

# **Dream job? Haaga campus students' perception of having a career in the hospitality industry**

Anni Holopainen



<b>Author(s)</b> Anni Holopainen	
<b>Degree programme</b> Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management	
<b>Report/thesis title</b> Dream job? Haaga campus students' perception of having a career in the hospitality industry	<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> <b>39 + 2</b>
<p>The aim of this study is to research the students of Haaga-Helia, Haaga campus, and their perception of having a career in the hospitality industry. Whether the students are willing to pursue a career within the industry after graduation and what might be the reasons behind their answers.</p> <p>The theoretical framework for the thesis consists of different factors affecting students' and new graduates' career choice. The hospitality industry and its job market in Finland is introduced as well as the studies at Haaga-Helia, Haaga campus. A study of hospitality graduates made by Haaga-Helia is also analysed.</p> <p>Well-being at work, how employees are treated, is important when it comes to choosing a workplace. Well-being can be monitored with collective agreements and human resource management. The image a person has of an industry, plays an important role in their choice of career. A person's motivation has a great influence on education and career development. These issues are all presented in the theoretical framework.</p> <p>The research was conducted with the help of a quantitative online survey. The target group for the research were hospitality students of Haaga campus. The online survey was distributed using Haaga campus' Facebook page. This was conducted during April 2016. The research survey gathered in total 35 responses.</p> <p>The results show that most of the students are in fact interested in having a career in the hospitality industry after graduation. Even though plenty of negative features can be found from working in the industry, the students' interest and passion towards hospitality motivates them into pursuing a career within the industry.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> hospitality industry, students, career development, motivation, well-being, image	

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# 1 Introduction

The students of Haaga-Helia, Haaga campus, are studying to become hospitality professionals. The studies at Haaga focus on working-life, business management and internationality. After graduation the students are expected to gain managerial positions or start their own businesses in the industry with the help of their education and the work experience they have gained.

The forever growing and changing industry of hospitality offers a lot of different possibilities for new graduates. Are the students still interested in continuing to work in the industry after graduation?

Many people will not end up working in the field they studied for. Is it the same for Haaga's students and what is affecting their decisions?

The inspiration and interest for this particular study arose from various discussions with fellow students. It seemed like many of the students in Haaga weren't too keen on continuing to work within the industry after their own work experiences. The author has also personally noticed that the image of working in the field didn't quite match the reality, which is why interest towards working in the industry has dropped.

When students think about their own career choice, there are a lot of factors affecting their decision. What mostly affects the student's choice, is their image of the hospitality industry, how they perceive working in the field would be like. The image is constantly changing and might be different during different phases of their studies.

A person's choice of career is also affected by how the industry treats its employees. Do the employees enjoy going to work and do they feel like their efforts are appreciated?

Motivation is a key player when it comes to education and career development. Without proper motivation, it can be tricky to get the degree and work position you desire. If a student is well-motivated and willing to work hard for success, it can take them to great lengths.

The objective of the thesis is to find out how the students of Haaga campus perceive having a career in the hospitality industry and whether the students are interested in pursuing a job in the field after graduation. The research was conducted by a quantitative online survey which was answered by the students of Haaga campus. In order to receive a sufficient amount of respondents, Facebook was used as a distribution method for the survey. The results of the research survey will answer how the students perceive having a career in the hospitality industry and whether they are willing to pursue one.

## 2 Hospitality Industry

Hospitality industry is one of the world's largest industries and has experienced steady growth almost every year. In recent years the hospitality industry has contributed around seven trillion U.S. dollars to the global economy annually. The number of international tourists is steadily increasing year by year. In 2015 the number of tourists was 1.19 billion and it has been forecasted to rise up to 1.8 billion in 2030. (Statista, 2016).

The industry is constantly growing, but it is also changing with the help of new consumer groups and technology. "Across the industry, there are key business, technology and hotel marketing trends that are set to take root and impact the industry as a whole in 2016. These range from the rise of the millennial traveler as the dominant consumer group by 2017, to the increased interest in using mobile devices and apps to enable more personalized hotel guest services." (Hospitality Net, 2015).

Hospitality is a broad industry and covers a lot of different types of businesses. The hospitality industry can be divided into four main segments: lodging, food & beverage, travel and recreation.

Lodging is the common name for all businesses focusing on accommodation such as hotels, motels, hostels, resorts and bed & breakfasts. The food and beverage (F&B) segment covers all restaurants, cafes, bars and catering services. Travel and tourism business includes travel agencies, transportations (e.g. airlines, cruise ships) and tour operators. The recreation segment covers all activities people tend to do in order to rest, relax or have fun. These kinds of activities include for example spas, attractions, sports and events.

When it comes to the four segments of hospitality industry, there are a lot of different work positions both on the operational and managerial level. It is common that students and new graduates are first employed on the operational level (waiter, receptionist etc.) and gradually move forward in the corporate hierarchy.

## 2.1 Job Market in Finland

The focus group for this research are Haaga students in Finland who are most likely to be employed by organizations in Finland. That is why this chapter is focusing on the Finnish job market in the hospitality industry.

“The Finnish hospitality industry is a growing and international industry with substantial growth potential. It is an increasingly important industry in terms of job creation and the number of people it employs. The jobs and tax revenue created by the hospitality industry all stay in Finland.” (Mara, 2016).



Figure 1. Hospitality industry in Finland (Mara, 2016).

As MaRa states and can be seen in the image (Figure1.), it is obvious that the hospitality industry is a key player in the Finnish economy. The hospitality sector in Finland employs 140 000 young professionals, who welcome more than seven million foreign visitors from all over the world.

Based on MaRa’s research the amount of foreign visitors has doubled in the years 2000-2015 and they also forecast that the number of jobs in tourism can increase by 30 000 in the next ten years. (Mara, 2016).

The hospitality industry has a lot of opportunities for new graduates and people looking for jobs in the field. The travel and tourism industry is constantly growing but also changing. This means that the availability of open jobs will continue but the job descriptions might be slightly different in the future.

### 3 Studies at Haaga-Helia, Haaga Campus

Haaga campus is one of Haaga-Helia's five campuses and has a renowned history of educating hospitality management professionals. The Haaga campus has currently more than one thousand students. The degree programmes and studies in Haaga are focused on the hospitality industry and can be studied both in Finnish and in English. Currently Haaga offers four bachelor's degree programmes:

- Degree Programme in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management (in Finnish)
- Degree Programme in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism (Chef training) / Culinary Management (in Finnish)
- Degree Programme in Tourism Management (in Finnish)
- Degree Programme in Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management (in English)

(Haaga-Helia, 2016).

The degree programmes have gone through slight changes over the past years. In the research survey, students were asked which degree programme they were currently studying. Due to the changes in the programmes, the answers can include degree programmes, which can no longer be applied for (e.g. Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management).

The bachelor's degree usually takes full-time students about 3.5 years to complete. The degree is worth of 210 credit points. The graduates of Haaga campus will earn the title of restonomi (Bachelor of Hospitality Management).

The hospitality studies at Haaga focus on four corner-stones. These corner-stones include: working-life orientation, business management, aesthetics and internationality, which are all integrated into the studies.

The studies are firmly linked into the working life with theory and practice. Business management is emphasized with leadership and managerial studies and by understanding the economic thinking behind all operations. The studies also aim to teach students the analytical and practical skills needed to create aesthetic, desirable and memorable services and products that will add valued for the guest and for the company.

Internationality is very visible at Haaga with students from all over the world, language and cultural studies, exchange programmes, study trips and work placements. (Haaga-Helia, 2016).

The students of Haaga will learn customer oriented and profitable operations in different sections of the hospitality industry. The studies focus on managerial responsibilities together with marketing, services and sales, managerial accounting, entrepreneurship and innovation. Graduates of Haaga are expected to be the change-makers of the industry, gain managerial positions within the field or start their own businesses. (Haaga-Helia, 2016).

### **3.1 Studying at Haaga & Job Experience**

One of the main points when studying in Haaga, is working life orientation and putting theory into practice. The school wants to help students gain as much real life experiences as possible from the industry.

When studying hospitality in Haaga, students have three work placements; placement in the industry, summer placement and advanced placement in the industry. Each placement is worth 10 credit points and should last a minimum of eight weeks. The aim of the work placements is to introduce the students into the working life in the hospitality industry, expand their skills and discover possible career-options.

Haaga-Helia assists students in finding a job by having a listing of open jobs on their Intranet (MyNet) which can be categorized by the different degree programmes. This way students can easily look for jobs from the industry they are studying. Haaga-Helia also organizes job fairs where students have the opportunity to meet up face to face with the representatives of various companies and possibly find a new employer.

## **4 Haaga-Helia's Research on Hospitality Graduates**

Haaga-Helia and Haaga Alumni have studied the hospitality graduates (restonomi) of Finland during years 2005, 2011 and 2016. Since no other organization is carrying out similar national studies, Haaga-Helia has taken this role. The aim of the research was to find out what kind of career possibilities the hospitality graduates have within the industry, how much money they are making and what is their image of having a degree in hospitality.

Approximately 850-1000 graduates have filled in the survey each year. The research studied both bachelor's and master's degree graduates. Both electronic and paper surveys were used. The research survey had both closed- and open ended questions.

The information gathered from the researches is used for developing the study programmes as well as evaluating the changes within the industry. The results and information are beneficial for graduates, students, companies and employers.

The study was made by Petteri Ohtonen, Kristiina Adamsson, Emmi Lehtinen and Jukka Väyrynen. In this chapter, a PowerPoint presentation of the research is the basis for the analysis (the original research piece wasn't yet available). The analysis will focus on the averages of each year's results.

### **4.1 Who Are the Hospitality Graduates?**

The first aim of Haaga-Helia's study was to find out the characteristics of the graduates. Who are they? What have they studied?

The results of Haaga-Helia's survey show that a majority, almost 80%, of all Haaga's graduates are females. The hospitality industry tends to attract more female students and employees. For this particular study, the ages of the respondents varied from 20 to over 60 years old.

One third of the respondents have a degree in hotel and restaurant management. While studying for the degree in Haaga, more than 70% of the graduates studied full time. Based on the survey results, the bachelor's degree programme usually takes three to four years to complete whilst the master's degree two to three.

## **4.2 Employment**

When looking at the results of Haaga-Helia's study, over 80% of the hospitality graduates are employed by companies within the Helsinki metropolitan area (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen). Most of the respondents were employed by food & beverage- (25%), lodging- (21%) and transportation (13%) businesses. The graduates are mostly employed by the biggest chain companies. Almost 70% of the respondents are working full time.

Haaga's graduates were asked to name their first job position, their current job position and which position they would like to have within five years. The most common first jobs the graduates had were receptionist, shift manager, customer service person, waiter and sales person. Currently most of them were working as a restaurant manager, sales person, receptionist or shift manager. The most common dream jobs were entrepreneur, teacher and specialist positions.

The first job position was most often acquired with personal contacts or by contacting the employer directly whereas their current job positions were mostly offered them by their employer. The most important factors affecting the graduates' choice of workplace were the characteristics of the actual job, steadiness, location and possibilities for moving forward in their careers.

Especially when studying in Haaga-Helia, entrepreneurship is highly emphasized. The study shows that approximately 40% of the respondents saw a possibility in becoming an entrepreneur. Almost 10% were planning on it and 4% already had their own businesses.

### **4.3 Salary**

The respondents of Haaga-Helia's survey were asked how much money they were making in their current work positions and what would be their ideal wage. The median gross salary from their current positions was 2900€ whereas the ideal gross salary would be 3200€. Approximately 50% of the respondents didn't feel like they were getting paid enough in correspondence to their degree or their current job position.

### **4.4 Image of the Degree**

In Haaga-Helia's research survey, graduates were asked to list and evaluate which assets they had gained from their hospitality education. The respondents felt that their education had brought them customer service-, language-, communication-, business- and management skills.

In their opinion the degree in hospitality (restonomi) was well-known within the industry. They also gave good evaluations of Haaga-Helia's image. The graduates felt like the school was well-known, international, respected and had a good reputation.

### **4.5 Analysis of the Study**

All in all the results of Haaga-Helia's study seem quite positive. The hospitality graduates are employed by businesses in the hospitality industry. Currently most of them are working full time and have acquired higher job positions and even thinking about becoming entrepreneurs. Even though many of the respondents weren't happy with the money they were currently making, it wasn't far from their ideal salary.

Based on the results, Haaga-Helia has a good image in the respondents' eyes. The graduates feel like their education in hospitality has taught them multiple different skills which they can take advantage of in their working life.

Since the study has been broad and has acquired a great number of responses, it can be used as a good base for the thesis. The wide-range of questions give valuable information regarding the employment, salary and opinions of the graduates which can be compared to the current students of Haaga.

## 5 Well-being at Work

One of the main issues affecting people's career choice is the employee's well-being at work. How am I being treated? Is my effort appreciated? Do I enjoy going to work?

"Focusing on well-being at work presents a valuable opportunity to benefit societies by helping working individuals to feel happy, competent, and satisfied in their roles. The evidence also shows that people who achieve good standards of well-being at work are likely to be more creative, more loyal, more productive, and provide better customer satisfaction than individuals with poor standards of well-being at work." (New Economics Foundation, 2014).

Well-being at work can be divided into three segments: physical, psychological and social well-being. Physical well-being at work covers for example safety issues, working hours, breaks and work ergonomics. Psychological well-being includes the person's own work motivation, learning possibilities and feedback. Social well-being is all about the employee's relationship between their colleagues and management and also the communication at their workplace.

The hospitality industry tends to have the most difficulties within the physical well-being segment. The industry does suffer from irregular working hours, stressful work and bad ergonomics. Whereas the psychological- and social well-being are more related to the actual workplace instead of the characteristics of the industry.

All of the three segments of well-being play an important role in an employee's working life. These factors can and will vary from one workplace to another, but there are laws and collective agreements that will ensure some rights for the employees when it comes to their well-being.

## 5.1 Collective Agreement

The collective agreement for hotel, restaurant and leisure industry has been made by PAM (Service Union United) in cooperation with MaRa (The Finnish Hospitality Association). The current agreement is valid from May 2014 to January 2017. The main topics discussed in the collective agreement are employment relationship, working hours, wages, absences and holidays.

The employment relationship starts with a written employment contract which should follow the provisions of the collective agreement. The contract should include description of work duties, salary, working hours, date when the employment starts (and when the fixed-term employment ends), trial period, and workplace. Also the ending of an employment relationship is discussed in the collective agreement. (PAM, 2014).

In the collective agreement regular working hours total the maximum of 111 hours in three weeks. Overtime is work done after 120 working hours in three weeks. For working overtime, employees are entitled with overtime pay. For the first 18 hours working overtime, employees get paid with a 50% increase. After that employees will get a 100% increase in pay. Employees will receive pay with a 100% increase also if working on their weekly rest day or working on Sundays or other Church holidays. (PAM, 2014).

Employees' monthly and hourly pay are divided into categories by their work position and how many years they have been working for. All employees are entitled for receiving evening and night supplement. For working during the evening (18:00-24:00) employees receive 1,05€/hour and for working during the night (24:00-06:00) the extra pay is 2,06€/hour. (PAM, 2014).

Here are a few examples of how you benefit from the Collective Agreement:

Issue	Collective Agreement	Law
<b>Wages</b>	Minimum wage (see pay scales)	No
<b>Pay increases</b>	Negotiated by the Union	No
<b>Overtime rates and supplements</b>	Negotiated by the Union	No
<b>Maximum working hours</b>	111 hrs / 3 weeks	120 hrs / 3 weeks
<b>Days off</b>	2 days / week + extra days off (JP)	1 day (35 h) / week
<b>Length of working day</b>	Maximum 10 hrs	Maximum 15 hrs
<b>Rosters</b>	Change only if mutually agreed	Employer has right to change for justified work-related reasons
<b>Sick pay</b>	1–56 days	1–9 days
<b>Pay during maternity leave</b>	Difference between normal pay and maternity allowance for 3 months	No
<b>Holiday bonus</b>	50% of holiday pay	No

Figure 2. Collective Agreement vs. law (PAM, 2014).

As seen in the table above, employees do benefit more from the collective agreement compared to the Finnish labor law. The collective agreement guarantees minimum wage, overtime pay, more reasonable working hours and more days off.

## 5.2 Perceived Organizational Support

Employees' belief that their work organization values their efforts and contribution and cares about their well-being at work is called perceived organizational support (POS). On the managerial level, an employee's dedication and loyalty is valued. It has been researched that employees who are committed to their job, show greater performance levels, reduced absence days and a lessened likelihood of leaving their job. (Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2002).

### **5.3 Human Resource Management**

Human resource management (HRM) is a function within an organization that is used for managing people. The main purpose of human resource management is to assure the profitability of an organization by having efficient workforce. The main issues covered by HRM are staffing (recruiting + laying off), training and rewarding.

HRM can be divided into three categories: individual, organizational and career management. Individual management focuses on identifying employee's strengths and weaknesses. This is carried through performance reviews, training and testing. Organizational management focuses on creating a successful system that maximises the human resources as a part of larger business strategies. This also involves the change management in which the organization can respond quickly to outside and internal influences. Career management's purpose is matching individuals with the most suitable jobs and career paths within the organization. (Inc, 2014).

It is obvious that working in the hospitality industry might not be that appealing due to having to work during nighttime, weekends and holidays. This is one of the characteristics of the industry that cannot be avoided. Other work related problems can be reduced by having successful human resource management. These problems include shift planning, unpredictable working hours, salary related issues, social relationships and work load. (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013).

Human resource management has been the number one issue in hospitality industry year after year. Research shows that there are difficulties in attracting talented people and especially retaining them. The employers fail to understand the importance of investing in the people who work for them. It has also been stated that the hospitality industry doesn't have much to offer for talented and motivated employees in order for them to enter and stay in the industry. (Enz, 2009).

## 6 Image vs. Reality

Each and every one of us have our own perception of life. Perception is how our sensory organs receive information and process it in our minds. All humans perceive things differently. The way we perceive things depends mostly on our expectations and previous experiences. (Simply Psychology, 2008)

When it comes to creating an image of something, perception is used. Kotler defines image as a set of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person holds regarding an object. People's attitudes and actions towards an object are highly conditioned by that object's image. (Kotler, 2003).

When a student thinks about having a career in the hospitality industry, the image they have in their mind, is based on several different factors. The factors affecting a student's image are previous experiences and knowledge, beliefs, expectations, values, attitudes, feelings and personality. If a hospitality student has only experienced the luxurious side of the industry from a customer's point of view, their image might be very different compared to another person's perspective who has worked in the industry for years.

A student's image of the hospitality industry is constantly changing during their studies. The image changes with the help of lectures, company visits, fellow students, own feelings etc. A student of Haaga campus gathers most of their experiences from the industry during their work placements. These real life experiences from working in the field will mold the student's image into a more realistic one. Whether the image changes into a more positive or negative one, is up to the student's own perception.

"If students were informed realistically and sufficiently about careers and working conditions in the tourism industry they would form more realistic and lower expectations with regard to jobs in the tourism industry. As a result they would be less disappointed when they choose to study tourism and work in the tourism industry which might prevent industry attrition." (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000).

Image can be very different from the reality and they can never match perfectly. Image changes constantly in collaboration with experiences and perceptions. Haaga's students image towards the hospitality industry is constantly changing into a more realistic one during their studies and own experiences.

## 7 Motivation

“Motivation can be defined as a force or energy that exists within a person and influences effort, directs behaviours, and ultimately affects performance and other individual outcomes.” (Career Research, 2016)

Motivation is a key element when it comes to educating yourself, finding a job, developing your own skills and moving forward in your career. Without proper motivation it can be difficult to achieve one’s goals and desires. But what kind of motivation is the most beneficial? The next chapters will focus on different motivational theories which can all be applied to students’ education as well as their career development.

### 7.1 External vs. Internal Motivation

Motivation can be divided into external and internal motivation. There can be positive and negative factors affecting a person’s motivation. Both positive and negative motivators can be visible simultaneously, but one is always more dominant. Which of them is more beneficial when it comes to education and career development?

In a person’s working life, positive external motivators are salary, incentives, recognition and appreciation. Positive internal motivators are self-growth, passion and pleasure of what you are doing. Negative motivators can be for example fear of failure and insecurity (internal), pressure from outside and getting laid off (external). These factors can also be applied to a person’s educational life in the form of for example the desire of educating yourself (internal) and grades (external).

In short, external motivation is reactive and consists of trying to earn prizes while avoiding the punishments. Whereas internal motivation is proactive; the excitement comes from within. Both of these can be visible in a person’s career life, but usually either of them is more dominant. It has been studied that internal motivation is more helpful when it comes to getting motivated about your career development and education. A person who is internally motivated, not only feels good but is more productive than others. (Sisäinen Motivaatio, 2014).

## 7.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

One of the most famous motivational theories comes from Maslow. Maslow's goal was to understand what motivates people. He believed that a person's motivation is based on achieving certain needs, and that some needs are first in priority.

The first thing that motivates us is the need for physical survival and once that first level is fulfilled the next level will become our next motivational target and so on. Every person is capable of reaching the highest level, self-actualization, but the progress is often disrupted by failing to fulfil the lower level needs. (Simply Psychology, 2016).

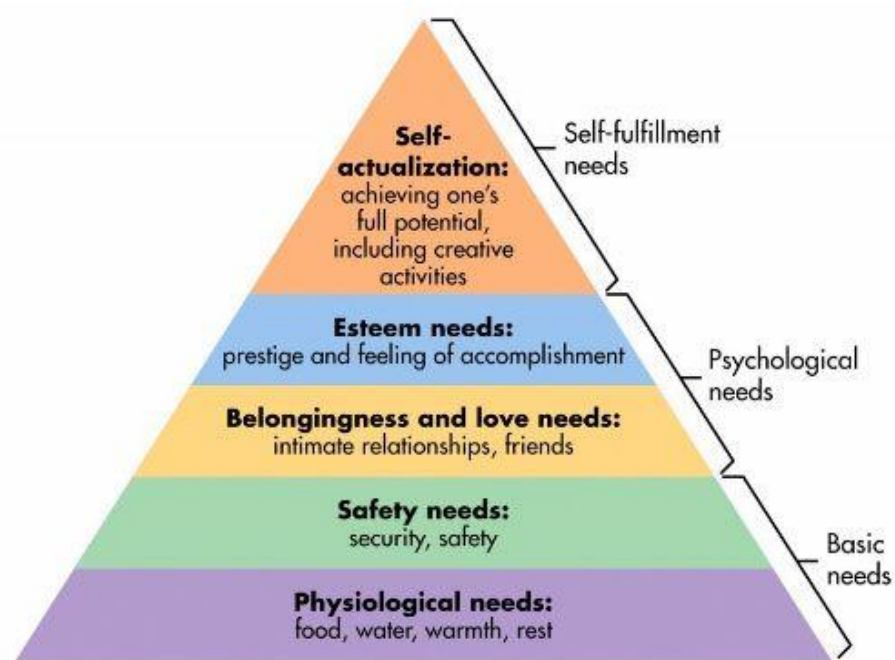


Figure 3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Simply Psychology, 2016).

Based on the theory, when a person's education and career development are concerned, the three lowest levels of needs should be fulfilled in order to achieve career related goals. Esteem needs are fulfilled by feeling of accomplishment, which in this case could be in response to doing well at school / at work. Self-actualization is achieved by using a person's full potential and fulfilling all basic and psychological needs. Self-actualization can mean different things for different people but in short it refers to the need for personal growth and finding the purpose for life. For some self-actualization can be fulfilled in a corporate setting.

Maslow was always focusing on the positive factors in human behaviour and believed that humans were always trying to move forward in order to reach certain goals. In theory, students are able to reach the highest level of self-actualization and perform in their fullest potential, if all the lower stages are taken care of. This raises a question though. Are students (and employees) expected to work at their fullest potential even if they lack support in the lower levels? Can they do their best even if they lack nutrition, sleep and support?

### **7.3 Two-Factor Theory**

Frederick Herzberg motivational theory is based on a study where employees were asked about their positive and negative feelings about their work. Herzberg found two factors that influenced the motivation and satisfaction of these employees.

The first, motivator factors, lead to satisfaction and motivates employees to work harder. This includes enjoying your work, feeling of recognition and career progression.

The second, hygiene factors, can lead to dissatisfaction and lack of motivation if not fulfilled. This includes for example salary, benefits and relationships between managers and co-workers.

According to the theory both motivational factors appear to work independently. While the motivator factors increase satisfaction and motivation, the absence of these factors doesn't necessarily cause dissatisfaction. Likewise, the hygiene factors don't appear to increase satisfaction, but their absence does cause dissatisfaction. (MindTools, 2016).

In order to motivate employees, they should first feel appreciated and supported. By giving plenty of feedback and making sure they can grow and proceed within the organization, the employees will feel more satisfied within the company. To prevent job dissatisfaction, employers should make sure their employees have the best possible working conditions and sufficient salary as well as good relationship with their team.

#### **7.4 Individual Difference Approach**

A theory called individual difference approach suggests that a person's motivation has a lot to do with their own personality. Some people will do anything to achieve their goals whilst others will always try to find the easiest way out. Studies have found that some people seem to have a need for achievement. These people have high levels of internal motivation and enjoy working under conditions of moderate risk. A person's motivation comes from within but can be shaped by their upbringing and culture. (Haslam, 2004).

When applying this theory into a student's educational life and career development, it has a lot to do with the student's personality whether they are willing to work hard for what they want. If the person has a need for achievement, they will try their hardest to get the education and job position they desire.

## 8 Research Implementation

The aim of the research is to study the opinions of Haaga campus' students concerning the hospitality industry. To find out whether the students are interested in having a career in the industry and what are the reasons behind their answers.

The research was implemented by using a quantitative online survey (see Appendix 1.). A quantitative online survey was chosen as the research method due to the fact that it is efficient. It offers an opportunity of receiving large amount of responses in a short period of time. An online survey is also easily distributed via simply sharing a link. By filling out the survey online, the respondents remain anonymous and are more likely to give more honest answers compared to face to face interviews. An online survey also enables an easy way of analyzing the end results.

The survey was made with the help of an online survey tool Webropol. The questionnaire was formed by using both open- and closed-ended questions. The survey had in total of 14 questions. The objective was to keep the survey as short as possible but still to cover enough topics in order for the respondents to actually go through the whole survey without giving up in the middle.

In order to receive a sufficient amount of respondents, Facebook was used as a distribution method for the survey. There is a group on Facebook for the students of Haaga campus called "HAAGA Campus of Haaga-Helia, University of Applied Sciences" which has more than 850 members. The link to the Webropol survey was distributed by using private message as well as the public wall of the group. Approximately 90 private messages were sent. This method didn't gather that many responses, which is why the link to the survey was published on the wall of Haaga's Facebook group. This was conducted during April 2016. The target group for this research are the current students of Haaga campus. Since the Facebook group has different types of members (students, graduates, teachers, applicants etc.), the survey was only targeted to the students currently studying in Haaga campus.

The distribution method didn't show up to be quite as efficient as planned. The research survey gathered in total of 35 responses. There can be quite many reasons why students weren't interested in answering the survey. First of all, they wouldn't gain anything themselves by answering the questionnaire. There was no prize they could win by answering the survey. Also there was no group pressure, which could happen in another setting, for example the author going to classrooms or the cafeteria asking students to answer the survey. This way not many would decline. It could also be possible that the students didn't simply notice the survey link on their Facebook messages/wall.

## **8.1 Limitations of the Study**

Some limitations to the study can be found. First of all the sample size, compared to the amount of students in Haaga, is quite small. There are more than one thousand current students in Haaga and only 35 responses were obtained. Due to the sample size, no strict conclusions nor generalizations can be made based on the research.

The research was made in English and most of the respondents (as well as the author) don't have English as their native language, which can lead to misinterpretations when reading, answering and analysing the survey questions and results. On the other hand the research questions were formed to be as simple and understandable as possible, so that misinterpretations wouldn't happen. The nationality of the respondents weren't asked in the actual research survey, which made it impossible to know the percentage of how many had English as their native language.

This study was made in Helsinki, Finland, where students and new graduates have very different career possibilities compared to other parts of Finland or even the world. Due to this, the results cannot be generalized to concern other cities or countries. If a similar study would be conducted in another city or county, the results would most likely be very different, due to the job market.

## **8.2 Reliability and Validity of the Results**

The credibility of a research can be measured with reliability and validity. For a study to be reliable, other researchers should be able to perform the exact same experiment, under the same conditions and generate the same results. Validity on the other hand refers to how well the study measures what it is supposed to measure.

Even though the sample size was quite small, the results can be viewed reliable. If the research were to be duplicated, similar results would most likely occur.

When it comes to validity, what was meant to measure was measured, but some errors can also be found. The sample group can never represent the entire population and for that reason the results cannot be generalized. Since the research survey was posted on Facebook, it cannot be guaranteed that no one outside of Haaga-Helia would have answered the survey. One cannot be completely sure whether all of the responses were completely honest or true or whether the respondents answered what they felt like they were supposed to answer.

## 9 Results

The following chapter will focus on the results of the survey questions. The results will be analyzed and presented in the form of tables and figures question by question.

The survey gathered in total of 35 responses.

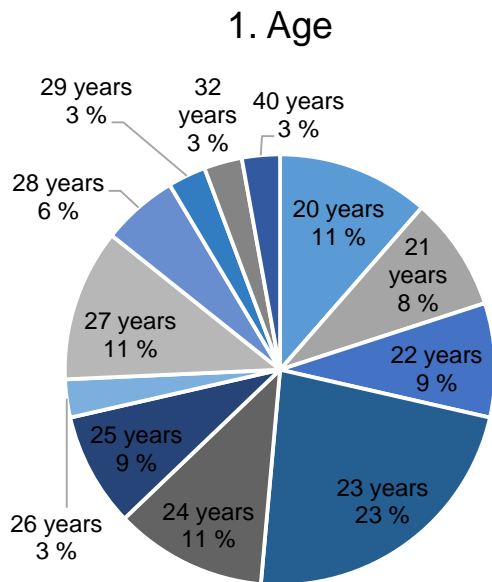


Figure 4. Age of the respondents

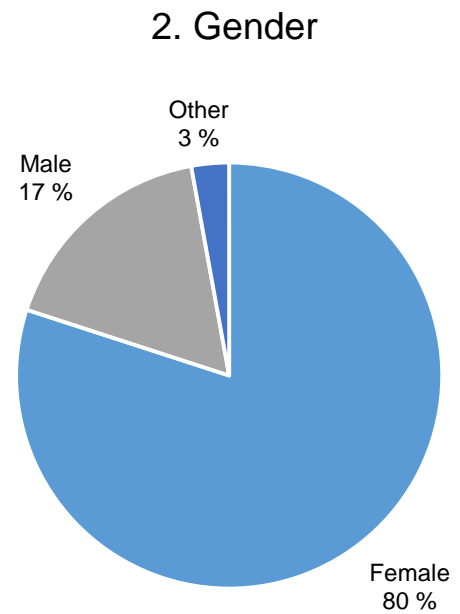


Figure 5. Gender of the respondents

The first two questions in the survey (Figure 4. & 5.) were to identify the respondents. The ages of the students varied from 20 to 40 years old, most of them being in their 20's. 80% of the respondents were female.

### 3. Which degree programme are you studying in Haaga?

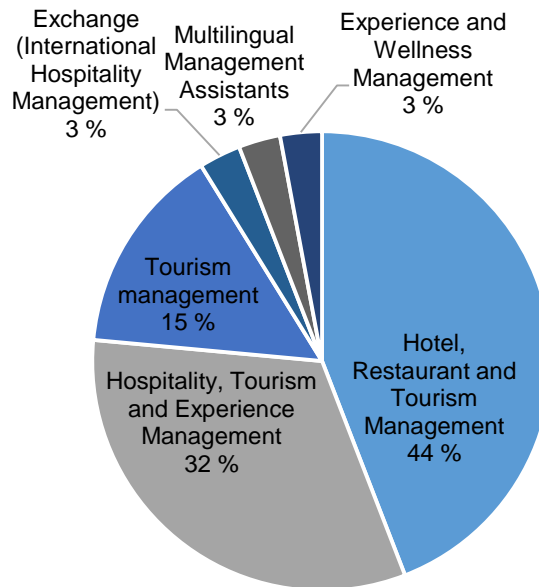


Figure 6. Degree programmes the respondents are currently studying

The third question in the survey (Figure 6.) shows which degree programmes the students are currently studying. The majority of the respondents were studying either Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management or Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management.

### 4. Why did you choose to study this subject?

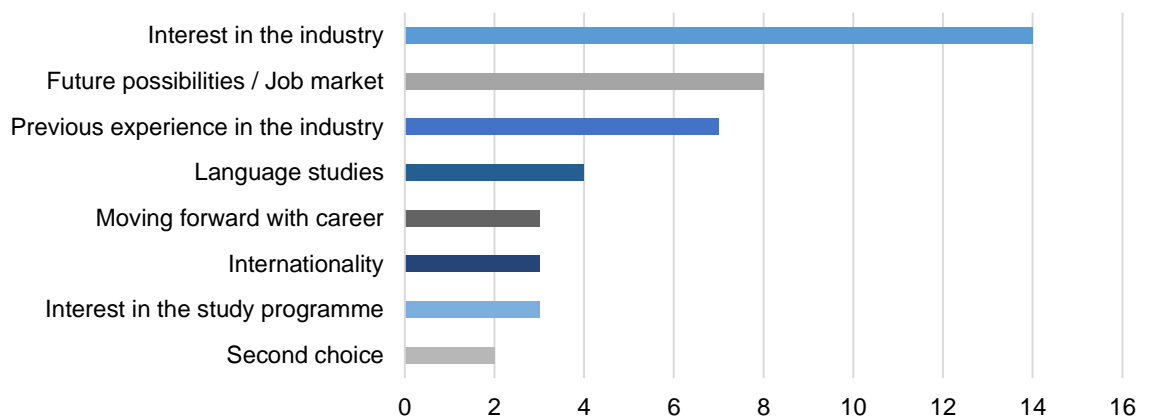


Figure 7. Reason why students chose to study hospitality

The objective of the fourth question (Figure 7.) was to find out the reasons why students had applied to study hospitality at Haaga. Many students had a general interest towards the industry which is why they chose to study this subject. Eight respondents saw future possibilities in the industry when thinking about the job market and the constantly growing industry of hospitality.

“I felt that this is the best way to educate myself within the customer service branch, which I was really interested about. There would be endless possibilities to work and get in higher positions later on.”

Some students had previous experiences from working in the industry which got them interested in studying the subject and continuing in the industry. Some of them saw an opportunity in moving forward in their careers by educating themselves. There were also some respondents who were interested in the actual study programme and internationality of the studies.

“Travel industry seems really interesting. Degree offers great variety of future job positions. I've been working as a waitress nearly 3 years now and also have a degree in it, so my choice was easy when I decided to start studying at Haaga-Helia! I felt like I wanted to move on my career in the restaurant business and this program seemed to be the perfect match for me.”

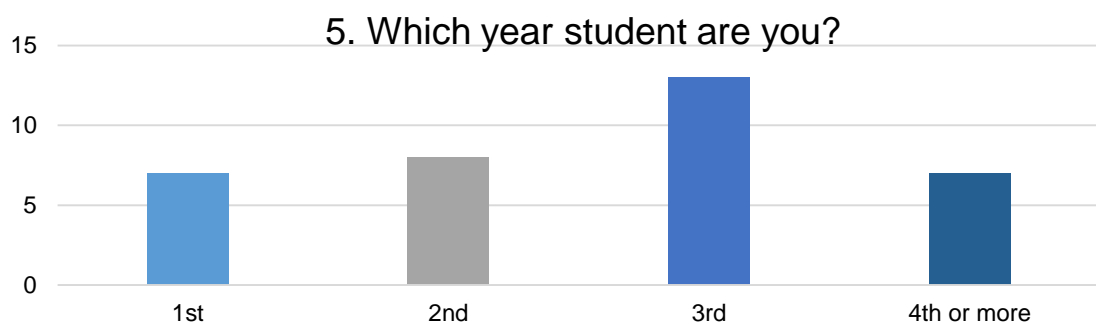


Figure 8. Which year the students are currently studying in

The fifth question (Figure 8.) shows which year students the respondents are. The survey gathered a good range of students from all study years. Most of the respondents were in their third year of studies.

## 6. How much work experience do you have from the hospitality industry in total?

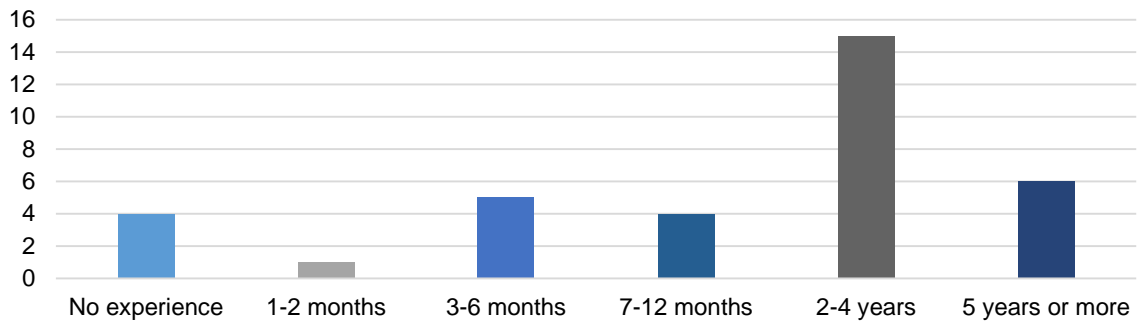


Figure 9. Amount of work experience the respondents have from the hospitality industry

The sixth question (Figure 9.) shows how much work experience the respondents have from the hospitality industry in total. Majority of the respondents have had years of experience whilst four of the respondents had zero work experience from the field.

## 7. Which job(s) have you had in the hospitality industry?

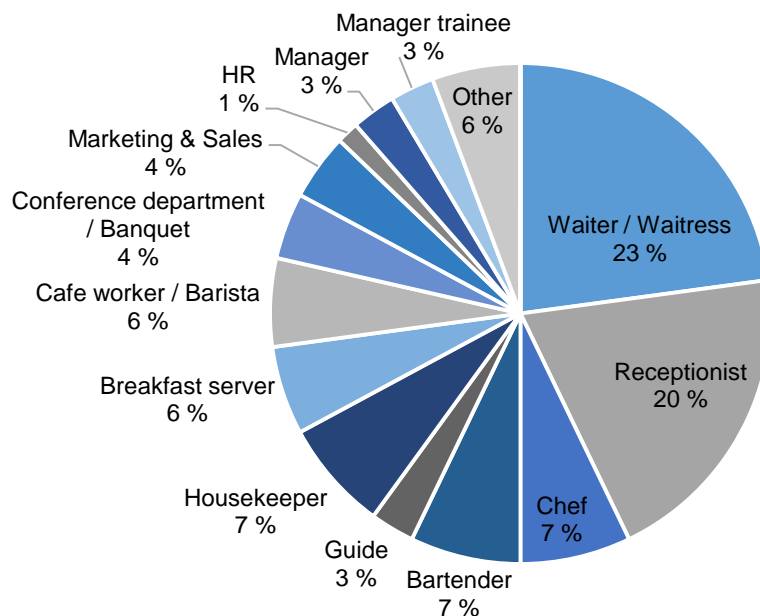


Figure 10. Job positions the respondents have had in the hospitality industry

The objective of the seventh question (Figure 10.) was to find out what kind of jobs have Haaga campus students had in the hospitality industry. The question collected quite a few different job positions.

Most of the jobs seemed to be in the bottom of the industry's hierarchy such as waiter, receptionist, bartender and housekeeper.

Only a few positions being on a managerial level. This can of course be expected when talking about students and the work experience they have gathered.

A lot of the students had had various job positions in the field. One of them stood out with their experience: "Operations at the hotel: Breakfast, Lunch, Bar, Restaurant, Terrace, Front Office and Meeting & Events. I have been at the housekeeping as well, but only 1 week period during my first internship. Also I have been working in Sales & Marketing department in marketing."

### 8. Are you currently working in the hospitality industry?

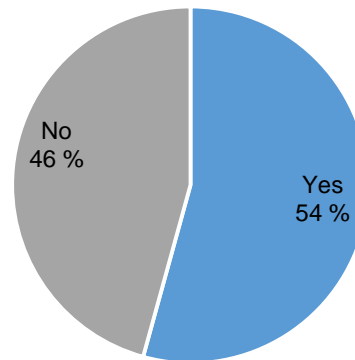


Figure 11. Respondents' current employment rate in the hospitality industry

The eight question (Figure 11.) shows how many of the respondents are currently working in the hospitality industry. More than half of the respondents are currently employed and working in the industry.

9. If your answer to the previous question was "Yes", please fill in the position you are currently working in.

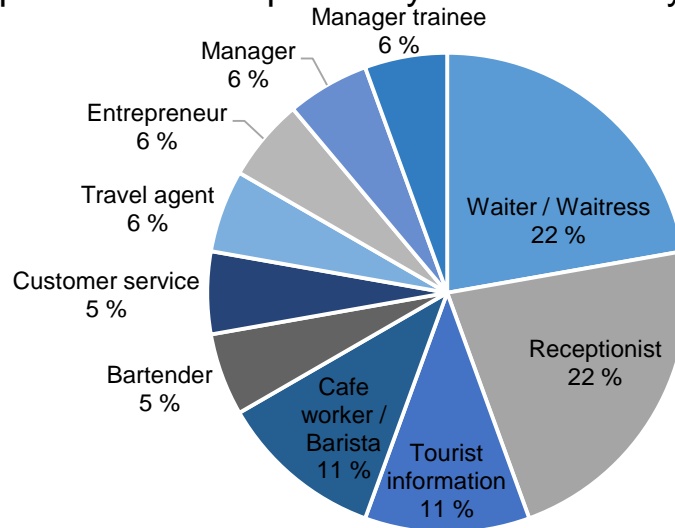


Figure 12. Job positions the respondents currently have in the industry

The ninth question (Figure 12.) shows what kind of jobs these 54% currently employed by the hospitality industry have. As in Figure 10 most of the positions are in the lower level of the industry's hierarchy.

10. I feel like the school has helped / supported me in finding a job in the industry.

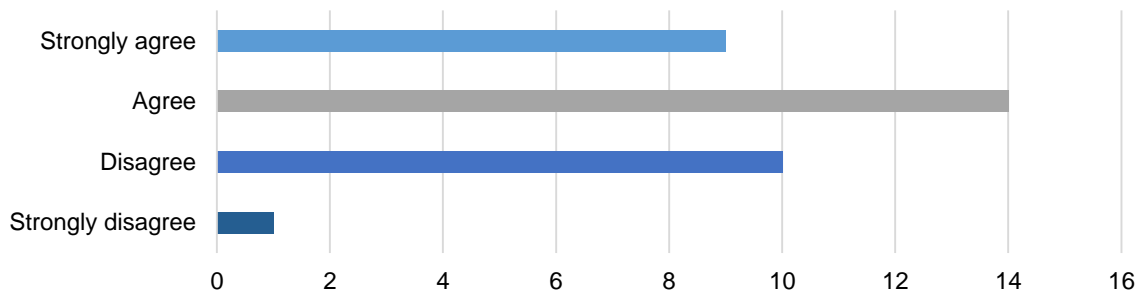


Figure 13. The respondents opinion whether school has helped them in finding a job

By using a Likert scale, the tenth question (Figure 13.) was to find out if students felt like they had had help from the school when trying to find a job in the hospitality industry. More than 67% of the respondents felt like the school had helped or supported them in some way when looking for a job in the industry. There were also respondents who felt like they hadn't had any support when searching for a job.

11. I am interested in pursuing a career in the hospitality industry after graduating.

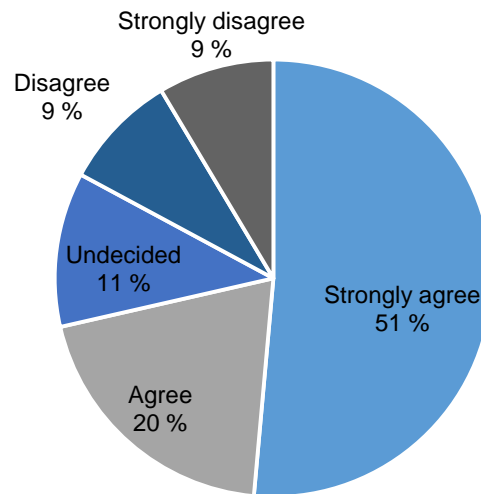


Figure 14. The interest students have in pursuing a career in the industry

The objective of the eleventh question (Figure 14.) was to determine whether the students of Haag campus are interested in pursuing a career in the hospitality industry after graduation. 51% of the respondents were strongly interested in having a career in the industry, whereas 11% have yet to decide what to do with their future career choice and 17% of the respondents didn't want to continue working in the hospitality industry.

## 12. Why are you interested in pursuing a career in the industry?

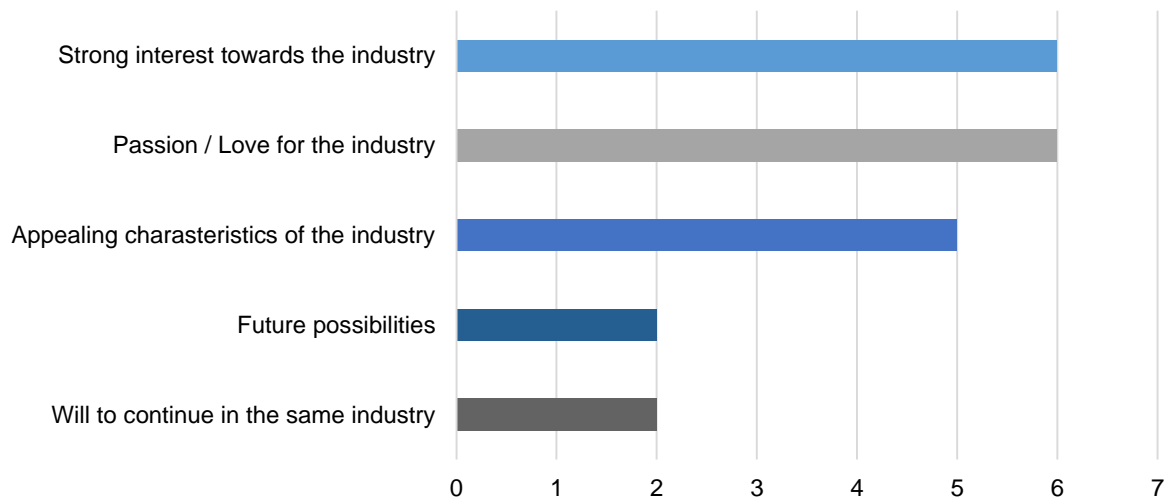


Figure 15. Why students are interested in pursuing a career in the industry

The twelfth question (Figure 15.) was to give reason for your previous answer. Why are you or why aren't you interested in having a career in the industry? Figure 15. only showcases the answers where students had interest towards the hospitality field in the future. The respondents who were interested in continuing in the industry had strong interest and felt passionate or even love towards the industry. They found the characteristics of the industry appealing and saw possibilities in the future concerning their career development.

The students who hadn't yet decided which way to go, said that they would prefer working in another industry or they didn't yet have a clear vision for the future.

Some of the respondents who didn't find the industry appealing anymore were interested in working in another field in the future. Some of them felt like their experiences in working in the industry didn't meet their expectations and didn't feel like there would be a lot of possibilities in moving forward in their career.

One of the responses to the question was quite broad and explained well what kind of struggles students may face when trying to start a career in the industry. Here is an excerpt of the response:

*"I'm a receptionist now, I wonder where I would head if I wanted to pursue a career. I guess this would mean that I would want to become a shift manager at some point? (I don't want to: it's even more stress than just being a receptionist), would it mean that I wanted to become a hotel manager? (haha and no thank you). I don't really know what other career options do I have? In school we had lots of marketing courses so could I go to the marketing team of a hotel? I doubt I would be hired on a marketing team with just reception experience. Or Human resources department? I wish I could specialize to HR department more during studies, then maybe it would seem more like an option to pursue a career in but now it seems unlikely and it hasn't felt like a serious career option in the degree. I think the school only helped me finding a job because it made you become a trainee in someplace and that work experience helped me getting the job as a receptionist. I don't think I have set up proper goals for myself at school in terms of how I would like to pursue a career in the industry? Specializing in hotel management when you don't actually know what working in a hotel is like is not smart I think, or realistic."*

### 13. In your opinion what are the pros of working in the hospitality industry?

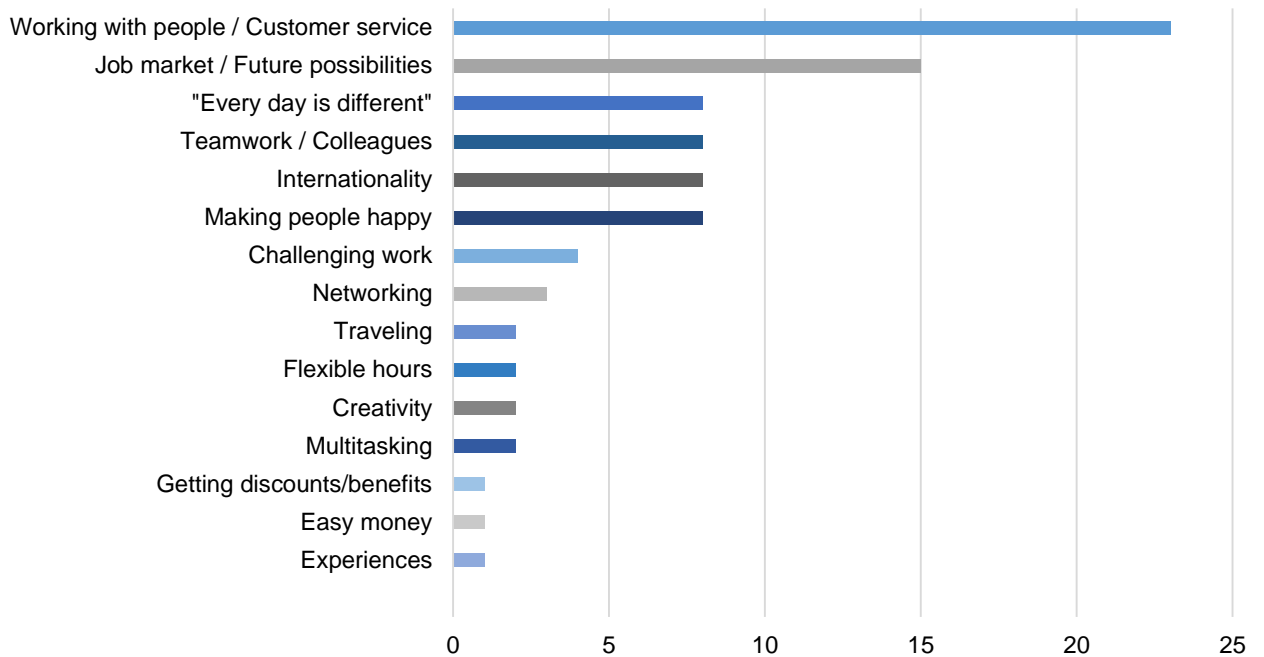


Figure 16. Respondents' view on the positive sides of working in the hospitality industry

On the thirteenth question (Figure 16.) students were asked to list the positive features in the hospitality industry according to their opinion. The number one thing that stood out was working with people and having a job at customer service.

"Meeting new, interesting and different people all the time. The work is never the same and doesn't get boring easily. There are many different possibilities and options career-wise."

Also the fact that there are future possibilities in the industry and a lot of available jobs were listed as positive factors. We are working in an industry that is constantly growing and most probably will never die.

"Variety of the industry, an industry that never dies (people always have to travel, eat, sleep etc)".

Students also found the characteristics of working in the industry appealing, such as working in teams, internationality, challenging work and multitasking. "Every day is different" was also one of the most popular answers which was found to be a positive factor in working in the hospitality industry.

## 14. In your opinion what are the cons of working in the hospitality industry?

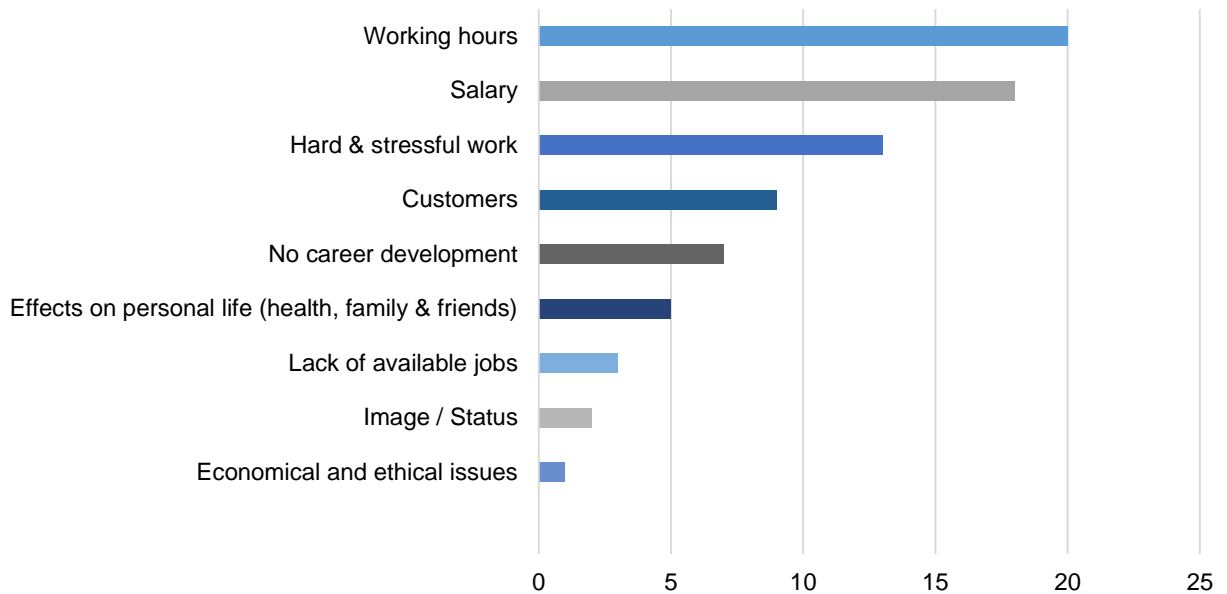


Figure 17. Respondents' view on the negative sides of working in the hospitality industry

The fourteenth question (Figure 14.) shows the downsides of working in the hospitality industry from the respondents' point of view. The most negative features mentioned were the working hours and salary in correlation to the hard work.

“Salary, working hours, irregularity, hard work, complaining guests, being in the same position for years, lack of available jobs (hotel).”

Customer service was also mentioned as a negative feature even though it was on the positive side too.

“Customers today are demanding and customer service is all about "customer being right". In hotels and restaurants customers are demanding, which equals work being demanding - through that we can get into conclusion about the pay check. The compensation which employees get afterwards is way too small compared to the amount of stress their surroundings put them in every day.”

Some of the respondents didn't see a possibility to move forward in their careers or found it difficult to find a job in the industry. Some of the students also felt that the industry was taking a toll on their health and social life.

“Low salary in comparison to physical and mental stress caused by working, poor working hours especially if you have family, dealing with drunkards/drug addicts/drunk middle-aged people, getting insulted by customers, work-related health problems (smoking, alcoholism, stress, sleeping issues, tension).”

### **9.1 Comparison between different answer groups**

When comparing the different year students and their interest in having a career in the hospitality industry in the future, some differences can be found. The respondents who were in their first year of studies were all interested in pursuing a career in the industry, whereas in the third year of studies a change can be seen. Seven out of thirteen of the third year students were interested in having a career in the industry in the future, two had yet to decide and four weren't interested.

The respondents who didn't have any work experience from the hospitality industry or less than six months of experience were more likely to be interested in pursuing a career in the field. After six months of work experience a few negative responses towards a future career in the industry occur. The students who had worked in the hospitality industry more than five years were all interested in continuing in the hospitality industry in the future.

As a strict conclusion it seems like the less experience a respondent has from the hospitality industry the more likely they are interested in working in the industry in the future. But if a respondent has been involved in the industry for more than five years, they are very likely to continue within the hospitality field.

## **10 Discussion**

As discussed earlier, Haaga's students are aiming to become hospitality professional and gain managerial positions within the industry. The forever growing and changing industry of hospitality offers various possibilities for new graduates. Based on Haaga-Helia's own study, a great number of Haaga's graduates do end up having a career within the hospitality branch, earn higher job positions and see that they have benefitted from their studies at Haaga. But why are there some students who completely lose their interest towards working in the hospitality field and what are the factors affecting students' and new graduates' choice of career?

The hospitality industry does struggle with its employees' well-being at work. Working hours tend to be long and irregular, the pay check is also quite often on the lower end of the scale. Other well-being related issues on the other hand can be dealt with by having a management team that understands the importance of keeping its employees satisfied.

When it comes to career choice and being successful, a lot comes from within a person themselves. Image, the way a person perceives certain things, does have a great effect on what industry is found appealing. The image can easily change with time and personal experiences, which is why some students' opinion on having a career in the hospitality industry has changed. The key to success, is motivation. Internal motivators, such as passion and genuine interest towards something, motivates a person the most. It also has a lot to do with the person's own personality, how far they are willing to go in order to reach their goals.

### **10.1 Conclusion of the Results**

Based on the results of the study, a majority of the students in Haaga see the hospitality industry as a positive option in their career paths. The students are intrigued by the possibilities the industry has to offer and are interested in continuing to pursue a career in the branch. They have a strong interest towards the industry and enjoy working with customers in an international environment.

Quite a few negative aspects can also be found from working in the industry, but only a few of the students have changed their minds while completing their education and having their own experiences of working in the field.

## 10.2 Suggestions for Development

Is there something the industry or the school could do in order to appear more intriguing and appealing to new graduates? There are some characteristics of the industry that cannot be avoided, such as working during the night time and weekends and working with customers. By having successful management, especially human resource management, other work related problems can be reduced. By efficient shift planning, salary negotiations and taking care of social relationships, a good level of well-being at work can be achieved.

Managers need to understand the importance of investing in the people who work for them, since the hospitality industry does struggle in attracting talented employees and especially keeping them. In order to have motivated and satisfied employees, they should feel appreciated and supported. This can be achieved by giving plenty of feedback and making sure the employees have a possibility to grow within the organization. In the end an organization's profitability can be assured by having efficient workforce.

The school is most often a student's first impression of what it is like to work in the hospitality industry. The students' previous experiences of the industry are often from a customer's point of view. The school is there to mold the image into a more realistic one. But is Haaga-Helia doing so? The studies at Haaga are mostly focusing on managerial operations. Will this be the reality for students and new graduates of Haaga?

Work-placements in the industry are a great way of shaping the students' image of what it really is like to work in the hospitality industry. Haaga-Helia could support the students more in finding the best possible training places, for example by having valuable contacts. It also needs to be emphasized how important the placements in the industry are and what a great opportunity it is to get to know different sides of the industry. It would be great for students to find workplaces that match their degree and education, instead of the students ending up working as waiters or receptionists, which they most often do.

### **10.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

In case the topic would be further researched, the author would have a few improvements and suggestions. It would be interesting to have more comparison between different sample groups and see how their opinions towards working in the industry differ. Let's take for example the first and the last year students of Haaga or the current students and the students who have already graduated. One possibility would be to compare different hospitality schools, probably even in different countries, to see if they have different attitudes towards the industry.

Preferably the sample group could also be larger in order for the results to be more generalizable. A larger group of respondents could be acquired by using paper surveys that would be distributed in classroom settings. On the other hand if online surveys were to be used, it would be beneficial to offer something in response for the respondents e.g. possibility to win a prize.

There are some questions that could be added to the study. It would be interesting to find out what the dream job of the students, who have lost their interest towards the hospitality industry, would be. Would it be something completely different? Also to find out what kind of assistance the students would prefer when trying to find a job or a work placement. How could Haaga-Helia help them better? The results also lack some information concerning the respondents' identity: where are they from, what is their background?

### **10.4 Assessment of Thesis Process and Learning**

The idea for the thesis came at the very end of the author's studies. After various break and lunch discussions with fellow students about the hospitality industry, an interest for this particular study arose.

The process of conducting the research and collecting results from the survey were fascinating. On the other hand it showed to be quite a challenge to get people to answer the online survey. The target group wasn't approached directly face to face, which could have led to a larger answer group.

While writing the thesis, one of the biggest challenges was to maintain an objective point of view due to own opinions and experiences from the industry. However, an objective point of view was achieved.

Most challenging part of the thesis was the actual writing part and finding motivation for it. It also proved to be more time consuming than expected. Luckily the author's interest towards psychology and the results of the research made it a bit easier.

The thesis was also conducted a bit upside down. First the research survey was made and then theory was examined. By going through and studying the theory beforehand could have brought more ideas to the research process.

Creating your own schedules and sticking to them definitely proved to be one of the biggest challenges and needs the most improving. It seems like the author needs due dates and goals set from an external party, in order to reach goals in time. The whole thesis could have been executed in a tighter schedule. It is definitely recommendable to write your thesis while still in school. That way one doesn't need to teach themselves how to write reports again and set timetables for yourself.

All in all the process was highly intriguing and it taught valuable organizing and writing skills. It is also possible to reach goals that don't seem so intriguing and also to fit them into a tight schedule. It also gave a lot of improvement ideas for the future concerning setting targets and goals.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Research Survey

### Students' perception of having a career in the hospitality industry

1. Age?

2. Gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other

3. Which degree programme are you studying in Haaga-Helia?

4. Why did you choose to study this subject? Explain shortly.

5. Which year student are you?

- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th or more

6. How much work experience do you have from the hospitality industry in total?

- No experience
- 1-2 months
- 3-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 2-4 years
- 5 years or more

If your answer to the previous question was "No experience", you can skip this question.

7. Which job(s) have you had in the hospitality industry? Please list the position(s) below.

**8. Are you currently working in the hospitality industry?**

- Yes
- No

**9. If your answer to the previous question was "Yes", please fill in the position you are currently working in.**

**10. I feel like the school has helped / supported me in finding a job in the industry.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**11. I am interested in pursuing a career in the hospitality industry after graduating.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**12. Explain your answer to the previous question. Why are you / why aren't you interested in pursuing a career in the industry?**

**13. In your opinion what are the pros of working in the hospitality industry? Please explain in your own words and list below.**

Pros = positive factors

**14. In your opinion what are the cons of working in the hospitality industry? Please explain in your own words and list below.**

Cons = negative factors