

ANALYSIS OF CAREER INTERESTS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AMONG GENERATION Z IN TASIKMALAYA CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze Generation Z's interest in choosing a career in the hospitality industry in Tasikmalaya City. With Generation Z becoming increasingly dominant as part of the new workforce, the hospitality industry faces strategic challenges in attracting superior talent with different characteristics, preferences, and work expectations compared to previous generations. This study applies a quantitative approach by distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents consisting of final-year students and recent graduates in Indonesia. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to test the simultaneous and partial effects between variables. The results show that employer branding simultaneously has a significant effect on Generation Z's interest in pursuing a career in the hospitality sector. Meanwhile, the economic value dimension remains a consideration, but does not occupy a primary position as a pull factor.

Key words: Career Interests; Hospitality Industry; Human Resource Management

INTRODUCTION

Demographic changes in the workforce indicate that Generation Z—those born between 1997 and 2012—is beginning to dominate the productive workforce. This generation possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it from previous generations, influencing its expectations of the work environment (Smith & Turner, 2021; Deloitte, 2023). Despite being one of the largest employment sectors in the service sector, the hospitality industry is often perceived by younger generations as physically demanding, high-risk, and lacking flexibility. On the other hand, this sector is dynamic and labor-intensive. Post-COVID-19, the hospitality industry is struggling to recover and faces intense competition to attract top talent. The industry's image of long hours, high pressure, and relatively low starting salaries presents a challenge in attracting Generation Z, who have different career preferences than previous generations.

The gap between these perceptions and the strategic realities of the hospitality industry has the potential to discourage younger generations from pursuing careers in this sector. Yet, the success of the hospitality industry depends heavily on the quality and commitment of its human resources, particularly in customer service. One strategic approach that can bridge this gap is employer branding, which is an organization's effort to build a positive image as an ideal workplace in the eyes of prospective employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). However, employer branding practices in the Indonesian hospitality industry have not yet optimally targeted the characteristics and needs of Generation Z (Nawaz & Gomes, 2022; Pratama & Widodo, 2023).

The results of an interview with one of the final semester students of the Hospitality Study Program in Tasikmalaya City showed a similar view:

"I personally love the hospitality industry, but many of my friends are starting to change their interests. They find working in hotels too tiring and lacking flexibility. If you can work remotely in another field and still earn a substantial income, why work eight hours a day in a hotel?"

(Personal interview, March 17, 2024)

The hospitality industry in Tasikmalaya City holds significant potential, driven by the growing tourism sector and the demand for quality accommodation services. However, the low interest of Generation Z in pursuing a career in this sector is due to several factors, including a lack of understanding of employer branding—namely, a company's image and reputation as an attractive workplace (Barrow & Mosley, 2011). Many hotels in Tasikmalaya have not yet optimally developed employer branding strategies capable of attracting the attention of a younger workforce. As a result, Generation Z, who tend to be selective in choosing jobs, are more attracted to other sectors considered more modern, flexible, and offering clear career paths. Furthermore, the public perception of the hospitality industry as synonymous with long working hours, low wages, and high workloads also weakens the interest of the younger generation. This condition is exacerbated by the still-high open unemployment rate (TPT) in Tasikmalaya City, indicating a gap between available job opportunities and the younger generation's preferences for sectors of interest (BPS Tasikmalaya City, 2024).

Based on this description, several main problems can be identified, namely:

1. Lack of understanding and implementation of employer branding in the Tasikmalaya hospitality industry.

2. Generation Z's low interest in pursuing a career in the hospitality sector.
3. Negative perceptions of wages and working conditions in the hospitality industry.
4. The unemployment rate is still high in Tasikmalaya City even though job opportunities in hotels are available.

Generation Z is known to be a critical generation in choosing a job, considering not only financial aspects but also company image, work flexibility, work-life balance, and opportunities for personal development (Ng, Lyons, & Schweitzer, 2018). Therefore, employer branding strategies play a crucial role in attracting them. Employer branding refers to the process by which an organization builds a positive reputation and image as an attractive workplace for prospective employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018). Unfortunately, most hotels in Tasikmalaya City have not optimized this strategy to attract Generation Z, so they tend to be more interested in working in other sectors considered more modern, prestigious, and aligned with their long-term career aspirations (Nawaz & Gomes, 2022).

Furthermore, negative perceptions of the hospitality industry—such as long hours, heavy workloads, and low wages—contribute to the sector's perceived attractiveness to Generation Z (Rahman et al., 2021). However, the hospitality industry offers a dynamic work experience, opportunities to develop interpersonal skills, and competitive career opportunities (Baum, 2019; Kim & Park, 2020; Dutta et al., 2022). These issues are closely related to the employment situation in Tasikmalaya City, where unemployment remains quite high, especially among young people (BPS Tasikmalaya City, 2024). Therefore, optimizing employer branding strategies in the hospitality sector is a strategic step to attract Generation Z and simultaneously reduce the existing labor gap.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is a quantitative method with a causal associative approach (Sugiyono, 2023). The population in this study were Generation Z individuals (aged \pm 17–27 years) who are currently or have studied in the field of hospitality, tourism, or hospitality management, as well as general students who showed an interest in a career in the service and hospitality sector, totaling 150 people. The sample for the interviews was determined using purposive sampling with a snowball sampling technique on Gen Z, including Active students or graduates of the hotel/tourism/hospitality study program, domiciled in Tasikmalaya City and Regency. The research data collection technique used online questionnaires and interviews. This study employed linear regression analysis because it was considered capable of measuring small sample sizes. The application used was SPSS version 26

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion contain the results of research findings and scientific discussions. Write down This chapter will discuss the results of the research conducted to evaluate and analyze the previously established variables. Based on data obtained from respondents, analysis of the instruments used, and hypothesis testing, the results of this study provide a comprehensive overview of the influence of the studied factors on teacher performance. The results will be explained in detail, accompanied by relevant interpretations and explanations to support a deeper understanding of the phenomena observed within the context of this research.

This study reports the findings of a study conducted by surveying 200 Gen Z individuals residing in Tasikmalaya. To test the hypotheses, the collected data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative methods. Simple linear regression analysis was used to examine the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The SPSS program, which includes several steps, including descriptive analysis, hypothesis testing, instrument testing to verify data validity and reliability, and classical assumption testing, was used to conduct the analysis.

Validity Test

Validity testing was used to examine each variable used in this study. In this study, the SPSS for Windows version 27 computer program was used to test the validity of the statements. The criteria used to determine the validity of the statements used in this study were:

- a. Degrees of freedom (df) = $n - 2 = df = 200 - 2 = 198$, obtained r table = 0.1388
- b. Each item is declared valid if the calculated r value $>$ r table.

The validity test results in the table above show that all indicators in the Employer Branding and Career Interest variables have a calculated r value $>$ r table, which is the r table value at a significance level of 0.05. Thus, all items in this questionnaire are valid and can be used to accurately measure the variables in the study. This indicates that each question in the questionnaire consistently measures the intended aspect in accordance with the research objectives.

Reliability Test

Data questionnaire is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is $>$ 0.60, indicating that the instrument has good internal consistency and is trustworthy. Conversely, if the Cronbach's Alpha value is $<$ 0.60, the data is considered unreliable, meaning the questionnaire is less reliable in consistently measuring variables.

Based on each calculation, each variable in the study has a value *Cronbach's Alpha* above the standard of 0.60, indicating that the instrument used is consistent in measuring each variable. The Employer Branding variable (X) has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.788, and Career Interest (Y) 0.775. Because all Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than 0.60, the data in this study are declared reliable, meaning that each item in the questionnaire can be consistently trusted to measure the variables studied.

Generation Z is known to have distinct characteristics compared to previous generations, including a focus on meaningful work, work flexibility, an appreciation for digital technology, and a desire for personal and professional growth. Therefore, employer branding strategies in hotels must emphasize innovation, digital engagement, and a clear, sustainable career path.

These results align with previous research (20)(21)(22) which states that employer branding can increase an organization's attractiveness as a workplace and influence individual career choices. In a local context, hotels that successfully communicate positive values, concern for employee well-being, and competency development opportunities will be more attractive to young graduates, especially Generation Z who are entering the job market.

The results of this study reinforce the view that employer branding is a key strategy in attracting young talent. Employer branding extends beyond a company's image to how a hotel showcases values, culture, and employee experience relevant to the needs of Generation Z.

Generation Z tends to choose workplaces that not only provide competitive salaries, but also offer:

- **An inclusive and supportive work environment**
- **Opportunities for personal and career development**
- **Interactive digital engagement**
- **Work-life balance**

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the career interests of Generation Z in the hospitality industry in Tasikmalaya City, it can be concluded that the career interests of this generation are influenced by several main factors, namely: understanding of career prospects in the hospitality industry, perceptions of the work environment, the influence of social media, family support, and the relevance of the education they are pursuing.

Most Generation Z respondents expressed a strong interest in careers in the hospitality industry, particularly positions related to hospitality, customer service, and hotel management. However, some remained hesitant, considering the industry to be challenging, such as unstable working hours and high work pressure.

Career interest also appears to be higher among individuals with internship experience or vocational education relevant to the hospitality industry. Furthermore, exposure to positive information about developments in the hospitality industry, both through formal education and digital media, contributes to this generation's interest in pursuing the hospitality industry as a career choice.

Thus, it can be concluded that to increase Generation Z's career interest in the hospitality industry, a more strategic approach is needed, such as integrating applicable education, improving career information, and creating a professional and promising image of the hospitality industry.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expresses his gratitude to God Almighty for the successful completion of this research. He also expresses his gratitude to all respondents who participated in this study. He also expresses his gratitude to all parties who provided support throughout the research process.

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