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Are they leaving or staying: A qualitative analysis of turnover issues for Generation Y hospitality employees with a hospitality education

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Abstract

This research examines Generation Y hospitality employees with respect to why they would leave, or have left, the hospitality industry, what would cause them to return if they had left, and the perceived positive and negative career related traits of the hospitality industry. This research confirms Generation Y employees desire an exciting and challenging career, but also indicates they may be thinking more long-term in their career than typical Generation Y employees. Discussion and implications include how the results are useful for hospitality graduates, hospitality educators, and industry professionals.

Comments

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Title: Are They Leaving or Staying: A Qualitative Analysis of Turnover Issues for Generation Y Hospitality Employees with a Hospitality Education

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1. Introduction

Employee turnover is a continuous challenge in the hospitality industry. There is validation within the academic literature on a variety of variables that positively and negatively influence both voluntary and involuntary turnover, some examples include employee motivation (DiPietro & Condly, 2007), accuracy of job information, relationship quality, job satisfaction (Choi, 2006), job demands, and emotional exhaustion (Babakus, Yavas, & Karatepe, 2008). Much of the literature related to turnover intention in the hospitality industry focuses on Baby Boomer and Generation X employees because they were the majority of employees present at the time of the research. While study of these employees is, and was, important from the standpoint of a variety of stakeholders at various levels of hospitality organizations (investors, senior management, line-level management, and HR practitioners), the researchers who conducted this study believe the topic of turnover needs further study. In particular, what can be done to reduce turnover and turnover intention of students who complete hospitality management programs and transition into jobs within hospitality. More specifically of interest is how the population of Generation Y, or Millennials, compare to previous research that focused on different generation populations.

2. Review of Literature

This review of literature is broken into two core areas. The first area will present a summary of Generation X & Y attributes; including how they are similar and how they differ; and their perceptions of careers in hospitality and tourism. The second and final core area relates to turnover. This section will document previous research about Generation Y's and turnover from hospitality industry positions.

As the Sages (born between 1925-1945) and the Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964) begin to leave the workforce, the remaining employees for the foreseeable future will be comprised of Generation X (born from 1965-1980) and Generation Y (born from 1981-2000) members. With this in mind, it important to identify various attributes these generations have in common, as well as how they differ. According to a recent Gallup (2013) article, Generation Y, also known as the Millennials, and Generation X each comprise 32% of the total U.S. labor force. In 2007, these numbers were 25% for Millennials and 33% for Generation X (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). The difference in numbers was logical because many individuals who fall into the Generation Y category were still

working through their education in either grade school (K-12) or in higher education. However, as Millennials age, they will become a larger proportion of the overall workforce.

Members of the workforce who are categorized as members Generation Y could have potentially been born over nearly a two-decade period, an immense amount time when discussing the innovation that the hospitality industry has undertaken. Today, we are able to check-in from our phones and through geo-location know the moment a guest enters our lobby. While these examples focus on the delivery of service, the expectations of new entrants into the hospitality industry has also evolved.

Three decades ago hospitality managers were focused primarily on the expectations of Generation X and Baby Boomers. Baby Boomers were existing employees, and Generation X was entering the workforce and moving upward through the layers of bureaucracy. Today, this has changed. The Baby Boomers are beginning to leave the workforce, Generation X is moving into middle and senior leadership positions, and the new line-level and entry-level leadership positions are being filled by workers from Generation Y. This shift in the composition of the workforce demands that operational managers continue to refine their knowledge of about what motivates their workers in hopes that the negative repercussions of motivation dips does not lead to failure in service delivery and turnover.

The origins of generational research are limited within hospitality academia. To gain a theoretical foundation for studying generations in hospitality academia, there is foundational work in sociology (Edmunds & Turner, 2002; Eyerman & Turner, 1998; Mannheim, 1952; Turner, 1998). More recently, sociologists are examining how historical events define a generation (Eyerman & Turner, 1998). In a similar way to the Vietnam War and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act influenced Generation X, Generation Y has been influenced by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, smart phone usage, social media, and the first African American president.

2.1. Generation X

Members of Generation X have a strong desire for teamwork, autonomy, independence, flexibility, and work-life balance (Tulgan, 2004). Tulgan (2004) also identified that members of Generation X show skeptical perspectives toward hierarchical relationships, and have a negative view towards titles in an organization and have issues with organizational loyalty. However, members of Generation X also have an ability to learn new technology quickly and have a desire to embrace diversity (Burke, 2004). Compared to Generation X, Generation Y shows more cultural diversity and considers education the key to their success (Weingarten, 2009).

Generation X members are pragmatic, self-sufficient, skeptical, flexible, tech savvy, and entrepreneurial. They also search for a difficult challenge, while members of Generation Y try to make a difference in their life, the life of others, and for their organization (Ruble, 2013). These two generations show unique characteristics in their view of careers. However, both generations approach the world with a little cynicism and distrust toward politics, organizations, society, government, and the world as a whole (UNJSPF, 2009; Park & Gursoy, 2012).

2.2. *Generation Y*

Generation Y members value honesty and respect in their organization. They build loyalty based on their sincerity, not on the length of work (Kerslake, 2005). Members of Generation Y are conditionally loyal to their organization as long as they achieve their own personal goals. Additionally, they are willing to seek a new job if they think their preferred conditions are not met (Kerslake, 2005). Even though they value leisure and vacation, members of Generation Y have high expectations of promotion and pay raises (Hill, 2002).

Members of Generation Y exhibit traits of being confident, well-educated, self-sufficient, tolerant, team builders, and socially/politically conscious. While these traits offer good insight into Generation Y, and some similarities exist when compared to Generation X, differences in views of work between the generations exist (Ruble, 2013). Richardson (2010a) demonstrated current issues surrounding careers in the hospitality and tourism industry. This included hours of work, salary offered, career development, and work-life balance. In accordance with these issues, researchers found members of Generation Y highly value personal life, pay and promotion, flexibility, and challenges in their jobs (Barren, Maxwell, Broadbridge, & Ogden, 2007; Blomme, van Rheede, & Tromp, 2010; Brown, Arendt, & Bosselman, 2014; Morton, 2002; Richardson & Thomas, 2012; Twenge, 2007; Weingarten, 2009).

Generation Y members value their non-work time for leisure and vacations and consider their job a source to fund their lifestyle (Kerslake, 2005; Morton, 2002). Members of Generation Y enjoy challenging jobs that provide a sense of significance and enthusiasm; however, they lose the value of a job easily. With this in mind, organizations can potentially have a positive influence on turnover reduction of Generation Y employees by engaging them with jobs that are fulfilling, significant, and challenging (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Gursoy, Chi, & Karadag, 2013). Overall, engaged Generation Y employees who are satisfied with their job will be committed to the organization, which can develop higher levels of job performance and lower turnover rates and intentions in the workplace (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Park & Gursoy, 2012).

2.3. Turnover

Numerous researchers observed lower levels of organizational commitment and higher turnover rates with Generation Y employees compared to other generations in a variety of industries (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Twenge, 2007). The high turnover rate of Generation Y members could be due to their weak psychological contract with the organization, which can lower their organizational commitment and levels of organizational loyalty (Blomme, van Rheede, & Tromp, 2010; Rousseau, 1989).

More seriously, a high rate of staff turnover is commonplace and considered a problem due to its high cost in the hospitality industry (Gustafson, 2002; Solnet & Hood, 2008). Low wages, long working hours, being out of the social pattern, and limited career opportunities can lead to hospitality industry employees being apt to have a high intention to leave the industry and move to other industries with better working conditions (Blomme, Tromp, & van Rheede, 2008; Blomme et al., 2009; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Walsh & Taylor, 2007). Arthur (1994) described such a problematic situation in the hospitality industry as “boundaryless cross-company career moves.” McCabe (2001) emphasized that multidirectional career systems emerging across industries has led to the possibility of mobility within different sectors of industries including hospitality and tourism (Baruch, 2004; McCabe, 2001). Due to multidirectional career systems, organizational commitment and loyalty have become a derivative consequence and has led to a superficial relationship among employers and employees (Baruch, 2004).

Compared to other generations, members of Generation Y are the hardest to retain in the workplace for two main reasons. First, Generation Y employees value their personal life and are willing to leave their current job if they decide the change is more beneficial for them. Second, they experience the biggest age gap in the workplace, which can be a crucial determinant of intention to leave the job (Barren et al., 2007; Weingarten, 2009). Weingarten (2009) stated that Generation Y members are very demanding and want quick responses and results. Generation Y employees value diversity, equality, tolerance in the workplace, compensation, and a defined organizational culture (Morton, 2002). Martin (2005) depicted this generation as independent, entrepreneurial, challenge taking, creative, technologically savvy, and knowledgeable. Even though they seek managerial support, they prefer to conduct tasks using their own methods at their own pace (Martin, 2005).

3. Research Methods

The focus of this research was to examine the reasons hospitality graduates leave, or would leave, the hospitality industry and what, if anything, would cause hospitality graduates to return to the hospitality industry.

3.1. Participants

The population for this research study was graduates from the year 2002 to 2011 from US four-year hospitality programs. The researchers made initial contact with each hospitality program identified in *The Guide to College Programs in Hospitality, Tourism, & Culinary Arts* (International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education, 2011). Because the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education, also known as I-CHRIE, is the largest professional organization for the hospitality academy, this resulted in the largest readily available database. Contact information was readily available for 121 hospitality programs and the researchers emailed all 121 program heads. After a reduction due to non-response or an inability to participate, the graduates of 10 programs comprised the final sample of this study. Due to a need to keep the databases confidential at 8 programs, a contact at each distributed the survey on behalf of the researchers. The remaining 2 hospitality programs granted access to their alumni databases and the researchers emailed these alumni directly.

3.2. Instrument

The researchers used SurveyMonkey.com™ to host the web-based questionnaire. Before proceeding to the questionnaire itself, all participants were required to agree to the informed consent as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards. Following IRB acceptance, participants indicated if they currently worked in a hospitality-related industry. This qualifying question directed the respondents to tailored questions tailored. The participants who were still in the hospitality industry responded to questions about 1) what would cause them to leave; 2) what would cause them to stay; 3) what are the most desirable traits of the hospitality industry; and 4) what are the least desirable traits of the hospitality industry. The participants who were no longer in the hospitality industry responded to questions about 1) what caused them to leave their hospitality career; 2) what would cause them to return to the hospitality industry; what were the most desirable traits of the hospitality industry; and 4) what were the least desirable traits of the hostility industry. In addition, the researchers collected age to determine generational membership; all remaining questions for this research study were qualitative in nature. The open-ended questions allowed an exploration of common themes as to why individuals would leave the industry and what would keep them in the industry or cause them to return if they had already left.

3.3. Analysis

Upon conclusion of the data collection, the researchers used QDA Miner (Provalis Research, 2009), a qualitative analysis program, to assist in the coding and analysis of the responses. Separately, the researchers used

inductive coding to develop themes. There was slight discrepancy in two themes that were later combined into one theme “better opportunity.” The separate themes consisted of finding a job elsewhere and finding a promotion elsewhere. The researchers then compared these developed themes with previous research. Lastly, the researchers used correspondence analysis as an exploratory method to examine relationships among those that stayed in the hospitality industry and those that were no longer in the hospitality industry.

4. Results and Discussion

Even though the researchers distributed the survey to graduates from 2002 to 2011, only graduates from 2006 to 2011 responded. In addition, the oldest respondent was born in 1984, which categorizes all respondents as part of Generation Y. Because the researchers did not have access to full data on all 10 programs, an extrapolation is presented as an estimated response rate. The 2 programs that provided email lists had an average of 146 contacts, if this average is applied to all 10 programs an estimated 1460 alumni received the survey. There were 107 responses from graduates in the hospitality industry and 39 responses from graduates who were not in the hospitality industry (estimated response rate of 10%).

4.1. Stayed in Hospitality Industry

Hospitality graduates still in the hospitality industry finished the following statements: “If I were to leave my career, it would be because,” “If I were to remain in my career, it would be because,” “The least desirable trait of my career is,” and “The most desirable trait of my career is.” Response themes to these statements are in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 Here]

The most common item that would cause current hospitality graduates to leave the hospitality industry was work-family conflict. Example responses included: “I would want to start a family,” “too big of a commitment for my growing family,” “I was looking to have more time with my family.” It is clear that hospitality graduates who are still in the industry would leave due to the work-family balance; however only 3.8% of respondents stated if the work-family balance was better would be a cause for them to remain in their hospitality career. Research conducted by Post, DiTomaso, Farris, and Cordero (2009) found family interfering with work led to a decrease in work satisfaction and turnover. In addition, Blomme et al. (2009) found the work-family conflict to increase turnover intentions, while Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) argued better managing the work-family balance could increase retention. The balancing of work-life balance has traditionally been of concern to Generation X employees (Tulgan, 2004), with Generation Y more interested in their personal life. Work-family can also reduce an employee’s

attachment to an organization (Zhao & Mattila, 2013), which increases turnover intention. The current research does show the Generation Y employees are considering the future impact of the work-life balance, but does not seem to be as big of a concern at the time of the survey.

Compensation was a theme common across all four questions. Those that would leave the hospitality industry due to compensation stated: “. . . lack of pay increases,” “. . . low pay,” and “[if] I found an industry that paid more.” However, those that stated they would remain in their career due to compensation stated: “the money is very good,” and “I enjoy [...] the lifestyle it affords me.” It is clear there are individuals who have acceptable compensation and those that feel they are extremely below what is acceptable to them. Blomme et al. (2009) argued when employees perceive unfair compensation it may lead to turnover. In addition, Lu and Adler (2008) found hospitality students, who perceived pay being low, were less likely to enter the industry. Richardson (2009) found hospitality students do not expect to have a high starting salary, but do expect high earnings over the course of their career. Perhaps there has been a shift with Generation Y employees where they expect the lower pay to start, but then expect higher earnings over the length of their career.

The most common least desirable trait of the hospitality industry was the long hours with 41.1% of the respondents commenting. Common responses included: “long hours,” “the hotels are 24 hours, so the work never stops,” “80+ hours/week,” “hours, managers are required to work 50 hours a week . . .,” and “long hours, holiday and weekend work.” Some respondents (2.6%) indicated if the work hours got better, they would remain in the hospitality industry. However, 38.5% of the respondents did not mention work hours at all. Perhaps hospitality graduates are aware the hours are long and accept it as a norm. This is supported by Roney and Öztin’s (2007) study in which students perceived irregular working hours as an unfavorable, but expected, factor in the hospitality industry. This indicates a need for Generation Y employees to think long-term and understand the need to work in the positions that require the long hours in order to get to positions that are more desirable.

Murphy, DiPietro, Rivera, and Muller (2009) determined the long hours to be a top factor as to why district managers leave their jobs. Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) argued the long hours need to be managed in order to have employees become more committed to an organization, this is particularly important when considering the already lower level of commitment from Generation Y employees (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Twenge, 2007). Generation Y hospitality graduates that stayed in the industry did not enjoy working with difficult people (8.9% responded). While not specifically examined in this study, this could be due to hospitality

graduates becoming exhausted from using surface acting instead of deep acting as found by Chau, Dahling, Levy, and Diefendorff (2009).

Individuals in the hospitality industry had some consistent themes with the most desirable trait in the industry. The most common themes were they enjoy working with people (21.3% responded), enjoy serving others (14.8% responded), and each day is different/excitement (12.3% responded). These have strong connections with the reasons the hospitality graduates, and Generation Y employees, would remain in the industry, which included working with people (8.3% responded) and enjoying the career (22.4% responded). There are hospitality graduates in the hospitality industry who know the hours are long, the work is difficult, but they thoroughly enjoy the industry because they enjoy making others have great experiences and each day brings new opportunities. Responses for those that enjoy working with other people included: “the opportunity to meet and work with people from all over the world,” “working with wonderful people,” “guest interaction,” “social aspect,” and “interaction with people/diversity.” Walsh and Taylor (2007) found one of the items hospitality graduates are looking for in the industry is the chance to improve life for others. In addition, Walsh and Taylor found the hospitality graduates found joy in the work done and want a challenge on a daily basis, very similar to the responses in this research and of Generation Y employees (Richardson, 2010a).

From the overall themes, it is clear Generation Y hospitality employees are still in the industry because they enjoy the job, believe the compensation is acceptable, enjoy working with people, having new experiences every day, and really enjoy serving others and making their day.

4.2. Left the Hospitality Industry

Hospitality graduates who were no longer in the hospitality industry finished the statements “I left my career in the hospitality/tourism industry because,” “If I were to return to the hospitality/tourism industry, it would be because,” and “The least desirable trait of my career in the hospitality/tourism industry was.” Response themes are in Table 2.

[Insert Table 2 Here]

The most common theme for why hospitality graduates left the hospitality industry was due to the long hours with 21.3% of respondents. Unsurprisingly, the long hours were also the most common theme (54.0% responded) for the least desirable trait of their careers when they were in the hospitality industry. Illustrative responses include “too many hours,” “I did not enjoy the hours,” and “wanted a job with better hours.” Responses

for the least desirable trait included: “Too many hours!!! . . .,” “always working while others are playing,” “I didn’t enjoy going to work every day . . .,” and “terrible hours . . .” It is clear the individuals who left the hospitality industry had a strong opposition to the number and types of hours they worked in the hospitality industry. The desire to not work long hours is something common of younger workers, especially when entering exempt positions where overtime pay is no longer present (Twenge, 2010). This issue again implies Generation Y employees view the job as a source to fund their leisure (Kerslake, 2005; Morton, 2002).

Long hours showed up as a top item in both those that left and those that stayed in the hospitality industry. These findings, coupled with past research (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Murphy et al., 2009), re-emphasizes the importance of examining the issue of long hours in the hospitality industry. Blomme et al. (2009) stressed the importance of ensuring hospitality graduates have accurate expectations when they enter the industry. Maxwell, Ogden, and Broadbridge (2010) who found Generation Y hospitality students to have high expectations of the hospitality industry further support this. It is clear the long hours are going to be present, but as Lee (2007) suggested, students learn more about the actual industry outside the classroom. Perhaps the only way to ensure hospitality students understand the long hours in the hospitality industry would be to ensure they experience the true industry when doing their work experiences or internships, something that may be difficult if done during the school year when most students expect, and hospitality programs require, reduced hours to ensure continued academic success.

Many of the individuals who did not like the long hours also mentioned a dislike for not being able to spend time with their family or being able to become a parent. The work/family conflict theme was present in 18.0% of respondents as a reason for why they left. Responses included: “no time for family,” “hours not conducive to family,” “started a family . . .,” and “family reasons conflicting with the hours of my job.” However, 3.5% of respondents did state they would return to the hospitality industry once their children were old enough or if they found a job that was more conducive to having a family. Lack of work-family balance can cause turnover, as shown in past research (Blomme et al., 2009; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Richardson, 2009) and the current study. In addition, those remaining in the hospitality industry mentioned it would be a reason they would leave. However, Richardson (2010b) found both domestic and international students to rate the importance of a job that works well with parenthood as the second lowest and the lowest important factors in career decisions, perhaps because Generation Y members tend to think in the short-term as opposed to what they will want in 5-10 years. In addition,

both domestic and international students perceived the tourism and hospitality industry as one that is not easy to combine with parenthood (Richardson, 2010b).

The reasons respondents would return to the hospitality industry were better compensation (16.9% responded), better opportunity (16.9% responded), and if they had no other choice (11.9% responded). The respondents left the hospitality industry due to low compensation, lack of work-family balance, and the long hours, so it makes sense they would return if there was a better opportunity or if they felt they were compensated fairly. The most alarming of these three is if they had no other choice, responses included “I’ve lost everything and have nowhere else to turn to . . .” and “I was out of work and unable to secure a new job in my current industry.” Other responses following the same path, but with a stronger tone were the 5.1% of individuals who stated they would not return to the hospitality industry, responses included “NEVER,” “Not sure I would,” and “I would not”

Hospitality graduates who left the hospitality industry shared a couple of the same perceived most desirable traits of the hospitality industry, these included they enjoyed working with people (54.3% responded) and liked every day being different and exciting (14.3% responded). Responses were similar to those still in the industry for both, responses included: “meeting interesting people,” “the social environment,” “meeting and working with great people,” “every day was different,” and “there was never a dull moment.” It seems those that left the hospitality industry enjoyed certain traits of the industry, but the long hours, work-family conflict, and low compensation were not made up for in excitement and working with interesting people. These findings seem to contradict Walsh and Taylor (2007) who determined the absence of these factors do not cause turnover, but individuals decide to leave due to lack of learning and growth opportunities. In this study, promotions and experience were factors, but not as prominent as compensation, long hours, and work-family conflict as to why the graduates actually left.

4.3. Left vs. Stayed

As seen in the analysis of percentages, the theme groupings are similar. The most desirable traits for those that stayed and left were working with people, excitement, and being able to serve. The least desirable traits for both were the long hours and working conditions. The reasons respondents left, or would leave, the hospitality industry are in the area of compensation, work-family conflict, and to get a change in career.

The reasons respondents in the industry would stay and the reasons that respondents that had left would return were different. For those that are in the industry, they would stay because they enjoy the industry, feel they receive fair compensation, have promotion prospects, and enjoy working with people. However, for those that had

left, the reasons they would return include if there is a better opportunity or because higher compensation is part of the offer. Some respondents (8.5%) stated a reason they would return is they miss the hospitality industry. However, 11.9% of respondents stated they would only return if they had no other choice and 5.1% of respondents stated they would never return. These would not be conceivable responses for those that are still in the industry, but still alarming to see.

A theme that was present for hospitality graduates that stayed in the industry, but not in those that left the industry, was dealing with difficult customers. Perhaps this is because it affects employees while they are in the industry, but not something that makes them leave the industry. Further supporting this claim, none of the individuals who stated it was the least desirable trait included it as a reason they would leave the industry. In addition, no one who had already left the industry mentioned it as a cause for leaving or a least desirable trait. Two individuals mentioned they would leave the hospitality industry when they retire. While the number of respondents mentioning they intend to retire in the industry was low, it does show there are some recent hospitality management graduates, and Generation Y employees, who intend to stay in the hospitality industry for the duration of their career.

The long hours of the hospitality industry topped the reason why hospitality graduates had left the industry (21.3% responded) and the least desirable trait of both the hospitality graduates that stayed (41.1% responded) and the hospitality graduates that left (54.0% responded). However, the top reason hospitality graduates who stayed in the industry would leave would be because of the work-family conflict (17.2% responded). The hospitality graduates still in the industry had the work-family conflict as only the sixth highest least desirable trait (4.5% responded). These findings could indicate the hours are not desirable for hospitality graduates; however, hospitality students accurately expect long hours (Blomme et al., 2009) so it may not always be the reason they leave the industry. In particular, with Generation Y employees tending to think in the short term, the long hours could only become a problem in the future and therefore could ultimately be the root cause of their turnover when they desire to start a family, or have a greater desire for a more balanced work-life.

4.4. Exploratory Correspondence Analysis

The correspondence plot produced by QDAMiner can be found in Figure 1. QDAMiner identifies the correspondence analysis completed by their program as an exploratory technique to analyze relationships. The technique uses a low dimensional space to graphically represent relationships. For purposes of this research, the

correspondence plot shows similarities and differences among the hospitality graduates who stayed and those who left the hospitality industry. Similar to what was shown the analysis of themes by percentages, the theme groupings are fairly similar in the plot. To interpret the plot, the angle between the point for the group (stayed vs. left the hospitality industry) and the theme in reference to the origin is important. If there is an acute angle, the two items are positively correlated, if there is an obtuse angle, they are negatively correlated.

[Insert Figure 1 Here]

The placement of points for similar questions are in similar areas for the most desirable traits, least desirable traits, and what causes or would cause the graduates to leave. However, the points for what would cause someone who was no longer in the hospitality industry to return and what would cause someone to remain in the hospitality industry are distanced. This confirms early analysis that there are high levels of similarities across the two groups with the exception of the last question. These differences can be seen in the correspondence plot which indicates a challenging job that utilizes their hospitality degree and is enjoyable is what would keep a hospitality graduate in the industry. However, in order to bring a hospitality graduate back to the industry, these would not be effective based on the obtuse angle with the origin. Instead, there would have to be a better opportunity, a promotion, higher compensation, or they get laid off from their current job for them to return.

The items that were similar for each group are shown by the acute angles and clustering of the questions. The most desirable traits of the hospitality industry are the ability to serve others, working with people, an exciting industry to work in, and the flexibility it affords employees. The least desirable traits are the working conditions, long hours, and difficult customers and what would cause the graduates to leave or caused them to leave are work-family conflict, for a change, compensation, and the economy. The themes of “no other choice” and “never” or overlapped in the top corner with a very small angle with what would cause a hospitality graduate to return to the hospitality industry because they are not found in any of the other areas.

5. Conclusions

Some hospitality graduates who left the industry stated they would never return to the hospitality industry, however, many hospitality graduates have a strong passion for the industry. Ayres (2006) found a common trait among successful managers was they had a passion for their job. If Generation Y hospitality students are passionate enough about hospitality to choose it as a major, then industry practitioners need to take advantage of this passion to shape their employees into successful Generation Y hospitality managers who are challenged and able to succeed in

the industry. Trying to motivate and retain valuable employees to the point where they feel comfortable and decide to stay is important.

The most common response from respondents still in the hospitality industry as to why they would stay was because they enjoy it. In addition, the respondents enjoyed working with people, enjoyed serving others, and enjoyed the excitement of hospitality. While these items individually may not be unique to the hospitality industry, a combination of all of them may be hard to find anywhere else.

The most common responses for hospitality graduates that left the hospitality industry as to why they left were because of the long hours and compensation. Some respondents stated their managers require them to be on property for excessive hours even after they complete all of their work related tasks, this is not acceptable to Generation Y employees and could be a cause for them to leave. It seems the long hour mentality of the hospitality industry has become a norm and therefore managers expect it from their employees, even when it becomes unnecessary. One respondent mentioned after becoming good at their job they no longer needed to be there as long as they were in the past, but that was not a welcomed change by their employer and therefore there is no motivation to become more efficient. This may be further evidence that human resources methods are not up to date in the hospitality industry (Hinkin & Tracey, 2010).

McGinley, O'Neill, Damaske, and Matilla (2014) suggest hotel executives should consider new compensation programs tied to advancement that would help motivate young manager in particular. With the generational differences found in Generation Y employees, managers should shape policies specifically to them in order to increase retention of well-educated employees. In particular, Gicheva (2013) found young professionals who are willing to put in 5 extra hours per week see an annual wage growth increase of 1%. For Generation Y employees this could be positive because they are more concerned about higher wages over the length of their career (Brown, Arendt, & Bosselman, 2014). Members of Generation Y tend to delay traditional adulthood, such as starting a family (Carroll et al., 2009), so they can get their career started. Getting an extra 1% increase per year early in their career could lead to much higher earnings over the length of their career.

Based on this results presented in this research, there is still a strong need for hospitality educators to shape the career expectations of their students. This research shows that students who recently entered the workforce lack an adequate understanding pertaining to the realities of careers in the hospitality industry in the core areas of compensation, work-life balance, and working conditions. While there are practical implications of these finding for

members of the hospitality industry, specifically operational and human resource managers, there are also implications for hospitality educators. The results of this research indicate that there is an opportunity for hospitality educators to play a role in providing realistic career expectations in the minds of the students through a variety of methods.

First, in the classroom environment, hospitality educators should ensure they are teaching about the realities of careers in the hospitality industry. One way to accomplish this is encourage and even reward faculty who use recent and valid classroom examples that represent a true picture of what the student will experience in their own careers, not focus solely on what may have been done 10, 20, or even 30 years earlier. While a historical perspective of industry is important to put things in context, the rapid evolution of the hospitality industry means that students are walking into a very different industry that previous generations worked in. For examples, when speaking about the management of lodging operations, educators may choose to focus on innovative uses of technology in the management of human capital or the delivery of customer service.

Incorporating this type of recent and realistic view of industry requires that the educator have actual work experience that can provide accurate expectations for the students. Unfortunately, hospitality doctoral programs are rewarding future educators who are competent researchers, but lack industry experience. The result of this is that students are learning about the hospitality industry from educators that are able to explain the theory behind an operational concept (i.e., what motivates one to stay in an organization), but lack the ability to speak about it in real terms based on their own experience. These educators with limited experience often rely on what they've read in textbooks, researched, or have experienced as a consumer. This is a dangerous trend that will continue to exacerbate the prevalence of students not getting a clear understanding of working in the industry unless educators and their respective administrators make some changes. These changes include making work experience a requirement for entering the classroom as an educator of record and in some cases when available, encouraging faculty to participate in faculty internships, externships, or extended shadowing with industry partners.

A second strategy that educators can employ to convey realistic expectations of careers to the students is the use of industry guest speakers and field trips. The chance for a student to interact with and ask questions to practitioners that are actually in hospitality leadership positions provides the students with valuable insight into what their own career might be like a few years. They can ask questions about what life is really like in terms of compensation, work-life balance, and working conditions. Although we, as educators, can convey our experiences

working those late nights and holidays, the chance for a student to interact with someone who is actually in the trenches dealing with guest and employee issues is a great benefit that should not be wasted. Furthermore, the excuse of “our school is not near industry so we can’t interact with industry” doesn’t carry much weight. The use of Skype, Google Hangouts, and GoToMeetings now allows educators and students to connect with industry virtually from any corner of the globe, assuming there is a reliable internet connection. Other examples such as networking events, industry/student mentorship programs have also been shown to be successful in preparing students for their careers.

Benefits can come from outside the classroom as well. Encouraging students to obtain part-time jobs and real world structured internships while they are in school has been shown to help immensely at addressing what careers post-college will be like. Moving forward, educators and administrators must hold industry accountable to provide internships that provide a structured educational experience that mirrors what the student’s job in industry as an entry-level manager will be like. While it may have been acceptable in the past that interns fetched coffee and made copies, those days are behind us. Internships and part-time jobs, which are two completely different things (although some in industry and the academy may disagree), are best ways students can develop realistic expectations about careers in hospitality. These experiences can assist educators and students prepare for their career by bringing perspectives from all sectors of the hospitality industry, particularly ones students may not consider, to assist students in making long-term career decisions. Finding a career path that best fits hospitality graduates could mean the difference between them staying in the hospitality industry or taking their hospitality education to another industry.

5.1. Limitations and Future Research

This research was geographically limited to the United States and findings may not be generalizable elsewhere. Even though previous researchers have found personalities to be similar in age groups across different countries (McCrae et al., 1999), this may not apply to generational differences in the work place. Future researchers should consider sampling hospitality graduates world-wide in order to obtain a more representative sample of all hospitality students and determine if the needs of hospitality graduates in the work place differ along with geographical or cultural differences.

Respondents to this survey were graduates of 2006 to 2011. While all respondents were members of Generation Y, there was not representation of all years within Generation Y. Because technology and careers seem

to be changing rapidly, it is possible hospitality graduates in earlier or later years of Generation Y may differ from these findings. Future researchers should consider surveying the full age range of Generation Y employees. In addition, if it turns out to be true that older and younger members of Generation Y differ, this could challenge the idea of grouping in this manner for this type of research.

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Table 1. Themes from open-ended turnover questions by Generation Y hospitality graduates still in the hospitality industry ($N = 107$).

If I were to leave my career, it would be because...		If I were to remain in my career, it would be because...	
Work Family	17.20%	Enjoy it	22.40%
Compensation	13.20%	Compensation	17.90%
Working Conditions	13.20%	Promotion	14.10%
Long Hours	12.60%	Working with People	8.30%
Better Opportunity	10.60%	Coworkers	4.50%
Promotion	6.00%	Work Family	3.80%
Boss	5.30%	Serve	3.80%
Change	4.00%	Better Opportunity	3.20%
Challenge	4.00%	Layoffs/Job Security	3.20%
Layoffs/Job Security	3.30%	LongHours	2.60%
Retire	2.60%	Boss	2.60%
Do Not Enjoy It	2.00%	Challenge	2.60%
		Excitement	2.60%
The least desirable trait of my career is...		The most desirable trait of my career is...	
Long Hours	41.10%	Working with People	21.30%
Working Conditions	18.80%	Serve	14.80%
Compensation	8.90%	Excitement	12.30%
Difficult Customers	8.90%	Flexibility	9.00%
Coworkers	4.50%	Compensation	5.70%
WorkFamily	4.50%	Coworkers	5.70%
Travel	4.50%	Travel	5.70%
Promotion	2.70%	Enjoy	4.90%
Respect	2.70%	Challenge	4.90%
		Experience	3.30%
		Society	3.30%
		WorkingConditions	2.50%
		Respect	2.50%

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to less frequent and non-responses.

Table 2. Themes from open-ended turnover questions by Generation Y hospitality graduates that have left the hospitality industry (N = 39).

I left my career in the hospitality industry because...		If I were to return to the hospitality industry, it would be because...	
LongHours	21.30%	Compensation	16.90%
WorkFamily	18.00%	Better Opportunity	16.90%
Compensation	14.80%	No other choice	11.90%
Promotion	6.60%	LongHours	8.50%
Economy	6.60%	WorkFamily	8.50%
Layoffs/Job Security	6.60%	Miss it	8.50%
Enjoy	4.90%	Enjoy	5.10%
Education	4.90%	Coworkers	5.10%
Experience	3.30%	Never	5.10%
WorkingConditions	3.30%	Layoffs/Job Security	3.40%
Respect	3.30%	Respect	3.40%
Change	3.30%		
The least desirable trait of my career in the hospitality industry was...		The most desirable trait of my career in the hospitality industry was...	
LongHours	54.00%	Working with People	54.30%
Compensation	16.00%	Excitement	14.30%
Boss	10.00%	Coworkers	8.60%
WorkFamily	6.00%	Enjoy	5.70%
Coworkers	4.00%	Challenge	5.70%
Respect	4.00%	Respect	2.90%
WorkingConditions	4.00%	WorkingConditions	2.90%
		Travel	2.90%
		Society	2.90%

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% due to less frequent, non-responses, and some individuals who had multiple themes.