What does It Take to Have a Successful Career Through the Eyes of Generation Z - Based on the Results of a Primary Qualitative Research*

Mónika FODOR[1,] Katalin JAECKEL[2]

[1] *Assistant Professor, Óbuda University, Keleti Faculty of Business and Management*

[2] *Assistant Professor, Budapest Business School University of Applied Sciences Faculty of International Management and Business*

Email: fodor.monika@kgk.uni-obuda.hu, katalin.jaeckel@uni-bge.hu

Abstract

Several studies have been prepared recently examining the differences between the various age groups, fro m various aspects. This present study follows the concept of generation marketing, and presents the peculiar traits of generation Z when it comes to selecting workplaces and career paths. Within the frame of a qualitative primary research, we have investigated the expectations, ideas about a successful career of Z generation and the motivation tools which could be targeted for them to be drive n for results and committed to the employer. It was important for us to know who these surveyed youngsters regard as their role model in terms of a successful career. Within the frame of the qualitative research, thirty interviews were conducted based on a semi-structured guide. The recruiting of members for the sample and the conduction of interviews were realized with the involvement of students from both institutions. We believe that the findings of the research provide useful information for future employers, to understand the values of their potential employees and their approach towards the world of work. It all might contribute to the establishment of appropriate incentive systems, and to the selection of HR tools which are able to increase loyalty and commitment, and inspire a better performance. Furthermore, the results also reveal important findings in relation to education: the peculiarities of generation Z – their attitude, values, behaviour – by all means call for adapting a new approach in their education. In order to be able to select efficient methods and contents, it must consider both the demands of the labour market and the generation -related peculiarities of students enrolled in education.

Keywords: career, Z generation, qualitative research

1. Introduction

Generation traits of their era, as a segmentation criteria within marketing Segmentation has been an important issue for decades in marketing. There are marketing strategies differentiated by geographic, demographic, behavioural or psychographic attributes. It is an important matter to decide, which brand we offer to whom, especially today, where in a number of cases we might come across quite personalized solutions in specific markets. Generat ion marketing might be of assistance in fields where this high level of sophistication is not an option, where large segments and large groups are targeted throughout the elaboration of the marketing strategy.The essence of the concept is to become familiar with the characteristics of each generation's time period, and based on this, their behaviour might be predicted more or less, thus explaining their decisions of today. Generations are bound together by their joint experiences, life sensations, and finally, mutual values (Törőcsik,2003).

The purchasing, consuming habits and brand preference of people within a certain generation might be quite diverse, but there is a mutual organizing principle, which categorizes them in the same segment, and this is th eir value system. Therefore when we examine the differences between generations, one should start with analysing the deviations regarding their value perceptions. The basic experiences, minor and major decisive events experienced during their socialization, and the "spirit of the age" accompany people throughout their entire life , and influence their choices.Who is generation Z? The so-called baby boom age group was born between 1945 and 60, and it was followed by generation X (1960 – 80) and Y (1980-2000). Generation Z are the children of the "digital age" (born in 1995-2010). Generation Z consists of those who were born between 1995 and 2010. They are the so -called digital natives, and for them, internet, mobil phones and web 2.0 are all natural phenomenon.On account of this, their value system, learning habits, consumer behaviour and media usage have changed to a great extent compared to previous generations. Instead of knowledge, experience has value for them. This also determines their behaviour: they a lways have to be there, they must see everything, and finally they must share everything. It is not by accident that Mrs. Mária Törőcsik, a leading figure in domestic trend analysis, named them the "give it all you got" age group

(Törőcsik, 2003). While in the life of previous generations, actual and online presence existed separately, it goes hand in hand harmonically in case of generation Z, for whom technology has become one of the most important tool of expressing their identity. Fast access to information is vital for this generation, and they are typically characterized by multitasking. The qualitative research conducted by Hotwire amongst 400 communication experts from 22 countries on 5 continents reveals that it has become outdated to deliver mess ages to a great mass of people, and personalized messages have become much more important; the new communication channels and new tools (engagement tools) have transformed communication habits (Molnár, 2016). This attitude is specifically true for generation Z. Those who were born in the end of the 1990-ies, prefer multimedia contents instead of written texts, which means that their processing methods are basically non - linear. They want to see the result of their work immediately, and expect instant feedbac k. They are able to manage several things at the same time, and they reach the information they are interested in rapidly, through a variety of channels. Regarding the self-development of generation Z, their internal motivation to learn and consciousness are the most significant traits. Their interest is diverse, they gather an increasing proportion of their knowledge fro m outside of school, and though it is important for them to obtain information in an entertaining way, at the same time they are critical and reflexive media users. Throughout their information gathering mechanisms, they prefer simultaneous interaction, and knowledge of practical use. (Rumpf, 2014.)

Experts also highlight that in case of young people born after 1995, there is a much thinner line between childhood and youth age, and also between youth age and adult age. It is explained by the fact that these children who explore the internet in an increasingly conscious manner are practically operate in the very same environment as adults, therefore the boundaries of entertainment and work blend in: the range of skills and competences considered to be valuable has also transformed: in the society of the 21st century, working in a rapid, precise and productive manner is in the focus. The increas ing complexity of tasks demand creativity, advanced communication skills, flexib le attitude and an ability to work in groups from young people who are becoming experts around the millennia. This new expectation of the labour market naturally affects educat ion as well: members of generation Z require completely different methods and syllabuses, providing a constant challenge for those who intend to modernize formal education. (Pintér, 2015)

The 18-24 years old age group consists of about 850 thousand youngst ers, the majority of who (about three quarters of them) is already, or soon will become an active player on the labour market. The fact that this age group shall enter the world of work much sooner than the generations ahead of them means that domestic employers will begin to meet more and more gen Z employees. As a result, it is important to understand how the young people of today choose their workplace. What kind of incentives work for them and how, where would they prefer to work, and what kind of a workplace and career they dream about. Since there are a number of studies confirming that the attitude and value system of the Z's differ from the previous generations from several aspects, it is worth taking note of their peculiar characteristic as employee s. (Profession.hu 2015)

The appearance of generation Z has restructured the domestic labour market as well. (Csehné et al., 2017). An essential criteria for employers who attempt to reach out to them is to be able to deliver targeted strategic solutions intended for this specific age group.

There are several studies examine the motivation and attitude of youngsters (Lazányi, 2014), generation differences are not the focus points of these.

2. Method

Within the frame of the qualitative research, thirty mini-focus group interviews were conducted based on a semi - structured guide. The recruiting of members for the sample carried out with t he help of snowball methodology, which helped to fulfilled the recruiting process, in the frame of that interviewees born 1995-210 has been selected. Six-me mb e r focus groups has been prepared, except for age groups were heterogeneous according to other social-demographic criteria. During the interviews a voice recording was made, the data was processed using a traditional content analysis method. This study presents the sub results of the first step of our primary research project. One major objective of our research was to explore what this age group thinks about caree r, success, and preferred and disliked workplaces. What motivates them, what do they expect from a proper workplace? And as for job listings, it is important to know where this generation gathers information about job opportunities. Based on the qualitative research results we would like to prepare our quantitative primary research project (objectives, hypothesis, standardized questionnaire).

3. Findings

One of the issues focused on how the state of the domestic labour market is perceived. We were interested in what young people think about the conditions of entering the world of work, and how do they perceive their own opportunities on the labour market. Young people agreed in the fact that it is difficult to find a job, and it is even harder to find a proper workplace. The majority of respondents claimed that a higher level of education means a greater change in finding a suitable workplace. They also thought that it is easier for those with a valuable social capital, or those who studied a profession where there is a shortage of skilled experts. On the other hand, people with a lower level of qualification and motivation have a harder time finding a job, according to youngsters. "It is easier for those who have a higher level of educational attainment, and a wider circle of relations, and also if the number of people working within their field of occupation is relatively low. It is more difficult for those with a lower level of education, who lack motivation, and who are also looking for a job in a field which is already full."

As future employees, the greatest challenge according to respondents is to find a job which makes them happy, and which is also a lucrative one. They believe that finding and maintaining the proper balance between wo rk and free time will later become a problem. More people said that seeing the example of their parents, the balance in many cases shifted in favour of work, and many of them sacrificed their free time, or even their health for work. Young people however o ne after another confirmed that they do not intend to follow this example. The importance of the work-life balance is also taken into account regarding the preferences in the selection of workplace. In a separate topic we have examined the aspects which generation Z considers in the process of choosing their place of work. The decisive aspects claimed to be of primary importance included working hours as well, besides the salary and allowances. They prefer flexible working hours, it is important for them to have time for themselves.

Another important aspect is the atmosphere of the workplace, whether it is an attractive environment, a place where they feel good while performing their work.

Another spontaneously mentioned aspect was the opportunity to move forward, which is considered in quite a conscious manner in the selection process. It is also a matter of importance whether the place enables the implementation of creative ideas and ambitions. Respondents explained that in order to achieve their goals and dreams, they are able and willing to work hard, but only if their efforts are recognised and compensated. Self-fulfilment, self-management and an inspiring working atmosphere are also significant factors. A number of experts have already highlighted that these young people show the greatest level of sensitivity towards receiving not only a salary, but an identity from the company as well. We have asked participants to describe how they imagine their perfect workplace.

The results revealed that at an ideal workplace, there is a good team, an expert leadership, there is no stress, yet a high-paced and diverse work awaits those who wish to work there.

They also wish to perform their duties within flexible working hours, in order to be able to coordinate their career with their personal hobbies, families, and they desire to spare time for themselves as well. At the ideal place, a motivated, creative employee is enabled to implement its ideas and plans, and their personal career path is supported, since there are several opportunities for improvement and advancement. There, a good performance is recognised financially with a proper salary (according to participants, it is around net 300-400 thousand HUF), and other allowances.

The employer has a good reputation, and implements significant developments on its relevant market and industry, therefore the employer might get to know the latest industrial innovations first hand.

Table 1. Characteristics of the ideal workplace

Factor	Characteristics
atmosphere of the workplace, teamwork	"to work in a team which is able to develop, and to assist my work"; "there is a pleasant atmosphere, colleagues are nice, I am respected and recognized"
	• "fair treatment, appreciation, recognition, no stress" • "the leader is not feared, not a typical boss, but a LEADER to whom employees might look up"
work-life balance	• Flexible working hours, a lot of free time • " not far from where I live"
opportunity for self-fulfilment	• Opportunity to move forward; • "where I can fulfil myself"; • "where I can move up positions" • "if the employees are appreciated"
reputation	• Recognized, well-known company, with a good reputation
new challenges, diversity, innovation	• Diverse scope of duties, tasks • Getting to know the latest technological innovations from first hand

Most of the preferred ideal workplaces named by respondents were from the automotive industry, FMCG, IT and financial sector, mentioning actual brands spontaneously such as
- Bosch, Audi,
- Nestlé, Coca Cola, Aldi, Tesco, Lidl Spar, Fornetti
- Henkel, Decathlon, Loreal,
- Google, Prezi, Microsoft, IBM, Telekom
- OTP

(Please note that these were students studying in the field of Business and Social sciences.)

However, there was an interesting contradiction when students were asked about the characteristics of a workplace they dislike, many of them emphasized that they do not want to work as a "slave at a multinational company". Yet , when they had to mention preferred workplaces spontaneously, multinationals were absolutely overrepresented. It might be explained by the fact that the brand name, reputation and employer perception of these mentioned companies are positive, and this positive attitude towards the brand as an employer is stronger than the general negative approach respondents feel towards multinational companies.

What does it take to have a successful career? "Is it surely only up to us?"

We have asked students about what they believe to be necessary for a successful career of a young beginner. Many of them emphasized knowledge, determination and strong motivation.

They feel that in order to be successful in a particular field, one must be persistent, motivated and determined. However, a number of external factors is also necessary, such as relations. "To be at the right place at the right time", to be able to exploit opportunities, and also that the workplace should enable appropriate opportunities and a suitable environment for career and development.

According to participants, a beginner can only be successful today, if he is flexible, able to cope with load, up -to- date, well-informed, enthusiastic and motivated, can take up the "constant speed" of work and adapt to the expectations demanded by an ever accelerating world.

In order to obtain these characteristics and competences, and generally for a successful start,

mentors play a significant role. Young people agreed that it would be quite useful to have a supporting person (mentor), who would prepare them to be ready for work. They feel that the best possible way to implement this is within the frame of education (as an optional course), or to offer it at an affordable price as a training session, where managing directors, HR experts, successful people in particular fields would present the most important advices based on their personal experiences. Beginners could receive personalized information and instructions about how they should prepare for an interview as a beginner, and from where they should gather information about job opportunities. What should they take into consideration when having to fit in at a workplace, and what kind of rights and obligations does an employee have, thus receiving practical and useful information and guidance. With the management of such training sessions, corporations might obtain a high level of awareness and recognition from the young generation – who are otherwise quite difficult to reach and persuade. We believe that sponsoring these profes sional programs could not only serve as an effective means for building relations for an employer who in many cases face the challenge of skills shortage, but it is also an excellent tool to build commitment towards the brand. The currently available alternatives, limited to workshop-like open days and a few hours long ad hoc presentations do not offer comprehensive solutions. Though these are refreshing initiatives, a systematically built professional program focusing on the requirements of the target grou p might operate with a much better efficiency. And based on the findings, it seems that the demand from the future employees exists towards such events.

Role models, reference persons

From the aspect of marketing, it is an important issue throughout the elaboration of a target-group specific communication strategy, to get to know those who are able to influence our subjects in their decisions, and whose opinion is significant for them, who they consider to be a reference person. On one hand, it was important for us to know who these surveyed youngsters regard as their role model in terms of a successful career. On the other hand, it provides a feedback of the value perception of the generation: the fact that who they consider to be successful also reveals what kind of values they attach to the notion of success. One characteristic of generation Z is the lack of socialization. Though they are active users of social media, where they have many friends, they live their social life day by day mostly on these c hannels. The classic social network which still existed for the X, has now transformed in case of the Z. It greatly reshapes the process of learning for them, and also it influences who they perceive as a role model, a good advisor, or a competent person w orth listening to within their environment. Bases on the results, we were able to differentiate two entirely different groups. For one group, the parents of members represented the example of a person with a successful career. These parents are seen by their children as satisfied people, who are successful and recognized in their work. They considered them to be successful, since they managed to establish appropriate living conditions, and also were able to spend quality time with the family – with them, the children. Young people see their own parents to be balanced, happy and satisfied. They wish to be successful in a similar way, either continuing what they have started (for example a family business), or to pursue another profession, but with similar res ults and feedback. Most of the parents considered to be successful run their own business, while those who work as employees represented a smaller proportion. The most important positive values were the fulfilment of dreams and independency in case of the former, and appreciation and stability for the latter. The fact that these role model parents keep on improving their skills and find pleasure in doing what they do are also dominant factors for success, irrespective from what position they have.

The other group however did not perceive the career of their parents to be exemplary. They see tired, shattered people, who in many cases cannot or do not want to make a change, and who though work, still fail to receive the well-deserved or expected compensation, neither financially, nor morally. Therefore in case of these young people, it was much more typical to seek for a role model outside of the family. The majority named well-known public figures, media personalities, or a singer-performer, where the commo n feature of being perceived as successful was their popularity, because they create, "do something good, unique", they love what they do, at the same time providing them a proper living. Those who did not mention actual persons, described the example of a p erson who is successful in work: "who is able to get into a high position within a relatively short time, with a high salary, but who also has time for other things as well besides work." Though respondents named reference persons from two different social groups (parents -family, well-kno wn people-media personalities), there are overlays between the values associated with success: financial and mora l recognition, self-fulfilment, development and sufficient time for themselves. Since the majority are curious and open towards new things, they would prefer a slightly more practical approach in

education: to have more opportunities for proving themselves, to be included in actual projects throughout their training. It would give them a certain knowledge which they would be able to make use of effectively in their work as well. (GKI, 2016). They demand interactivity, diversity, the application of technical devices, and they prefer to manage their own time even during their education. Education should adapt to these demands, with the application of an entirely different approach, method and structure.

The other key element of the communication strategy is the media preference.
  Since it is not enough to know what we need to communicate, we also need to know the way we have to deliver the message. We have analysed separately the sources young people prefer, from where they gather information when it comes to seeking for a job. Young people today live in virtual communities, they spend most of their free time on the internet, and the majority of their relations is also linked to online social sites. Therefore it is not a surprise that they search for useful information about job opportunities in the online world and through social media as well, as they seek for jobs at facebook, gyakornok.com, profession, google, or the website of a particular company, and the sites of student associations. Nevertheless it is important to highlight that the opinion and advice of friends, or the parents and successful people they know and perceive as mentors is just as important and substantial. Therefore, the significance of social channels remained, even if in many of the cases it has been channelled into a virtual space. Job fairs and workshops, with an opportunity to establish face to face contacts were also mentioned spontaneously as a means of gathering information by participants. Based on these findings, it is obvious that the flagships of a media mix focusing on generation Z are represented by the online and social media, but "traditional" instruments assisting the formation of personal relations should also be applied.

4. Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

  There have always been differences between the various age groups – in their system of values, way of thinking and lifestyle. However, the transformation of the perception of values is becoming more and more dynamic, which results in greater deviations between the various age groups. The other important factor is that this dynamic change has started to influence more and more fields of human behaviour, which obviously reshapes customer and consumer habits and thinking. Moreover, the development of technology further accelerates these processes, increasing the pace of change and expanding their impacts. The differences between generations represent a segmentation criteria which can be applied greatly in several fields of marketing. One example for this is the process of employer branding bearing an increasing level of significance on the labour market. The employer brand, such as a product brand differentiates, identifies and positions. The definition of the values of an employer brand is the first step in the strategy. However, it is not enough for an employer to define what kind of values and individualities it reflects, but also to know who they intend to reach. The generation Z is growing and becoming more and more important as a target group on the labour market , bearing – from a number of aspects – quite different media using and purchasing habits and social relation building practices, compared to members of the previous generations. Therefore research studies exploring the incentives and the way of thinking of this generation could become important and useful, serving as a guide for employers who attempt to reach out, convince and retain them.
  In this present study, we have analysed the preferences in relation to selecting a workplace, the concept of success and the desires and expectations of the ideal workplace, as perceived by the youngsters representing generation Z. Based on the results, a flexible workplace offering development opportunities and diversity in the scope of duties represent the ideal workplace for the young people involved in the research. They like to work in teams, to belong somewhere, and they are willing to put in a great effort, if they receive positive feedback and recognition. Many youngsters intend to be successful by the example of their parents: an employee who finds pleasure in work, who constantly learns, and who is able to maintain the proper balance between work and family, at the same time being able to establish and maintain a suitable living. People who love their job, and do what they like to do are also models of example for the young generation. This aspect is even more important than a good salary. They are also aware of the fact that finding a good workplace is a difficult task. However they do not hesitate for a moment to change or to move on, if they do not feel comfortable at a workplace. They also experience that beginners of today have to face great expectations, and the existence of a number of factors is required for success, such as skills, ability to

cope with load, motivation. Many of them gather information from the internet, they spend most of their time in the online world, and their relations are also formed there. They expect the opportunities offered by the online world to exist in the world of work as well: home office, flexibility, task-orientation, gamification, just like if the workplace was also a slightly bit part of the augmented reality. Though there are similarities – especially regarding the basic values – it is obvious, that the value perception of the generation Z, thus their approach towards work and success is quite different compared to the previous age groups. This is why we believe that throughout the building of an employer brand integrating more generations, it is worth considering different strategies and applying target group specific solutions, taking into consideration the peculiar attitude of the various age groups.

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