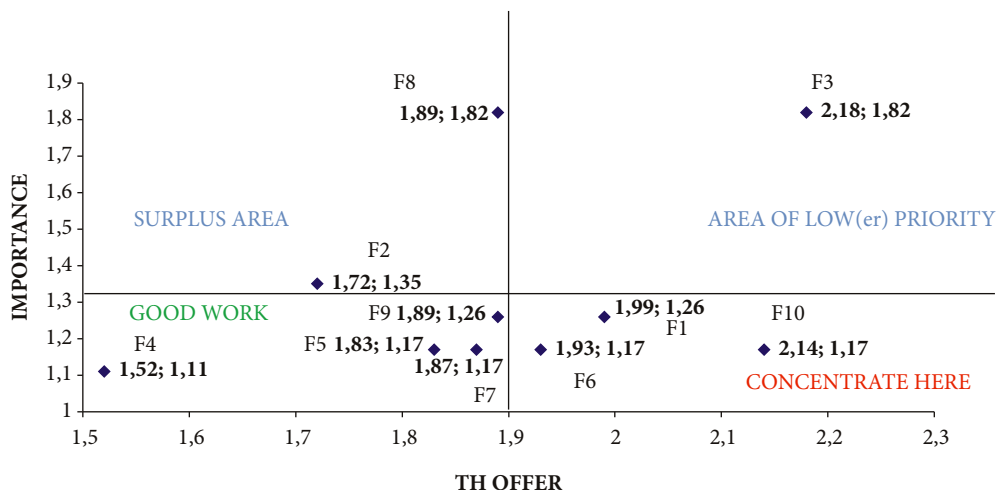
For Polish students, the perceptual map (Figure 2) suggests that (F1) appreciation of work done, (F6) loyalty to employees, and (F10) good wages are critical and require industry improvement. Factors located in the area of “good work” – (F4) interesting work, (F5) advancement and development, (F7) good working conditions, and (F9) job security – while positive, again require continuing efforts to reduce existing gaps between expectations and reality.

Differences between students' perception of a career in the tourism and hospitality industry in the context of their working plans and working experience

Regarding perceptions, Spanish students who declared their intention to work in TH were more likely to believe that industry would provide them with interesting work than were those who had either not yet decided, or did not want to work in TH after graduation.

The difference in perception of these students (with and without the intention to work in TH) was statistically significant ($t=-2.955$; $p=0.004$). In the case of the remaining factors, statistically significant differences were not found ($p>0.05$).

FIGURE 2. Perceptual map of Polish students



(F1) full appreciation of work done; (F2) feeling of being involved; (F3) sympathetic help with personal problems; (F4) interesting work; (F5) advancement and development; (F6) loyalty to employees; (F7) good working conditions; (F8) tactful disciplining; (F9) job security; (F10) good wages

The placement of the dividing lines – overall mean of TH offers and importance (1.90; 1.33)

Source: own elaboration.

For Polish respondents, full appreciation of work done ($t = -2.546$; $p = 0.012$) demonstrated statistical significance. Those who intended to work in TH were more likely to believe that TH would offer this motivator than those who did not feel a strong commitment to the industry.

Work experience also mattered. In the case of Spanish students significant differences were observed in the following factors:

- (F1) full appreciation of work done ($t = -2.474$; $p = 0.016$)
- (F4) interesting work ($t = -2.117$; $p = 0.04$)
- (F6) loyalty to employees ($t = 2.577$; $p = 0.012$)
- (F7) good working conditions ($t = 2.897$; $p = 0.005$)
- (F9) job security ($t = 2.867$; $p = 0.006$)
- (F10) good pay ($t = 2.417$; $p = 0.019$)

Students with work experience were more likely to believe that TH would offer full appreciation of work and interesting work. By contrast, good working conditions, job security, loyalty and good salary were perceived much less favorably.

In the case of Polish students with work experience, differences were observed in the following factors:

- (F5) advancement/development ($t = 2.319$; $p = 0.022$) and
- (F7) good working conditions ($t = 2.047$; $p = 0.045$).

In both groups, students with work experience perceived the industry less favorably in this context.

Finally, the general gap between students' expectation and perception was analyzed in the context of their work experience. Here, students with working experience in TH perceived significantly greater discrepancies between factor importance (in general) and expectation in TH, when compared to students with no work experience in the industry. These statistically significant differences were observed in both groups, Spanish students ($t = -2.140$; $p = 0.036$), and Polish students ($t = -2.081$; $p = 0.04$). Specifically, among Spanish students at the level of individual motivators statistically significant differences were found in the following factors:

- (F7) good working conditions ($t = -2.795$; $p = 0.007$) and
- (F10) good pay ($t = -3.033$; $p = 0.003$).

For Polish respondents, a statistically significant difference was observed in (F5) opportunities for advancement and development ($t = -2.660$; $p = 0.009$).

Although, due to the nature of the study, the results cannot be generalized, they provide a basis for discussion and serve as a starting point for future studies.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that when choosing a career students generally value mostly: interesting/challenging work, opportunities for promotion and development and good working conditions. This finding is supported by previous studies [Gursoy et al., 2008; Jenkins, 2001; Ng et al., 2010] and confirms that Millennials value professional development, want career promotion and interesting/challenging work, and are "impatient to succeed" [Ng et al., 2010, p. 282].

When analyzing the importance of factors and significant differences, 5 out of 10 factors were found to be more important for Polish than for Spanish students. However, when comparing the extent to which the respondents believed TH offers important characteristics, a statistically significant difference was found for only 1 of 10 factors (good working conditions). Thus, while multiple significant differences in importance factors are found between groups, the perceptions of TH by both groups is not so significantly diverse.

Based on this study the author finds that students of both groups had a similar perspective on what the industry offers, whereas they were more diverse in their career importance factors. This is in contrast to Scott Richardson's [2010] study, which compared Australian and international students, and found much more significant differences in factor perception comparison than in factor importance confronting [Richardson, 2010, p. 6, 7].

Both Polish and Spanish students generally did not believe a career in the TH industry offers them the motivating factors they found important when choosing a career. In this context the results of this study confirm those by Richardson [2009, p. 386] among Australian students, Richardson and Thomas [2012, p. 7] among USA students; and Richardson and Butler [2012, p. 271] among Malaysian students, who confirmed the establishments. Perceptual maps for both student groups reveal that the areas which need improvement in order to enhance the perceptions of potential workers are:

- for Spanish students: good working conditions and good salary
- for Polish students: appreciation of work done, loyalty to employees, and good salary.

These results seem to confirm that Millennials do not believe that they are respected and appreciated because they are young, thus they require more constructive feedback and praise [Gursoy, 2008, p. 453; 454]. The emphasis on financial rewards may also be explained by Millennials' need for feedback in the form of salary (salary being proportional to their level of performance and appreciation) [Ng et al., 2010, p. 282]).

One positive findings is that students in both groups expressed an intention to work in TH, in line with several previous studies [Richardson, Thomas, 2012, p. 10]. Those students also have a much more favorable perception of the industry, especially concerning interesting work (Spanish respondents) and work appreciation (Polish participants). Roney and Öztin [2007, p. 11] confirm the finding that those interested in working in tourism after graduation view the industry much more favorably than those who were not interested or undecided. Willingness to work in tourism contributed positively to the overall image of the industry [Roney, Öztin, 2007, p. 12], which is partially observed in this study.

However, students with work experience seem to less likely believe that TH will meet their expectations, especially as to working conditions and payment (Spanish respondents) and opportunities for advancement and development (Polish participants).

These findings are particularly relevant in view of the Polish and Spanish labor markets. In 2014, Spain had one of the highest overall unemployment rates in Europe (24.5%), and the highest youth unemployment rate (53.2%) [Unemployment Statistics, 2014]. The economic crisis severely affected young workers [Unemployment Statistics, 2014], and many of them, often talented ones, decided to emigrate and search for work [Hiszpania: bezrobocie wśród młodzieży..., 2015]. Thus, to attract and keep young and talented employees, work improvements are critical, particularly in working conditions and wages.

In case of Poland, the 2014 youth unemployment rate was 23.9% [Unemployment Statistics, 2014] and falling. The observed decrease in unemployment likely had several reasons, including new investments and government support programs [Młodzi Polacy...,

2015]. However, many graduates who studied tourism are looking for work, or working, outside their educational fields [Losy absolwentów..., 2014, p. 116, 137]. Thus, when recruiting young workers, especially in TH sector, an improvement in the employer image is recommended both in the context of extrinsic motivators (e.g. good wages) and intrinsic ones, e.g., loyalty to employees and work appreciation.

Finally, the results of this study confirm that nationality may be significant in respondents' career perceptions of the TH industry. Thus, given the international nature of the industry, managers need to carefully consider implementing tailor-made management practices to successfully attract and retain employees from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, who may vary in their career expectations.

Educational and Managerial Implications

A clear understanding of motivating factors that students consider when selecting a career in TH is critical for both educators and industry to make TH industry attractive for young workers. This study shows that Polish and Spanish students do not believe that TH will meet their career expectations. Thus, based on the literature [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 22; Kusluvan, Kusluvan, 2000, p. 262; Richardson, 2009, p. 387; Richardson, Butler, 2012, p. 273; Richardson, Thomas, 2012, p. 12; Teng, 2008, p. 84; Wong, Liu, 2010, pp. 98–99] and findings from this study, the author provides several recommendations to address this perception.

First. Provide more opportunities for students to experience real, work-related problems facing today's TH. Dual training based on cooperation between educators and the business is recommended. Study tours, field trips, company visits, industry workshops and live case studies should also be considered.

Second. Internships (both domestic and abroad) and other forms of work experience should frequently be offered. Partnerships between industry and educators will provide young people with quality industry experiences and realistic expectations of TH that may influence students' future career choices [Hsu 2013, p. 182; Chen, Shen, 2012, p. 30].

Third. Learning seminars and career presentations by TH human resources managers could help to resolve students' career concerns and inform them about the range of TH careers that is available. Inviting alumni with industry experience is also recommended to provide students with real examples of successful TH careers.

Fourth. In addition to well-developed career support programs, individual career counsellors should also be provided to assist students in making future career decision.

Fifth. To cope with employees' expectations, new strategies and management practices should be formulated and adopted by the TH industry which recognize that young people are looking for interesting, challenging work that is meaningful and gives them a sense of satisfaction. Future employees also place a great value on good working conditions,

competitive salaries and are focused on continuous learning and development opportunities. It is worth noting that despite increasing number of large multinational tour operators, airlines and hotels, most TH enterprises are small and medium-sized organizations [Kuslvan, 2003, p. 10], which operate locally employing several people. As a consequence, there is no opportunity for rapid career promotion, which is strongly valued by the youth, and therefore may reduce their retention.

Given the financial limitations faced by some TH firms the author focuses on two recommendations here: first, a career path is not always linear in the hospitality industry, as underlined by John R. Walker [2014] “we don’t always use straight-line career ladders” [p. 37], which means that before reaching high managerial position, previous experience in many hospitality areas is recommended. Second, to gain experience and simultaneously answer the development needs of young people, the industry should employ not only vertical but also horizontal mobility for its employees by providing them with challenging work assignments and task variety. This practice includes greater job responsibility, autonomy and professional training, which may improve workers’ opportunity to expand their knowledge, increase skills and help the overall image of work in the TH industry. Additionally, continuous performance feedback gives young people the opportunity to gather experience, that can be used in the future, as companies invest in their growth and development.

Based on interviews with educational representatives, it is worth noting that several of these recommendations (e.g. workshops/seminars with future employees, talks by former students about their experience, informative sessions or personal tutoring) have already been implemented, particularly in the context of the Career Support Program at the University in Spain.

Summing up, a greater balance between theory and practice is needed, including a switch from a traditional to a more innovative, interactive teaching mode [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 17] based on collaboration with business.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study is a subject to at least two limitations:

One. As David Airey and Athanassios Frontistis [1997, p. 157] found there are differences between views about employment in the tourism sector perceived as a whole and views on individual jobs in tourism, and the latter tend to be more accurate than those on the entire tourism sector. Thus, it is more realistic to ask about individual jobs in the TH industry, which is a recommendation for future research.

Two. The study results cannot be generalized as respondents came from only two institutions, which does not reflect the much larger world of higher education in both countries. Thus, future studies based on a larger sample are recommended.

We expect that future research may follow several paths. *First*. Investigation of which students' individual traits influence their career choices and their perception of the industry. *Second*. Future studies should also consider the socio-demographic characteristics of students' families and their potential impact on children's career choices in TH, both in Poland and Spain. Such research is limited [Wong, Liu, 2010, p. 88]. *Third*. Similar research should be conducted among students of other nationalities to compare the findings in the context of cultural differences and discuss potential discrepancies. *Fourth*. Students' expectations about their future professional lives should be considered by both educators and industry professionals.

The research findings should be also regularly updated to be in line with changes in young people's preferences and expectations about their future careers in a globally changing tourism and hospitality industry.

Summary

This study attempted to bridge the knowledge gap about students' (generation Y) career aspirations and perceptions of TH. It was done by presenting job related motivators which Polish and Spanish tourism and hospitality students found important when considering their future careers, and investigating the extent to which they believe TH meets their needs.

The main results of this study demonstrate that students believe all motivating factors they deem important are lacking in the TH industry. Some differences between students from Spain and Poland were also found. Thus, the TH industry and educators should consider using the findings of this study to enact strategies to minimize identified gaps and foster positive student attitudes towards a TH career. The study also identifies international differences in work perception, particularly helpful when employing a global labor force.

Clearly, the industry needs to improve its image and communicate career opportunities for young workers which meet their specific expectations to encourage TH graduates to enter the industry upon graduation.

All above stated can be concluded with the words of David Scowsill (President and CEO of the World Travel & Tourism Council): *"We are a people industry – we depend on quality people to deliver a quality product – and we need the right policies, programmes and partnerships in place to ensure that the workforce of the future knows about the opportunities in our sector, and has the appropriate skills and knowledge to support future growth"* [Global Talent Trends..., 2015, p. 7].

Notes

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