Generation-Y do you want to work there?

An exploratory study focusing on the employer preferences of final year undergraduates, representing Generation-Y

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate Generation-Y and their preferences when looking for employment. The Chartered Institute of Personal and Development (CIPD) (2015) [1] state that Generation-Y is born between 1979 and 1999. Currently, Generation-Y is made up of students and professionals, of whom are in the early years of their career (Alsop, 2008 [2]). The future graduates, who are apart of Generation-Y, are an interesting demographic within the UK. They were the first to be introduced to the rise in tuition fees, which increased from £3,290 to £9,000 per year (Coughlan, 2010 [3]). The rise in fees was introduced for the 2012/13 cohort; this resulted in a sharp decrease of 6% for enrolments between 2011/12 and 2012/13 (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016 [4]). This causes them to be an interesting demographic to focus on within Generation-Y.

Rationale and Current Literature

Inspiration for the project was during the researchers placement year working on a project in HR about attracting early professionals within the Generation-Y category.

Current literature focuses heavily on the characteristics of different generations and how there life experiences and previous generations shape their own. See the table below with opinions from Alsop, 2008 [2]; PewResearchCenter, 2015 [5]; Sunley, 2011 [6]; and Zemke, Raines, Filipczak, 2013 [7].

Generation	Key Historical Events	Traits	Informal Key Characteristics
Veterans	• Great Depressions • The Cold War • World War II • Pearl Harbour • Korean War	Patriotic; Strive for Financial Security; Simplicity; Work Ethic; Loyal	Children were 'seen, but not heard'
Baby Boomers	• Assassinations of JFK, Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. • The Cold War • Vietnam War • Man on the Moon	Free Spirited; Less optimistic; Distrust of government; Workaholic; Seeks personal fulfilment; Lives to work	Created the term 'workaholic; Parents said ' You can do anything'
Generation X	• AIDS epidemic • Fall of the Berlin Wall • MTV • End of Cold War • Challenger Explosion	Entrepreneurial; Technological Savvy; Adaptable; Resourceful; Reject Rules; Independent	Defined as 'slakers' and have the 'carpe diem' attitude Parents said ' Stand on your own two feet'
Generation Y	• Rise of the Internet • Death of Princess Diana • CDs/DVDs • Terrorism • Swine Flu • Y2K • Afghanistan & Iraq • Social Media	Ambitious; Optimistic; Entrepreneurial; Busy; Accepting of Change; Wants instant gratification; Very informal; Multi-taskers	High levels of student debt Parents said ' You're wonderful and brilliant at everything'

When focusing on employer preferences there are four key preferences the literature points towards:

• There is a strong need for progression and at a speed.
• Image of the organisation is important for Generation-Y job seekers.
• Graduate job seekers are willing to join an organisation with a positive reputations in exchange for a lower wage.
• Generation-Y want to break down the barriers between work and play.

Final Comments

Generation-Y has proven to be a complex generation who are currently entering the labour market and making other generations notice them. They have a strong need for teamwork and they want work to be as enjoyable as possible.
The study of generations will always be an evolutionary one and Generation Z will inevitably be as complex as Generation-Y.

Aim

What are the preferences of final year undergraduates, representing Generation-Y, when seeking future employment?

Methodology

An interpretative approach has been taken to conducting primary research on this topic. The method for collecting primary data was three focus groups, using final year undergraduates at Oxford Brookes University. The focus group will be in two sections, the first being a general discussion to gage views and opinions using exploratory and descriptive methods. Whereas in the second section the participants will be given four company profiles from The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers 2015-2016. They were asked to discuss their most and least preferable and why. The organisations were:

Oxfam | Civil Service | Google | ALDI

From this the focus groups were fully transcribed and analysed across all three focus groups opinions to find comparisons and contrasts within the participants views and the current literature.

Findings

Within initial discussions in the focus groups this is what was discussed across all three focus groups. Largest being the most talked about and smallest the least.

It was found that all participants have been involved in employment or work experience and all had an idea of what they wanted to do post graduation. When looking at the four companies discussed here is what was said:

Interestingly within general discussion the image of the company was discussed as not important or a factor when picking an employer. However when actually looking at businesses statements were made such as 'not sexy' and 'because it's Google', showing that image does play a factor sub-consciously.

References

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