Solving Intergenerational Communication Problems in Tourism and Hospitality Enterprises

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Abstract

Aim. The aim of the research is to identify intergenerational communication problems in tourism and hospitality enterprises and define teaching/learning initiatives and methodologies required to develop employees' competencies to solve intergenerational communication problems.

Methods. 12 semi-structured expert interviews with tourism and hospitality business owners and/or top-level management in three countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Sweden) were conducted to collect information on generational differences in communication and intergenerational communication problems in the company. Qualitative content analysis was applied for data analysis.

Results. Nine main groups of intergenerational communication problems have been detected and corresponding teaching/learning initiatives and methodologies that take into account the specific characteristics of each generation are recommended to eliminate each of the problems identified.

Conclusion. Generational differences and differences in communication lead to intergenerational communication conflicts in tourism and hospitality enterprises. The suggestions on organising adult learners' teaching/learning process based on generational differences may be applicable in workplace learning and also in educational institutions providing adult education.

Cognitive value. The paper focusses on analysing intergenerational aspects in communication processes in tourism and hospitality enterprises and offers the means of solving communication conflicts by employing certain adult teaching/learning initiatives and methodologies suitable to non-formal and formal adult learning.

Keywords: communication, generational differences, intergenerational communication, intergenerational communication conflicts, adult teaching/learning

Introduction

Information technology has greatly changed organisations and highlighted generational differences, including differences in communication. Communication as a social, interactive, ongoing, complex and contextual process takes place in a definite interpersonal, intercultural, cognitive, organisational contexts.

In scientific literature communication is defined as an "information exchange and stands for an essential need in our lives" (Amariței, 2013, p. 279), "a transmission of information that implies the emission of the message" (Matias & Cardoso, 2021, p. 133). It is a "dynamic, complex and continually changing" (Guamguami & Zeriouh, 2018, p. 18) authentic process taking place both "sequentially and simultaneously" (Orzeață, 2021, p. 323). However, Adela Dragan (2019) argues that all scholars, disregarding differences in their studies, agree that, during the communication process, information, ideas and opinions are transmitted from person to person, or from one group to another.

Hence, it may be concluded that communication is essential for any organisation, including a tourism and hospitality organisation. It is "a unique expression of the institution's own values" (Luchian & Florea, 2022, p. 87), which strengthens the organisation's reputation in society. However, communication in a tourism and hospitality organisation is not always smooth and employees encounter intercultural and intergenerational communication problems.

Prior research (Underwood, 2020; Urick et al., 2017) has found significant differences between younger generations (Generation Y and Z) and other generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X). Generational differences may be a reason for workplace conflicts, misunderstandings and misrepresentation of messages impacting the work environment (Schullery, 2013)

which result in poor relationship among employees and the company, its customers and/or business partners. In order to compete in the global environment, it is crucial to understand the cause of these problems and find appropriate solutions to them. Hence, special teaching/learning initiatives carried out in the workplace and at educational institutions educating future professionals may help to solve the situation.

Although there exists prior research in the field of communication in enterprises, intergenerational aspects in communication processes in tourism and hospitality enterprises and the means of solving communication conflicts by employing certain adult teaching/learning initiatives and methodologies has not been a widely researched topic. This study examines intergenerational differences and intergenerational communication problems in tourism and hospitality enterprises and the specifics of adult teaching/learning to provide applicable suggestions for resolving communication problems between generations in the companies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Theoretical Framework is formed by theories of adult teaching/learning and generational differences.

Differences in Behaviour

Currently, several generations of employees collaborate in the labour market. This research is based on Generation Theory by Neil Howe and William Strauss (2000), which divides generations as follows: (a) Baby Boomers, born between 1943 and 1960; (b) Generation X, born between 1961 and 1981; (c) Generation Y, born between 1982 and 2000; and (d) Generation Z, born after 2000. It is generally perceived that the members of each generation have some common traits and that one generation differs from the other.

Thus, Baby Boomers are perceived as "generally idealistic, optimistic, self-confident, and communicative. They value education" (Lissitsa & Laor, 2021, p. 2). Baby Boomers are often considered to be workaholics who work efficiently, are team-players and prefer in-person communication (Bejtkovský, 2016). As Baby Boomers are responsible and ethically perform their work, they are good business leaders (DeOliveira Lopes Melo et al., 2019). This is the generation who has already retired and may continue working for various reasons or they are retiring in a couple of years.

People belonging to Generation X are conservative, self-reliant, want structure and direction, and prefer direct and immediate communication (Bejtkovský, 2016). Generation X are more technologically savvy than Baby Boomers and they use Internet and social media daily, both for obtaining information and communication (Rodriguez, 2020). Overall, they have well developed employability skills, and although they are less patient than pre-

vious generations, they are autonomous learners (DeOliveira Lopes Melo et al., 2019). They are ready to accept changes (Kyles, 2005). They are considered to be the middle generation between Baby Boomers and Generation Y since they have children of Generation Y and parents of Baby Boomer Generation, so they have to cope with both of them (Pierce & Payne, 2018). Generation X is the most represented generation in the labour market. For example, in 2020, 42% of labour market of Latvia was composed of Generation X representatives (Kārkliņa, 2020).

The core values of Generation Y are realism, confidence, extreme fun, and socialising. They are multi-tasking, entrepreneurial, tolerant, goal oriented, participative and prefer e-mail and voice-mail communication (Bejtkovský, 2016). Generation Y are optimistic, team oriented, digitally connected, creative, solution-oriented, and self-organised (DeVaney, 2015) and expect to have immediate professional advancement (DeOliveira Lopes Melo et al., 2019). Currently, Generation Y is the second most represented generation in the labour market (Kārkliņa, 2020).

Generation Z, also known as Digital Natives, Silent, and New Silent Generation, are not good listeners and communicators. Their interpersonal skills are not well developed, and communication is done using the web (Bejtkovský, 2016). This generation is the most technologically savvy generation and at the same time they are tolerant to diversity (Kautish et al., 2022). "They are always online on any technical device virtually, with no stop" and search for problem-solutions on the Internet (Bencsik et al., 2016, p. 93). This is the generation most impacted by the shift to online learning at the university level which has resulted in "increased internet-enabled device usage, and a lack of real-world classes" (Kautish et al., 2022, p.1).

Differences among generations exist also as to the preferred modes of learning and teaching/learning methodologies.

Generational Differences in Teaching/Learning

Prior research (Bencsik & Machova, 2016; Bencsik et al., 2016) implies that Baby Boomers highly value the traditional education system, rely on their experience and view learning as a holistic process. They prefer a safe and non-authoritarian learning environment and in mutual relationship like interaction, socialising, and teamwork (Kerry & Myron, 2009). They highly value their time and everything they do, matters. Therefore, it is crucial to manage time efficiently and use the vast experience of Baby Boomers in teaching/learning process (Rothwell, 2008) so that the younger generations can learn from the elderly ones and the elderly generation would feel significant and valued.

Generation X prefer flexible, short-time training, active participation and interactivity (Bencsik & Machova, 2016; Bencsik et al., 2016). As they have experienced educational criticism and reform and become sceptical of formal education (Strauss & Howe, 1991), they would prefer informal learning to formal. However, as Generation X may sometimes lack learning

motivation, it would be beneficial to show them how the new knowledge acquired, and skills and competences developed may contribute to other people and what their own benefits would be (Rothwell, 2008). "Xers prefer self-directed learning and do not tend to be team players. They appreciate learning that is flexible and fun, like role-playing, and are motivated to get work done" (Kerry & Myron, 2009).

Generation Y prefer rapid, alternative learning based on IT (Bencsik & Machova, 2016; Bencsik et al., 2016). On the one hand they are serious and work oriented, but on the other hand they tend to be impatient, and they have high expectations from everything and everyone, including teachers. Since Generation Y appreciate speed and the feeling of being "linked in", it would be beneficial to apply technology in teaching/learning of this generation (McGill, 2019). A positive learning environment that would enable combining teamwork with technology should be provided. To ensure multitasking the educator has to use various multimedia in the learning process (Kerry & Myron, 2009). As generation Y want to attain the aims fast, they learn "just in time" (Bencsik & Machova, 2016).

Generation Z value freedom, non-commitment and learning that is based on interest, therefore informal learning is popular among them (Bencsik & Machova, 2016; Bencsik et al., 2016). As mentioned above, they are not attentive listeners and their interpersonal skills are not well developed (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2020), hence, the teaching/learning process has to be organised in such a way that it would satisfy their social and emotional needs (McGill, 2019). Learning alone is the most preferred learning mode for Generation Z, and no interaction with others is required (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Since they are always digitally connected and feel better in a virtual than traditional learning environment, "a multidimensional learning environment to develop novel skill sets" (Kautish et al., 2022, p. 2) could be beneficial therein.

Previous research indicates both certain common traits in adult learning (Illeris, 2004; Kolb, 1984; Long, 2002; Knowles et al., 2011; Pätzold, 2011), and cultural (Hofstede, 1986) and generational differences (McGill, 2019; Rothwell, 2008). Maturity, self-confidence, autonomy, decision-making and purposefulness are typical traits of adult learners. However, adults are not so open-minded and do not react so flexibly to changes as children do (Kraus, 2016). Their readiness to learn depends on need.

Since adults have established their opinions and values that they are likely to bring into the learning context (Rogers, 1996), it might be complicated for them to change their opinions. Consequently, the use of traditional means and techniques in adult education may turn out to be unproductive. Thus, it is essential to apply a dialogical approach in ensuring adult learning. Such an approach responds to learners' needs and wishes and complies with the learning context. Andrew Hines and Alexandra Whittington (2017) emphasise the role of personalised instruction and differentiation for adult learners. Personalised instruction has to match the learners' individ-

ual learning styles and differentiation should reflect the individual value of each learner, including those based on generational differences.

Methodology

The Aim of the Paper
The aim of the paper is to identify intergenerational communication problems in tourism and hospitality enterprises and define teaching/learning initiatives and methodologies required to develop employees' competencies to solve intergenerational communication problems.

Research Question
What intergenerational communication problems exist in tourism and hospitality enterprises and what teaching/learning initiatives and methodologies may be applied to eliminate them?

The Research Paradigm
In order to gain a better understanding of the underlying processes that may influence participants' behaviour, the interpretivism paradigm (Brancati, 2018) has been applied enabling researchers to understand both the context and the cause of differences.

The Type of Research
Exploratory qualitative research that enables looking for patterns and ideas to solve the research question (Collis & Hussey, 2009) has been conducted.

Research Methods
12 semi-structured expert interviews with tourism and hospitality business owners and/or top-level management in three countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Sweden) were conducted to collect information on generational differences in communication and intergenerational communication problems they encounter. As pointed out by Stephen M. Croucher and Daniel Cronn-Mills (2019), the strength of semi-structured interviews lies in using a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions, and their flexibility. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, on Zoom and Cisco WebEx platforms, depending on the Covid-19 situation in each respective country. The interview length was from one hour to 2 hours and 42 minutes. Qualitative content analysis was employed for data analysis, as it is typically "used to describe a communication event" (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2019, p. 162).

Research Tool
The interview guide comprised 5 parts: a) Introduction (introductory remarks, explanation of terminology and the approach applied, interview date, time, duration and place, written consent); b) Information about the

informant and the company, challenges in business, etc.; c) Internal communication of the company; d) External communication of the company; e) Different communication problems in tourism and hospitality enterprise (generational differences, communication channels for different generations, communication challenges, problems of intergenerational communication, teaching/learning needs, etc.). This article will focus on the fifth part of the interview guide.

Research Sample

The criterion sample has been created for interviews involving individuals having certain "shared characteristic or experience" (Aurini et al., 2016, p. 58) – owners or top-level managers of tourism and hospitality enterprises (catering sector, accommodation sector, travel agencies, tour operators and tourism information centres/points) having at least two years of work experience at a managerial position and five years of work experience with colleagues, business partners and/or clients of different generations, and the company employs at least two employees from different generations. The sample is as follows:

- One Baby Boomer, the owner of accommodation business (bed and breakfast) in Sweden (coded I1).
- Six representatives of Generation X – the manager of a tourist information centre in Lithuania (I2), the manager of a tourist information centre in Latvia (I3), CEO and head of the Board of a tour operating company and travel agency in Latvia (I4), the owner of a tourist information centre in Sweden (I5), the owner and Board member of accommodation business (a guest house) in Latvia (I6), and the director of an accommodation enterprise (a youth hostel) in Latvia (I7).
- Five representatives of Generation Y – the co-owner of accommodation business (guest house) in Lithuania (I8), the co-owner of catering business (pizzeria) in Lithuania (I9), the co-owner of accommodation and catering business (guest house) in Sweden (I10), the director of a tour operating company in Lithuania (I11) and the managing director of a tour operating company in Latvia (I12).

The code 'I' above and further in the article, stands for an informant.

Findings and Discussion

Data analysis was done in several stages: a) creation of categories (meta--codes) based on key words; b) division of category content into sub-categories; c) coding text and organising it according to categories to elicit evidence (supporting statements), d) data analysis and interpretation.

This paper will analyse three categories related to education: a) generational differences, b) generational differences in communication, c) the

need for learning to communicate more efficiently with customers and business partners.

Generational Differences
All informants have come across generational differences when performing work duties. They have noticed that Baby Boomers are "more easy-going and more open to accept differences than Generation X" (I12) and they "don't worry about small misunderstandings" (I12), but they "expect more attention" (I12). In turn, Generation X "are often more stressed, especially Europeans. They are more independent" (I12) and they are "less patient" (I5, I10) than Generation Y and Z. "Generation Y is more courageous in technology, thus pushing X to learn" (I2). Generations Y and Z are more demanding than other generations and expect to have the things "the way they want it and do not willingly accept the existing rules or regulations" (I7) but at the same time "they are more carefree" (I5) than older generations. Generation Z is "more free and more communicative" (I9). Generational differences were identified in all types of tourism and hospitality enterprises. The generational differences identified have been categorised into seven sub-categories (see *Figure 1*).
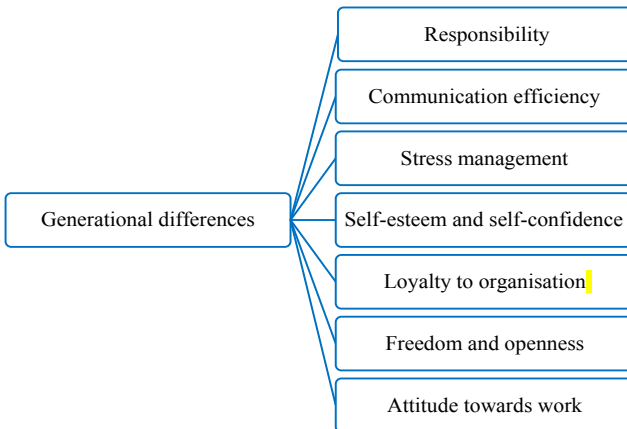
Figure 1
Generational differences in tourism and hospitality enterprises
Source. Own research.

Responsibility
The interviews showed that older employees "are more responsible" (I8) and "solve everything" (I7), whereas "younger employees tend to be more frivolous, so they make mistakes" (I7). In most cases "age correlates with a sense of responsibility" (I8). These findings comply with the research by Marlene Catarina DeOliveira Lopes Melo et al. (2019) emphasising the responsibility of Baby Boomers and the research by Jiří Bejtovský (2016)

who indicates that Baby Boomers give preference to "duty before fun" (p.108) and "work is an obligation" (p.108) to them, whereas one of the core values for Generation Y is having "extreme fun" (p.108). Responsibility of younger generations may be enhanced in studies by appointing them as the lead persons in joint projects.

Communication Efficiency

According to the research, older generations have a need for hierarchy – they want a formal tone and respect from the younger ones. A young tour operator, Generation Y representative, admits that the formal tone in conversation "with the older guides is out of respect for them" (I11). But this may also be explained by the fact that "the older a guide is, the better he/she communicates, making fewer mistakes" (I11) because such a guide is more experienced (I11). In accommodation business, communication efficiency is hindered by two factors – insufficient language skills and insufficient digital skills. As to the language issue, "older generation does not speak English, whereas younger generation has difficulties in speaking Russian" (I3, I6) but the problem lies in the fact that a part of customers is a Russian-speaking population. As regards technologies, the guest house owner from Latvia finds that younger generations are better educated in technologies than the elderly ones and he adds that "this is a problem with both customers and staff" (I6). To improve communication efficiency, it is suggested to organise workshops on developing digital skills for employees with lower IT skills and public speaking classes for the younger ones. Afterwards, both groups of employees may be brought together in a seminar in which some simulations may be practiced.

Stress Management

The research findings indicate that Generation X can better cope with stress and leave an impression that they do not worry a lot while performing their job duties. "Older guides do not get lost in stressful situations" (I11), and even if they get lost, it is not for a long time. "The older the guide is, the less nonsense he/she does because he/she has more experience" (I11). It may be concluded that experience helps in overcoming stress. Hence, different roleplays and simulations may be used to act out possible problem situations beforehand.

Self-esteem and Self-confidence

Generation X are more flexible but also "persuading and striving" (I2), and self-confidence of younger generations is very high (I2) as they highly value themselves. "Young people of Generation Y think very well about themselves, they think they know everything" (I2). Sharon A. DeVaney (2015) has come to a similar conclusion summarising the opinion of a recruiter: "It's not a question of whether or not they [Millennials] are right for the job, it's a question of is the job right for them" (p. 13).

Loyalty to Organisation

The informants have observed that Baby Boomers and Generation X are "more attracted to their job" (I2), they are more loyal to their organisations, whereas Generation Y "take everything more easily, if they don't like something, they quit the job" (I2). This result complies with the research done by Betkovský in Czechia (2016) which found out that Baby Boomers and Generation X would work longer at the company. Generation Z "makes little effort to stay if they fail to adapt" (I2) and as Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace (2016) conclude "Half expect to become their own bosses during their careers" (p. 5).

Freedom and Openness

Another finding emphasises that Generation Z highly appreciate freedom and openness. They are "more framed, and they are free people" (I9). A business co-owner from Lithuania, Generation Y representative, claims that when seeing such a client, she also feels freer as "they are such open people" (I9). According to Seemiller and Grace (2016), "Generation Z graduates will create their own employment opportunities that suit their styles and passions" (p.5) as then they will not be committed to certain lifestyles imposed by others upon them.

Attitude Towards Work

According to the findings, Baby Boomers "value work more, are more responsible so as not to lose their job position" (I9) which is explained by the fact that younger generations have more opportunities – "the world is still open to young people" (I9), especially Generation Z who "have not tried much and they want to be everywhere" (I9). Generation X differ from other generations in their attitude to work with their conscientiousness and determination. They work very hard in order to succeed, but "if they fail, they try even harder, they try, they suffer, and sometimes it lasts for 40 years or more" (I2). However, an informant from Latvia, Generation X representative, considers that attitude to work depends on the person, not on the generation. She explains that "regarding the work style, for someone working means sitting in the office to be seen, for others – the result is what matters" (I3). She also concludes that if there are conflicts between employees or between an employee and the management, in most cases it "is not an intergenerational conflict, but it is a communication conflict" (I3). Attitude to work is related to responsibility and it may be enhanced by applying teaching/learning methodologies, such as, project work, work in teams that require input by all group members.

However, despite similarities and differences, generations can work together and benefit from each other, share their knowledge and improve techniques. Generation Y and Z have an opportunity to experience several cultures from Generation X and Baby Boomers (Strittmatter et al., 2020), whereas Baby Boomers and Generation X may benefit from the feeling of

satisfaction that they had contributed to passing over their values and work ethics to younger generations. Responsibility, communication efficiency, stress management skills, attitude to work may be developed in studies which may help employees eliminate conflict situations.

Generational Differences in Communication
The informants admitted that they had experienced various problems in communication at work: a) problems related to foreign language skills, b) problems with customers and business partners arising from differences in communication style and mode, c) problems because of different levels of digital competencies of employees or the inability of using information technologies and social media by the customers, d) problems in receiving and passing information, e) managerial problems in the organisation, f) problems stemming from unfulfilled expectations, g) intercultural communication problems, and others. These problems have been classified into the category *generational differences in communication*, which is further sub-divided into eight sub-categories (see *Figure 2*).
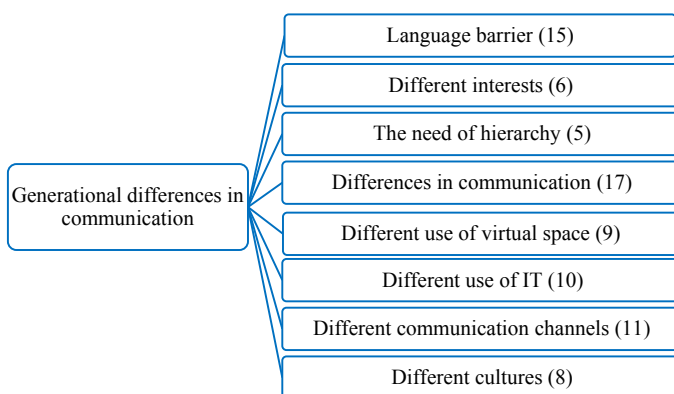
Figure 2
Generational differences in communication

Source. Own research.

Language Barrier
The informants admitted that the "age gap" (I3, I7) and the "language barrier" (I3, I7, I8, I10, I12) are the main factors preventing efficient communication in a tourism and hospitality enterprise. As can be seen from *Figure 2*, language barrier is the second most frequently mentioned generational difference in communication. "Lack of foreign language skills" (I3) results in an "inability to communicate accordingly" (I3). In Latvia and Lithuania, the main language barrier concerns English and Russian – "a young person does not speak Russian, and an older person does not speak English" (I8) and "Russian language is no longer known by either the Y or Z Genera-

tions" (I9). Similarly, in Sweden, elderly people do not speak English and when asked to wait while the hotel employee finds someone who can speak Swedish, they leave (I10), which is typical of the demanding Baby Boomers as they expect that everyone should speak Swedish in Sweden. Latvian accommodation business faces similar problems, especially in housekeeping where many "employees are of Russian nationality and young people do not understand Russian as well as older generations" (I7). The problem is solved with translating lots of material (I12). This also concerns other foreign languages, such as, Spanish, Italian (I12). As to internal communication, some informants admit communication barrier as well, since there are employees who speak Russian but do not speak any other language (I6, I7), some of them understand Latvian – the state language (I6), and communication is done only in Latvian, but this may lead to misunderstandings. Hence, the need for developing employees' language skills is evident. It may be done in organising language courses in the company or supporting and motivating staff members to attend language courses organised by language teaching institutions.

Different Interests
Different interests may also lead to intergenerational communication conflicts. For example, "Generations Z and Y communicate only on issues that interest them, if they do not want to solve a problem, then they will avoid and ignore it" (I7). The director of the youth hostel adds: "If they have something that interests them, they will try to find out quite intrusively, but if I have a question for them, they will completely ignore it" (I7). Another example is, when different interests among generations (Generation X and Y) led to mutual conflicts in a travel agency as representatives of Generation Y felt ignored by Generation X members (I4). The situation was resolved through mutual discussion involving all team members. Different interests may impact also answers to clients' questions. For example, the inability of an elderly chambermaid (Baby Boomer) to suggest entertainment options near the hotel to a young couple (Generation Z) (I8). Thus, it may be concluded that there may be a correlation between the age and information provision to the guests. The latter is also linked with the following categories: *different use of IT*, the use of *different communication channels* and *the need of hierarchy*. The conflicts arising out of different interests should be resolved through mutual discussions, and specific teaching/learning initiatives are not required therein.

The Need of Hierarchy
As with the previous category – *different interests*, the need of hierarchy may impact communication process, consequently influencing the quality of the tourism product. The informants mentioned the level of formality when speaking to Baby Boomers (I4), who prefer a more formal language style, but overall, the head of the Board of the given travel agency admits

that "clients choose the style of communication and we [the agency] try to adapt to it" (I4). The need of hierarchy is more typical for communication in the company, as younger tour operators "sometimes do not feel enough authority to make decisions" (I12), coach drivers ignore instructions given by younger tour guides (I11). The respect for hierarchy is most characteristic of Baby Boomers, and Generation X "have less respect for hierarchy" (Bencsik et al., 2016, p. 95), they may even have "negative attitudes towards authority and hierarchy" (Mayer, 2006, p. 59). It is suggested to organise some seminars educating employees about generational differences – traits of character, behaviour, communication styles. It is possible to include some tasks in language classes as well.

Differences in Communication

To apply the most appropriate learning methodologies for each target group, it is crucial to understand both similarities and differences in communication among members of different generations. Differences in communication is the sub-group having the largest number of supporting evidence. Generation X and Y like preparing in advance before asking for help. They "will explore, find out what web page information they all do not understand and then communicate by phone or face-to-face. They will always call with specific questions" (I7), and Baby Boomers and Generation X record information on paper (I10, I12). Generation Y "use other forms of communication such as e-mail and websites" (I10). Generation Z have difficulties in problem formulation (I7), use "Anglicisms, which other generations may not understand or accept" (I7) which is often a cause for misunderstandings.

Prior research emphasises that Baby Boomers highly appreciate personal relationship, respect traditions (Bencsik & Machova, 2016), and prefer conducting business using telephone (Mayer, 2006; Venter, 2017). Diane Mayer (2006) argues that Generation X grew up in the information age and they value the ability to learn new things, flexibility and feedback. Informants found many similarities between Baby Boomers and Generation X. In turn, Generation Y, has certain similarities with the previous Generation – Generation X and with the next generation – Generation Z. Generation Y "were the first wave of the digital generation born into the world of technology" (Bencsik et al., 2016, p. 92) which has influenced their way of communication. Digital Natives – Generation Z share knowledge easily and rapidly on a virtual level and prefer collaborating in groups also on a virtual level (Bencsik et al., 2016).

Different Use of Virtual Space

The informants mentioned the role of virtual space in communication, which was especially significant during the pandemic. "Younger colleagues belonging to Generation Y initiated a more active transition to the virtual space during the pandemic. [..] Sometimes it's hard for X" (I2). This is in

line with DeVaney (2015) who describes Generation Y as digitally connected. Nevertheless, all tourism companies use both traditional and virtual space. Baby Boomers and Generation X use traditional space (face-to-face and telephone) more, because not "all use social networks to communicate" (I7) and "the older generation prefers telephone or face-to-face" communication (I10). The CEO of the travel agency from Latvia highlighted difficulties in communicating with elderly clients who do not use smart phones or e-mail (I4). The use of virtual space is also directly connected with clients' and employees' IT skills.

Different Use of IT
All informants highlighted the change of technologies used in their work and they have also noticed certain differences between generations. They have adapted to the use of these technologies and use them daily (I2, I5, I6, I7). The director of the youth hostel mentions their progress from no computers at all to computers used for e-mail communication and now social networks used for communication. She concludes that "communication is constantly evolving" (I7), consequently, employees' digital skills as well. However, the development is not the same for all generations and all people. There are still clients who don't use IT. The older generation is less technologically savvy than the younger ones and this refers both to customers and staff (I4). Another example supports this claim: "older Swedish generations are less likely to use technology" (I10). At the same time tourism and hospitality enterprises are switching over to "no-contact communication with customers" (I6) which might cause problems for those with a low level of digital skills. Therefore, companies have to prepare in advance on how to deal with such problems. Some workshops may be held at the company to introduce technical innovations and employees have to be trained in using them. "Generations X, Y and Z are more used to finding information on the Internet" (I10), although Generation Y is even "bolder in technology [..] than Generation X" and motivates them to learn (I2).

Differences in preferred communication mode, different use of a virtual space and use of IT should be taken into consideration when selecting teaching/learning modes for employees. Generation Z would willingly learn online, whereas face-to-face teaching/learning modes need to be used for Baby Boomers. Research findings indicate that Generations X and Y might be involved both in face-to-face and online teaching/learning initiatives.

Different Communication Channels
The informants were asked to evaluate the efficiency of various communication channels for different generations to find out the main channels used overall and for each generation in particular. As can be seen from *Figure 3*, face-to-face communication is the prevailing means of communication for Baby Boomers and Generation X. Additionally, Generation X also prefer

e-mail communication. This finding is in line with prior research by Jiří Bejtkovský (2016) and Miri Rodriguez (2020) on typical modes of communication by different generations. In turn, the informants consider that e-mail, Internet sites and social media are the most efficient communication channels for Generation Y. Similarly, Generation Z would prefer social media and Internet sites for obtaining information.
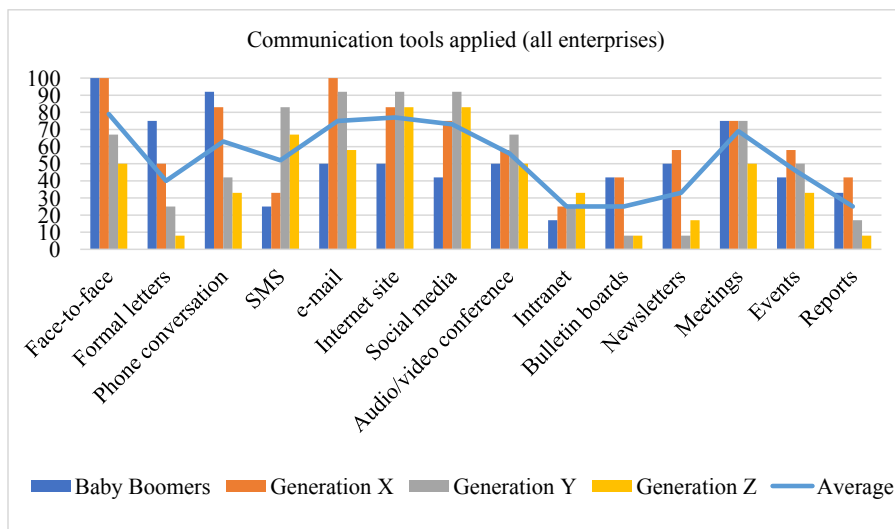
Figure 3
Communication tools applied (all enterprises), %

Source. Own research.

Although it is evident from *Figure 3* and the informants' expressions that informants recognise differences in efficiency of various communication channels for different generations, in practice they use the same communication channels for all generations (I4, I6, I7, I8, I9, I12). The following examples illustrate this: "We do not differentiate the means of communication according to the age or other characteristics of the customers" (I12), "the communication tools are the same for all generations" (I7), "we do not use different communication channels for different generations" (I4), "communication with different groups of customers is pretty much the same" (I6), "communication is common for all ..." (I8), "age is completely irrelevant to our product" (I9). The only informant who emphasised different communication channels for different target groups is a Lithuanian tour operator and their different use is connected with observing ethical principles and attitude towards employees not with generations: "I would never in my life communicate with drivers and guides through a social network, because it is an intrusion into their private life..." (I11). This proves the necessity of improving employees' digital skills and communication com-

petencies since inappropriate use of communication channels may result in misunderstandings and communication conflicts. To sum up, the use of communication channels for different generations identified, support the previous conclusion on the preferred mode of teaching/learning by members of different generations.

Different Cultures
In the interviews, the informants mention that different cultures have different impact on the communication. The keywords are "cultural differences" (I3, I7, I12), "different cultures" (I7), "local culture" (I3), "rural area" (I3), "religious influence" (I7), "discussions" (I7). In the countryside, people communicate differently, they are shyer than in a city (I3). The impact of religion is more observed in accommodation business, although "the differences were bigger ten years ago than now" (I7). This might be explained by the experience accumulated by employees on how to deal with customers having different religious backgrounds. However, there are some conflicts between staff members and the customers and among customers themselves. These conflicts are usually solved through discussions (I7).

There is also a cognition that "most communication problems are because of different cultures not generations" (I7). Thus, training in intercultural communication is very significant and this could be done in specially organised lectures and seminars as well as certain examples and tasks may be incorporated in other teaching/learning initiatives organised by the company, such as language courses, public speaking courses and others.

Teaching/Learning Initiatives Required to Make Communication More Efficient
From the analysis above, it can be stated that one of the most common ways to solve communication problems of different generations is a conversation, a meeting, and an analysis of the situation. It has been observed that some of the companies analysed apply technological measures to avoid communication problems, but in many cases technological innovation is hampered by the attitude of different generations and their ability to use technologies. It has also been noted that colleagues as well as other people who can help are involved in solving problems related to a foreign language.

In order to communicate more effectively with customers and business partners, the research identified the need for training. The needs may be categorised into six sub-categories: a) Specific training that meets the specifics of the company's activities (I8, I9); b) Digital literacy competencies (including management of communication in social networks) (I3, I6, I12); c) Public speaking courses (I12); d) Foreign language courses (I10, I12); e) Marketing and sales courses (I1, I4, I11) and f) Face-to-face courses in personal communication with customers (I4, I6, I7).

The findings show that tourism and hospitality enterprises have different training needs, but the common thing is that they may be organised

at their workplace as non-formal adult education initiatives. To foster the development of learners' competencies that would enable solving of inter-generational communication problems in the enterprise, it is significant to take into account the specific characteristics of each generation.

Donald R. Hillman (2014) makes recommendations to address inter-generational communication problems: a) Provide all generations with a clear organisational vision; b) Provide increased performance feedback to the employees of Generation Y; c) Use cross-generational team problem solving for all generations that promotes shared work values; d) Use social media and mobile devices to communicate with employees of Generation Y; e) Involve employees of Generations Y and X in collecting internet-based information; 6) Involve employees of Generation Y in multitasking projects; f) Generation X and Baby Boomers are more effective when working at projects requiring face-to-face tasks; g) Provide mentoring, including reverse mentoring, to all generations; h) Implement a knowledge-management (retention) system for all generations including the current Baby Boomer retirees.

The research findings support these suggestions so they will also be integrated in the next section describing teaching/learning activities.

Organising Teaching/Learning Activities Considering Generational Differences

Based on the common traits in adult learning, the following activities may be recommended for all generations of adult learners: a) giving partici-pants memorable instruction, b) appealing to as many senses as possible, c) relating training to what learners already know, and d) applying pro-blem-solving tasks to real problems that learners face at work (Rothwell, 2008). Pairwork/groupwork in which learners tell interesting stories to each other, describe certain theories and rules may be beneficial, especially if they are accompanied with some visuality, practical demonstration and experimenting. This may be especially useful for specific training connec-ted with the company's activities and for marketing and sales courses.

Evaluating the communication problems and the learning needs iden-tified in the research, it may be concluded that project-based and games--based learning in traditional and in/or blended learning format may be applied for all the categories.

Since Baby Boomers highly value time and the traditional education system, traditional short-term seminars and workshops, for example, prac-tical workshops in digital training, may be useful. However, it is essential to use their vast lifetime and professional experience and organise joint workgroups with younger generations to ensure experience exchange. Dif-ferent problem-solving tasks done in small groups may be applied.

Considering the characteristic traits of Generation X described in the literature review section and the analysis of the research findings, different case studies and games-based learning may be applied as this generation

wants to be prepared for different situations before they have occurred, and Generation X are ready to learn "just in case". Their involvement in discussions in buzz groups and jigsaw groups may be fruitful therein. According to John Biggs and Catherine Tang (2011) in buzz groups learners are given a question, problem or issue to discuss in their group or they are asked to apply theory to analyse and solve a case study. In case of jigsaw groups, the groups are allocated sub-tasks and during the plenary they have to put the finished sub-tasks back together to solve the main task. This ensures active participation of all groupmates in the problem solution.

Since Generation Y prefer short-term alternative learning based on IT (Bencsik & Machova, 2016; Bencsik et al., 2016) and their digital competencies are sufficiently developed, short webquests and online case studies may be applied. Generation Y are used to collaborating with peers and helping each other learn, thus interactivity is useful therein. Another option might be creating learning cells. Biggs and Tang (2011) explain that learning cells are dyads formed for working jointly on a problem or skill which is particularly useful in contexts which require work at the computer when searching for the information required. This complies with two essential requirements – collaboration with peers and application of IT in teaching/learning.

Generation Z are digitally savvy, but they are individualistic and interact with peers in a virtual environment rather than in a traditional classroom. Therefore, traditional project work might not be efficient for Generation Z. Instead, a project could be split into several smaller ones and each learner would have to prepare one stage individually. Seemiller and Grace (2016) suggest using case studies of social issues of interest to learners, logic-based approaches, experiential learning, searching for information on the Internet to find solutions, learning through trying out and then applying this information in practice. Furthermore, specific opportunities for entrepreneurial experiences, such as business simulations or entrepreneurial project-based learning, could be particularly beneficial for Generation Z.

To summarise, the activities suggested may be used in organising workplace learning by inviting professionals and adult educators to give seminars and courses to company employees and these principles may be applied in formal education institutions educating future tourism and hospitality industry employees as well. Focus should be given to developing learners' intercultural and intergenerational communication competences and problem-solving skills which would consequently lead to more efficient communication in companies.

Conclusion

This research deals with the intergenerational aspects in communication processes in tourism and hospitality enterprises in three European countries – Lithuania, Latvia and Sweden. The research conducted in twelve tourism and hospi-

tality enterprises employing people from several generations identified certain differences among the generations as well as differences in communication of the companies leading to intergenerational and intercultural conflicts.

The research findings indicate that Baby Boomers are responsible, self--confident, reliable employees who highly value the traditional education system, rely on their experience and prefer face-to-face communication and communication by phone. Generation Y are realistic, confident, technologically savvy, have high self-esteem but often get impatient. Generation Y are able to use the information available to adapt quickly to any technological changes and can apply technological innovations at work very fast. They prefer learning based on IT, require constant feedback on their success and it is recommended to communicate with them through mobile devices and social networks. Generation X is an intermediary between Baby Boomers and Generation Y. Generation X are conservative, self-reliant employees who prefer flexible and short time training, and communicate both face-to-face and virtually. Generation Z highly value freedom, have high self-esteem, are not perfect listeners, and have insufficiently developed interpersonal skills. They prefer using the World Wide Web to communicate with others as they are always online. They like learning based on their interest.

The following intergenerational communication problems were detected: a) communication inefficiency; b) inability to manage stress leading to communication problems; c) different attitude to work resulting in lowered service quality; d) insufficient language skills for certain groups of employees; e) the need of hierarchy by Baby Boomers which causes communication problems with other generations; f) differences in preferred communication mode (face-to-face or computer mediated communication); g) different use of a virtual space and different levels of IT skills of elderly and younger generations; h) different cultures causing intercultural conflicts which are even more evident than intergenerational ones; i) different interests leading to work conflicts which cause problems but do not require special training initiatives as they may be resolved through mutual discussions of the parties involved.

The following teaching learning/initiatives and methodologies may be applied to eliminate the above-mentioned problems: a) to increase communication efficiency short-term seminars and workshops on developing digital skills and public speaking classes may be organised in the company; b) different roleplays and simulations may be applied to train employees to overcome stressful situations; c) project work and teamwork may enhance everyone's input in attaining the company goals; d) language competences may be developed in language courses organised by their companies or by other educational institutions; e) seminars educating employees on generational differences and language classes may be useful to explain different attitude of generations to hierarchy in the company; f) when organising teaching/learning initiatives different teaching/learning modes shall be applied in accordance with generational preferences – online mode for Generation Z,

face-to-face mode for Baby Boomers, face-to-face and online modes for Generations X and Y; g) intercultural conflicts may be resolved through discussions and by organising intercultural training in the company.

The following teaching/learning methods and approaches may be applied for each generation in particular: a) problem-solving tasks in small groups are suitable for Baby Boomers; b) case studies, games-based learning, teaching/learning organised in buzz groups and jigsaw groups are suitable to Generation X; c) webquests and online case studies and learning cells in which learners work jointly on a problem or skill are suitable to Generation Y; d) case studies, logic-based approaches, experiential learning, business simulations, entrepreneurial project-based learning in which projects are split into smaller segments are suitable to Generation Z.

To conclude, training related to the specific functions of an organisation and marketing and sales courses may be organised as workshops/seminars applying pairwork/groupwork activities. The development of employees' digital skills, language competences, public speaking skills, skills to improve personal (intercultural and intergenerational) communication with customers may be organised as workplace learning taking into account the teaching/learning activities recommended above for each generation and problem.

Different generations can successfully work together in the tourism and hospitality labour market and complement each other. Baby Boomers and Generation X have work experience and service skills, whereas Generations Y and Z are oriented to technological innovations. This mix of skills can make an organisation more competitive in the labour market.

Research Limitations

The research sample consisted of experts from Generations X and Y and one Baby Boomer representative, but Generation Z was not represented in the sample.

Implications for Future Studies

The results of this research might be beneficial for adult educators of formal and non-formal learning when choosing teaching/learning methodologies. Future research could analyse the application of the communicative game created within the project to develop adults' intergenerational communication skills.

Acknowledgements

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