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A GENERATION-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS OF CHOOSING A JOB, EMPLOYEE LOYALTY AND MOTIVATION AFTER THE CORONAVIRUS

Abstract:

In the present study, we analyzed the preference system for job choice under the influence of the coronavirus from a generation-specific perspective.

Employer branding, retention and motivation of employees is an increasing challenge for employers. Changing labour market conditions, the generational divide and the specific values of the new generation have in themselves posed significant challenges for employers. This has been exacerbated by the multidimensional negative macro-effects of the coronavirus, which have significantly reshaped labour market conditions. Working conditions and attitudes to work have been transformed by the pandemic, as has the issue and meaning of loyalty.

In addition to the difficulties of recruitment and retention, the difficulties of cooperation between different generations have presented HR professionals with new challenges.

It is very difficult to create a climate of trust that can be both optimal, attractive and stimulating for employees with different values and socialisation backgrounds.

It is no coincidence that in recent decades a growing body of research has examined how the ranking of incentives for employees has changed. Given that, the HR profession has witnessed an increasing intensity of change.

Within the framework of this study, quantitative data were collected in the framework of primary research using a pre-tested standardised questionnaire. The analysis of the responses obtained from the random sampling allowed us to conclude that the generational gap in perceptions of the world of work has been further exacerbated by the pandemic, which has further encouraged employers to think about differentiated solutions and employer branding strategies rather than generic solutions.

Keywords:

generations, workplace preference, quantitative research

1 Introduction

The impact of the coronavirus crisis has been a major challenge for employers in Hungary over the past two years. Solutions had to be found to keep the company running, to deal with staff shortages, to retain existing employees and possibly to recruit new ones. Where it was feasible, a shift to home-office working was implemented, even if it had previously been considered inconceivable or remote. Workers of different generations had to be accommodated in order to communicate and collaborate under the new conditions (Nikolov, 2020).

Certainly, alongside the drawbacks, there are also potential benefits, such as technological change and acceleration. The pandemic has also resulted in a boom in online platforms and new means of communication. The transfer of programmes used in the home office, such as Zoom and Teams, to everyday work has also proved to be essential (Bagó, 2020).

The importance of mental health has also recently been appreciated. Companies are increasingly taking measures to find out what is on the minds of their employees and are conscientiously trying to address possible symptoms of depression and burnout. It is therefore a relatively new task for management to look for ways of providing positive incentives. As an employer/HR manager, it is necessary to ensure that time spent at work is a meaningful and valuable part of people's lives. It is also important to recognise what can be done to help people perform at their best. Workplaces where this attitude is embedded will make employees more willing to go to work, feel better about themselves, be more loyal and be able to do better quality work (Kovács, 2017-2018; Wood 2020).

The timeliness of the topic is also confirmed by the fact that the coronavirus pandemic could cause mass illnesses again, with new waves of outbreaks expected, while there are also new cases of viruses that threaten to become pandemic. All this poses new and serious challenges for employers and workers alike.

2 Literature review

2.1 Employer Branding strategy – with a generation-specific focus

In sociology and social psychology, the letters X, Y, Z are used to distinguish different micro-generations. Although the years often differ by 1-2 years, approximately those born between 1965-1980 belong to Generation X, those born between 1981-1996 to Generation Y and those born between 1997-2010 to Generation Z. In addition to these, our society also includes members of the Veteran Generation (1925-1945), the Baby Boomers (1946-1964) and finally the members of the Alpha Generation (2010-2020). The key difference between the micro-generations, however, is the online or virtual space. The most marked difference is between the digital and non-digital generations. They have been socialised differently and have adopted different ethics. (Tari, 2013, 2015)

The micro-generations also think about relationships and work, among other things, in a different way, which can often lead to disagreements. Generation Y and Generation Z, who are increasingly entering the labour market, tend to change jobs every one and a half to two years. For them, the most important thing is their own progress and loyalty, or brand loyalty are secondary considerations. The world of work has also undergone significant changes with the emergence of new generations. The rules have been completely transformed in terms of career

planning, information sharing, retaining existing staff and attracting a younger client base. Several companies have now recognised that aligning generations X and Y-Z and creating a new company culture is vital for collaborations. Generation X wants to work, Generation Y wants to build their own careers and Generation Z wants to succeed (Steigervald, 2021; Nikolov, 2020; Tari, 2013,2015)

Bringing the generations together and sharing knowledge - the older ones with their experience and the younger ones with their recent professional knowledge - is therefore crucial for success.

This is why the focus of our research was to find out what the workplace expectations of different generations are after two years of the pandemic. The importance of this is that, based on the experience of the pandemic, changing employee expectations should be taken into account by employers when developing and communicating their employer branding strategy. Companies need to take into account that different generations have different job expectations.

Employer branding is the need of Generation Y and Generation Z, as new employees entering the European labour market, including the Hungarian labour market, often choose a job based on factors that can be communicated in advance and that allow companies to differentiate themselves from other companies, so that potential employees can actually know the company better before starting work. A good employer brand paints an attractive but realistic picture of an employer. A successful employer brand is always built around pre-defined objectives and strategy, with measurable results, delivered through a variety of channels and tools. Employer branding itself is a process that credibly communicates to prospective and existing colleagues the company's identity and why it is a good place to work, while supporting the company's business objectives. Effective employer branding also pays attention to the perception of the company by current employees and the experience of the company in the minds of the employees they want to hire (Törőcsik, 2017; Kópházi, Pétervári, Balassa, 2018)

The employer value proposition (EVP) is the starting point of the employer brand and defines the positioning and strategic direction of the brand. An effective employer value proposition should reflect external demands on the company, competitors, internal reality and the strategic context of the company. It should also include the values and principles that the company stands for. A common practice is to assign human personality traits and habits to a company as a so-called Buyer Persona, in order to get a more in-depth picture of the company (Wood, 2020).

3 Methodology

Within the framework of a primary research, a quantitative methodology was adopted to investigate the factors motivating Hungarian employees' job selection.

A pre-tested standardised online questionnaire survey with arbitrary sampling was conducted.

Factors influencing job selection, motivational tools and the management of generational differences were the main topics of the questionnaire, in addition to socio-demographic issues.

In the present study, in addition to descriptive statistics, the analysis of variance method was applied to examine the correlation between the nominal and metric scale scores, including the one-way ANOVA method for comparing multiple sample means. The mean of a metric dependent variable was compared between more than two groups. The post-hoc test was performed to

determine which pairs of groups were significantly different. Significance values were used to determine the existence of correlations ($\text{sig} \leq 0.05$). Internal correlations were analysed along the comparison of group means using the F-statistic, i.e., the coefficient of variation of the means within samples (Sajtos-Mitev, 2007; Malhotra-Simon, 2009). For the correlation tests presented in this study, where the significance value according to the ANOVA table was below 0.05, it was confirmed that there is a correlation between the age group (generation) and the variable under study (importance of competence), and thus these data were highlighted and illustrated in the SPSS post-hoc test results.

The objective of the research was to investigate job selection and performance incentives and to analyse their differential effects by age. The research was conducted to test the following hypotheses:

It was hypothesized that job selection criteria in the sample vary by age (H1).

We hypothesized that the employer's perception of performance incentives varies by age (H2).

4 Results

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the majority (53%) of respondents were aged 19-22 (Generation Z), 22% were aged 23-27 (Generation Y) and a further 15% were in the working population aged 28-31. The proportion of respondents aged 42 and over was 10%.

Regarding the gender distribution of the sample, 70% of respondents were female and 30% male. There was a clear majority (49% and 36%) of sample members living in the capital and city respectively compared to those living in rural areas (15%).

88% of respondents had a mother under 42 years old, while this proportion was as high as 95% for fathers. The vast majority of the sample is therefore raised by young parents.

Parents with secondary education dominated the sample at 45% (for mothers) and 53% (for fathers).

4.1 Job selection criteria in relation to age groups

According to respondents, salary is no longer the most important factor when considering a new job/job opportunity.

The personality and leadership style of the manager is one of the most important factors, as is team spirit and work-life balance.

The preference system clearly shows that for those with work experience, the system of pay, benefits and allowances is far less important than the style of the line managers, the atmosphere and values, which, in the case of a company is fundamentally determined by the personality and leadership style of the manager.

The fact that a good team spirit in a workplace is more important than how much an employee earns, we believe, is evidence of the increasing value of organisational and management skills. Organisational development, a good division of labour, creating a good working atmosphere, and a family-friendly workplace are all aspects that the employees surveyed place more emphasis on than issues related to pay.

We consider that this is also due to the fact that the increase in wages - e.g., the recent rise in minimum wages - has brought about a regularisation of wages in a number of positions and job

functions. This has broadened the range of competitive advantages for companies and has introduced dimensions that previously had little or no influence on people's choice of jobs.

The ownership of the company - whether it is a domestic or foreign-owned employer - is no more a determining factor for the respondents than whether it is a multinational company employing many people. Today, it seems that it is not the size and ownership of the employer that is more important, but rather the management, the style of the person in charge and the atmosphere they create at work.

Table 1 Ranking of factors that determine job selection

Ranking of factors that determine job selection	mean (where 1=not important at all, 4= very important)
Financial background of the company, market stability	3.23
Reputation of the company, general image	3.04
Avoid damaging work-life balance	3.50
Opportunities to work abroad	2.35
Other benefits and allowances in addition to the basic salary	3.12
Foreign ownership of the company	1.91
Predictable, fixed working hours	2.79
Opportunities for professional development	3.48
Variety of work tasks	3.26
Creative work assignments	3.19
Opportunities for promotion within the company	3.37
The company should employ a lot of people	2.01
High salary	3.40
Transparent performance appraisal and feedback	2.93
Performance-based bonuses	2.99
Opportunities for further training and education	3.10
A good team spirit	3.54
The company should be socially responsible	2.97
It should be a nationally recognised company	2.25
Staff with a younger average age	2.41
Hungarian ownership of the company	1.77
A multinational company	2.07
Employment not through a recruitment agency, but with the company	2.95
Flexible working hours	3.16
Modern working environment	3.27
Distance of the place of work from my home	3.25
The personality and style of the manager	3.60
The possibility of competence development training/education	2.90
Programmes, events	2.85
Opportunities for foreign language use and development	3.11
The company's employer branding strategy is publicly available	2.49
The company should be accepting and inclusive	3.38
Sports facilities at the company	2.30
A clear career model in the company	2.83

Source: authors' own research, 2022 N=331

Generation-specific perceptions of incentives for better performance at work

Similar results were obtained when assessing the larger factors that induce better performance.

Higher pay is still the most important motivating factor, but not the only one: team spirit and a modern, creative working environment are just as important as higher pay.

Table 2 Ranking of factors that motivate people to work more efficiently

Incentives for higher performance	mean (where 1=not motivating at all, 4= very motivating)
Higher pay	3.77
Opportunities for promotion at the workplace	3.61
Career opportunities abroad	2.79
Greater autonomy to make decisions	3.26
More free time, less work	3.45
Opportunity to implement ideas	3.43
Work in a good team	3.71
Opportunity to participate in training and professional development courses	3.08
Other fringe benefits (cafeteria)	3.38
Modern, creative working environment	3.46

Source: authors' own research, 2022 N=331

4.2 Spontaneous association of the most ideal jobs

We asked our respondents to spontaneously name the jobs, companies and businesses where they would most like to work. The results of the spontaneous association revealed that Unilever, Vodafone, Apple, Bosch, Telekom, Audi, Microsoft, Mercedes are the "top companies to work for".

Although the multinational nature of the company or even the employer brand value was not considered important by respondents when selecting a job, the spontaneous association result shows that multinational companies that are at the forefront of employer branding are the most preferred and desired workplaces.



This result also demonstrates the importance of employer branding and the optional competitive advantage it can provide in the battle for employees. Even if the employee is not fundamentally aware of its importance when making a choice, it is nevertheless a decisive factor in their decision.

In this research, we examined whether there is a statistically verifiable relationship between the differentiation of job selection criteria and age.

The results showed a significant relationship for some factors (H1 partially confirmed).

4.3 Differentiation of factors that influence job selection by age

Table 3 Factors that influence job selection

Factors that influence job selection		Mean	sig
Performance-related bonuses	16-18	3.57	0.018
	19-22	2.99	
	23-27	2.79	
	28-31	2.78	
	32-36	3.50	
	37-42	2.50	
	over 42	3.21	
	Total	2.96	
A good team spirit	16-18	3.43	0.019
	19-22	3.61	
	23-27	3.40	
	28-31	3.81	
	32-36	4.00	
	37-42	3.33	
	over 42	3.59	

	Total	3.57	
National recognition	16-18	2.71	0.001
	19-22	2.26	
	23-27	2.18	
	28-31	2.09	
	32-36	1.75	
	37-42	2.67	
	over 42	2.74	
	Total	2.28	
	Hungarian ownership	16-18	
19-22		1.78	
23-27		1.62	
28-31		1.53	
32-36		1.50	
37-42		1.67	
over 42		2.15	
Total		1.75	
A well-understood career model at the company		16-18	2.43
	19-22	2.88	
	23-27	2.66	
	28-31	2.56	
	32-36	2.75	
	37-42	2.50	
	over 42	3.09	
	Total	2.80	

Source: authors' own research, N=331, One way ANOVA

Performance-related bonuses were rated as above average by the youngest respondents (16-18 year olds). For Generation X employees aged 42 and over, a well-understood career model, Hungarian ownership and national recognition were more important than average and compared to other age groups. A good team spirit was the most important aspect for respondents aged 32-36 years old, belonging to Generation Y.

We could see that generational differences and the core values that characterise each generation are reflected in the criteria for selecting a job.

This is a significant result because it also shows that it is worth differentiating between the opportunities and working conditions offered by jobs, as this is a much more effective way of meeting the needs of the different target groups.

Similarly, we examined the differentiation of performance incentives by age. In this case, a significant relationship was found between all variables and age. There is also a clear generational pattern of values in the perception of the factors: higher pay, opportunities for promotion, more free time, the possibility of a career abroad and the possibility of realising one's own ideas are the main motivators for the youngest.

For more experienced workers, aged 32-36, professional development and greater autonomy are a greater motivator.

Table 4 Differentiation of performance incentives by age

Performance incentives		Mean	sig
Higher pay	16-18	4.00	0.000
	19-22	3.81	
	23-27	3.82	
	28-31	3.88	
	32-36	3.00	
	37-42	3.33	
	over 42	3.50	
	Total	3.77	
Opportunities for promotion at the workplace	16-18	4.00	0.000
	19-22	3.74	
	23-27	3.67	
	28-31	3.56	
	32-36	3.00	
	37-42	3.00	
	over 42	2.97	
	Total	3.61	
Career opportunities abroad	16-18	3.14	0.000
	19-22	3.03	
	23-27	2.78	
	28-31	2.47	
	32-36	2.00	
	37-42	1.00	
	over 42	2.15	
	Total	2.78	
Greater autonomy to make decisions	16-18	2.43	0.001
	19-22	3.28	
	23-27	3.42	
	28-31	3.16	
	32-36	3.50	
	37-42	2.67	
	over 42	3.09	
	Total	3.25	
More free time, less work	16-18	3.71	0.000
	19-22	3.59	
	23-27	3.51	
	28-31	3.34	
	32-36	2.50	
	37-42	3.33	
	over 42	2.97	
	Total	3.47	
Opportunity to implement ideas	16-18	3.71	0.000
	19-22	3.52	
	23-27	3.63	
	28-31	3.19	
	32-36	3.00	

	37-42	2.67	
	over 42	3.03	
	Total	3.44	
Work in a good team	16-18	3.43	0.008
	19-22	3.74	
	23-27	3.82	
	28-31	3.66	
	32-36	3.00	
	37-42	3.33	
	over 42	3.50	
	Total	3.70	
Opportunity to participate in training and professional development courses	16-18	3.14	0.000
	19-22	3.09	
	23-27	3.33	
	28-31	3.31	
	32-36	3.50	
	37-42	2.33	
	over 42	2.50	
	Total	3.09	
Other fringe benefits (cafeteria)	16-18	2.86	0.001
	19-22	3.43	
	23-27	3.44	
	28-31	3.56	
	32-36	2.00	
	37-42	3.00	
	over 42	3.29	
	Total	3.39	
Modern, creative working environment	16-18	4.00	0.000
	19-22	3.64	
	23-27	3.53	
	28-31	3.25	
	32-36	2.00	
	37-42	2.67	
	over 42	2.79	
	Total	3.46	

Source: authors' own research, N=331, One way ANOVA

5 Summary

Within the framework of the research, first the most important aspects for employees when considering a new job or job opportunity were examined. The results show that pay, benefits and incentives are less important than direct management style, a good working atmosphere and leadership style. Likewise, when it comes to motivational tools to enhance performance, we found that team spirit and a modern, creative working environment are as important as higher pay.

The results suggest that the classic pay-related toolbox is losing importance and that factors such as leadership style, organisational development and employer branding are dominating in the choice of job, as well as in the motivation to perform better.

The criteria for job selection and the range of incentives for better performance also showed differentiation by age. Generation-specific values are also reflected in job selection and the perception of performance incentives. All this suggests that differentiated human policy instruments that take account of individual and generational differences rather than standard responses may be more effective today.

In the continuation of this research, we will therefore explore these generational differences by analysing how different generations can collaborate and work together effectively and efficiently at the workplace.

The limitations of the present research include the fact that the results are not representative due to the arbitrary nature of the sampling, which we intend to correct in the continuation of the research by implementing quota sampling.

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