



# Job satisfaction perceptions of different generation employees in hotels in Polokwane

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## Abstract

The tourism and hospitality industry is of tremendous importance globally as it is the second largest source of job creation and income generation in the world. Government officials around the world therefore place huge emphasis on creating and developing funding bodies, associations, and/or organisations that help with the development of the hospitality and tourism industry of their countries by marketing themselves globally in the hopes of attracting tourism, which generates income and creates employment opportunities. Employees' contributions are essential to ensuring that the hospitality and tourism industry is prosperous. It is therefore essential to study job satisfaction, and the different generations' perceptions thereof, within this industry to determine how satisfaction levels can be improved, thus strengthening the industry. Employees contribute to an increase in efficiency in the hotel business when they are satisfied with their workplace. If hotel management is unaware of employees' level of satisfaction or is unable to identify the aspects that make employees feel satisfied, then it should not be a surprise when hotel management ends up being confronted with poor performance, poor revenue or profit turnover, and poor customer retention problems. This study made use of questionnaires and was quantitative in nature. The questionnaire was distributed to hotel employees and the software STATA SE version 14 was used to analyse the data. This study reports on different generational groups that work in hotels in Polokwane, South Africa, as well as the elements that promote work contentment and discontentment. The outcomes of the study will assist in identifying the causes of low employee satisfaction in Polokwane's hotel industry and open other avenues for research within the Polokwane hospitality industry that will better develop it.

**Keywords:** dissatisfaction, generations, job, perceptions, ratings, satisfaction.

## Introduction

According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO, 2018), the tourism industry in sub-Saharan Africa has seen a 4.0% increase, in which 2.86% of the increase came from South Africa, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industry, in 2019.

Irrespective of the faltering South African economy, the South African tourism industry continues to attract tourists from other parts of Africa and all over the world (WTO, 2018). The statistics provided by the South African Tourism Gazette reported that South African tourism contributed R136.1 billion, 2.9% of the total South African gross domestic product (GDP), in



2017. Tourism directly and indirectly supported approximately 1.5 million jobs in 2017, which is 9.5% of total employment, and there is a possibility to develop employment in the area to 2.1 million jobs in the future (WTO, 2018).

The number of tourists in South Africa in 2012 was 4.16 million, and in 2016 rose to 15.52 million. It is predicted that this number will increase to 18 million in 2021 (WTO, 2018). To maintain and grow these numbers, it is important that the tourists are satisfied with the service they receive. However, as stated by Pazir and Amin (2019:1119), it is vital to ensure that the employees who provide this tangible or intangible service to the customers are satisfied with their working conditions, in order to ensure a level of quality with which the customer will be satisfied. Winker, König and Kleinmann (2012:518) state that the biggest global factor that is overlooked by employers in the service industry is that they fail to understand that in order to have high customer satisfaction, high employee satisfaction is needed.

Even though the South African tourism and hospitality sector continues to boom, as is evident from the South African Tourism Annual Report (2019:10) stating that tourists contribution to the South African economy increased from 103,8 billion rand in the 2017/2018 financial year to 116,9 billion in 2018/2019, little to no research has been conducted to examine and assess the job satisfaction of employees within each generational group and how it is linked to high customer satisfaction (WTO, 2018). One could question whether hotel managers are focused more on customer satisfaction than employee satisfaction, and secondly, whether hotel managers focusing on employee satisfaction across different generation groups will contribute to improving the customers' level of satisfaction (Prossach, 2019:63).

### **Theoretical background**

Employees contribute enormously to the prosperity of a company (Kara, Uysal & Magnini, 2012:226). Job satisfaction in the hospitality industry has over the years been a problem that has been difficult to solve. Research has shown that job dissatisfaction is caused by various operational reasons; the main contributors of such dissatisfaction in the hotel industry are the long working hours and poor salaries/wages (Kara *et al.*, 2012:226). Poulston, (2009:23) reported that hotel employees in Auckland New Zealand indicated that poor pay, bad supervision and poor working conditions were the leading problems causing low morale. A study conducted by Mansour (2016:2) in Canada refers to the 24/7 nature of the hotel industry and that it frequently leads to workers spending long hours working at a hotel. One of the recommendations of this study is that workers should have the option of time compensation as an alternative to overtime remuneration. It seems that the same negative aspects is prevalent in the South African hotel industry seeing that Koko and Ramarumo (2015:1199) who conducted a study in the Free State province on job stress and burnout in the accommodation industry also referred to long hours and poor pay.

According to Rahman, Akhter and Khan (2017:89), it was found that job satisfaction is determined by the following four factors: (1) the atmosphere set by managers, (2) self-actualisation, personal growth, and development, (3) capability to be useful in the job, and (4) labour conditions. Only if management addresses all these factors will employees experience job satisfaction. Should one aspect be neglected, it will negatively affect employee satisfaction (Rahman *et al.*, 2017:93).

Job satisfaction is individualistic and differs from person to person (Rahman *et al.*, 2017:90). When investigating further, however, it can be noted that different generational groups have different preferences in entertainment, clothing, lifestyles, as well as working and managerial styles. Hotel managers should strive for a good balance of the following generations: (1) baby boomers (born between the years 1946 and 1965): there are not many of the baby boomer generational group in the hospitality industry; (2) Generation X (born between the years 1966



and 1984): this generational group is seen as the successors of the baby boomer generation, and they brought about little change to the technological advancement in the hotel industry; and (3) Generation Y employees (born between the years 1985 and 2004): Generation Y is seen as a generation with an average career span of 10 years in the workplace and they are likely to change their job twice in their career span. Generation Y is motivated by innovation and creativity and hates monotony (Aziz, Rahman, Yusuf & Yunus, 2018:22).

Numerous hospitality companies previously utilised top-down bureaucratic management and leadership approaches, which led to cost-driven human resource policies, where employees were treated the same as any other resource to be deployed to achieve organisational goals (Sing, 2017:562). The workforce should be used as skilfully and adequately as possible to reach organisational intent, but it is vital to remember that employees should be treated humanely with regard to their emotions, aims, personal objectives, and pre-eminence in life, as well as their need for self-fulfilment and satisfaction and the possibility for growth (Sing, 2017:561).

## Methods

This research project utilised quantitative research methodology. A quantitative research method was chosen because it gave the researcher the ability to collect data in a short time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018:93). The project investigated perceptions of job satisfaction of employees of different generations who work in hotels in Polokwane. The study made use of an existing questionnaire, printed self-administered questionnaires as a data-collection method. The researcher visited the hotels where hardcopies of the questionnaire were distributed to the participants whom were requested to complete the questionnaires. The purpose of the research was explained thoroughly to each participant in the information leaflet and consent form that accompanied each questionnaire. The researcher stayed with the participants and collected the questionnaires and informed consent forms on completion. Ethically correct behaviour is of utmost importance when working with human subjects and it is important for consents to be obtained from the respondents. All ethical considerations and protection of dignity of all stakeholders were ensured by informing and assuring the participants in advance that confidentiality will be guaranteed. The researcher also issued and explained the information consent form that participants signed before participation.

The target population of this study consisted of employees employed in hotels in Polokwane, South Africa. A sample can be described as a fragment of a larger occupant that is considered to be a representative of the population (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018:224). The researcher used the stratified random sampling method. Stratification is the process of splitting up a unit of the population into correlative subgroups prior to sampling. This means that it is a type of sampling method whereby the investigator classifies the population into non-overlapping distinctive groups called strata. The strata (in this case, the generation groups) should be incompatible; each element in the population must therefore be allocated to a single stratum (Manzo, 2014:136). The sample for this study were 500. Of the 500 questionnaires that were distributed but only 380 questionnaires were returned. The 380 questionnaires were further analysed and it was discovered that 130 questionnaires were not fully and accurately completed. These were considered as invalid, so had to be discarded and excluded from the final analysis. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) is designed to evaluate an employee's self-contentment with his or her job and what aspect of the job he or she is the most satisfied with (Martins & Proenca, 2012:559). Three versions of the MSQ are available: two long versions (the 1977 version and the 1967 version) and a short version (Marijani, 2017:609). For this study, the MSQ short form was used. Rather than conducting a general measure of job satisfaction, the MSQ provides specific data on the aspect(s) of work that individuals find gratifying (Martins & Proenca, 2012:559). The MSQ measures job satisfaction that covers the following: ability utilisation, attainment, undertaking, progress, consent, company policies,



indemnity, co-workers, creativity, independence, moral values, recognition, duty, protection, social status, supervision (human relations), supervision (technical), diversity, and work conditions (Marijani, 2017:609). MSQ were used successfully in various South African research studies amongst other by Muzanenhamo, Allen-Ile, Adams, and Iwu (2016:10) that did a study on organisational citizenship, Khunou and Davhana-Maselesele (2016:7) that measured job satisfaction of nurses and also Hansen, Buitendach and Kanengoni (2015:2) that measured educators job satisfaction.

## Data analysis

Data analysis can be elucidated as a procedure by which gathered data are inspected and evaluated in order to recognise patterns that address the research query (Craver & Lanham, 2014:103).

STATA SE version 14 was used to analyse the data. STATA (named for “statistics” and “data”) is a general-purpose statistical software package that provides solutions for data science needs, retrieves and manipulates data, visualises data models, and generates or provides useful reports (Manzo, 2014:114-115). Using the software, bar graphs and pie charts were generated to compare different variables (Manzo, 2014:114-115). Frequency tables were used to give a snapshot of the data to allow the researcher to find patterns. It is a technique of sorting out unprocessed data in a compact form, by placing a sequence of results from biggest to smallest or from smallest to biggest together with their frequency. Data were also presented in pie charts and frequency tables.

## Results

In the biographical section, the first question was on the star grading of the hotel where the respondent was employed. Figure 1 shows the percentages of respondents who worked in differently graded hotel establishments from the total of 250 respondents.

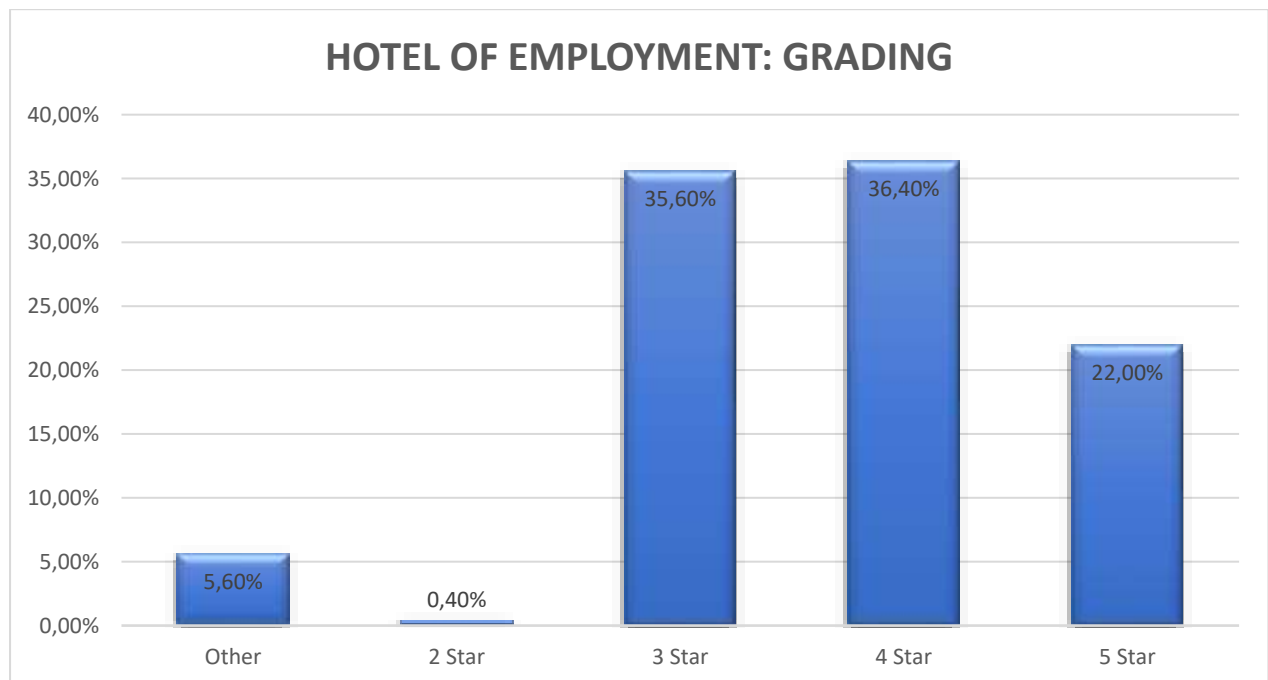


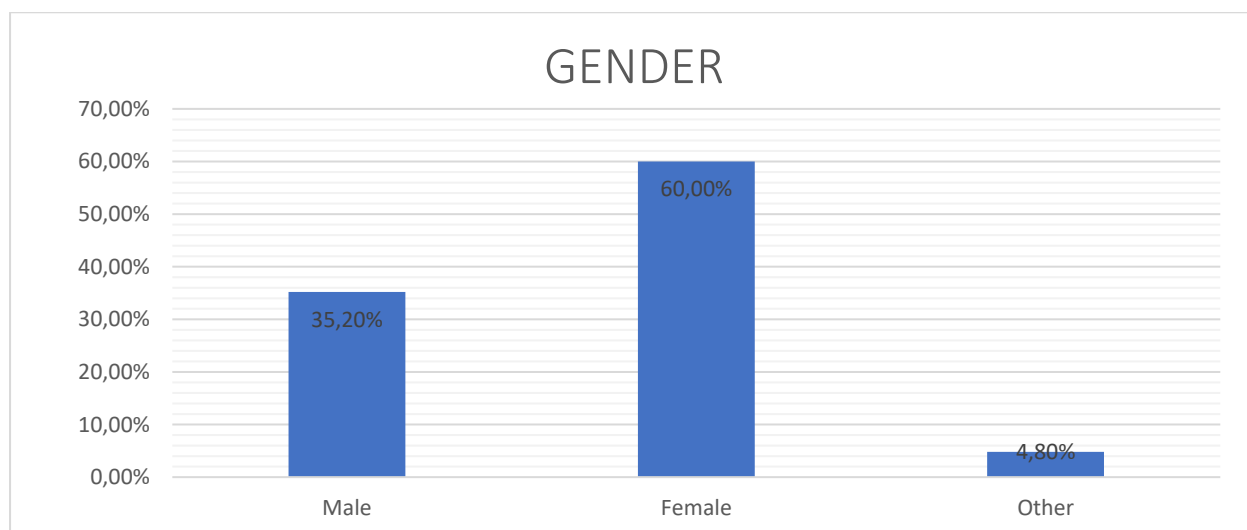
Figure 1. Respondents per hotel grading



Only one respondent from this survey was employed in a two-star hotel. Three-star hotels had 89 respondents (35.60%), making them the second largest grouping, with the highest being four-star establishments with 91 respondents (36.40%). “Other” referred to a hotel that is new and still waiting to be graded, or is in the process of being upgraded or downgraded. It can therefore be reported that the respondents were representative of all the different graded hotels, except two-star establishments, which had only one respondent.

Liu, Chen and Wang (2018:114) state that most employees in the hospitality industry are employed in three-star and five-star establishments, as the concept of boutique luxury hotels becomes more popular. These are generally five-star establishments in nature, and so in the future we will likely see more employees working in five-star and four-star hotels, and fewer in three-star hotels. Taking into account the response rate from the analyses, most respondents worked for three-star and four-star establishments. It can therefore be stated that the distribution of respondents, according to the grading of establishments, is in line with Liu *et al.*'s (2018) research.

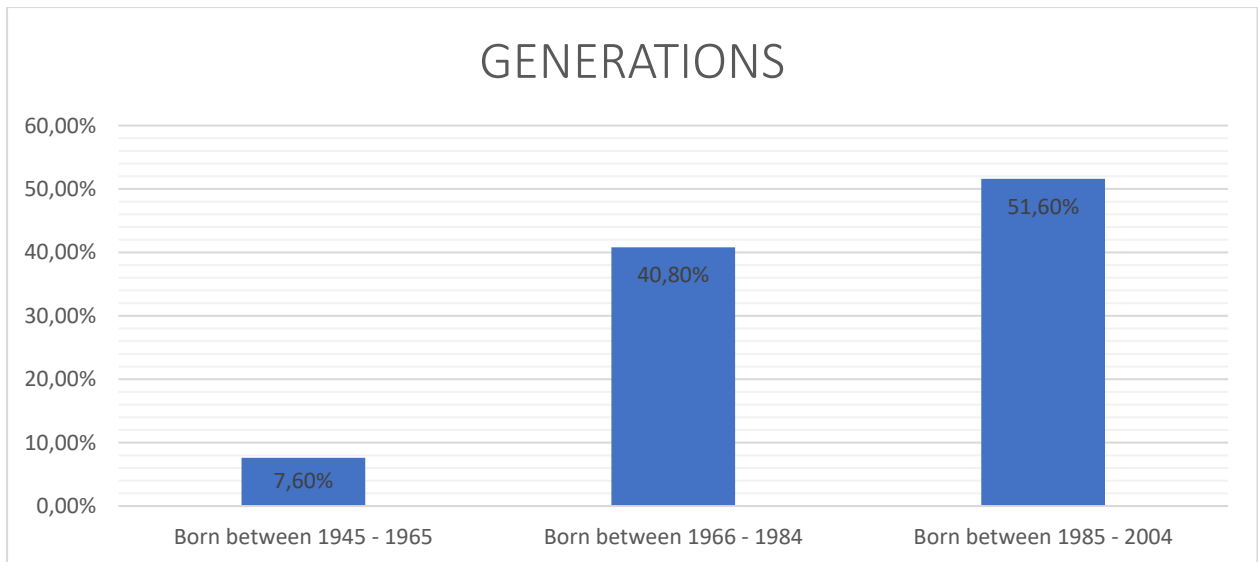
The participants' gender is reported in Figure 2. There were 88 male respondents and 150 female respondents. Twelve respondents selected “other”.



**Figure 2.** Gender of respondents

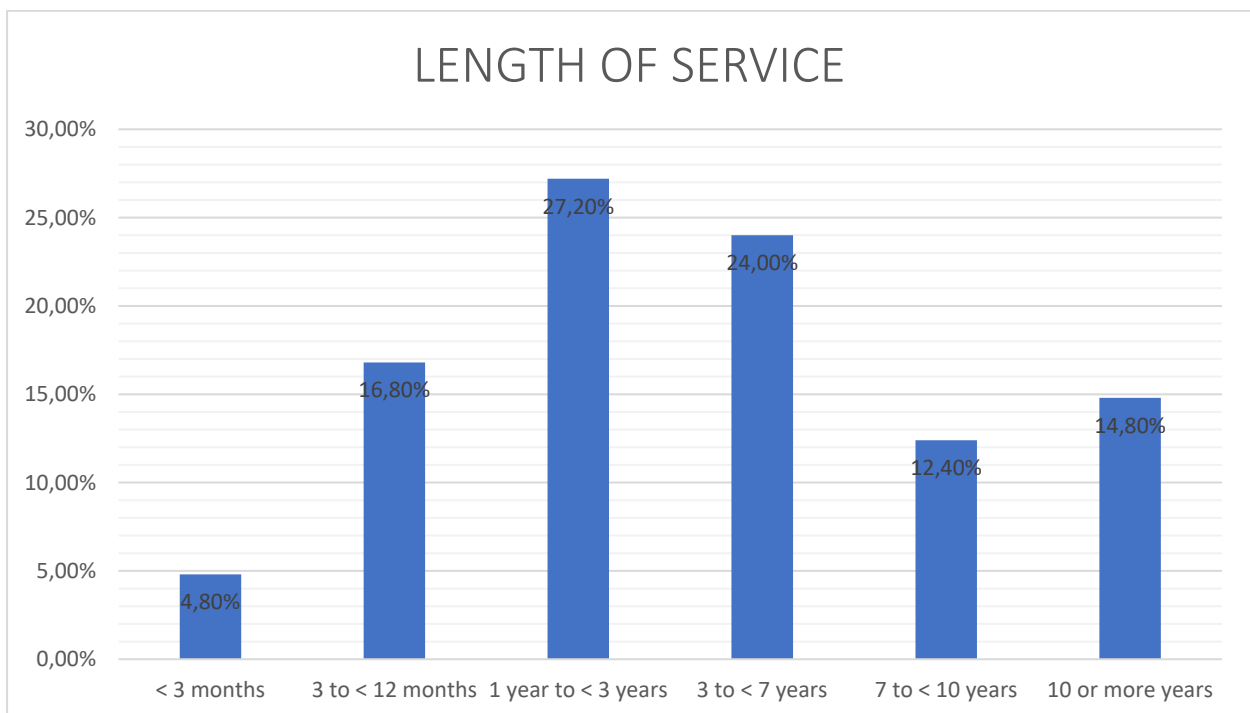
The majority of employees in hotels tend to be female, as also reported in a study conducted by Mbane (2017:61), who stated that 68.3% were female. Roeloffze, Swart and Kleynhans' (2014:15) study found that 61.6% of hotel personnel were female. In a report by the World Travel and Tourism Council (2019:3) it is stated that on average, female employees as a percentage of the total number of employees in the tourism industry, South Africa (53,6%) has the second highest female workforce after Russia (54,3%). The G20 countries average female employees in the tourism industry is 46,4%.

An important aspect of this study was to determine to which generation the employees belong as the researcher wanted to determine whether the different generations would have a different opinion on their experience of job satisfaction (see Figure 3). The number of baby boomers who responded was 19. The vast majority of employees were either from Generation X (n=102) or Generation Y (n=129).



**Figure 3. Generations**

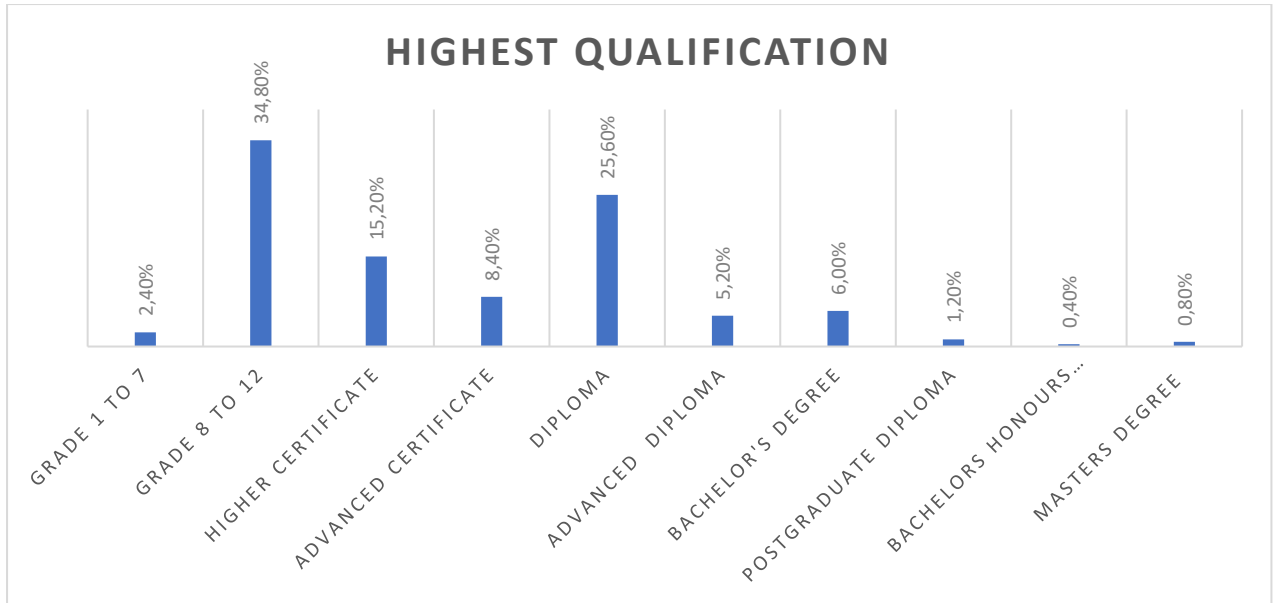
The researcher also included a question to determine the length of service of the respondents. The majority of employees were in the service of hotels from one to less than seven years (51.2%) (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Length of service**

Only 14.8% of employees were still in the employment of their hotel after 10 or more years. This might be an indication of hotel employees who regularly change jobs, or it might be that dissatisfaction leads to employees finding jobs in other industries. The last biographical question was on the respondents' educational level (see Figure 5).





**Figure 5.** Highest qualification

Of the respondents, 37.2% indicated that they had a Grade 12 or below qualification, 23.6% were in possession of certificates, and 25.6% of the respondents indicated that they had a diploma.

The questions that were used to determine job satisfaction and the percentages of respondents who selected one of the five Likert-scale options to each question are indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Feelings about job

Job aspect	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Being able to keep busy all the time.	25.20%	53.60%	10.00%	4.80%	6.40%
The chance to work alone on the job.	20.40%	52.00%	13.60%	7.20%	6.80%
The chance to do different things from time to time.	21.20%	53.20%	12.80%	5.20%	7.60%
The chance to be somebody in the community.	24.80%	45.60%	16.00%	8.40%	5.20%
The way my boss treats his or her workers.	22.40%	46.00%	16.00%	8.00%	7.60%
The competence of my supervisor in making decisions.	21.69%	46.59%	18.07%	6.02%	7.63%
Being able not to do things that do not go against my conscience.	28.00%	48.80%	12.40%	6.80%	4.00%
The way my job provides steady employment.	24.60%	50.81%	15.32%	5.24%	4.03%
The chance to do things for other people.	25.20%	51.20%	13.20%	6.40%	4.00%
The chance to tell people what to do.	22.98%	47.99%	17.74%	6.45%	4.84%



The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities.	23.60%	45.60%	16.00%	4.80%	10.00%
The pay and the amount of work that I do.	14.40%	42.80%	17.20%	12.40%	13.20%
The chance for advancement in this job.	19.60%	40.40%	18.40%	10.40%	11.20%
The freedom to use my own judgement.	19.68%	46.98%	17.67%	6.43%	9.24%
The chance to try my own method of doing the job.	21.69%	40.96%	20.88%	7.23%	9.24%
The work conditions.	27.20%	46.40%	16.80%	4.40%	5.20%
The way my co-workers get along with one another.	25.60%	45.60%	14.80%	6.40%	7.60%
The praise I get for doing a good job.	23.69%	45.78%	14.06%	9.24%	7.23%
The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job.	26.51%	45.78%	15.66%	5.22%	6.83%
<b>Average</b>	<b>23.08%</b>	<b>47.16%</b>	<b>15.61%</b>	<b>6.90%</b>	<b>7.25%</b>

The respondents were generally satisfied with the work conditions in the hotels, as can be seen if the averages for very satisfied and satisfied are combined (70.24%). The very dissatisfied average was 7.25% and the combined very dissatisfied and dissatisfied average was only 14.15%. The five questions that the respondents were most positive about if one combined very satisfied and satisfied are the following, ranked in order from highest to lowest:

- 1) Being able to keep busy all the time (78.8%).
- 2) Being able not to do things that go against my conscience (76.8%).
- 3) The chance to do something for other people (76.4%).
- 4) The way my job provides steady employment (75.41%).
- 5) The chance to do different things from time to time (74.4%).

The five questions that the respondents were most negative about when combining the dissatisfied and very dissatisfied responses were the following, listed in order from highest to lowest:

- 1) The pay and the amount of work that I do (25.6%).
- 2) The chance for advancement in my job (21.6%).
- 3) The chance to try my own method of doing my job / The praise I get for doing a good job (both at 16.47%).
- 4) The freedom I get to use my own judgment (15.67%).
- 5) The way my boss treats his or her workers (15.6%).

In the comparison of the different generations, the following differences were identified and tabulated as follows:

**Table 2.** Comparison of different generations

Generation X (1945-1965)	Generation Y (1966-1984)	Millennials (1985-2004)
Is the least employed generation.	They make the second largest generational group employed.	Are the most employed by Polokwane hotels.
They are the least employed but most have worked in their establishments longer than 10 years.	The average employment span is three to seven years.	Average employment span is one to three years.





Values job stability.	Values being effective at work and work advancement.	Value leadership style, (managerial competence) creativity, and remuneration as significant contributors to job satisfaction.
Few are employed, majority (37%) possess a Grade 12 certificate.	Majority (17%) obtained an advanced certificate.	Majority (46%) obtained diplomas and some obtained a bachelor's degree.

From the comparison in Table 2, it can be seen that Generation Y finds promotion a significant factor at work. Some researchers or writers may refer to Generation X as unambitious but it is seen that they tend to value having a job and being able to provide for their family as more important than promotions (Neal, 2019:6).

The last question in the questionnaire was an open-ended question where employees could state two issues that were not included in the survey that their establishments could improve on. The common responses to the open-ended questions are as follows:

- Staff meals
- Staff uniforms
- Separate meeting and eating area
- Team building
- Training
- Own initiative
- Degrading staff and discrimination

Many challenges are facing the hospitality industry; however, there are “silent challenges” that the literature or companies are often reluctant to address, such as:

- harassment of and discrimination against employees perpetrated by management and customers;
- the use of vulgar words by superiors when referring to staff; and
- providing free or selling unacceptable meals to staff (Nain, 2018:565).

The answers provided by the open-ended questions, namely discrimination, degrading staff, and the provision of unacceptable staff meals, are what Nain (2018:565) describes as “silent challenges”.

### Limitations

This study was based on the perceptions of different generational groups employed in the hospitality industry in Polokwane and the findings of this specific study can therefore not be inferred to other cities or provinces outside of Polokwane. However the researchers are of the opinion that it is highly likely that similar trends will be evident in the other provinces. The participants of the survey were employees who were employed in Polokwane on a full-time basis. Part-time or contracted employees were excluded from this study.

Another limitation of the study was that the research was only conducted in Polokwane, therefore one cannot make broad conclusions for the entire province of Limpopo, nor South Africa. Secondly, because this study was novel in Polokwane, no studies have previously been conducted and no comparison could be made to reach an overall general conclusion to assess



whether satisfaction is increasing or decreasing. Thirdly, due to time constraints, the research could only take into account hotel employees working in Polokwane hotels and not other lodging establishment such as self-catering units and motels, to name a few.

## Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of job satisfaction among hospitality employees. This research was able to identify the following:

The average length of service among the Millennials was one to three years. Nearly half (34.80%) of the respondent possessed a Grade 12 certificate and 25.60% were in possession of a postgraduate degree. The analysis showed that more than half (60%) of the respondents were female and 35.20% were male.

The factors that contributed to respondents perceiving job dissatisfaction were pay and the amount of work that they do (25.6%), as well as the lack of advancement in the job (21.6%). The factors that contributed to respondents' perceptions of job satisfaction were the fact that their job kept them busy and productive. Being able to keep busy (76.8%) and being able to do something that does not go against their conscience (76.8%) contributed towards employees' job satisfaction.

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