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### CAREER ATTITUDES OF POTENTIAL TOURISM SPECIALISTS

**Abstract:** This article examines the career attitudes of potential specialists in tourism. It presents the results of an empirical study conducted among students majoring in Tourism at the Faculty of Economics of St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria. These results are analyzed by a complex of methods. Key conclusions are drawn, on the basis of which solutions are proposed. It turns out that adequate knowledge of the characteristics of the young generations is of key importance for future employers, necessary for proper adaptation to the job conditions they offer.

**Keywords:** human resources; career attitudes; students; tourism; Generation Z.

#### Introduction

Career development is a process that concerns the aspiration and desire of employees to develop in a professional field. On the other hand, this process depends on the working conditions created in the organization. Managers are those who, with their management style and desire to develop staff, can contribute to effective career development, which will be favourable for achieving the organization's goals. The work between employees and managers must be in symbiosis to yield the desired results for both parties. In order to arrive at career development, however, one must take into account the career attitudes with which workers embark on their career path. These steps of recognition and development are part of human resource management – one of the most complex processes due to the diverse human nature.

The application of methods, means and practices, as well as the choice of motivators aimed at the employee, can be different over the years. These dynamics can be attributed to the change in expectations and attitudes towards the workplace. The misconception of some corporate structures that the motivation of employees

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is mainly reduced to high pay turns out to be inapplicable in today's living conditions, deteriorated demographic structure, and new type of workforce.

Quality of life is another important factor that influences a person's aspirations. Ts. Tsanova¹ defines the concept as comprehensive – in a broad sense, it is associated with the social and economic state of society, and in a narrow sense, the quality of life is a set of subjective and objective characteristics of the life of the population, with subjective sensations coming to the fore. This is the situation of a large part of new workforce in the market, as they basically grew up in conditions of over-satisfied needs. It is Generation Z that brings the new and different in business organizations, the specificity of the environment in which it was formed in terms of life and career development expectations. It is these attitudes and expected standard of living that are key to the development of organizations aiming to attract personnel with the highest potential to achieve their goals.

The object of this study are the career attitudes among the trainees for future realization on the labor market. The subject are the students majoring in Tourism at the Faculty of Economics of St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria.

The main tasks facing the authors are:

- brief presentation of aspects of the science of human resources in relation to the subject of the study;
- collecting, summarizing, and analyzing data from an empirical study among undergraduate students in Tourism at the above-mentioned university;
- deriving recommendations for a better understanding of the expectations of future personnel in tourism.

The methods and means to achieve the goals set include literature review, statistical method, content analysis method, empirical studies, synthesis, analysis, etc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> **Tsanova, Ts.** Theoretical and Methodological Basis of the Concept "Quality of Life" and Its Development as an Economic and Social Category. *Dialog*, vol. 2, 2021, p. 61.

Through this report, the authors aim to contribute to the expansion of the scientific and applied literature on tourism and to offer practical guidance to businesses and organizations in tourism, regarding the understandings of Generation Z for their future realization in the field.

# **Theoretical Overview**

Human resources are the lifeblood of organizations and are believed to have over 100 years of history in scholarly works. As a synonym for human resources in theory and practice, the term *human capital* can be found. In her monographic work, M. Karailieva<sup>2</sup> defines the theory of human capital as knowledge distinguished by sustainable relevance. In her view, competition in tourism puts human capital first as the most essential factor for creating prerequisites for competitive advantage. The scholar examines the concept in a narrow and broad sense. In the first case, human capital includes the knowledge, competence, experience, and potential of people, while in the second case, the concept is considered by the market and non-market aspects of the investment process of people.

In her work, V. Hristova defines labour resources as the main source of human resources in organizations, regardless of their size, sphere of activity, or form of ownership. They are represented as a compact force of the working population in a particular country or region, which can perform certain activity aimed at the production of certain goods<sup>3</sup>. Human resources are also considered a key element for achieving their success. In his study, A. Zahariev<sup>4</sup> directly connects them with potential economic growth, which is formed by business organizations performing certain activities and processes.

 $<sup>^2</sup>$  **Караилиева, М.** *Човешкият капитал в туризма*. София: Нов български университет, 2018, с. 23–25

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> **Христова, В.** Бъдещето на труда в хибридния модел на работа ли е? – В: *Изграждане на работещи партньорства и насърчаване на изследователската активност и креативност на студенти, докторанти и млади учени. В. Търново: УИ "Св. св. Кирил и Методий", 2023, с. 28–36.* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Захариев, А. Финансово управление на човешките ресурси. Свищов: АИ "Ценов", 2017, с. 55

In this regard, T. Hristova<sup>5</sup> defines the purpose of human resources as a special consistency in the organization, which brings together people performing collective work for the creation of a certain final product related to the realization of the goals and results of the organization. In the concept of consistency of people, the author highlights the individual differences that together form the collective work. On the basis of these differences, the same scholar defines three elements: degree of satisfaction, degree of suitability, and degree of motivation. These factors play a key role in the organizational environment from recruitment to implementation. By knowing and analyzing them, an accurate approach can be formed, the right incentives can be chosen and offered, and the way of thinking and attitudes of the individuals in the team can be actively worked on. As soon as human resource company managers realize how significant they are, they would create the most appropriate conditions related to their needs. Management actions should be hierarchically arranged, so that the motivation of human resources is given high priority.

Another important aspect in the study of human resources is their motivation and the management of mechanisms for individual and group motivation. The fact that Frederick Herzberg points out in his *Motivation to Work*<sup>6</sup> is interesting, as he forms a theory about the two factors of motivation. Based on his research in various work situations, Herzberg concluded that there are two key factors that determine people's motivation to work: the hygiene factor (which affects the feeling of job dissatisfaction and includes elements such as wages, safety of work, interpersonal relations, and working conditions) and a motivating factor (that influences the sense of job satisfaction and includes job attractiveness, opportunity for achievement, professional growth, and taking responsibility). The author believes that the employee pays attention to his/her remuneration and working conditions only if they are not fair. Here, human resource management is also key to forming

<sup>5</sup> Hristova, T. Management of Human Resources. London: Princeps, 1996, pp. 19–23

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Herzberg, F. Motivation to Work. New York: Routledge, 1993.

a sustainable workforce with an eye towards working conditions, leading to staff development and satisfaction.

Currently, various human capital studies have determined that work is not a primary means of survival in life. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* from 1989, Stephen Covey determined that skilled people placed in a poor system will perform poorly. When there is effective organization of work, then limitations can be overcome. Since 2014, the European Commission has been monitoring Member States' progress in the digital field through the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) reports. Each year, the DESI includes country profiles that assist Member States in identifying areas requiring priority action<sup>8</sup>.

The study of the characteristics of each generation is a process related to the consideration of specifics in the needs, attitudes, values, motives, and way of thinking of the relevant group of people at a similar age, who grew up and reached maturity at a certain period of time and were influenced by certain social factors. Representatives of different generations meet in the labour market, which is seen as a positive model for solving various organizational issues in the context of the experience and characteristics of all representatives.

According to McCrindle,<sup>9</sup> there are seven generations: the Federation Generation (born before 1925), Builders (born 1925–1946), Boomers (born 1946–1964), X-ers (born 1965–1979), Y-ers (born 1980–1994), Zeds (born 1995–2009), and Alpha (born after 2010). Nowadays, there are four generations in the labour market: Boomers, X-ers, Y-ers, and Zeds. Each of them has its own attitude to work, its own values, and its own motivations<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Covey, S. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Sofia: Kibea, 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> **Бянов, И. Бянова, Н.** Цифровизация на българската икономика в Европейския съюз. – В: *Сб. от* юбилейна научна конференция по случай 85 години катедра "Обща икономическа теория" "Икономика и икономическа теория: проблеми и взаимодействия". Варна, октомври 2022 г. Варна: "Наука и икономика", 2022, с. 368–375

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> **McCrindle, M.** *Word Up: A Lexicon of Generations Y & Z: A Guide to Communicating with Them.* Australia: McCrindle Research Pty Ltd, 2006.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> **Пенкова,** Д. Анализ на тенденциите в развитието на мениджмънта в туристическата индустрия. − В: Сборник от научно-практическа конференция "Човешкият капитал – методология, измерения и практики". София: НБУ, 2015, с. 410–448

In this article, the representatives of Generation  $Z^{11}$  are of research interest, who are a sample of empirical research and the basis of scientific study.

# **Research Methodology**

To achieve the objectives of the research, a survey was conducted among full-time undergraduate students majoring in Tourism at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Veliko Tarnovo. The students surveyed were 89 out of 166 (or nearly 54%) studying in the academic year 2022/2023. The average age of the respondents was 20.5 years, with 70% being female and 30% male.

To conduct the research, a questionnaire was compiled with closed and open-ended questions, aiming to reveal the specific expectations of the sample group on the subject of the career attitudes of future tourism specialists. The responses were collected from Generation Z, which is estimated to make up 11% of the workforce in the labour market, and whose employment will increase in the coming years. <sup>12</sup> It is important to specify that more than 50% of the respondents have worked or are currently working, and some of them have accumulated experience outside the country.

The topic of generational characteristics and career attitudes is relevant both among academic circles and among a number of organizations researching market trends and human capital. This study was proprietary and is aimed at a specific target audience of students. It was carried out for the first time and included questions developed by the authors of the article.

 $<sup>^{11}</sup>$  According to one of the most popular classifications, that of Mark McCrindle, they were born between 1995 and 2009. According to some Bulgarian researchers, the beginning of the period for those born in Bulgaria is 1992 (associated with the changes after 1989), and for others – 1997 (as a reflection of the economic crisis in the country).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> The data are from the "Generation Profiles Analysis. Profile of Generation Z" of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce under the project "Joint Actions of the Social Partners to Adapt the Working Environment to the Specific Age Needs of the Different Generations, with the Aim of Promoting a Longer Working Life and Ability to Work" (2019–2021).

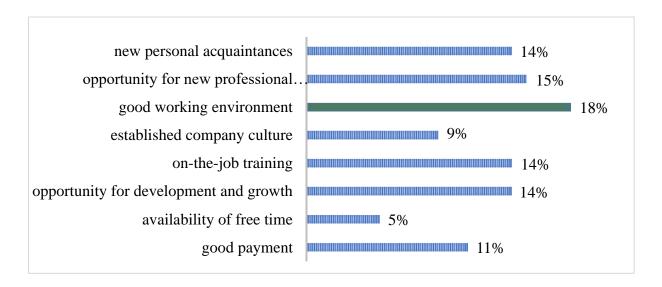
### **Results**

In order to achieve the goals and objectives set in this paper, certain results regarding personal opinion on key issues related to the professional realization of each of the respondents should be established. Students answered depending on their understanding of future professional realization and on the basis of their personal and professional experience. As a result of the survey, we will trace key questions and answers that can be a good basis for employers in the tourism sector, as well as complement, confirm, or reject results of other surveys with a similar focus.

The first question reveals the students' expectations and their preferences regarding the mode of employment. Just over 48% indicated that they would prefer to work on an employment contract, and only 3% would prefer to work as freelancers. This question does not fully justify the general perception of Generation Z and its attitude of seeking frequent change. Labour relations prove to be a prerequisite for finding a safe working environment and permanent income. Job insecurity is a factor that can negatively affect the desire and aspirations of personnel for professional development and qualification improvement in order to achieve higher results at work. The high percentage of those wishing to work on an employment contract shows the maturity of the generation. These results are confirmed by the analyses of ManpowerGroup Bulgaria<sup>13</sup>. In their survey of Bulgarian students conducted in 2021 with the aim of helping Bulgarian companies "adapt to the expectations, needs and attitudes of young talent," they found that Bulgarian students, despite being at the very beginning of their career path, avoid opportunities for short-term employment, but look for long-term employment with a perspective of three to five years.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> **ManpowerGroup.** Career Expectations of Young Talents 2022: Results and Perspectives. [online] [Accessed: 28 October 2023]. Available at https://manpower.bg/uploads/pdf/blog/Career\_expectations\_of\_young\_talents.pdf

Another survey question revealed personal satisfaction for each of the survey's proposed statements, which are presented in Fig. 1 and refer to the conditions offered by an employer at the workplace.



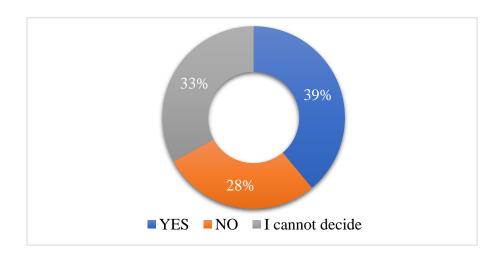
**Figure 1.** Personal Satisfaction for Each of the Statements
Related to the Conditions Offered by an Employer at the Workplace (in %)

A good working environment turns out to be a key factor leading to a high level of satisfaction, and 18% of the respondents give their support for it. Next are the creation of new professional contacts, personal acquaintances, as well as opportunities for training and professional growth. This leading indicator is part of the characteristics of young people, and according to the Study of Generational Characteristics of the Workforce in Bulgaria<sup>14</sup>, it is clear that Generation Z is looking for a good working environment and does not tolerate a lack of security in the workplace. From this study, women (about 60%) emerged as more critical than men in evaluating and seeking a good work environment. Pay ranks 4th in importance, which shows that at this stage of their development, students are looking for opportunities for career development as a priority over pay. In comparison, opportunities for career growth rank first in the ManpowerGroup Bulgaria survey.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The data are from the Final Analytical Report on the study of the generational characteristics of the workforce in Bulgaria under the project "Joint Actions of the Social Partners to Adapt the Working Environment to the Specific Age Needs of the Different Generations, with the Aim of Promoting a Longer Working Life and Ability to Work" of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce, 2020.

The next two questions reveal an interesting dependence in reporting the answers, namely the questions related to the desire to work in a team and personal satisfaction. The cross-analysis shows that over 45% of the respondents prefer to work in a team to achieve the organization's goals, and only 18% put individual work as a priority. On the other hand, 90% of both groups of students prefer receiving non-material incentives over material ones such as a car, computer, phone, etc. In comparison, the results related to material and non-material incentives in this study differ significantly from the results presented at the national level in the ManpowerGroup Bulgaria report. The reason for this difference may be rooted in factors such as family upbringing, personal experience, level of generational maturity, etc. This question is key for managers and for achieving the organization's goals.

With the emergence and development of new professions, such as influencer, the respondents were provoked to answer a question related to the existence of a hobby. Fig. 2 reveals an interesting aspect in young people's understanding of future professional development.

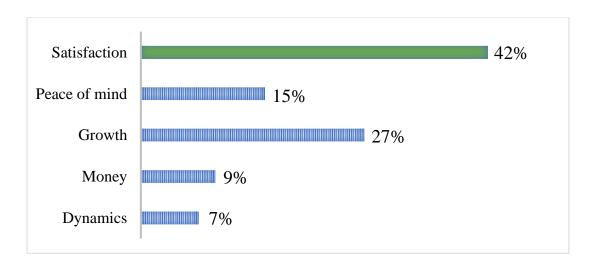


**Figure 2.** Answers to the Question "If You Have a Hobby, Do You Expect It to Become Your Future Profession?"

Figure 2 clearly shows that 39% of the students have expectations of turning their hobby into a profession, and 28% do not think this is possible. There is a serious group of 33% who have no opinion, as they have not thought about this

possibility. This question reveals the tendency of young people to use, in addition to their specific knowledge in a given direction, the so-called soft skills that facilitate easier adaptation in social and professional terms. The ability to communicate and easily fit in in different teams, to present themselves in the best way, to develop their creative thinking, etc. are valuable qualities for overcoming stress, critical moments and conflicts, and for achieving high results. A hobby gives individuality to each person and shows that he/she has a desire, qualities and skills outside the established or pursued professional field.

Another question related to the individual characteristics of the respondents outlines their attitude related to recognition in the profession.



**Figure 3.** Responses to the Question "If You Had to Describe Your Dream Job in One Word, What Would the Word Be?"

The largest number of respondents indicated the word *satisfaction* as a characteristic of their dream job. Definitions such as *dynamics* and *money* remain in the last two places with the lowest percentage. In the report of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce mentioned above in the text, in the profile of Generation Z, the statement is clearly defined that it is key for them to make sense of what they do. For this reason, representatives of the generation prefer organizations with a good public reputation, with a clearly defined mission, strategic goal and vision.

In this sense, precise and clear goals and set tasks are crucial to achieving the best results, and hence the necessary satisfaction of human resources.

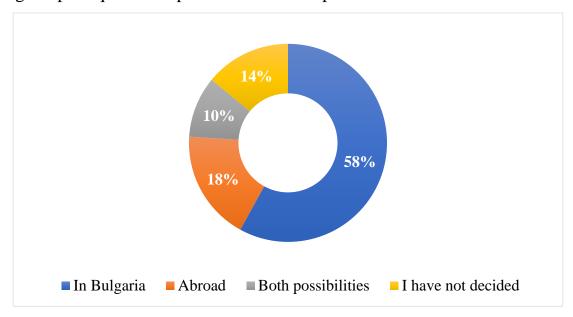
To reveal more of the students' expectations for the future workplace, they were asked how they would recognize the desired workplace and what they would associate it with? The most common answers were:

- Personal satisfaction from what I do;
- The desire to be at the workplace, even outside working hours;
- A cohesive team, peace of mind, and security;
- To feel valued;
- To be happy and smiling;
- A good work–free time ratio;
- High pay compared to the work involved;
- To willingly go to work;
- Opportunity to develop and grow professionally.

Another key question was "What shortcoming do you most often find in the working conditions offered by employers?". The answers clustered around the following:

- High requirements, low pay;
- Lack of professional growth;
- Long working week;
- Weak organization of the work process;
- Failure to comply with the promised working conditions;
- Incorrectness on the part of employers;
- Underestimation of the work done;
- Combining 2–3 positions by one person;
- Non-payment of overtime and assigned additional duties;
- Lack of training;
- Disrespect for the opinion of the workers.

Despite the negatives, the trainees were unanimous that in Bulgaria, there is a good prerequisite for professional development in the sector.



**Figure 4.** Answers to the Question "Where Would You Prefer to Find a Job: In Bulgaria or Abroad?"

About 58% stated that they preferred to work in Bulgaria, and 18% abroad. Nearly 10% did not reject both options, and 14% have not yet decided. The current data coincide in terms of preferences with the study of ManpowerGroup Bulgaria, where the students' desire for professional realization in Bulgaria (44%) is again the leading one, at the expense of those who would work abroad if they were given this opportunity (38%). Certainly, these data are a good prerequisite for Bulgarian employers to use already trained personnel and to offer them suitable conditions for work and career development.

Interesting are the comments FOR and AGAINST working in Bulgaria or abroad. In general, there are different opinions and contradictory statements regarding the potential of the labour market in Bulgaria. Not a small percentage of the respondents (35%) believe that realization in Bulgaria would be much easier, since there is not as much competition as there is outside the country's borders. These same students shared the opinion that there were more niches for development in Bulgaria, which would create a chance for faster success.

At the other extreme was the opinion that the level of business in Bulgaria was not high, and also that the pay was low and insufficient for a "normal" life. One comment is also impressive, according to which employers in Bulgaria are looking for ready-made personnel and are not inclined to train or accept students in practice. It is a common opinion that success in the country comes with a lot of persistence and ambition. Some of the respondents said that they would work in Bulgaria, but for foreign companies. Thus, they believe that their personal and professional interests would be protected, and also that they would get the desired level of realization in foreign companies. Regarding the desired countries for development, Switzerland and the USA are mentioned.

Apart from professional motives, a positive assessment of the students for realization in Bulgaria, the presence of more favourable conditions for raising children than abroad is determined. They believe that they should keep their Bulgarian roots and that their children should grow up close to their relatives.

# **Discussion**

The career attitudes of future tourism specialists largely coincide with the general attitudes of young people in Bulgaria. This conclusion is possible thanks to other recent studies carried out in the labour market. In this regard, the presented research can be a good basis for deepening and analyzing the topic among the sampled target group and the new students in Tourism at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Veliko Tarnovo, and thus a sustainable strategy for supporting career development among young talents can be built and upgraded.

Part of the data obtained from the empirical study draws attention to certain conclusions, such as:

- employment relationships are a prerequisite for ensuring a safe working
   environment and permanent income;
  - a good working environment is a key factor for young people;
  - teamwork is preferred over individual work;

- non-material incentives are highly valued over material ones;
- the hobby has the potential to become a field of professional realization;
- the dream job is related to the word *satisfaction*;
- Bulgaria is the preferred place for professional realization.

The personal opinion of students also directs certain expectations towards employers. It can be seen that they give informed answers and opinions on the issues related to professional realization. To a certain extent, they are aware of what they can and are willing to contribute to the workplace, and at the same time, what are the factors that would prevent them. Poorly developed management, the lack of a clear strategy and goals in the organization, poor conditions for career development, failure to keep promises, labour law, etc. are among the disadvantages that lead to frustration and lack of desire to work in specific organizations or sometimes in an entire economic sector.

Several basic recommendations related to the expectations of future personnel in tourism can be formulated:

- remuneration tied to real economic conditions;
- favourable working environment with conditions for professional growth;
- managing teams and deepening the cooperation between their members;
- appropriate material and non-material incentives according to expectations;
- conditions for finding and developing talents;
- personal assessment of workers and recognition of successes;
- offering more attractive conditions than those of competitors, etc.

The commitment of employers to the learning process in academic environments is a means of proving professional morality and attitude to future personnel. The students' answers show their dissatisfaction with the fact that most of the organizations do not allocate resources such as time, material base, and personal presence in the educational process. If this happens consciously by the representatives of business structures and organizations, the relationship with young people will be direct, with commitment, understanding and depth in the

analyzed groups of motives and guidelines for talent development from the educational environment.

## **Conclusion**

The topic of career attitudes is rooted in human resource management, provoking academics, practitioners, psychologists, labour market analysts and others to seek solutions to real and potential challenges. The subject is dynamic due to changing generations, living environment, and career opportunities.

In the study among students, it was found that a large part of them have a clear vision and expectations for the workplace. This fact does not bring the necessary benefits on its own, since the process of securing the desired job is two-way and requires the commitment of representatives from the practice. In this regard, it can be summarized that the academic environment is favourable from the point of providing logistics in the educational environment–learners–business process and that it is a key factor in achieving a competitive educational and management product with a vision for the future.

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