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Authors Details

Dr Anastasios Zopiatis (Corresponding Author)
Assistant Professor
Department of Hotel and Tourism Management
Cyprus University of Technology
Spirou Araouzou 115
P.O. Box 50329
3036 Limassol
CYPRUS
Telephone: 357-25-002502
Fax: 357-25-002653
Mobile: 357-99-482880
Email: anastasios.zopiatis@cut.ac.cy

and

Dr Antonis L. Theocharous
Assistant Professor
Department of Hotel and Tourism Management
Cyprus University of Technology
Spirou Araouzou 115
P.O. Box 50329
3036 Limassol
CYPRUS
Telephone: 357-25-002561
Email: antonis.theocharous@cut.ac.cy
ABSTRACT

"Managing multigenerational workforces is an art in itself. Young workers want to make a quick impact, the middle generation needs to believe in the mission, and older employees don't like ambivalence. Your move."

McNulty (2006)

For the first time in recorded history three different generations (Y, X, and Boomer), defined by Kupperschmidt (2000, p. 66) as “…a group of people or cohorts who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together, influencing and being influenced by a variety of critical factors”, are working together in the tourism industry. Following the human reproductive cycle, each generation covers a specific time span, approximately twenty to twenty five years, in which their members’ personality is shaped by historical, cultural, and social experiences and life events. The symbiotic co-existence of different generations in the workplace poses numerous challenges for the tourism industry as it strives to achieve inter-generational comfort, thus avoiding conflict; an impediment to the effectiveness of even its most sophisticated organizations.

Arsenault (2004, p. 124) argues that “…the workforce is more diverse than ever” and requires thorough investigation in order to ensure the symbiosis does not create work-related conflicts, whereas Zemke et al. (2000, p. 1) inform us that “…there is a growing realization that the gulf of misunderstanding and resentment between older, not so old, and younger employees in the workplace is growing and problematic”. Echoing similar views, a growing number of tourism scholars have embarked, via the utilization of mixed methodologies, on numerous investigations of today’s multigenerational workforce (e.g. Barron et al., 2007; Chen and Choi, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2008; Lub et al., 2011; Zopiatis et al., 2012; Chi, et al., 2013; Gursoy, et al., 2013). Most studies (e.g. Chen and Choi, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2008; Zopiatis et al., 2012) affirm that generational differences do exist in the tourism workplace, especially between the newest generation entering the industry – Generation Y – and previous generational cohorts, and thus immediate actions ought to be taken.
Generation 'Y', also known as 'Generation Why', 'Millenials', 'MySpace Generation', 'Nexters', 'dot.com Generation', the 'Internet Generation', and the ‘Great Generation’ (Sullivan et al., 2009, 287), includes individuals born after 1980 (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Eisner, 2005). The literature suggests that 'Y-ers', who would like to work with others but without giving away their individuality, are less loyal to the organization and more loyal to themselves (Smola and Sutton, 2002); although it is still debatable whether this is attributed to their own lack of loyalty or the failure of the corporate world to inspire them. This generation is perceived as high maintenance who seeks a different psychological contract in the workplace characterized by the tendency to question authority and skepticism towards recognition, a notion also supported by Smola and Sutton (2002). Numerous scholars have attempted to portray the idiosyncrasies of Generation Y in the workplace. Zopiatis et al. (2012), following a thorough review of existing literature, developed a matrix, exhibited as Table 1, with 'Y-ers' perceived occupational characteristics.

**Table 1**

**Generation Y and Occupational Attributes: The Existing Literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views on Occupational Factors</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Views on authority</td>
<td>Refuse to pay dues; Question authority; Rules are made to broken; Challenge traditional workplace norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards motivation</td>
<td>Tend to be motivated when their managers connect their actions to their personal and career goals; Not motivated by feelings of duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on recognition</td>
<td>Expect rapid promotion and development; They like to be recognized and respected; More narcissist than previous generations – not good at taking criticism; Like public acknowledgement and frequent recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on loyalty</td>
<td>Skeptical to corporate loyalty; Less loyal to the company and more ‘me’ oriented; Can demonstrate loyalty and dedication as long as they are achieving their personal goals as well; if that does not happen they will seek another job; Consider their organizations as a mean to an end, and not the end in itself; Judge institutions on their own merit; Loyal to peers, managers, coworkers, not organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on work-life balance</td>
<td>Family and friends are more important than work; they are hard and ambitious workers but not workaholics; Blend work and play; Value their non-work time while they want to enjoy work ; Work is not the most important thing in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological orientation</td>
<td>Intense users of high technology; They take electronic collaboration for granted; Basic spelling and writing skills problems due to their heavy reliance on technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards rewards (Intrinsic / Extrinsic)</td>
<td>Financially Smart; Desire instant gratification; Individual development is very important; Place great importance to both intrinsic (motivators) and extrinsic rewards (hygiene factors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on change</td>
<td>Addicted to change; Embrace change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualists or team players</td>
<td>Great collaborators and value team work; Value team work; Expect diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy vs. Hard Working</td>
<td>Perceived as Slackers; Have unrealistic expectations about what it means to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on supervision and guidance</td>
<td>Need constant feedback; Expect personal attention to be given to each employee by managers; Desire immediate feedback about performance; Constantly seek approval and praise; Want managers who empower them and who are open and positive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Views on work schedules</td>
<td>Want a flexible work schedule cause they are not willing to give up their personal activities due to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on career</td>
<td>Distrust job security; Y-ers view jobs as primarily the mean to build a career resume; Prefer a job that has meaning; Committed to work they believe will impact the world and make a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on management style</td>
<td>“Hate micromanagement”; Seek managerial support, yet detest micro-management; Favor an inclusive style of management; Dislike micromanagement and slowness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on socialization at and off work</td>
<td>Blend work and play; Highly socialized; Prefer more frequent social interaction with their managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards respect</td>
<td>Tend to value respect and wants to earn it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on reliability</td>
<td>If treated professionally they are likely to act professionally; They will get the task done but in their own way and paste; Results oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local or global thinkers</td>
<td>Globally concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on learning ability</td>
<td>Stronger learning orientation; Lifelong learners, they embrace action learning; Learn best by collaborating; Seek an active role in creating their own educational plans; Seeking learning opportunities and challenges; Best educated generation ever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on single/multi-tasking</td>
<td>Multitasking is a habit; Able to work on parallel tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Zopiatis et al. (2012)

This conceptual paper aims to enhance stakeholders' understanding of the challenges and opportunities 'Generation Y' brings to the tourism workplace. Reflecting upon current literature and numerous empirical studies conducted in Cyprus, the paper describes the current state of knowledge on the topic and analyzes the implications for stakeholders, both in the industry and academia. Implications pertaining to human resources management and academia are recommended to those wishing to enhance inter-and multi-generational synergies, whereas numerous innovative practices are suggested to industry stakeholders who wish to develop a positive working environment by investing in generational opportunities while at the same time capitalizing on established differences. Finally, suggestions for future
research are provided to scholars who wish to further explore the status of today’s multigenerational workplace in their distinct hospitality or other business environment.

Future generations will continue to be different and organizations which adapt fastest will have a significant advantage in attracting and retaining the highest quality employees. The success of any organization, whether private or public, is embedded in the knowledge, skills and abilities of its people who occupy all levels of the organization’s hierarchy. Each generation that enters the workforce brings with it its own unique perspectives and values, shaped by the times in which they live, their work and their work environment; thus posing atypical human resources management challenges. Industry stakeholders are invited to rise to the occasion by investing in ‘intelligent’ practices which aim to overcome the challenges associated with managing today’s multi-generational tourism workforce. Moreover, it is essential that academia, take the center-stage in enhancing 'Y-ers’ knowledge of inter-generational differences; what Piktialis (2006, p. 11) refers to as ‘generational competence’ which is described as “the ability to understand, appreciate and meet the specific needs of different generations”.

**Keywords:** Generation Y, Tourism Employees, HRM challenges and opportunities

**References (Included in the Abstract)**


