

## GENERATION Y EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN SEASONAL HOTELS – CONCEPT AND MEASUREMENT

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The hospitality industry is a business area characterized by high turnover rates related to seasonality. Therefore, practitioners and researchers in hospitality have focused on developing the practices designed to prevent the employees from leaving a job. Furthermore, as the new generation of employees (Generation Y - Gen Y) enters the hospitality workforce, there is a growing need to adopt the management strategies to successfully recruit, select, train and motivate them to achieve organizational goals. The previous studies have observed that internal marketing practices (attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining qualified employees) creates a good working environment, which brings employee satisfaction and loyalty (Barry, 1981, Kale, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to conduct a comprehensive review of the literature on Gen Y at the workplace, how to retain them for longer time in seasonal hotel and which internal marketing activities are attractive for them.

**Methodology** – desk research method was used for gathering data for this study, together with the existing literature on Generation Y employee retention and on the management of the internal market activities. The content analysis was used to display the development and explanation of the current stance on the research terms, while the descriptive method was used to demonstrate the specifics of the individual terms of the research conducted so far.

**Findings** – The findings suggest that the implementation of the internal marketing activities could be efficient in managing Generation Y employees in seasonal hotels.

**Originality of the research** – The paper provides a useful review of the appropriate literature related to Generation Y employee, employee retention and internal marketing activities in seasonal hotel. The conceptual model created in this paper is an assumption how to successfully retain Generation Y employees in the seasonal hotel.

**Keywords** Generation Y, employee retention, internal marketing, seasonal hotel, content analysis

### **INTRODUCTION**

A fast - changing business environment, including a tight labour market, intense competition and varying customer demands, imposed a challenge on today's hospitality firms (Goh and Lee, 2018). Historically, the hospitality industry has been characterized by high staff turnover rates (Cho, Woods, Jang and Erdem, 2006; Walsh and Taylor, 2007, Maxwell and Maclean, 2008, Tews, Stafford and Michel, 2014, Brown, Thomas, and Bosselman, 2015, Baum, 2019). The main reason for that are labor characteristics (e.g., long working hours, part-time employment, low salary or fluctuating demand), specifically between line employees (Birdir, 2002). Moreover, the seasonality in hospitality industry represents an additional challenge, especially in terms of the labor market, nature and quality of employment, availability of skills, and high costs of recruitment and training (Goh and Lee, 2018). All of the above, results in negative

publicity for the hospitality industry as an employment sector, especially when it comes to attracting new employees and ensuring development and retaining of the existing ones. Therefore, the hospitality leaders must understand the factors which significantly influence the employee retention and turnover (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, and Pierce, 2013; Gupta, 2019). The hotel management needs to set up and implement strategies and policies to attract and retain adequate workforce, improve employee engagement, motivation, job satisfaction, and work environment, while maintaining profitability (Marshall, Mottier, and Lewis, 2016). Prior researches have shown that internal marketing activities have a positive impact on employee retention (Yu, Assad, Yen and Gupta, 2016). There has been little research conducted to study the relationship of internal marketing and Generation Y employee retention in seasonal hotels.

The aim of this research is to conduct a comprehensive review of the appropriate literature related to Generation Y employee retention in seasonal hotels. The literature review presents the evolution of the following variables: Generation Y employee, retention process and internal marketing. Based on the literature review and the assumption on the connection between the employee retention and the internal marketing activities, a conceptual model was designed. The conceptual framework highlights the role of internal marketing as a tool for Generation Y employee retention in seasonal hotels. Lastly, the measurement scale referring to the efficiency of the retention was presented to be used in future studies, as well as the main implications and limitations of the study.

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study focuses on the relationship between Generation Y employee retention and internal marketing activities in seasonal hotels. The literature review first defines the characteristics of the Generation Y employees and then it looks at the factors that influence Generation Y employee retention process. Finally, it studies internal marketing activities as the Generation Y employee retention strategy.

### **1.1. Generation Y**

Over the last ten years, the millennial generation, better known as “Generation Y”, has been entering the workforce in substantial numbers. Generation Y are all those who were born between 1980 and 2000. They are well educated, skilled in technology, very self-confident, able to multi-task, and have plenty of energy. They have high expectations for themselves, and prefer to work in teams, rather than as individuals. Apart from these, they want to be respected for their views and expect to know when they have done a good job and when they have not (Raman, Ramendran, Beleya, Nodeson, and Arokiasamy, 2011). They are looking for challenges, but at the same time the work-family balance is of utmost importance to them Working with them is different from working with earlier generations. The below table summarizes the major literature findings for Generation Y employee characteristics.

**Table 1: Literature review for Generation Y employee characteristics**

<b>Author; Year</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Martin, 2005	Qualitative	Generation Y workers looking for mentoring, flexible work schedules, technological access, constructive performance feedback
Terjesen, Vinnicombe, and Freeman, 2007; Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007	Qualitative Quantitative	Five important organisational attributes for Gen Y are identified, namely, career advancement opportunities, developmental opportunities, care for employees, friendly work culture and work variety, freedom to work on one's own initiative and scope for creativity in one's work.
Lowe, Levitt, and Wilson, 2008	Qualitative	Transparent communication, teamwork, flexibility, technology access, feedback, challenging work, mentoring, and positive relationship with manger are necessary to retain Generation Y employees
Dulin, 2008	Qualitative Quantitative	Findings indicate that Millennials desire leaders who can act as mentors.
Gursoy, Maier and Chi, 2008	Quantitative	Generation Y hotel employees are team-oriented, optimistic and prefer collective action
Niemczyk and Ulrich, 2009	Quantitative	Results indicate the preference for greater personal freedom with less managerial interventions.
Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010	Quantitative	Generation Y seeks rapid career advancement, desire meaningful life outside the workplace. Their expectations vary with gender.
Weyland, 2011; Gilbert, 2011	Qualitative	Continuous learning and feedback, recognition,
Holt, Marques and Way, 2012	Quantitative	Challenge, personal growth and making a positive impact are top three driving factors that motivate Generation Y.
Rai, 2012; Viswanathan and Jain, 2013	Quantitative	Social media has become a vital source for internal communication between the employees in an organization
Stahno and Yang, 2014	Qualitative	On-job training, mentoring, developmental relationships and short training sessions are identified for developing Generation Y leaders.
Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014	Quantitative	Young graduates from Generation Y prefer job security and a relaxed work atmosphere.
Kultalahti and Viitala, 2015	Qualitative	Social relations and the supervisor's behavior; flexibility and work-life balance are important factors for Millennials.
Özçelik, 2015	Qualitative	Effective implementation of internal branding strategies through the contributions of HR policies influence Millennials commitment and engagement
Goh, Nguyen and Law, 2017	Qualitative	Millennials are looking for organizations that promote Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or green and sustainable hotel environment
Rani and Samuel, 2016; Mooney and Baum, 2019	Qualitative	Millennials expect to move up quickly in their career and appreciate an adequate job content relating to their competences, and high salaries

Source: Authors

All these stated concepts are important for employers and managers to understand and acknowledge; otherwise, they may face considerable challenges related to motivation, job recruitment, and retention of Generation Y employees (Josiam et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2016; Naim and Lenka, 2018).

## **1.2. Employee Retention**

Employee retention (ER) is one of the challenges faced by many hotel organizations in the world, especially the seasonal ones. It involves taking measures to encourage employees to remain in the organization for the maximum period of time (Frank, Finnegan and Taylor, 2004). Employees are the most valuable assets of any organization. They are the ones who add value to the organization in terms of quality and quantity. Demographical and market changes have created a more confident and demanding workforce, which makes it necessary for organizations to be competitive and work harder at meeting employees' needs in order to retain their loyalty (Anitha and Begum, 2016).

A number of researches (Kumar and Arora, 2012; Hassan, Mahsud, Yuks and Prussia, 2013) have focused on finding the factors that influence employee retention in organizations. Kuttappa (2013) determines that human resources management practices such as: effective selection, challenging employee assignment and opportunities, training and career development, reward and recognition of employee value, equity of compensation, leadership, company policies and culture, working environment, all have a positive impact on retention rates. Irshad (2012) also concluded that the hiring process and training influence the employee retention. In their study, Hassan et al., (2013) revealed that hiring the right person for the right job leads to a long-term relationship between employers and employees.

In regards of Generation Y employee retention, Rubel, Kee and Rimi, 2017 emphasized that appropriate leadership, creativity, relationship management, work-life balance and participation in decision making, bring positive results. Frye, Kang, Huh and Lee (2019) in their study identified several factors which affect a Generation Y employee's intention to remain with a hospitality company with respect to internal marketing tactics. Those are: empowering employees, fostering positive work environments, managers establishing positive and supporting relationships with their workers, and paying wages that are acceptable to employees. These positively influence employee commitment and, by extension, their intent to remain in the hospitality industry (Naim and Lenka; 2018). This finding is in the line with the previous study of Park and Gursoy (2012), who showed that if Generation Y employees are deeply committed to their work roles, they are likely to stay in the organization. The stronger an employee's commitment to their organization, the higher the retention rate will be.

Contrarily, if a Generation Y employee is not satisfied with the job that she/he is doing, she/he may switch over to another, more suitable job. Replacing experienced employees, from managers to hourly employees, could become costly to the hospitality industry, because preparing new workers takes a significant amount of labor, which equals lost money (Milman and Dickson, 2014). Training a new employee or manager also means losing the productivity of the trainer (Bryant and Allen, 2013). Therefore, it remains an imperative for the managers to encourage Generation Y employees to stay (Mensah, 2013).

Beside the stated factors that have influence on Generation Y employee retention, seasonality represents one more challenge in hotel business. The research done by Faldetta, Fasone and Provenzano, (2013) reveals that the hotel managers commonly hire and lay off employees based on seasonal fluctuations, thus ignoring the supply and demand concept and remaining unprepared to synchronize the labor and demand. Furthermore, many tourist destinations experience an increase in their visitor rates during the high season months, leading to the overuse of infrastructure and heavy demand on services. Thus, when more employees are needed, they often lack sufficient skills, experience and/or qualifications. This results in the poor quality of service and insufficient attention to detail (Dickson and Huyton, 2008). Consequently, the hotel managers should apply better management techniques to retain the most valuable, well-trained Generation Y employees, who will make up a dominant share in the overall workforce in the years to come (Jones, Parth, and Torabian, 2019).

### **1.3. Internal Marketing**

One way to improve employees' job satisfaction in the hospitality industry is through internal marketing (IM) (Hwang and Der-Jang, 2005; Yang, 2010; Huang and Rundle-Thiele, 2014). This concept includes hiring, continuous training, employee empowerment and employee involvement in decision making which are all important factors for retaining Generation Y employee at workplace (Jones, Parth, and Torabian, 2019)

The concept was first proposed in mid - 1980s as a solution to recruit, retain and train the best qualified employees who will deliver high-quality service to the customer (Berry, Hensel, and Burke, 1976). Berry (1981) defined internal marketing as "viewing employees as internal customers, viewing jobs as internal products and then endeavoring to offer products that satisfy the needs and wants of these internal customers while addressing the objectives of the organization". In the same study he stated that the same marketing tools used to attract customers, can also serve to attract and retain the best employees, who could be considered as "internal customers". Such management philosophy creates values from inside (employees) and delivers them to the outside (customers) (George, 1990).

The implementation of the internal marketing concept in business operations is called the internal market orientation (IMO). It includes monitoring and developing an understanding of the market, exchanging information between departments, and meeting the needs and wishes of employees who will then transfer their satisfaction to the guest

(Lings and Greenley, 2010). For instance, Huang and Rundle-Thiele (2014) showed that internal marketing practices, such as internal communication and training, influenced hospitality employees' level of job satisfaction, which in turn, affected their job performance positively. Moreover, an empirical study about hotel employee satisfaction also revealed that hotel Generation Y employees are more sensitive to communication and trust within their work team than to financial compensation (Lee and Way, 2010). Such internal marketing practices have a strong positive influence on job satisfaction, particularly in the hospitality industry (Huang and Rundle-Thiele, 2014; Hwang and Der-Jang, 2005; Yang, 2010).

Internal marketing is a successful strategical human resource tool for managing people in the organization (Ahmed, Pervaiz and Rafiq, 2003). It has a more strategic role of boosting the employee's motivation and creating their sense of belonging, through effective communication (Ciclov, Naghi and Boldea, 2016). When it is applied, employees are treated as internal customers and they feel more appreciated, engaged, valued by their employer, and resultantly, more satisfied with their organization (Arnett et al., 2002) and willing to remain within for longer time (Lings and Greenley, 2010; López-Cabarcos et al., 2015; Nadiri and Tanova, 2010). This led to the conclusion that companies with strong internal marketing build strong employer brands, hire most competent people, and have lower rate of absence, higher profit and satisfied employees (Figurska and Matuska, 2013).

Previous studies have examined the direct relationship between IMO, employee job satisfaction (Gounaris, 2008), customer satisfaction (Tortosa, Moliner, and Sanchez, 2009), staff attitudes, retention and compliance (Lings and Greenley, 2005), brand identification and brand supportive behavior (Yu et al., 2016). However, there is no empirical study that examined the impact of IMO's dimensions on Generation Y employee retention in seasonal hotels. Hence, the conceptual framework presented in this study was developed to propose positive relationships between IMO and Generation Y employee retention in seasonal hotels.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

In order to better understand Generation Y's work values, preferences, needs and traits, employee retention process and internal marketing activities in the hospitality industry and their interconnectedness, desk research method and content analysis was used to display the development and explanation of the current stance on the research terms. The descriptive method was used to demonstrate the specifics of the individual terms of the research conducted so far. The following databases were examined: ProQuest Basic Search, EBSCO Host Web, Science Direct and Emerald Management Review. They were accessed online in the period from December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 until February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. These databases offer a broad coverage of relevant academic journals in the hospitality industry such as: *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*, *FIU Hospitality Review*, *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing*, *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration*, *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, *Journal of Human*

*Resources in Hospitality and Tourism*. In addition, leading tourism journals, including *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and the *International Journal of Tourism Research*, are also available in these databases. The review also includes theoretical and empirical articles published as book chapters, practitioner surveys, conference proceedings, and dissertations.

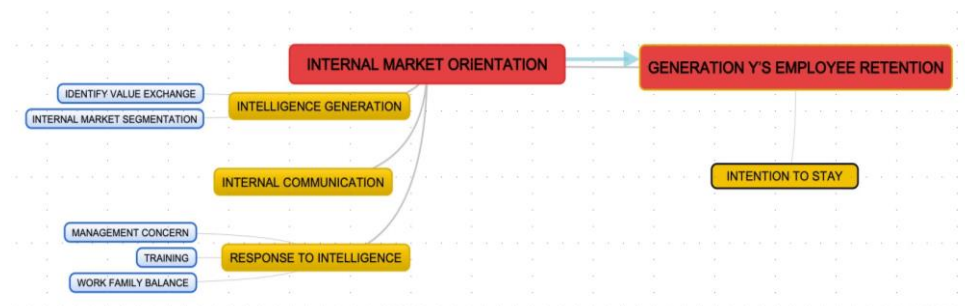
The primary focus is to explore the psychological profile of Generation Y, therefore articles that study Generation Y's work values, preferences needs, and traits were selected. Furthermore, articles emphasizing the internal marketing and employee retention of Generation Y employees were examined. The criteria for searching the literature included keywords individually and collectively, such as "Millennials", "Gen Y", "Generation Y", "employee retention", "internal marketing", "hospitality industry" and "seasonality".

In terms of geographical representation, the majority of the reviewed articles came from U.S.-published journals while several others relate to Asian and European studies published in international or foreign journals. All articles used were written in English. Most of these journals are the top-tier journals in human resources management, marketing and hospitality industry, indexed in reputed databases, which adds a special value.

### 3. GENERATION Y EMPLOYEE RETENTION – concept and measurement

Based on the extensive literature review, the conceptual framework was developed and is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: **The proposed conceptualization of Generation Y employee retention in seasonal hotels**



Source: Authors

The conceptual framework has independent and dependent variables. Internal market orientation dimensions represent the independent variables, while Generation Y retention represents a dependent variable. The proposed framework suggests that the identified dimensions of internal market orientation (IMO) have positive and significant effect on Generation Y employee's intention to stay in a seasonal hotel.

The conceptual framework of this research consists of three different dimensions of IMO. The first internal market orientation dimension is the internal market intelligence generation which is composed of two different factors: the value exchange between the company and its employees, and the internal segmentation. This refers to all the activities relating to the identification of the employee value exchange. Such value exchange consists of seeking a balance between the value that each employee brings to the company and the value that the company offers to the employee. Furthermore, internal segmentation helps hotel managers to group employees with similar characteristics and needs, and to enable them to work together and achieve the best results.

Second dimension is internal communication which is important for achieving the best results. It includes the relationship between employees, the attitude of managers, and the organizational climate. If employees are highly satisfied with their work, supervision, co-workers and pay, and if they derive a high level of overall job satisfaction, they are more likely to be committed to their organization (Karia and Asaari, 2006). Positive organizational climate exerts and enhances employees' attitude and job satisfaction; hence, they are less likely to look for jobs elsewhere. Thus, keeping good employees is critical to business success, and organizations should make employee retention a part of their corporate culture. Additionally, recognition and respect are highly important, especially for those employees who are in direct contact with the customers, as it is the case with employees in seasonal hotels.

Recognition for good performance received from managers is vital for increasing job satisfaction and boosting morale. A supportive management style demonstrated through open communication, respect and recognition, greatly enhances and improves employees' attitudes and in turn leads to employee job satisfaction (Rad and Moraes, 2009). This represents the last dimension of the internal market orientation, which is referred to as a response to the internal market intelligence and comprises three factors: management concern, training, and work-family balance. Management concern refers to the degree to which managers develop a work climate of psychological support, helpfulness, friendliness, and mutual respect (Johnston et al., 1990). Support from their supervisors reduces work-related stress levels and may create a sense of belonging, which provides employees with enough reasons to stay in the organisation. This is in accordance with a growing body of mentoring literature (e.g. Fleig-Palmer and Rathert, 2015; Fishman, 2016; Lowe, Levitt, and Wilson, 2008; Ng, Lyons, and Schweitzer, 2017; Twenge, Campbell and Freeman, 2012) indicating a positive effect of mentoring on employee retention. Furthermore, Van Dyk and Coetzee (2012) emphasize that the supervisory support can be viewed as a source of trust in an employee's willingness or strive to be the best in whatever they do. Furthermore, training and development provide opportunities for employees to develop their careers (Van Dyk and Coetzee, 2012). They have a positive psychological effect on employees because they might feel valued by the organization and in turn they will demonstrate commitment. Training provides the employees with skills and knowledge required for effective work performance, and hence, employees turn out to be satisfied with their work since they know what they are doing (Armache, 2014). Lack of opportunities to grow may result in job dissatisfaction and lead to employees looking for better and more challenging jobs to stimulate their personal growth (Coetzee and Harry, 2015). Moreover, the ability to integrate their work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities (Van



Dyk and Coetzee, 2012) has become very important to employees. Benefits that the companies have recognized as important include flexible work time and a kindergarten within the company (Thompson and Prottas 2005). Ruizalba et al. (2014) argued that employees make an important factor in customer satisfaction. Using hotels in Spain as an example, they found that the work-family balance is very important for retention of hotel employees and it was therefore included in this study.

To measure Generation Y employee retention, this study proposes to take into the calculation Generation Y employee intention to stay in a seasonal hotel. The 6 items from the questionnaire used by (Kyndt et al, 2017) were adopted from Coombs (2009) and Armstrong Stassen and Ursel (2009). Each of the adapted questions asked how strongly the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements indicating their intention to stay, by using a five-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. This Generation Y employee retention framework differs from the previous research since it includes the IMO dimension of the work-family balance in seasonal hotels and examines its relation with the intention to stay. This dimension was proven important for Generation Y, and therefore makes a significant contribution to the study.

## CONCLUSION

This conceptual study proposes the Generation Y employee retention model which takes into account the impact of the internal market activities (IMO) on employees in seasonal hotels, as a means of increasing their intention to stay with the current employer. The specific dimensions of the IMO include the intelligence generation, internal communication, and response to intelligence, which further includes the management support, training and maintaining the work-family balance.

According to the literature review, the young employees referred to as the Generation Y (the Millennials) are not contented with their profession and show a tendency of leaving the job with or without valid reasons (Wiggins, 2016). They are looking for better job opportunities or self-employment, while maintaining the work-family balance. The same author accused employers of not motivating their Generation Y employees and failing to take the necessary steps to retain the Generation Y leaders in the organization. Training and opportunity for learning and development are the strong predictors of employee intention to remain with their current employer (Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsen and Moezaert, 2009). Therefore, the hotel management practices and policies must seek to overcome these challenges. This refers especially to seasonal hotels, which are characterized by work overload during the peak season, when employees are working under pressure. Such a working environment is likely to lead to stress, burnout and performance problems (Simons and Buitendach, 2013). In this context, the present study sought to propose the internal market orientation as a strategic tool of Human Resources Management for retaining Generation Y employees in seasonal hotels.

The proposed model of this study extends the previous research dealing with retention of Generation Y employees, by exploring the relationship between the IMO dimensions and Generation Y employees' intention to stay in seasonal hotels. This study also represents the first attempt to empirically prove the relationship between the IMO

dimension of the work-family balance and intention to stay in a seasonal hotel. The conceptual framework is also useful for the hotel management, who should treat Generation Y employees as customers. They need to replace their traditional style of hierarchy, conventional structure and processes, senior based mentoring and rigid career growth, with two-way mentoring, flexible work time, collaborative workplace and opportunities for learning and development, which are important to the Generation Y employees.

This conceptual paper has some limitations that could be used to pave the way for future research. The paper is based on the literature review and secondary data. The empirical study of the proposed framework should be tested on a sample of Generation Y employees in a seasonal hotel. The study can be further extended to other sectors like IT companies and manufacturing industries. Furthermore, the study may focus on different geographical locations as the output may vary due to different perceptions of Gen Y in different regions.

Regarding the IMO dimensions in the framework, the future studies may include some new dimensions such as work environment, work style, learning climate, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, team work etc. The intention to stay is the only employee retention dimension within this framework and the measurement scale is proposed for the future studies. Furthermore, the framework may or may not be effective in the context of other parameters, such as gender and organizational structure, and could have a moderating effect on the outcome variables (DeCampo, Haggerty, Haney, and Knippel, 2011). Also, it must be emphasized that the current empirical evidence regarding generational profiling of the Generation Y employees is still scarce as a lot of studies are based on student populations. Hence, there is a need to study the working population of the Generation Y. Such research is likely to be highly valued by academicians and practitioners alike.

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