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Do Gen Zs feel happy about their first job? A cultural values perspective from the hospitality and tourism industry

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Abstract

Purpose – In order to address Generation Z’s role in the emerging workforce, this paper aims to examine Chinese Generation Z’s subjective well-being during their internship in the hospitality and tourism industry through the lens of Chinese Cultural Values. It explores the extent to which Gen Zs identify with Chinese Cultural Values and the influences of Chinese Cultural Values on intern students’ Subjective Well-being (SWB) which in turn, predicts their future job intentions in this industry.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper proposes a normative model to contextualize the multi-dimensional interactions between Chinese Cultural Values, intern students’ SWB, and their future job intentions in the hospitality and tourism industry. A survey as the main data collection method was employed with 400 respondents in Macau, China in testing hypotheses and analyzing the direct and indirect effects of these interactions.

Findings – The paper provides empirical insights into the way that Generation Z’s SWB is influenced by Chinese Cultural Values. Findings show that Chinese intern students’ average SWB in the workplace was above average. It also suggests that two cultural dimensions can be identified as playing a significant and salient role in shaping their SWB in the workplace as well as their future job intentions, namely, attitudes towards work, and job-related face values. However, no significant relationships with the other three dimensions of CCVs were found to influence their SWB or future job intentions,

namely, attitudes towards people, moral discipline and status and relationship.

Research limitations/implications – This research results may lack generalizability because the respondents chosen in Macau cannot be fully representative of Chinese Generation Z. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to widen the respondent base. Furthermore, cultural influences are tempered by many macro-contextual factors. Although this study focuses on unpacking Generation Z’s mental status from the level of national culture, other factors such as organizational considerations warrant future academic attention.

Originality/value – This paper addresses a research gap by identifying the influences of cultural values on the SWB of intern students which, in turn, affects their future job intentions in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Key Words Generation Z; student interns, Chinese Cultural Values, Subjective Well-being; hospitality and tourism industry

Article Type Research paper

Introduction

Student interns are widely recognized as the talent core of an emerging workforce (Goh and Lee, 2018). Their subjective well-being (SWB) is pivotal for the development of a labor-intensive and youth-intensive hospitality and tourism industry which faces staff shortages, high turnover rates and recruitment difficulties (Rasheed *et al.*, 2020; Golubovskaya *et al.*, 2019; Bangwal and Tiwari, 2019). SWB is also essential to ensure the delivery of consistent service standards by qualified personnel and that reflect the demands of change in the age of transition from a service to an experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). What is more, internships normally serve as the initial or primary working experience before formal careers begin, from where the individual learns and retains fairly consistent work-related values during these “formative” years (Lyons *et al.*, 2007, p. 340). This can be viewed as “socialization” which has a profound influence on a person’s life-long values and work-related behaviors (Inglehart, 1997). The current Generation Z who are coming of age and are about to step into their careers are said to value personal happiness as a priority. In circumstances when they cannot find it, they are very likely to pursue new job avenues (Ozkan and Solmaz, 2015). Although the extent of happiness that is valued may vary from culture to culture, factors

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effecting the SWB of potential employees have significant implications for the future global job market.

Cultural values and SWB are closely related to each other (Diener *et al.*, 2003). Employees' SWB can be boosted if they can act in accordance with their cultural values and beliefs (Bosch and Taris, 2014). Many interns engaged in the hospitality and tourism industry are young students in educational institutions such as universities and vocational schools, most of whom fall into the demographic category of Generation Z, or Gen Z for short. The significance of Gen Z in varied domains has been addressed, with a particular emphasis on their role of being potential or actual high spenders as consumers (e.g., Cox and Brooks, 2019; Williams, 2015). Despite this generation's importance and recognition of their significance to the future of the hospitality industry (Hjalager and Andersen, 2001), there is a dearth of research that is dedicated to understanding workers' perspectives of their mental status from a cultural perspective..

Although a wide range of research studies have been dedicated to full-time employees' attitudinal and behavioral working performance (e.g., Bosch and Taris, 2014; Chiu and Kosinski, 1999), generation Z's potential role as an emerging young workforce calls for more academic attention (Goh and Okumus, 2020). This issue of scientific inquiry is critical for many countries, including China, which are increasingly aging societies with youngsters filling job vacancies and shaping the future labor market. In 2018, China remained the world's largest tourism spender, with one fifth of international spending, followed by the United States and it was tenth as recipient of international tourism income (World Tourism Organization, 2019). This gives rise to increased potential job opportunities with demand for future labor in the service sector (Wilson, 2018). This study is an attempt to fill the knowledge gap by investigating the influences of cultural values on intern students' SWB which, in turn, affects their future job intentions in this industry.

In order to achieve its aims, this paper proposes a normative model, representing the relationships between cultural values and intern students' SWB, whose interactions may influence intern students' future job intentions in the hospitality and tourism industry by taking into account their multi-dimensional nature.

As a note, we recognize that this data were collected prior to the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic. We are mindful of injunctures to anticipate significant attitudinal and behavioral change as a consequence of current world events, and therefore we caution that conclusions drawn here may require revisiting in the future.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Cultural values and employment

Cultural values refer to “the effects that culture has on those who experience it and the difference it makes to individuals and society” (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2014, p. 124). Cultural values penetrate every domain of people’s lives, pervasively influencing tangible objects, shaping intangible things, regulating practices such as commemoration of historic events (Stephenson, 2008). In the business context, two streams of research have been identified from the extant literature. The first deals with the relationship between cultural values and customers’ responses including brand loyalty (Lam, 2007), gift receiving or giving behavior (Gao *et al.*, 2017), and technology acceptance (Srite and Karahanna, 2006). The second is set at the organizational level, examining relationships between cultural values and innovation, or managers’ behavior, decision-making style, marketing action (Yau, 1988).

Cultural values implicitly and explicitly regulate human activities through everyday exposure and are trans-situational. Work is well-recognized as the foundation of human society, and thus provides a broad opportunity for cultural values to be expressed. This is not entirely novel in that research at the national level has been undertaken to explore employees’ commitment and satisfaction dating back roughly three decades (Palich *et al.*, 1995). For example, collectivity-oriented employees are more prone to report higher levels of job satisfaction (Hui *et al.*, 1995). Different ethnic groups exhibit significant differences regarding their subordinate-superior relationships (Fontaine and Richardson, 2005). Unfortunately, this line of research lacks consistency and seemingly is subservient to a focus on organizational (or corporate) level culture which has undergone intensified discussion in relation to research that seeks links with working attitudes or behaviors (e.g., Tan, 2019). It is undeniable that there is variation in culture

at a personal or organizational level, however, as Schwartz (1999, p.26) states, societal or national cultural values shall be the “central thrust of their (societal member’s) shared enculturation” behind all these regulating forces. There is a need to revisit this “central force” and extend this line of research to investigate work related issues in the current demographic context.

Cultural values and employment among Gen Z

Although there are a number of studies on the attitudes and behaviors of tourists from different generations as mass consumers, there is almost no study on cultural values and their implications for the job market in relation to different generations in the context of hospitality and tourism. That is to say, generational disparity attracts attention from academics in terms of its social, cultural and economic significance while seemingly ignoring possible influences of cultural values on the decision-making of Gen Z. In the hospitality and tourism area, plenty of research has been committed to identifying generational attributes regarding different cohorts of tourists (e.g., Yang and Lau, 2015). In addition, the experience of specific cohorts in relation to tourism behavior in different contexts are also well documented, such as in wine tourism, nature-based tourism, backpacking, fast food purchasing behavior, or specific future tourism demand (Benckendorff *et al.*, 2010; Padgett *et al.*, 2013). Among them, Gen X (i.e. people who were born roughly between 1965 and 1980) and Gen Y (i.e. people who were born roughly between 1980 and 1995) have attracted the majority of academic attention resulting from their influential purchasing power in the market (e.g., Gupta, 2019). Given the fact that Gen Zs are the “dominant youth influencers of tomorrow” (Williams, 2015, p.1), a better understanding of them is important for social science researchers, marketers and employers in industry. There is no consensus about the exact timeframes of this cohort. However, it is widely agreed that Gen Z were born between the mid-1990s to the early- 2010s. It is doubtful whether a clear-cut boundary exists among different generations in terms of their personal qualities or behavioral tendencies with blurring qualities around similar time spans. Nevertheless, it is still common industry practice to target segments demographically, highlighting the perception that Gen Z does inhabit a different world from their preceding generation.

There has been considerable focus on distinguishing Gen Z from other generations. The most frequently brought up qualities or characteristics are their adaptation to and use of internet technology (Bromwich, 2018), and perceptions that they are always in a rush and on their phones (Nadin, 2017). Some attitudinal features about Gen Z have also been identified, such as being independent, stubborn, pragmatic, mature and in control, as well as having entrepreneurial instincts (“Meet generation Z,” 2014). Other prominent qualities are being “self-confident, happy, fit to the team spirit and social service activities” (Ozkan and Solmaz, 2015). Gen Z’s profile as tourists has been extensively outlined, with an orientation towards individualism and mobility as well as an interest in digital and gamified tourism experiences (Skinner *et al.*, 2018). However, as underlined previously, Gen Z’s potential for a major role as an emerging workforce for the future in hospitality and tourism is not unproblematic. Goh and Lee. (2018) undertook pioneering research by identifying the working attitudes and their perceived difficulties of current Gen Z’s while employed in the hospitality industry in Australia. There is little doubt that further research is needed to explore how to utilize Gen Z’s characteristics as a workforce cohort in this industry, given the high level of dependence that the sector has on youth (Baum, 2019). In this future, it is argued that ignorance of Gen Z as a potential and significant workforce for the hospitality and tourism industry may create challenges for talent and human resource management in the industry at both micro and macro levels in the future.

SWB: with an emphasis on intern students

Subjective well-being, often shortened to SWB, is generally related to theories encompassing happiness, quality of life, fulfillment, or life satisfaction (Steel *et al.*, 2018). The growing pursuit of SWB in the contemporary world is recognized to be of “genuine significance to human society” (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2011, p. 19), because it goes beyond merely economic pursuit which previously dominated work-related motivation and moves the focus forward to a more comprehensive goal which could be closer to an integral and core pursuit of human nature. SWB is recognized as a multidimensional concept, and a variety of measures have been employed in different research, among which, the cognitive and affective dimensions are deemed to be suitable for this study. The former is used to capture the extent to which the individual

evaluates overall life favorably, or positive functioning about satisfaction with life in certain situations (Diener *et al.*, 2003). The latter is utilised to measure the emotional responses and ongoing evaluation of conditions of life. This two-dimensional solution is widely embraced in tourism-related research (e.g. Chi *et al.*, 2017; Lyu *et al.*, 2018).

SWB is receiving increasing attention in China. Government officials at different levels have initiated special programs to cope with the optimization of citizens' SWB (Fan, 2016). The SWB of university students, among others, is attracting academic attention because of their role as the potential talent pool for the sustainable development of society. Substantial differences exist among Chinese students from various types of schools, among which university students appeared to have much higher SWB than vocational students, and female students appeared to be happier than males (Zhu and Ling, 2008). Employment concerns were identified as dominant among all the pressures faced by Chinese university students (Liu, 2019).

There is a wide array of discussion on antecedents of SWB in different contexts as well as at different levels. Addressing a more macro level, cultural factors are highlighted as more significant among other considerations that impact on SWB compared, for example, to personal wealth (Kahneman *et al.*, 1999). Cultural values have been widely employed as predictors or mediators to understand SWB (Wu *et al.*, 2015). The lens of culture is essential to unpack SWB (Lun and Bond, 2016). This line of research has been extended by many researchers in an effort to better understand what kind of culture may bring out relatively high SWB. Steel *et al.* (2018) confirmed empirically that cultural norms which feature low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance, high masculinity (low achievement orientation) and high individualism are more likely to be associated with happiness. However, a closer investigation into a generational specific cohort of Gen Z is lacking to date.

Implication of Chinese Cultural Values for employment among Gen Z

Chinese cultural values, shortened to CCVs, have been well documented over the past few decades. One of the very early attempts to create a value inventory was constructed by the Chinese Cultural Connection (1987) with a list of 40 major cultural values which converged into four dimensions: integration, Confucian work dynamism, human

heartedness, and moral discipline. Subsequently, the list of CCVs has been add to, adjusted, and updated. From a perspective of service provision in the hospitality industry, Tsang (2011) proposed a five-dimension framework of CCVs, namely attitude towards work, attitude towards people, personal traits values (Confucius related moral discipline), status (respect for elders and authority in social affairs) and relationships, and moderation. Another noteworthy study added individualism and materialistic orientation to the existing inventory in current Chinese society with a 40-item pool, trying to keep up with ever-changing Chinese cultural trends (Hsu and Huang, 2016). Similarly, Ren and Qiu (2019) proposed a list of 18 cultural value items in the context of frequent travelers to Chinese budget hotels, and further conceptualized them into three behavior norms: traditional virtues, relational values and choice norms. The first one deals with ancient Confucius beliefs such as hardwork, devotion to family, and trustworthiness. The second is about group orientation, long-term relationships and face. The last one stresses on-line information- processing tendencies. However, with most emphasis placed on the perspectives of tourists on the market “demand” side, it is very rare for research to examine this theme from a “supply” side perspective, which includes the workforce or labor market.

To identify cultural values among different nations as well as cohorts of people is recognized as a significant issue for researchers (Tang *et al.*, 2017). In accordance with the argument that cultural values influence behavior, CCVs have been employed to explore customer behavior in varied contexts, hospitality and tourism included. Gift shopping is influenced by particular cultural factors such as face saving, reciprocity, and Guanxi (relationship) (Yau *et al.*, 1999).

The Chinese Gen Z cohort is estimated to account for 40 percent of global Gen-Z purchases by 2020 (Henriques, 2019). Many Gen Z- related research studies were conducted in a western context. Some of the confirmed features might not necessarily fit into a Chinese context where people are imbued with traditional Chinese cultural attributes. Major events or accidents may intervene and shape different psychological or behavioral tendencies. For example, the so-called “obsession with safety” with American Gen Zs which features less irresponsible behaviors such as the drinking of alcohol or a failure to fasten safety belts while driving, might be linked to outcomes

from the terror attack of 9/11. But Chinese Gen Zs do not inherently exhibit such obsessions. However, the current Covid-19 pandemic has escalated to be a global health and economic threat in a very short-time period and it is interesting to speculate whether this may impact on Gen Z in a similar or different way in various countries with different cultural values.

Although the Chinese do not necessarily use the term ‘Gen Z’ in their language system, the population of the younger generation still receives academic attention. Chinese prefer to use post 90 or post 00 to indicate cohorts of people who were born after 1990 or after 2000. Given labor laws which determine that teenagers in China who are below the year of 16 are not lawful employees, it can be deduced that the approximate birth spectrum of college interns ranges from mid-1990 to the early 2000s. A recent survey undertaken by Tencent QQ¹ revealed many personal attributes and beliefs of post 00’s (“The Portrait of Chinese,” 2018). Drawing on 12705 active users from social media, based on a random sampling, this report shows that post -00’s exhibit high levels of identification with traditional Chinese culture, yet at the same time also have a relatively stronger sense of individualism. This provides further support for this study to employ CCVs to examine Chinese Gen Z.

Chinese cultural values have a very profound and complex influence on people working in hospitality and tourism. On the one hand, cultural norms seem to contribute significantly to the nature of work in this industry. The Confucius doctrine is believed to be a dominant value in contemporary Chinese society. Many Confucius-related values, such as hardwork, solidarity with others (Teamwork), the avoidance of confrontation (harmony) and courtesy are desirable personal qualities in this industry. On the other hand, there are also some demotivating barriers. For example, Yang and Lau (2019) argued that it is still very common for Chinese people to be judged by their occupation and moral character other than on the basis of wealth. In Chinese, the first character of service, represents “submission” or taking orders (Pang *et al.*, 1998, p. 278). To date, despite media and public attention, little academic research has been conducted to address the role of these values in influencing the emergent workforce (Tang, *et al.*, 2017), not to speak of addressing the influence of CCVs on their SWB

¹ Tencent QQ is one of the biggest and most influential instant messaging software service providers in China.

during internships, which may have a decisive role in framing their future job intentions.

Towards a conceptual framework

Various theories have been developed in the domain of SWB, among which, need and goal satisfaction is recognized as a principal one, or rather, a constellation of theories (Snyder and Lopez, 2009). Put simply, the degree that people's needs are met (Sheldon *et al.*, 2001), and the extent to which important goals are ascribed by to in-life events being achieved (Brunstein, 1993), can explain subjective well-being. Values are embedded in culture to guide a person's emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses (Ye and Ng, 2019). According to Schwartz (1999, p.26), values are guiding principles and frame the "vocabulary of socially approved goals pertain to desirable end states or behavior" and "ordered by importance". Needs and goal satisfaction theory underpins our conceptual understanding of the proposed framework.

Cultural values are confirmed to play an important role in explaining SWB in specific domains as well as in terms of overall life experience (Diener *et al.*, 2003), including working life. While it has also been widely acknowledged that CCVs can be related to tourist behavior (e.g. Kwek and Lee, 2015; Fu *et al.*, 2015), it remains unsubstantiated if these behaviors are affected by mental health status. The role of SWB in relation to cultural values and behavioral outcomes requires focus in order to achieve a clear understanding of hidden influences (Homer and Kahla, 1988).

Some cultural values are reported to be beneficial for the enhancement of peoples' innate psychological gratification. They are also labeled as "healthy" values, characterized by self-direction and stimulation, while the values where differentiation between people by occupation is more limited demonstrates universalism, self-transcendence, and benevolence (Jensen and Bergin, 1988). On this basis, it is reasonable to assume that, among CCVs, the first three dimensions are healthy indicators of mental status. Working hard and teamwork are typical stimuli. Courtesy and wisdom are representative of self-cultivation. Moral discipline such as Tse (德) is about benevolence and self-transcendence. The pursuit of these innate psychological

needs leads to more long-lasting emotional gratification and happiness. However, some values are described as detrimental which symbolizes deficiency needs such as power, conformity and security (Bilsky and Schwartz, 1994). Pursuit of these values will downgrade a person's mental status. Following this, the last two dimensions in our CCVs, namely status and relationships and job-related face value are extrinsic pursuits and require stressful, ego-involved engagement in activities (Ryan *et al.*, 1991).

Based upon this review of the literature and wider interpretation of the social science literature, this study has developed a normative model (see Figure 1) which reflects the influences of cultural values on the SWB of intern students, which in turn affects their future job intentions. Happiness orientation or well-being is well documented as strong predictor of job intention and successful career (Muskat, *et al.*, 2019; Rasheed *et al.*, 2020). In the light of the proposed conceptual research model and literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Student interns' attitude towards work positively influences their subjective well-being by positively influencing a) affective subjective well-being (ASWB) and b) cognitive subjective well-being (CSWB) during their internship.

H2: Student interns' attitude towards people positively influences their subjective well-being by positively influencing a) affective subjective well-being (ASWB) and b) cognitive subjective well-being (CSWB) during their internship.

H3: Student interns' moral discipline positively influences their subjective well-being by positively influencing a) affective subjective well-being (ASWB) and b) cognitive subjective well-being (CSWB) during their internship.

H4: Student interns' status and relationship value negatively influences their subjective well-being by negatively influencing a) affective subjective well-being (ASWB) and b) cognitive subjective well-being (CSWB) during their internship.

H5: Student interns' job-related face value negatively influences their subjective well-being by negatively influencing a) affective subjective well-being (ASWB) and b)

cognitive subjective well-being (CSWB) during their internship.

H6: Student interns' subjective well-being a) affective subjective well-being (ASWB) and b) cognitive Subjective Well-being (CSWB) during internship positively influences their future job intention.

It is important to note that, in looking into the mental state of a young workforce, a wide range of diversified predictors have been explored at different levels, ranging from the organizational level such as organizational support, to the individual level such as employees' personal mind and outlook (Marques, 2017). This study aims to unpack Chinese Gen Z's SWB particularly through the lens of cultural values. Therefore, other factors are beyond the scope of this research.

[Figure 1 Proposed framework near here]

Methodology

Instrument

This study is located in China, where traditional Chinese culture prevails along with emerging and diversified cultural trends. Researching such complex relationships proved challenging since, as stated, the extant literature has largely ignored this topic. Thus, it was decided to utilize a survey methodology as the main data collection method. The authors' considerable working and living experience in the tourism sector and field study region, respectively, have enriched their personal knowledge about the field study area. These proximities have facilitated interpretation of the quantitative data.

In order to design a questionnaire that is informed by the literature on cultural values, SWB and their possible effects of future job intentions in the hospitality and tourism industry, several open-ended interviews were first carried out with intern students, hotels managers at different levels and academicians including directors of internships programs at higher education institutions engaged in hospitality and tourism education in Macau. From these and a review of the literature, a draft questionnaire was developed

and piloted with 41 intern students and 9 academics in Macau. Based on their feedback, the questionnaire was further enhanced by improving expression, omitting some statements. That is to say, a combination of a wide ranging and multidisciplinary review of the literature, undertaking a number of key-informant interviews, followed by the administration and implementation of a quantitative questionnaire have ensured both content and construct validity of the instruments employed for this research.

The resulting questionnaire consisted of four main parts: CCVs, SWB during their internship, future job intentions and demographic questions in addition to filter questions. The first part is composed of 28 items tapping the five dimensions of CCVs which were developed and empirically confirmed by reference to Tsang (2011) and Gao *et al.* (2017). These five dimensions are attitude towards work, attitude towards people, moral discipline, status and relationships, and job-related face values. One dimension, namely moderation, was not employed here. Despite the fact that moderation is an important Confucian doctrine, it was found to be influential during the decision-making process (Tsang, 2011). Because Gen Z are early in their career paths and highly unlikely to be engaged in decision-making positions during their internships, this dimension is deemed to be inappropriate and thus not valid in this study. Another dimension of job-related face was supplemented as a result of its role in Chinese traditional values towards occupation discernment. Respondents were invited to rate the importance of these values.

The second part of the instrument deals with situation-specific SWB during internships. It is measured by cognitive and affective SWB which was derived from the extant literature (e.g. Chi *et al.*, 2017; Diener *et al.*, 1985). Three items were used to capture cognitive SWB and five items were included relating to affective dimensions. The third part deals with the interns' future job intentions which was adapted from Lam *et al.* (2007) as well as four items from Richardson (2008). A seven-point Likert scale was employed throughout the first three parts, with 1 indicating the least important (disagree), and 7 indicating the most important (or agree). The last part of the instrument is related to respondents' personal profile and internship information. The filter questions about their age span and nature of intern organizations were raised in order to ensure the representativeness of the respondents.

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Study site and sampling

This study was undertaken with interns in Macau, China. The justification is triple-fold. Firstly, culturally speaking, as a former colonial city, it represents a mix of rich traditional Chinese and western cultures, providing a good study site to explore CCVs in contemporary society. Secondly, as a well-established destination city, hospitality and tourism together with the gambling sector represent the dominant industry in Macau, generating 61.4% local employment and providing 84.58 % of government revenue in the year of 2018 (The Statistics and Census Service, 2019). Thirdly, educationally speaking, to facilitate the growth of the industry, local education keeps expanding to cover a wide range of academic degrees from vocational education, bachelor through to PhD level, with an approximate annual enrollment of more than six thousand students in these relevant majors. All of these provide a solid foundation for Macau to be an eminent tourism educational center for not only locals, but also for mainland Chinese students (“tourism education Macau’s eminent name card”, 2018).

This research employed E-survey methods as a data collection instrument empowered by purposive sampling methods within the limitations of available time and financial resources that prohibited utilization of simple random sampling. Attaining a representative sample size is a significant issue to ensure reliability of research output (Tosun, 2006). There is disagreement on what constitutes a representative sample among scholars. The authors followed a systematic method to determine the sample size by utilizing the formula borrowed from Ryan (1995, p. 178). In brief, the sample size of this research is calculated as 267 by utilizing the formula borrowed from Ryan (1995, p. 178), that constitutes 16% of the research population.

The research population of this study was the number of full time intern students in tourism and hospitality related programs in higher education in Macau. This number usually equals the final year students of tourism and hospitality related programs at universities and other higher education institutions in Macau. The research population was determined as 1653. Under the guidance of the above calculation, 400 intern students out of 1653 were reached through means of an E-survey between May 3 and May 30, 2019. The attained sample size represents approximately 24% of the local population, which is 8% larger than the sample size calculated through the formula of

Ryan (1995, p. 178). In sum, in the light of the discussion on pertinence of a sample size in social science literature, it is believed that the calculated sample size would be representative of the research population. Many universities and vocational schools in Macau begin their second semester from about February each year after the traditional Chinese Lunar New Year. The data collection was conducted approximately in the third month of the semester. This timing was specifically designed to allow interns enough time to experience and reflect on their internships.

To enhance the representativeness of the sample, the following measures were taken. Faculty members who were responsible for intern programs in hospitality or tourism-related majors in universities and vocational schools in cities of Macau were invited to pass on the E-survey link to their intern students while interns were also encouraged to pass on the link to their peers who were Macau students and also doing internships in this industry. Students who choose the same major may share similar interests and motivation (Walsh and Holland, 1992), resulting from the fact that university or vocational school departments tend to socialize their students towards particular values. This explains why interns are highly likely to inherently endorse homogeneous cultural values (Sagiv and Schwartz, 2000).

Data analysis

Partial least squares (PLS) was employed for the estimation of the proposed model. Smart PLS 2.0 was applied to test the fit of the proposed model, the magnitude and the direction of the path coefficients. PLS is suitable for predictive and exploratory research (Ali *et al.*, 2018). Given the novelty of our research domain, it is deemed appropriate for this study. Another critical reason is that PLS is compatible to deal with formative as well as reflective constructs (Chin, 1998). In this research, the five constructs of CCVs and their corresponding indicators fit the criteria of formative ones, which are to “define or cause the construct”, instead of “being caused by underlying construct” (Hulland, 2015, p.201). The three other constructs, are reflective ones. Furthermore, PLS is featured with fewer identification issues and estimation problems, giving rise to greater robustness (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013). Given the above mentioned, the adoption of PLS in this research is appropriate.

All the criteria and procedures were strictly adopted following rigorous recommendation from experts (e.g. Henseler *et al.*, 2009; Chin, 1998; Hulland, 2015; Hair *et al.*, 2011). Following the reliability test using Cronbach's α , convergent validity, standardized factor loading for formative constructs, outer loading for reflective ones and Discriminant validity were all assessed. What is more, another essential criteria R^2 which accounts for the percentage of explained variance of endogenous latent variables were also tested followed by Stone–Geisser's Q^2 test. To further triangulate this, f^2 and q^2 was supplemented as suggested by Henseler *et al.* (2009). After all these reliability and validity criteria were met, the function of nonparametric bootstrap analysis was applied to test the proposed hypotheses.

Findings

Sample characteristics

As indicated in Table 1, male respondents (53.50%) were slightly greater than their female counterparts. More than three fifths of them were in higher education in universities (63.5%). More than three quarters were engaged in internship programs with a duration greater than four months. Hotels and resorts provide the most internship vacancies for the respondents in the study (64.25%), with about one third working in food, beverage and culinary related positions (33.25%). Another four frequently-held positions add up to be nearly a half (49.75%) of the sample. They were front office, administrative positions (HR, Finance, etc.), retail, and rotation among different departments.

[Table 1 near here]

Outer model analysis

The outer model analysis shows that most commonly suggested criteria were met. Convergent validity average variance extracted (AVE) were well above the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). Besides, for almost all indicators of the reflective construct, the standardized factor loading exhibited all went beyond a 0.7 significance level, with the lowest one equaling 0.913. In addition, regarding formative constructs of the five cultural dimensions, all the weights as well as significance levels are presented in Table 2 after blindfolding. The composite value is greater than 0.9,

indicating good inner consistency. Discriminant validity was assessed following Fornell and Larcker's (1981) approach. Each construct's square root of AVE presented in Table 3 is greater than its correlation with the rest of other constructs, exhibiting satisfactory evidence for discriminant validity. Cross loading was also examined as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2011) and this yielded a satisfactory outcome.

The most frequently identified cultural values among these student interns are attitudes towards people (Mean=6.355), followed by traditional moral discipline (Mean=6.352). The least identified ones are job-related face values (Mean=4.995), followed by status and relationship (Mean=5.931).

[Table 2 near here]

[Table 3 near here]

Evaluation of inner model

R² is one of the essential criteria accounting for the percentage of explained variance of endogenous latent variables (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). As shown in Tables 4 and 5, R² of SWB and job intention range from 0.478 to 0.520, exhibiting satisfactory explanatory power. We also conducted the Stone–Geisser's Q² test (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). If Q² value goes significantly beyond zero, then it is a good sign of sufficient predictive power for all endogenous constructs. We ran blindfolding procedure with 7 as omission distance (Short of OD). The two tables present satisfactory evidence of predictive relevance. To further triangulate this, f² and q² was supplemented as suggested by Henseler *et al.* (2009). f² represents the increase in R² about unexplained variance of an endogenous variable; while q² indicates the predictive relevance of endogenous variable (Matzler *et al.*, 2016). Both these two value sizes for SWB, as well as for job intention are positive, which is a good sign for explanatory and predictive power.

[Table 4 near here]

[Table 5 near here]

Table 6 demonstrates the outcome of hypothesis testing. The function of nonparametric bootstrap analysis was applied to 5,000 subsamples with 400 cases. The result identified

two Chinese cultural dimensions with a close relationship to Gen Z's SWB. Attitudes towards work are positively related to affective and cognitive SWB ($\beta = 0.344$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.415$, $p < 0.001$). Besides, face is also positively related to affective and cognitive SWB ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.310$, $p < 0.001$). The rest of the other three cultural dimensions showed no significant relationship with SWB. Regarding the students' future job intentions, it was significantly and positively influenced by affective SWB ($\beta = 0.411$, $p < 0.001$), as well as those above mentioned two Chinese cultural dimensions, namely attitudes towards work ($\beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.005$) and face ($\beta = 0.133$, $p < 0.05$). Table 7 presents the direct, indirect together with total effects of the cultural dimensions on interns' job intention which were proven to be significant. These two cultural dimensions exhibit similar levels of total effect (0.339 and 0.336 respectively).

[Table 6 near here]

[Table 7 near here]

Conclusions and discussion

Conclusions

The current Gen Zs are identified to value happiness. This research revealed that Chinese intern students' average SWB in the workplace is above average (ASWB=5.544; CSWB=5.647), which leaves sizable room for improvement. However, this number should also be viewed with discretion because of cultural bias. For example, collectivists were reported to score relatively lower on positive effects and higher on work strain compared to individualists (Chiu and Kosinski, 1999).

Two cultural dimensions were identified to play a salient role in shaping interns' SWB and future job intentions, namely, attitudes towards work and job-related face values. Prudence scored the highest as one of the most striking attitudes towards work (Mean=6.558), followed by patience (Mean=6.443), teamwork (6.365) and working hard (6.350). This implies that the current Gen Z are still instilled with these traditional value, which are inspirational facilitators for interns to deal with human industry with less emotional burnout (Kim and Qu, 2019). Chinese Gen Z highly identify teamwork spirit, which is congruent with the statement that Gen Z are a more "we" generation

compared to Gen millennial' (Hope, 2016).

Widely recognized as a collectivist-oriented culture, Chinese society values face within social networks. According to our research, this value might have faded and weakened to a certain extent among Gen Zs. The least important values in the eyes of Gen Z, are distinguishing people by job (Mean=4.993), job is related to face (Mean=4.665) and job-related identification by others (Mean=4.005). Even the most valued value, Guanxi (social network), only scored a mean value of 5.735. It could easily be inferred that Chinese Gen Z are more independent and self-reliant rather than expecting to merely rely on social networks. This concurs with Hsu and Huang (2016) research on emerging individualism within Chinese culture. Surprisingly job-related face values indeed positively help students boost their affective and cognitive SWB in the workplace. It is possible that less concern about face in workplace is beneficial to improve SWB. As stated by Steel *et al.*(2018), the relationship between cultural values and SWB could be counter-intuitive and subject to variation across individuals and nations.

The important role of these two cultural dimensions are further accentuated through their direct impact on future intentions as shown in Table 7. The total effect of interns' attitude towards work together with their job-related face value on their future job intention are both significantly positive ($\beta= 0.282, p < 0.001$; $\beta= 0.298, p < 0.001$).

The theory of person-environment fit could give our findings another interesting angle. As stated by Schmid (2005), social environment affects employee' subjective feeling in the workplace in terms of whether they feel true to themselves at work and whether they can act on their values and beliefs. For Chinese Gen Z, redefining their happiness by living their own truth or, in other words, realizing one's value is prioritized. Being subjected to a persuasive social environment and situational forces during working, one's beliefs or values can get reinforced or challenged. In our research setting, Chinese Gen Zs' cultural priming is a positive traditional working attitude and they show fewer concerns about job-related face.

However, our research found no relationship between the other three dimensions of CCVs with SWB, namely, attitudes towards people, moral discipline, status and

relationship. It can be inferred that those values could be difficult to fully express in Gen Z's working environment. For instance, courtesy is regarded in Confucian doctrine as the inner cultivation penetrating in people's daily life. Yet it is inevitable that interns are surrounded by a rather complicated human environment, in which not every customer is deemed friendly and well-educated. Moreover, the period of internship may appear to be a tough transition for interns to find a new balance between their ivory educational tower and the 'real' world out there.

On the whole, interns' SWB in hospitality and tourism is significantly influenced by two Chinese cultural values, which in turn impacts on their job intentions ($\beta = 0.411$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.152$, $p < 0.1$). The affective SWB was shown to have a positive and significant influence on interns' job intentions, while the cognitive SWB only exhibited a marginal influence. This is possibly because the cognitive SWB captures general life satisfaction, which is also related to some non-workplace variation, thus weakens the causality. Interns' job intentions are not inspiring (Mean=5.087), which seems not in line with Seemiller and Grace's (2016) statement that Gen Zs are loyal to their job.

Theoretical implications

The oldest Gen Z (born in 1995) turned 25 years old in the year 2020. There is, therefore, an urgency to take a closer look into this cohort in the job market context, not only in terms of the disparities which reside among different generations, but also in terms of Chinese Gen Z compared with their peers in other cultures and nations. Knowing who they are and what they want in the context of culture is a critical issue challenging the hospitality and tourism industry (Wilson, 2018). This study argues that there exists a consensus of cultural values within cohorts of people, exhibiting similar pattern of attitudes and behaviors, although it is also not deniable that there are within-cohort variations, as well as between-cohort similarities. Based upon our overall analysis and discussion, the main contributions of this study can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, this study advances knowledge of SWB, particularly through the lens of Chinese cultural values, which adhere to the call for assessing SWB in different cultures because some unique patterns could emerge in certain societies (Tov and Diener, 2009).

Secondly, it bridges a gap in previous research which did not consider the emerging workforce of intern students in the hospitality and tourism industry, by focusing on Gen Z's mental state during their internships, accentuating the relationship between the culture they are subject to and their situation specific mental state in the working environment. In this context, this paper extends the existing literature on workforce research, in response to the argument that such studies are relatively scarce in the field of hospitality and tourism and subject to piecemeal approaches (Baum, Kralj, Robinson, & Solnet, 2016). Thirdly, it examined closely the perceived Chinese cultural values among Gen Z in modern Chinese society at aggregated individual level, to challenge the dominant national level approach of assessing cultural values (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019) and by empirically validating an inventory of Chinese cultural items, most of which were developed by qualitative method. It could also be viewed as effort which extends generational studies with focus on Gen Z and draw on their work values, to address Parry and Urwin's (2011) call that generational analysis should better be applied to specific groups within cohorts and within national culture.

Practical implications

A changed focus on adaptable cultural priming could serve as a beneficial angle to help interns find more happiness in their future careers. Personal culture can be adjusted in a different cultural context (Ye *et al.*, 2019). Chinese students could be better prepared to cope with the internship environment if they are directed towards the path of the highly identified traditional stream of philosophy to stress the importance of self-growth and self-cultivation. Aspirations or goals such as fulfilment or sense of prestige brought by job can be instilled. As Chinese Gen Zs are characterized by being "culturally hungry, intensely China proud, and eager to strike a physical and emotional balance in their lives" ("China's Gen Z champion 'compression era,'" 2018), management strategies regarding the drives stimulating and removal of some perceived working barriers could also facilitate staff recruitment and retention.

Management effort could also focus on efforts to further enhance the fit between the confirmed two relationships between CCVs and SWB, or at least narrow the gap by changing organizational and environmental culture in a deliberate way rather than a

merely automatic way (Bardi and Goodwin, 2011). Remolding organizational culture to be in line with Gen Z's identified cultural values could make interns feel more highly driven to express their values in positive behaviors and attain work related goals, such as infusing more trust and interaction into the working culture as well as creating a more productive and equitable culture.

Intrinsic values such as job challenge, psychological satisfaction, individual stimulation should be emphasized by management in the tourism and hospitality industry as useful retention strategies for Gen Z (Ng and Parry, 2016). Because this generation is strikingly characterized with social media or internet 'savviness', it would be beneficial to provide them with more training opportunities to enhance their human interaction skills. On-the-job training should encourage interns to interact with not only staff, supervisors, mentors, but also managers. This is consistent with Taylor and Finley's (2010) suggestion that, in partnership with other colleagues, trainers can facilitate acculturation for temporary new employees. Management-on-training and talent management programs are also recommended to give interns a proper sense of responsibilities and make them better motivated (Self *et al.*, 2019; D'Annunzio-Green, and Ramdhony, 2019; Murillo and King, 2019; Williamson and Harris, 2019; Shulga and Busser, 2019). **In addition, universities and vocational schools are recommended to prepare their students with skills that enable them to be better socialized. Our findings show that Gen Z's current attitudes towards people was not found to be beneficial for interns' enhanced SWB. Part of the reason could possibly arise from incompatibility of their previously embraced human values and real working environment. Particular human skills when dealing with demanding customers are valuable to ease future shock in entry-level jobs. Instilling students with proper work ethics such as non-job-related face value and sense of responsibility will also help Gen Zs to improve SWB and facilitate a better engagement with this cohort.**

Commented [5]: Replace this one with another Baum's recent work.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The research findings should be considered in light of the following limitations.

First, it should be underscored that the Chinese students enrolled for hospitality and tourism studies at universities in Macau may not be evaluated as completely representative of Chinese students overall studying for the aforementioned subjects at

higher education institutions. Therefore, it is difficult to make generalizations about the wider cohort. Conversion from interns to full-time employment is unpredictable and even changeable as a predictor of their future job intentions.. However, it was found that the conversion rate of interns to permanent employment at their internship location is increasing and reached 56.1 percent, which is more than 10 percent higher than the previous year (NACE, 2019). These promising results suggest that within a short period, most Gen Zs are going to be new entrants for their formal career path. Thus, academic attention to the Gen Z workforce who are on a fixed employment contracts warrants future investigation.

Second, cultural influences are tempered by many macro-contextual factors (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). The age of interns is a sensitive transition from school to work and thus inevitably suffers from uncertainties (Robinson *et al.*, 2019). Respondents in this study came from different educational backgrounds, ranging from Vocational school to Masters or above. All of these factors might have some influence on the SWB during their internship, which in turn complicates the situation and thus deserves future academic attention.

Chinese cultural values are far more complex and sophisticated than existing frameworks, classifications or conceptualizations in previous studies suggest, as is the case with any other cultures. In future, ethnographic, anthropological and sociological techniques could be employed to shed more light on how to capture cultural experiences in the workplace of different societies. Future research can employ other cultural configurations as alternatives to further illustrate the characteristics of Gen Z. In the meantime, comparing Gen Z with preceding generations in the workplace and looking into generational diversity could be another potential direction. Besides, although the aim of this research is not to provide cross-sectional comparisons between Gen Z in different cultures, it does provide insight into one single generation through the lens of specific Chinese culture. Future research can adopt comparative research among different nations to outline generational differences co-varied with cultures.

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