

EXAMINATION OF SERVICE-FIRM PERCEPTIONS OF TECHNOLOGY AMONG MULTIGENERATIONAL GROUPINGS

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Abstract

The Service-firm workforce in America is becoming increasingly diverse and specifically in the hospitality industry where technology and innovation play a key role in customer service. There is increasing concern how to effectively lead a Service-firm workforce that spans several generational groups. In the highly competitive Service-Firm industry, leaders are concerned with high employee turnover rates that reduce both productivity and profits for their companies. CEOs and managers are always looking for ways to attract and retain workers through technology and innovation, because potential employees are attracted to those organizations that devise new ideas and ways of making the business and the work environment exciting.

The focus of this study is to explore generational similarities and differences in terms of; perceptions Service-firm employees hold about technology and innovation within the organizational structure and work environment. Leaders in the hospitality Service-firm industry recognize the ability to source and retain employees long-term is fundamental to improving customer services. Since the Hospitality Industry is growing at exponential rates, bringing with it workforce challenges that include differing views of technology among generational groups. These issues, related to Service firm human capital, are becoming more complex as the workforce becomes increasingly multigenerational. This has created unique challenges for both individuals and organizations in today's society. To facilitate improved performance and retention of Service-firm employees in the hospitality industry, increased knowledge of multigenerational perceptions about technology and innovation is beneficial.

In the Service-firm industry, the vitality of the organization lies in the spirit of its employees and is closely linked to job satisfaction and employee morale. Work environment that fosters employee satisfaction is key to providing marketable customer service experiences that are realized in increased profits. This study investigated the workplace perspectives of Service-firm employees as it pertains to multigenerational groupings and their views of technology and job satisfaction overall.

The mixed methodology focus group and survey instrumentation designed research project incorporates a (N=2,577) sample. Information was obtained and analyzed through secondary data analysis, namely principle component analysis and multi-item scale development. Data was measured through a combination of descriptive statistical measures, Pearson correlations, and One-Way and Multivariate Analysis of Variance. The data analyzed created is expected to provide a greater understanding of how to develop and retain highly productive multigenerational human capital, while also investigating their perceptions of technology. Added to the literature on leading a multigenerational Service-firm workforce, were the principles of value creation and innovation in Service-firms. The information from this study will help guide Service-firm industry leaders in developing policies, processes, and practices that create a work environment and employees who are technologically integrated across multigenerational groupings. It is believed that cultivating contributions of multiple generational perspectives of technology, among Service-firm workers, can also be effective in creating a competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

Keywords

Technology, multigenerational workforce, service-firm leadership

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry represents a significant component of the overall US economy consisting of over 5% of the gross national product. Following years of depressed revenues and deferred capital investment in physical plant infrastructure, the hospitality industry has been experiencing a significant period of economic uncertainty [1]. A contributing factor behind this uncertainty is that competitive forces within the industry are driving service-firm leaders toward an increased focus on improving guest perception of service as a means of maintaining and expanding market share while improving profitability [2].

Leaders in the hospitality service-firm industry recognize that the ability to source and retain employees long-term is fundamental to improving guest services. According to leaders at the Disney Institute by “creating service heroes of your employees only then will you have a workforce that anticipates the needs, wants and emotions of your customers”. Business leaders who provide training opportunities for their employees that engage them in co-creating the vision and objectives for the organization in providing excellent customer service often experience increased retention and reduced employee turnover. In addition to hotel location, quality standards, and leaders who deliver on service promises, guests mention employee attitudes as a defining factor influencing their choice and loyalty to a particular hotel or food and beverage services business. Because these service line employees interact day-to-day with guests through technology systems, they exert a powerful influence on whether customers develop negative or positive impressions of their experiences.

The challenge for hospitality industry leaders of today is how to create supportive work environments for an increasingly diverse population of multigenerational employees and work groups. With a global economy, the aging population in many of the developed economies means that, increasingly, employees will be sourced from all over the world. Essential in effective leadership within the hospitality industry will be the need to develop new standards of human resource management in order to connect with an increasingly more diverse workforce that reflects a multigenerational, micro-cosmos of religious, nationalities, and culturally diverse backgrounds.

NEED FOR STUDY

The majority of companies in the hospitality industry operate within large-scale, bureaucratic organizational structure with communication and the flow of information in a highly structured and formalized manner [5]. Leadership is usually top-down and transactional, focused on reacting to and solving problems. Many popular hotel chains (i.e.; Hyatt Hotel Corporation, Holiday Inn, Starwood Hotels, and Harrah's) have achieved success with the hierarchy based organizational structure and scientific approach to management delivery. However, my lived experiences within the hospitality industry have led me to believe there are limitations to the scientific based management approach and current division of work based on large-scale bureaucratic structure prevalent within the industry. My experience in dealing with current multigenerational workers indicates changing perspectives and practice of employee behavior geared more towards work-life balance, appreciation and inclusiveness in decision-making processes.

Leading hospitality organizations across the country (i.e., Disney, Marriott, and Four Seasons) have implemented policies and practices that require, to some degree, collaboration and cooperation among workers to increase productivity and provide the highest quality goods and services to customers. The hospitality industry conducts business in a highly competitive global economy and conflict among workers can adversely affect the efficient delivery of high quality service [6]. Researchers indicate it is crucial for hospitality leaders and managers to understand multigenerational similarities and differences in worldview, attitudes, work philosophy, and ways of interacting with others, enabling them to make informed decisions in creating positive working conditions that attract and retain highly productive workers [7].

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to explore, using a secondary analysis of existing survey data, the similarities and differences in the expectations, worldviews, and work philosophies of hospitality industry employees from each of the generational groups in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the leadership challenges facing the hospitality industry. The research questions for this study were designed to explore the unique perspectives individuals from each

generational cohort bring to their interactions with others and their views of technology within the organization.

Multigenerational perspectives among hospitality workforce employees differ in many areas. Specific research within the hospitality industry regarding leadership approach and organizational process has been limited, my desire is to explore the phenomenon of varying perspectives within the multigenerational hospitality workforce in order to offer improved ways of leading and connecting with employees thereby reducing turnover and increasing retention. Examination of the generational cohorts can clarify the multifaceted approaches each of the generations take to their work, technological orientation and overall workplace environment

PROFILE OF GENERATIONAL GROUPS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Within the last seventy-five years, advances in technology have transformed the world, with people living longer in societies that are more diverse and complex than in the past: issues about life and work are often discussed within the context of a multigenerational global society [8]. Researchers and social scientists who study the effects of population on society, use the term “generation” to refer to people born in the same general time span who share key life experiences perceptions about the world, and how one interacts with it, are influenced by the era during which one is born and raised. The effects of those key life experiences tend to be relatively stable over the course of their lives. Due to these distinct key life experiences, each generation develops a personality that determines members of each generation’s feelings toward authority and organizations [9]. For example, members of generations who come of age in lean times or war years tend to think and act differently than those born and raised in peace and abundance. The generational personality is also likely to determine what individuals want from work, what kind of workplace environment they desire and how they plan to satisfy those wants and desires. Due to generational differences, these wants and desires tend to vary from generation to generation. Broadly speaking, in the United States, the formative years of one generation occurred when the country was experiencing economic depression, uncertainty, and a nation at war (i.e., the Great Depression, WWI, WWII, Vietnam Conflict, Gulf War(s) while another generation were raised during periods of economic abundance, distanced from the effects of national or world conflict [10]. Therefore, people from different generations may have problems understanding others’ perspectives about work, creating stress, confusion, and frustration in a demanding workplace like the hospitality industry.

Workers in the hospitality industry are represented by three primary generational groups who hold different views about the world, country, work, and self: Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials. Following is a brief profile of each generational group presented below [11].

Baby Boomers (1946-1964): These individuals, born during or shortly after World War II, were raised in an era of extreme optimism, opportunity, and progress. Boomers, for the most part, grew up in two-parent households with the mother as primary care-giver and the father as sole income earner. They lived in neighborhoods and attended schools that were relatively free from crime and violence. During the period of post-war prosperity, large manufacturing and service-oriented companies generally provided their workers with job security and Baby Boomers expected to begin their careers and retire from the same company. They represent about two-thirds of all U.S. workers. On the job, they value loyalty, respect the organizational hierarchy, and generally wait their turn for advancement.

Generation X or Gen-Xers (1965-1980): As members of the generation following the Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers were born into a rapidly changing social climate dominated by social and civil unrest, and advances in science and technology that moved the average citizen into the computer age. They grew up in two-career families in a society with rising divorce rates, an economy in recession, increased crime and violence in schools, corporate downsizing, and loss of job security. On the job, they can be fiercely independent, like to be in control, and want fast feedback

Millennials (1981-1999): The children of Baby Boomers or early Gen-Xer parents, Millennials were born into the current high-tech, neo-optimistic times. Although the youngest workers, they are fast learners, impatient, and the most technologically adept.

MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE ERA

Because of the high growth rate of the hospitality industry, the age-span of workers in today's labor market has widened and the workforce has become multigenerational. This has created unique challenges for both individuals and organizations in today's society [12]. Many employers are faced with situations involving employees who are unable to work together productively, often due to differing perspectives in ages, values, morals, and ways of dealing with each other. The affects of multigenerational differences has been experienced in the hospitality and other industries because people are remaining in the workforce longer creating environments where employees often experience confusion, frustration, and stress when working with individuals outside their own generational groups. According to researchers, in the fast-paced global economy with increased pressure for higher productivity and quicker results, the demand for collaboration and compromise has intensified. Multigenerational differences in perspectives create fertile ground for conflict and an "us vs. them" mentality that results in job dissatisfaction, high employee turnover, and decreased productivity [13]. The hospitality industry that provides services for their customer base is especially sensitive to the underlying tension of multigenerational conflict in the workplace.

Through their efforts to increase productivity and improve employee retention, leaders and managers are beginning to recognize that generational perspectives, learning styles, perceptions of technology and technology use, ways of interacting with others, and the hopes employees bring to the workplace are influenced as much by age as they are by gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and culture. In the past individuals from different generations had worked in the same organization, however, they were usually separated from each other by the nature of their job and their position in the company hierarchy. The oldest or veteran employees, typically white males, held supervisory positions, mid-career employees served in middle management, and the youngest employees, mostly Gen-Xers, worked at entry level or non-supervisory positions. Additionally, the command-and-control hierarchical structure of most organizations, governed by formality and protocol often restricted the "mixing" of workers from different generational groups; employees interacted mostly with their peers and less often with their supervisors. Collaboration and sharing power in the decision-making process was very limited. Typically, veteran employees were the decision-makers who issued directives that were then handed down and communicated to younger workers through the line supervisor. Feedback from lower level employees was not solicited and the reasoning or justification behind orders given generally was not provided [14].

Through the sharing of diverse perspectives and ideas, a positive, creative synergy can be introduced into the problem solving process. A drawback to generational blending and integration is that it can lead to inter-generational conflict in the workplace due to different perspectives related to appropriate work attire, values, worldviews, and ways of working, talking, and thinking [15]. Within the bureaucratic organizational system predominating corporations in the hospitality industry, is an increasingly diverse workforce. Leaders are faced with the challenge of managing and leading workers that range in age from 17 or 18 to employees in their late 60s and 70s. Based on their year of birth, Americans belong to one of four generations: Veterans, Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials. Not only are there notable differences in each of the generational groupings there exists the phenomenon of bringing each of their perspectives together within a common work or organizational environment [16]. Major demographic shifts are occurring in the overall workforce and by 2010, employees aged 35-45 will be in the prime of their career contribution to the workplace. The majority of mid-level managers are hired from this group and it is expected that there will be a 10% decrease in the number of workers available to fill these leadership positions. With a decreasing labor force as Baby Boomers retire, in the hospitality industry every skilled worker of every age will be needed in every successful enterprise.

Today, the US labor force is predominantly comprised of workers from three generational groups: Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials. The challenge for hospitality industry leaders is to create a work environment for a multigenerational labor force reliant on technological advancement that fosters collaboration, job satisfaction, and productivity. Because specific approaches that are effective for workers of one generational group may not necessarily work for another, leaders have the challenge of finding a balance between the competing work ethics, desired work structure, leadership approaches, and technological needs of their employees [17]. Individual examination of the generational cohorts can provide a clearer picture of the complex approaches each of the generations take to their work and workplace environment.

The hospitality industry is staffed by a multigenerational workforce and the workplace is influenced by the social, political, and cultural norms that workers of each generational cohort bring to their jobs. Examination of current organizational theory underscores the necessity of understanding how key factors affect the ability of multigenerational workforce leaders to achieve organizational goals. These factors include: (1) flattening of bureaucratic organizational structures, (2) transitioning of information acquisition from seeking the wisdom of older colleagues to utilizing information technology, and (3) a shifting in culture for peer to peer relationships from one of deference to one of assertiveness and inter-activeness goals [18]. Effective leadership of a multigenerational workforce requires an understanding of worker values and expectations, within and across the different generational groups. Researchers are finding that the command-control leadership style pervasive in bureaucratic organizations is no longer effective in leading a workforce that is increasingly multigenerational.

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS

The secondary analysis of the data used in the study was collected from an original survey study conducted by a mid-scale Hospitality Corporation in 2007. Using the original survey instrument a revised survey instrument was developed specifically for this secondary analysis of the original raw data.

The original study conducted by Gursoy and Swanger included 2,577 hourly staff and 494 managers working at the corporate office or at hotels located across several Western states. A list of employees was obtained from the corporate human resources department. At each hotel, the original survey was administered in a paper and pencil format to hourly employees during a scheduled meeting, sealed upon completion, and mailed directly to the researchers. Out of 2,577 hourly, 814 employee surveys were completed for a return rate of 31.59%. Managers at the individual hotels and headquarter office based executives used SurveyMonkey, a Web-based software program, to complete the survey using the internet. Access to SurveyMonkey was password protected and information was downloaded and converted to an SPSS data file format. An e-mail was sent to 474 managers and corporate office employees inviting them to participate: 374 (75.71%) manager/executive level employees completed the on-line version of the survey.

For the present study, a secondary analysis was conducted from the raw data collected by Gursoy and Swanger through their original Workplace Perception Survey (WPS) administered to 2,577 line-staff and managers, employed by the corporation under study. Participants included line-staff and managers from hotels located in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, as well as line-staff and managers at the headquarters office. Fifty-six items from the original survey developed by were dropped and the remaining 107 items were reorganized into the Job Opinion Survey (JOS) that consisted of eight multi-item scales: (a) Job Feelings Scale (JFS), (b) Workplace Feelings Scale (WFS), (c) Feelings About Older Workers Scale (FOWS), (d) Feelings About Younger Workers Scale (FOYW), (e) Feelings About Younger Managers Scale (FOYM), (f) Feelings About Older Managers Scale (FOMS), (g) Intent to Leave Scale (ILS), and (h) Leadership Qualities Scale (LQS) [19].

When discussing the various subscales of the JOS, the number of items in the subscale and individual subscale items are referenced using a set of abbreviations and numbers. Subscales were developed specifically for the present study using a principle component analysis of the original data set collected. The reliability of the subscales was strengthened through an iterative process of item analysis and scale reliabilities. Conceptual definitions of the variables were used for scale development. Initial development of the JOS involved the selection of a pool of items for each of the eight scales and modifying or creating additional items as needed. Items considered too narrow in focus or too ambiguous were eliminated from the initial pool. Following the initial process, items in each of the 19 components were examined through visual inspection based on conceptual dimensions. Following this initial process, items in each of the 19 components were examined through visual inspection for redundancy and ambiguous meaning. This resulted in the collapsed and final scale categories for the present study. Once items were grouped into one of the eight subscales, a reliability analysis was conducted. Based on item analyses and scale reliabilities, Cronbach's internal consistency reliability coefficient alpha values were used to make decisions about items to retain and delete from the final draft of the survey for the present study. The reliability coefficient values were found to have landed in the acceptable and desirable levels of 0.50 to 0.60 [20].

The research questions used for the study were as follows: (1) What are the demographic characteristics of the hospitality workforce sample? and (2) Are there significant generational and workforce perceptions of technology?

DATA ANALYSIS

The secondary analysis of data in this present study involved a combination of descriptive statistical measures, Pearson correlations, and Multivariate Analysis of Variance methods. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the JOS data, using the 11.5 version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data analysis was used to determine staff and manager perceptions about their workplace and working with co-workers and managers across different generational groups. Analysis of Variance procedures were used to examine group differences.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The study population consisted of 885 employees who had complete data for the study variables. The frequencies and percentages for sex, generational group, and job category are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequencies and Percentages for the Demographic Variables of Sex, Generational Group, and Job Category (N = 885)*

	Baby Boomer		Gen-Xers		Millennials		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Male								
Associate	69	65.1	93	62.8	56	83.6	218	67.9
Manager	29	27.3	41	27.7	9	13.4	79	24.6
Corporate	8	7.5	14	9.5	2	3.0	24	7.5
Total	106		148		67		321	
Female								
Associate	104	63.0	172	64.4	113	85.6	389	69.0
Manager	50	30.3	71	26.6	18	13.6	139	24.6
Corporate	11	6.2	24	9.0	1	.80	36	6.4
Total	165		267		132		564	
Total Sample	271	30.6	415	46.89	199	22.48	885	100.0

The ratio of females to males in the study sample was approximately 2:1 ($n = 564$ and $n = 321$, respectively). This is representative of workers in the hospitality industry. Among the three generational groups, Baby Boomers represented 30.6%, Gen-Xers 46.9%, and Millennials 22.5%. Compared to national workforce statistics, Baby Boomers represented 42%, Gen-Xers 29%, and Millennials 22%. In terms of the Millennial group, the percentage of workers in the study sample is representative of the percentage of Millennials in the general U.S. workforce; however, there were considerably more Gen-Xer workers (46.9%) of the study sample compared to the national average of 29%. In addition, while Baby Boomers comprise nearly half of the national workforce (42%), they only represented one-third of the study sample.

In the study sample, associates or line staff employees represented 67.9% of workers. This is expected because the largest employee segment in the hospitality industry is front-line service personnel who deal directly with customers. Managers/supervisors represent one-fourth of the study sample or (24.6%). They include workers who hold middle management positions in the hierarchical organizational structure. These individuals have daily interaction with associates providing leadership oversight, organization and assignment of work, provide best practices for customer service standards, maintain adherence to policy and procedure, and assure achievement of financial goals. Finally, corporate employees represent the highest tier of hierarchy and include senior executives, primarily responsible for setting the corporate mission, vision, and strategic plan. These individuals answer to the CEO, CFO, and Board of Directors. They typically do not have day-to-day direct

oversight over operational activities in the field, and have limited interaction with those at the lower levels of the organizational structure (i.e. associates).

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations and Univariate ANOVA for Generational Group, Sex and Job Category on WFS:Technology scale scores

Generational Group	Associate			Manager/ Supervisor			Corporate			Total		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Males												
Baby Boomers	69	11.01	1.69	29	11.83	1.39	8	11.75	1.58	10	11.29	1.63
Generation X	93	11.29	1.79	41	12.27	1.76	14	13.07	1.90	14	11.73	1.88
Millennials	56	12.02	1.77	9	12.56	1.33	2	15.00	.00	67	12.18	1.77
Females												
Baby Boomers	104	11.11	1.98	50	12.04	1.84	11	12.09	1.87	16	11.45	1.97
Generation X	172	11.11	1.69	71	11.96	1.78	24	12.58	1.67	26	11.47	1.78
Millennials	169	11.95	1.76	18	12.17	2.04	1	15.00	--	13	12.00	1.80
Total	607	11.37	1.81	218	12.06	1.74	60	12.62	1.81	88	11.62	1.84

ANOVA: Generational Group, Job Category, & Sex by WFS: Technology Scale

	df	MS	F	p.	η^2
Main effect of Generational Group	2	21.29	6.80	.001	.015
Main effect of Job Category (JC)	2	55.86	17.85	.001	.040
Main Effect of Sex (SX)	1	.29	.09	.760	.000
GG x JC	4	4.68	1.49	.201	.007
GG x SX	2	2.84	.91	.403	.002
JC x SX	2	.17	.05	.948	.000
GG x JC x SX	4	.38	.12	.975	.001
Within-cells error	867	3.12			

TECHNOLOGY PERSPECTIVES

The WFS:Technology scale was developed to measure employees' feelings about technology in the workplace. An example of an item in this scale is "Using the latest technology makes my job easier." Items 14, 15, 25, 26, 27, 37 were reversed scored in this scale, e.g. 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, and 5 = 1. Presented in Table 2 are the means, standard deviations, and univariate ANOVA results for the WFS: technology scale scores by sex, generational group, and job category. The total mean score for the WFS: technology scale were 11.62 (N = 885, SD = 1.84) out of a total score of 15. The scale item mean was 3.87 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating moderately high positive perceptions about using technology in the workplace

A significant main effect was found for generational group, $F(2, 885) = 6.805$, $p < .001$, and job category group $F(2, 885) = 17.854$, $p < .001$. Post hoc analysis for the generational group revealed significant mean differences between Baby Boomer and Millennial groups ($M_D = -.67$, $SE_D = .165$, $p < .001$) and Gen-Xers and Millennial groups ($M_D = -.50$, $SE_D = .153$, $p < .01$), indicating that the youngest workers had the most positive perceptions about using technology in the workplace. Post hoc analysis for the job category group revealed significant mean differences between associate and managers/supervisor groups ($M_D = -.69$, $SE_D = .140$, $p < .001$) and associate and corporate groups ($M_D = -1.25$, $SE_D = .239$, $p < .001$), indicating that corporate employees had the most positive perceptions about using technology in the workplace and associates had the least positive perceptions.

Overall, employees in the subject study indicated they were comfortable using technology in the workplace. As expected, younger workers (Gen-Xers and Millennials) had the most positive perceptions about using technology in the workplace. Corporate employees had the most positive and associates had the least positive perceptions about using technology in the workplace. This could be explained by the required use of technology associated with the corporate level job as well as the higher levels of education the corporate employee is required to bring to the position [21]. Based on work roles and responsibilities in the hospitality industry, the typical corporate role involves the use of technology for monitoring, reporting, analyzing information, and communicating across the organizational hierarchy, while the majority of line-level associates are involved in more face-to-face interacting with limited or infrequent use of technology in delivering customer service. What is interesting is that younger (Gen-Xers and Millennials) workers who are considered more facile with technology, were born into a fast-paced technology dominated society and who make up the majority of associate or line-level positions had the lowest perceptions of using technology in the workplace. In addition, Employees with a lesser degree of comfort with technology (Baby Boomers) may find work less satisfying and could lead to less engagement of older generations than younger ones [22].

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

In leading a multigenerational workforce in an era of technological advancement, it is important to study ways in which technology can be used as a bridge to engaging collaboration and fostering positive interactions and perceptions between workers from different generational groups. It is recommended that further study be conducted to understand the role that technology plays in levels of job satisfaction and perceptions about the workplace among both the older and the younger generational workers. Further study would also provide a better understanding of the perceptions about the use of technology by workers among different generational groups and job categories and how this might contribute to positive workplace perceptions, increased retention, and productivity. Leaders in the hospitality industry are faced with the challenge of creating new standard of management that fosters positive and supportive work environments that meet the individual and group needs of a multigenerational and increasingly diverse workforce. Leadership practices that can offer an alternative to the scientific management approach often employed in the hospitality industry will be important to increase the body of knowledge available about how technology and an increasingly complex organizational environment can address the every changing service-firm human capital shortfalls.

Transforming an organization also requires a new vision, new frames for thinking about strategy, structure, and people. While some . . . can start with a clean slate, transformational leaders must begin with what is already in place [23]. As part of the transition from the old leadership paradigm toward a new vision embedded in technological advancement, it becomes necessary to incorporate newer structures, policies, and other support to sustain a multigenerational workforce. Examination of the current organizational approach to leadership in the hospitality industry through the lens of technological innovation could lead to improvements in the industry management of a diverse workforce. According to Covey, "nothing is constant: things, people, and structures can and do change—paradigms shift. Almost every significant breakthrough is first a break with tradition, old patterns, old ways of thinking, and old paradigms" [24]. With a global economy, the hospitality industry is changing and expanding to meet the demands of new opportunities. The hospitality industry is composed of learning organizations that must continually expand their capacity to create their future by thinking toward the future and not allowing the organization to stagnate in the present. Leaders in the hospitality industry are faced with the challenge of creating a new standard of management that fosters positive and supportive work environments, incorporating technological innovation that meets the individual and group needs of a multigenerational and increasingly diverse workforce.

In leading a multigenerational workforce in an era of technological advancement, it is important to study ways in which technology can be used as a bridge to engaging collaboration and fostering positive interactions and perceptions between workers from different generational groups. It is recommended that further study be conducted to understand the role that technology plays in levels of job satisfaction and perceptions about the workplace among both the older and the younger generational workers. Further study would also provide a better understanding of the perceptions about the use of technology by workers among different generational groups and job categories and how this might contribute to positive workplace perceptions, increased retention, and productivity.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study, as with any study, had several limitations. First, items on the present Job Opinion Survey (JOS) were selected from the original and larger Workplace Perceptions Survey (WPS) developed by Gursoy and Swanger. Therefore, the method used to assess the content validity of the WPS was based a different purpose than stated for the present study. Reliability studies of the JOS and the scales and subscales indicated good reliability; however, validity issues could be problematic. While the content validity may have been at appropriate levels for the original study, it may not have been for the secondary analysis of data that was performed in the present study. Finally, because data used was derived from a secondary analysis of data collected for a purpose different from the purpose of the present study, it might not yield results as informative had the data been collected using a survey developed specifically for the research questions of this study.

The process of collecting data for the study may have introduced a bias into the data. Line-staff were required to complete the survey as part of an in-service paid scheduled meeting, while manager/supervisors and corporate employees were allowed to complete an anonymous questionnaire online. The quantitative format used to collect data limited the ability to probe more in-depth into worker perceptions. Furthermore, the instrument format did not allow respondents to indicate factors important to them other than those presented on the survey and thus may have limited the ability of respondents to indicate their beliefs more accurately.

Finally, a weakness to this study was the unequal sample sizes for the sex, generational, and especially the job category groups. For example, some groups were too small to yield any valid information. In addition, the questions available for assessing perceptions of leadership were limited and only addressed traits of leadership and not employees' feelings about the leadership in the company.

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