Factors affecting students' motivation to consider hospitality as their career choice

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Factors affecting students' motivation to consider hospitality as their career choice

Senior Capstone Project

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to measure self-efficacy, career outcomes and talent management and their relationship with students` motivation to pursue a career in hospitality. Research was conducted through online-form questionnaires. The results showed high level of students' confidence toward hospitality career and positive perception of the hospitality industry and its career outcomes. However, talent management practices were not positively related with motivation in pursuing hospitality career, meaning that HR and hospitality companies should improve and implement those practices accordingly. Hospitality industry is perceived by students as a prosperous industry with the consideration of improving talent management practices in attracting this segment of workforce.

Key words: hospitality, self-efficacy, career outcomes, talent management, motivation, students, hospitality companies

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality industry today is experiencing the most prosperous times in its entire history due to numerous success factors such as rise of household income, accessibility of travel, developed hotels with high focus to design, employees training and education and technology implementation. Furthermore, customers play a crucial role in the hospitality industry since their overall satisfaction boosted hospitality industry to grow. On the other hand, acquiring enough employees with proper knowledge and skills has never been more difficult for industry's human resources and hospitality managers alike. The focus of this research will be the student population attending hospitality programs and their desire to pursue a career in hospitality. Studies on hospitality students' career choices and intentions were done in the past (Jenkins, 2001; Chuang and Jenkins 2007) but over time market conditions are strikingly changing. In addition to market condition changes, job candidates (in this case students) are changing too. Their interests, professional expectations, priorities, and perception of the industry are evolving as well. Therefore, industry impact on new generations of students must be continuously examined since the realities of yester-years may not reflect the reality of current circumstances. Therefore, we will try to explore the level of students' motivation to consider potential hospitality careers with industry employers based on the following three variables: self-efficacy, career outcome expectations and employers' practices in managing talent. This study will be partly based on the career decision scale-efficacy scale (CDSE) designed by Taylor and Betz (1983) and talent management scale designed by Jayaraman, Talib and Khan (2018). Also, several items will be used from career outcome expectations scale (COE) developed by Hackett, Betz, Casas and Rocha-Singh (1992) to find the reasons to pursue hospitality as career. Lastly, to examine motivation as factor we will use research from Chuang and Jenkins (2010) where they researched students' career decisions and motivations. Through these variables our research will try to understand and possibly reveal what are some the areas

that contain the potential for improvement while obtaining talent. This represents our main driver and purpose to conduct this research. Through surveys as a method, students` level of motivation followed by variables mentioned above, will be observed, and analyzed.

Students as a workforce are exposed to hospitality companies (restaurants, hotels, travel agencies etc.). Usually they work part time and during the summer season, yet we believe that they have enough industry contact to be able to evaluate key variables that are at the center of our study. Through student opinions about their previous hospitality related work experience and their level of motivation about their future employment alternatives we anticipate outcomes that may be of a great value to employers in hospitality.

This research aims to show that while attracting talent and creating positive career practices, hospitality industry must understand and accommodate students' expectations and motivations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. SELF-EFFICACY

1.1. SELF-EFFICACY DEFINITION

Term self-efficacy indicates person's confidence to be able in completing certain task or goal. It can influence the outcomes of any action; specifically, will the person succeed or fail. The importance of self-efficacy can be seen in the amount of effort that a person will put in the given task. With higher level of self-efficacy, person will be persistent and resilient in goal or task achievement, while with lower level there is an issue of disengagement and avoidance because it is seen as challenge that cannot be solved (Hopper, 2019). Followed by that, level of self-efficacy will define the goals selection, way to accomplish it and final reflection of performance (Cherry, 2019).

1.2. SELF-EFFICACY PROCESS

Furthermore, self-efficacy can be described as a belief that motivates people, in this case, students, towards achieving goals and given tasks. Following that belief, certain effects are created through processes of cognitive, motivational, affective and selection. Firstly, cognitive can be defined as self-appraisal of capabilities where people set higher goals for themselves followed by strongly perceived self-efficacy. Secondly, the motivational process is where beliefs are formed towards achieving or setting a specific goal or task. Thirdly, the affective process is beliefs that define the amount of stress and depression present while experiencing a stressful situation or task. Lastly, in the selection process is about choosing the environment and activities led by personal efficacy (Bandura, 1994).

1.3. SELF-EFFICACY AND HOSPITALITY CAREER

In this research, the author will investigate the level of the students' self-efficacy in pursuing hospitality as their career choice. Since this factor is crucial in the further development of hospitality career, students' beliefs, and abilities to accomplish it will be put as an imperative. Furthermore, those abilities include self-appraisal, information gathering, future plans, problem-solving and goal selection by which a certain level of career maturity is created (Chuang, Jenkins 2010; Crites, 1961).In addition to those abilities, self-efficacy can be developed in another 4 ways, from career performance, learning, social persuasion, and emotional engagement. The main reason why is self-efficacy one of the most examined factor of pursuing any career is due to the creation of interest and professional development towards career choice. Furthermore, students see many obstacles in the hospitality career, specifically their development and financial support from the companies, which is why their motivation decreases as well as their self-efficacy (Cantos, Sauna, Ramos, 2019).

1.4. SELF-EFFICACY AND CAREER DECISION

Furthermore, level of self-efficacy defines career decision or indecision. In many cases it is indecision where students whose confidence and belief in their abilities is low what lead to negative results in their career development. They perceive choosing a career as stressful due to their beliefs to being uncapable to engage enough. On other side, students with higher level of self-efficacy, tend to approach their career decision enthusiastically. Due to their strong interest and commitment towards career development, their confidence increases as well as their self-efficacy (Coon, 2009).

1.5. STUDENTS' PERSONALITY

Self-efficacy can also be measured with individual's proactive personality when it comes to career adaptability. Proactive personality can be defined as: 'stable tendency describing

likelihood of individuals taking initiative to influence their surroundings.' (Hou, Wu, Liu, 2014). High self-efficacy combined with proactive personality will provide students easier career adaptability, in this case, in hospitality industry. Due to positive and confident approach, their career decision making will be less stressful and more beneficial for their further development (Hou, et al.2014).

2. CAREER OUTCOMES

2.1. HOSPITALITY

Hospitality as one of the biggest industries in world offers various job positions from waiters, cooks, receptionists, supervisors, and others, where students mostly start with their work experience. Unfortunately, popularity of the industry is decreasing due to low pays, long working hours, high staff turnover and lack of chance to be promoted or upgraded (Wood 1993;1995). The author of this research prompted by those reasons will try to find out what career in the hospitality will provide students in their future. Specifically, what outcomes can students except if they decide to create their career path in the hospitality industry.

2.2. CAREER PREFERENCES

Some of the researchers were discussing about students' career preferences after finishing and completing hospitality degree. Their decisions were based on their belief of hospitality as an industry and their expectations towards career development. Positive factors that were mentioned are high percentage of hospitality undergraduate students that will pursue their career in the hospitality industry. More specifically, companies offered many opportunities for students' development like training programs and internships where they can develop their skills and provide beneficial input for that company. Furthermore, with those programs students

can pursue management and supervisory positions and met their expectations towards career development in the hospitality industry (Kumar, Balasubramanian, Francis, Sangaran, 2011).

2.3. CAREER IN HOSPITALIY

On other hand, some of the studies showed low students' willingness to develop their careers in hospitality. The main reasons that were mentioned are lack of motivation, poor working conditions, low salaries and not providing careers that they want to pursue. Those students were led by previous unsatisfying experience in the hospitality. Furthermore, as another negative factor is having unrealistic expectations from employer about career development. More specifically, research mentioned university as a key role for creating job or career expectations. Universities should learn and prepare students for pursuing career in the hospitality, show them all the possible challenges and promotions that may occur during job development (Atef, Belushi, 2017).

2.4. EDUCATION AND CAREER EXPECTATION

Educational institutions, especially with hospitality management programs, may fail in providing ''right picture'' about hospitality industry. Provided by wrong and occasionally high expectations, students discourage themselves when being rejected or fail during recruitment processes. Ambitiously, they expect to be a part of management program, have high salaries, and present themselves as ''overqualified'' for some job positions. Interestingly, students with realistic expectations often end up in the turnover statistics (Casado, 1992).

3. TALENT MANAGEMENT

3.1. TALENT MANAGEMENT DEFINITION

Talent Management is defined as a crucial component of HR practices to acquire talents in the company. Since most of the industries lack talents, especially hospitality, this practice can retain high quality workforce and invest in them. Furthermore, talent as a term is: '' collective knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, values, habits and behaviors of the employee.'' (Schiemann, 2014). Talent makes a significant value difference within the company and its environment (Jyoti, Rani, 2014).

3.2. CHALLENGES IN HOSPITALITY

The main challenge for hospitality companies is knowledge about proper training and attracting talented young individuals to provide beneficial outcome for both sides. However, talent for hospitality companies differs from universal definition, meaning that hospitality companies will have different perspectives and values when attracting the talent. Before starting to think about attracting talents, companies need to implement key measures in their talent management practices. The emphasize is put on adaptability and reciprocity in order to define a perfect fit for their organization. The success of talent management practice will be seen in students' performance and their satisfaction and motivation to continue develop themselves in that company (Scoot, Revis, 2008).

3.4 TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

When it comes to relation with hospitality and hospitality students, talent management is used to attract and retain graduates with essential skills for career in the hospitality. Many debates were held towards hospitality educators and industry, where industry people emphasize a huge difference between what graduate students learn and what is going on in the industry.

Specifically, theory is more involved then practical work, what causes nonrealistic expectations and lack of practicality when exposed in the industry. Furthermore, due to lack of real view of the industry, more than 50% of hospitality graduates choose another career to pursue rather than hospitality (Barron, 2008).Talent management can be divided into 3 perspectives brought by Lewis and Heckmann in 2006, including HR practices, talent pools and focus on talent for specific job position. Firstly, HR practices efforts can be seen in recruiting, developing, succession planning and career management. Secondly, talent pools are defined as constantly develop employee through job position. Thirdly, focusing on talent divides into high performers and potential talents.

3.5. TALENT MANAGEMENT BENEFITS

Specifically, potential talents are extremely important resource for the company since their input can be beneficial for the company performance if used and managed properly (Selman, 2016). Talent management practices will not just focus on attracting talent, but also it can create positive image of hospitality for students and other employees. More specifically, by creating positive working environment, valuing employees, and improving their skills can increase a chance to change perception of this industry (Maxwell, MacLean, 2008).

4. MOTIVATION

4.1. MOTIVATION AND CAREER DECISION

Author of this research will combine previously mentioned terms, self-efficacy, career outcomes and talent management in order to define level of motivation when choosing hospitality as students' career choice. Motivation in this research will be measured as a final step towards students` decision. Motivation to consider hospitality as a career choice is

influenced by image of that industry and how perception of the industry will shape any further decisions.

4.2.PERCEPTION OF THE INDUSTRY

One of the researches done about students' perception of the industry showed mostly negative results. Poor employee treatment, low salaries, no investments in employees are the factor mentioned that make hospitality as not lucrative industry to be a part of. Those factors led to high staff turnovers and losing potential talents in this industry (Barron, Maxwell, 1993). Previous work experience in the hospitality industry as a motivating factor tend to decrease in the last decade. Being exposed to stressful and unpleasant environment make students belief that this industry does not have any positive aspect. Those findings made many researchers to investigate where the gap between students and industry is. Some of them emphasize lack of knowledge about hospitality jobs and not going through grounding levels of job position to reach senior level. Although students tend to have negative perception about the industry, their intention to pursue career in this industry is high. It seems paradoxical when looking all the factors, but they mention one the main reason is to apply knowledge learned from university. Furthermore, they expect to be promoted as managers after completing 3 years within the company (Houshy, 2014).

MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

With everything being said in our introduction, variables that we took into consideration, and issues associated with them we are proposing the following research model:

Figure 1
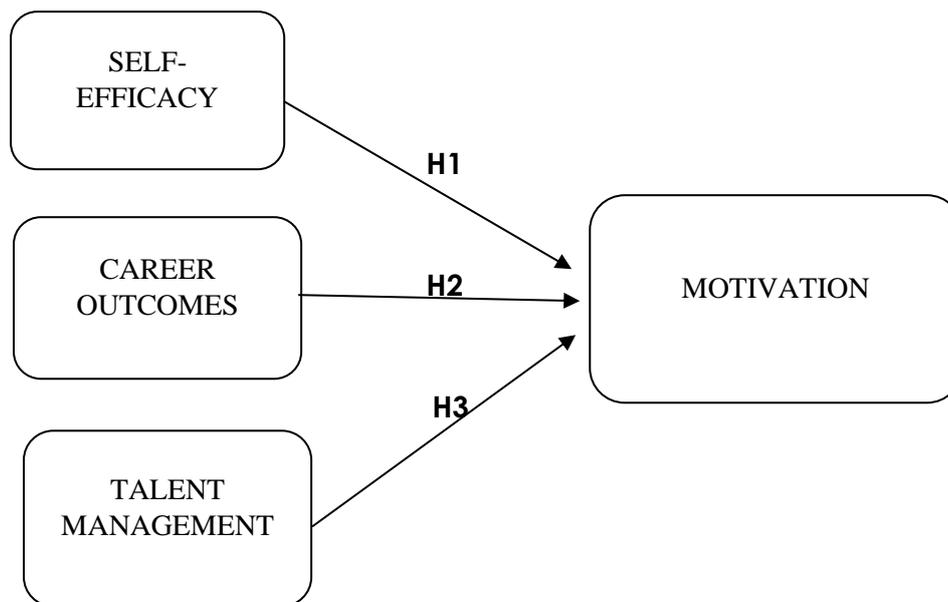
Self-efficacy, talent management and career outcomes will be main variables in defining students' motivation when choosing hospitality as their career choice. Their relation is defined by confidence to complete a task (self-efficacy), what can be offered in the future (career outcomes) and willingness of hospitality companies to invest in students (talent management).

Our main research question is: How self-efficacy, career outcomes and talent management will affect students' motivation to consider hospitality as their career choice? The research hypothesis we are putting forward are as follows:

Hypothesis:

H1: There is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and students' motivation to pursue a career in hospitality

H2: There is a positive relationship between career outcomes offered and students' motivation to pursue a career in hospitality

H3: Properly implemented talent management practices will result in students' higher motivation to pursue a career in hospitality

METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative analysis method to measure self-efficacy, career outcomes and talent management and their relationship with students' motivation to consider hospitality as their career choice. Specifically, questionnaires were provided to selected participants. Questionnaires as a method are described as research instrument that is used to collect specific date through various channels of distribution (Bulmer, 2004). They can be distributed via electronical ways, paper and pen or interview methods with selected questions that will serve as an answer to specific issue or problem in the research. Some of the researchers done an analysis of questionnaires as a method where results showed that sensitive information were willing to be shared more in the paper and pen method rather than interview method. Furthermore, when looking at the format of the questionnaires they can be designed with open or closed questions. Specifically, open questions provide an opportunity to have variety of answers that can serve as suggestions or elaborations. On other hand, closed questions are designed for collecting larger amount of data and it is easier to analyze them, but they can create certain bias while answering those questions due to subjective set of questions. (Kelly, Harper, Landau, 2008)

Firstly, measure used for students' self-efficacy level was done by Taylor and Betz (1983) consisting of 25 items, which was modified for this research. More specifically, 8 items were used to evaluate students' confidence level. Main points that were evaluated included goal orientation, assessing abilities, combining interest with career decision etc. Secondly, career outcomes were measured with career outcome expectations (COE) was developed by Hackett, Betz, Casas and Rocha-Singh (1992). In Jenkins and Chuang study from 2001 this measure was partially modified due to their main goal of the research, which was career intention and motivation. Since this study relates in some points with this research, their modified scale was used to measure career outcomes expectations. More specifically, 7 items were implemented into the measuring instrument for the purpose of this research including people interaction, employment opportunities, monetary rewards, and others. Thirdly, talent management practices were measured with talent management scale designed by Chen (2012) and Hung (2013) and modified by Jayaraman, Talib & Khan 2018. Talent management scale was mostly used in HR practices, specifically to measure companies' readiness to invest in talent. From 26 items, this study will incorporate 4 items related to purpose of the research. Specifically, activities, development, opportunities, and feedback were main points of talent management measurement in this study. Finally, motivation measurement was evaluated by question of pursuing career in hospitality industry, where participants, in this case students, identified their level of motivation for this industry. Question was taken from Jenkins and Cheng research (2001), where their main point was also motivation and career intention measurement.

Questionnaires were distributed to hospitality students from Dubrovnik. Questionnaire was designed in 4 parts with a total of 17 items; in first part participants were asked to state their confidence level towards career planning and career decision (8 questions). Second and third part incorporated 5 items on a 1-5 Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree* and from *Never to Always* where career outcomes and talent management were measured.

Last part included one question which is motivation towards hospitality industry where the participants needed to explain their answer. This final question was pivotal in our questionnaire since it represents the main point of the whole research.

RESULTS

In this research 65 students majoring in Hospitality and Tourism major participated in the online based questionnaire. From those 65, 18 (27,7%) participants were sophomore students, 21 (32,3%) were junior students and 26(40%) were senior students. Freshmen students were excluded from the research since they did not complete any co-op yet through their college.20% of the participants were in the category of 18-20 years-of-age, 72,3% in 21-24 years of age while 7,7% were 25 or older. (Table 1). All the participants were from RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus.

TABLE 1

Sociodemographic data		
	N=65	%
AGE		
18-20	13	20%
21-24	47	72,3%
25+	5	7,7%
YEAR LEVEL		
Sophomore	18	27,7%
Junior	21	32,3%
Senior	26	40%

Source: Author 2020

DATA ANALYSIS

In Table 2 minimum, maximum, average and standard deviation values are presented. In that table, standard deviation has lower variation for self-efficacy (value<1), while for the career outcomes, talent management and motivation have higher variation (value>1). More specifically, for lower variation results are closer to the average while higher variation mean that results are spread out with higher values.

TABLE 2

	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	SD
SELF-EFFICACY	21	40	3,83	0,94
CAREER OUTCOMES	10	25	3,96	1,05
TALENT MANAGEMENT	4	20	3,29	1,33
MOTIVATION	1	5	3,5	1,24

Source: Author (2020)

When looking at variables, provided responses showed high level of confidence when it comes to career plans and hospitality as career (M=3,83, S 0,94). Precisely, students are confident in their capabilities and they would put effort in achieving successful career. Second variable is career outcomes with highest value (M=3,96, S=1,05). Focus of this variable was on providing level of agreement towards pursuing career in the hospitality, from interaction to people to stable job and secure employment. Results show students' agreement that hospitality career is beneficial, and it can provide desired outcomes. Third variable is talent management with lower score (M=3,29, S=1,33) where emphasis was put on previous co-op companies providing enough training and development to their employees. Result show slightly neutral opinions, where some companies provided some training and feedback while some of them did not. Last

variable is motivation with the result (M=3,5, S=1,24) that show mostly neutral opinions, but with variations in responses of ''don't know'' and ''most likely''.

Table 3 represent correlations between variables. Variables are tested through coefficient correlation test where relationships between variables were measured as positive or negative. Variables were tested according to set hypothesis.

TABLE 3

Correlation	SELF-EFFICACY	CAREER OUTCOMES	TALENT MANAGEMENT
MOTIVATION	**0,33****	**0,66****	**0,18**

Source: Author (2020)

The primary focus of this research was to measure students' motivation to consider hospitality as their career choice. The results showed significant positive correlation of self-efficacy and motivation (.33 $p<0,01$), which means that if the one variable increases the another will increase as well. The strongest positive correlation is for career outcomes (.66 $p<0,01$) and not significant correlation for talent management (.18 $p>0,01$).

Based on our set hypotheses we got the following results:

H1: *There is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and students' motivation to pursue a career in hospitality*. We confirmed our first hypothesis which showed significant positive relationship between these 2 variables. More specifically, we found the higher self-efficacy level is the higher the motivation to pursue hospitality as career choice.

H2: *There is a positive relationship between career outcomes offered and students' motivation to pursue a career in hospitality*. Our results confirmed second hypothesis where there is significant positive relationship between these 2 variables. Namely, career outcomes are positively related with the motivation to pursue hospitality as career choice

H3: *Properly implemented talent management practices will result in students' higher motivation to pursue a career in hospitality*. Last relationship was measured, and the results showed no significant relationship between these two variables. More precisely, talent management practices are not positively related with the motivation to pursue hospitality as career.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to measure self-efficacy, career outcomes and talent managements and their relationship with students' motivation to consider hospitality as career choice. We were prompted to research this topic due to an increased demand for employees(professionals) in hospitality sector. We have provided three hypotheses to the following research and prepared an instrument to measure relationships between the variables.

First relationship that we measured was self-efficacy with motivation, where it showed significant positive relationship. Precisely, if level of confidence increases the motivation will increase as well. This confirms previous researchers where they confirmed that higher level of self-efficacy would result in confidence to achieve certain goal or achievements, which in our case is motivation to consider hospitality as career choice. Given the results of this relationship, we came to conclusion that hospitality students are confident in their career choice and goal achievement. Furthermore, we examined relationship between career outcomes which for

example are dynamic work environment, job security and stability, people interaction, upward mobility, etc. and motivation. The results showed also significant positive relationship between these two variables. Specifically, that career outcomes offered are strong factors related to young people while considering hospitality career. Unlike this research Atef and Belushi (2017) that presented low students' motivation towards hospitality due to lack of career opportunities and hospitality being perceived as low salary industry. Interestingly, our results are contrasting Atef and Belushi (2017). Hospitality as a career in our case is perceived as prosperous industry that students want to be part of. One of the possible explanations could be that the quality and experience of hospitality industry and companies differ in samples youth. More specifically, given the various reasons that hospitality provides from people interaction, secure employment, and promotions they showed high level of agreement to pursue this career choice.

Last variable examined was talent management practices and its relationship with motivation. The results showed no significant relationship, meaning that talent management practices are not related towards motivation to consider hospitality as career choice. Our results contradict the research done by Scoot and Revis (2008) where they found the importance of talent management practices and students career management. Our results showed that talent management practices still needed to be improved or implemented properly. Having well-implemented training and development activities would create a difference towards students' perception of the hospitality companies and industry itself. Another reason that may explain our results is the fact that our sample was predominantly consisted of students completing their co-ops. This may have influenced their perception because they were not fully exposed to talent management tools that companies offer.

In addition, reasons for choosing hospitality industry were mainly due to people interaction, job opportunities and personal growth in the career development. This is no surprise since interaction makes the job more dynamic and as such, we expected these results.

The value of this research may be beneficial to current hospitality students and hospitality companies. Students can further understand how their level of self-efficacy towards this industry is linked provided career opportunities. On the other hand, companies can see students' perception and improve their strategies when attracting students as their workforce. For example, they have lot of room to improve their talent management practices, since this field showed no major influence to pick hospitality as a career.

Only consideration left is for talent management practices that needed to be improved or implemented to increase overall perception about company and industry itself. Engaging and developing students' abilities at work could create a difference and competitive advantage towards other companies and industries. Investing in this particular workforce segment would be beneficial for companies but for students as well. Since their motivation would increase and their effectiveness at work would be at higher levels, companies would be able to be innovative in the creation of products and services.

Overall, results showed that current students' attitude toward the industry is positive. This can, in a part, be explained due to preparation through education and their co-op experiences.

LIMITATIONS

Through our research we had certain limitations related to questionnaires distribution due to current global crisis caused by COVID-19. Questionnaires needed to be distributed in the online form which was not planned at the beginning of our study, which affected our final number of responses. With having a smaller sample size and that sample taken from RIT Croatia only, we assume that responses could have been different if there were more participants. In addition, some of the answers were influenced by current market situation which is not favorable for any industry and especially for hospitality.

FUTURE RESEARCH

One recommendation that we can propose is to include participants pursuing different fields of study (not related to hospitality) and their perception of the hospitality career.

Specifically, how is hospitality perceived from students majoring in other fields of study. Then it would be possible to make a comparison between hospitality and IT students' perception towards hospitality industry. Those results would be beneficial for hospitality companies to know how to attract specific workforce and retain them. Finally, further research should be based on observation or focus groups to get better insight in their opinions and perceptions.

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