

ELEMENTS OF TOURISM CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION Z

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Abstract: *Differences in behaviour between generations are becoming increasingly apparent. The young generation of the moment, also known as Generation Z, distinguishes by many elements from the previous generations. The article performs a research among the students of the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Administration from the Transilvania University of Braşov in order to analyse some behavioural elements related to the information, acquisition and consumption of tourist products. In manifesting their tourism behaviour, Generation Z members develop attitudes of utmost relevance and importance for professionals in the field.*

Keywords: *tourism behaviour, Generation Z, tourism activities.*

1. Introduction

Each generation identifies itself through specific values and beliefs, attitudes and experiences which, undoubtedly, generate distinctive characteristics of consumer behaviour. Generation theory assumes that we can generalize cohort differences to the mean cohort level of each generation for a better understanding of the profile and characteristics of prototypical individuals (Twenge, et al., 2010). Both tourism practitioners and academics have acknowledged the validity of using generational analysis to study generations' travel behaviour (Li, Li and Hudson, 2013).

The focal point of this study is Generation's Z tourism consumer behaviour, a generation to pose the biggest challenge for future marketing research (Morgan, 2016). The expression "Generation Z" refers to a new sociological category, nourished by the information technologies, the internet and the social networks (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018). If there are considerable studies in the literature in the last 10 years referring to the generational influences upon work attitude, work satisfaction, managerial style, buying behaviour, there are very few which focused on identifying such differences on the subject of spending free time and relaxing activities (Negruşa and Toader, 2018, p.1).

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The main objective of the article is to highlight a few essential elements that individualize the consumer behaviour of Generation Z in connection with the means for obtaining information and booking tourist services, the frequency of consuming tourism activities and also some essential characteristics of their tourist practices.

2. Tourism Consumer behaviour of Generation Z

Members of Generation Z - people born from 1995 to 2010 - are true digital natives: from earliest youth, they have been exposed to the internet, to social networks, and to mobile systems, thus being very comfortable with collecting and cross-referencing many sources of information and with integrating virtual and offline experiences (Francis and Hoefel, 2018). The youngest of the generations prefer Internet channel to search for information because it is the cheapest, fastest channel and allows one, without any help, to get a lot of information (Lipowski, 2017, p.166). They are savvy consumers, they know what they want and how to get it and they are over saturated with brands (Four Hooks, 2015). Wood (2013) characterizes Generation Z as consumers on four pillars: (a) an interest in new technologies, (b) an insistence on ease of use, (c) a desire to feel safe, and (d) a desire to temporarily escape the realities they face. They make decisions and relate to institutions in a highly analytical and pragmatic way, they consider consumption as access rather than possession, consumption is an expression of individual identity, and they develop more ethical concerns (Goh and Jie, 2019; Francis and Hoefel, 2018). Ozkan and Solmaz (2015) found this generation to portray self-confidence, embrace team spirit, require assurance for their future, seek for happiness and desire independence over authority.

The technology advances generated faster, cheaper and efficient travel distribution and booking mechanisms that were inconceivable in the past (Gardiner, Grace and King, 2014). Consumers search and book travel products while on work, lunch times and during commuting to work (Wang, Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2014). The convenience allows consumers to purchase when travelling (Tan, et al., 2017), bookings using m-devices for hotels are conducted on the same day, and consumers take advantage of last minute bargains which result to saving in costs and time (Wang, Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2014). All these elements explain the complex changes in tourism consumption behaviour and the need to understand and analyse its patterns and trends.

In general, literature analyses tourism consumption behaviour without explicitly invoking the life cycle model, considering that the main demographic characteristics influencing the choice to make a trip are income, education, occupation, size and composition of the family and so on (Bernini and Cracolici, 2015). Yet, decisions regarding tourism consumption are highly influenced by cohort effects. As Haddouche and Salomone (2018) outlined young tourists representing Generation Z are cultivated, difficult to retain, and expect a great deal from their travels. Generation Z correspond to a travel profile that breaks with conventional tourism through its travel and accommodation choices and its relationship with the environment and the local populations (Van de Walle, 2011). Often presented as a narcissistic generation, seeking to put forward their "selves", for example by posting selfies, Generation Z seems to

show a great modesty during tourist experiences (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018). Lived as an extraordinary moment, the tourist experience requires to break with the daily routine, and therefore also with the use of social networks (Carù and Cova, 2006). At the same time, the cultural content plays a less important role for them in comparison with previous generations (Negrușă and Toader, 2018).

Important elements describing tourism consumer behaviour of Generation Z have been highlighted by Mignon (2013):

- inclination toward last-minute decisions,
- continuous search for opportunities,
- use of word-of-mouth recommendation sources to choose their destinations,
- increasing use of low-cost services.

The growth of this tourist segment is a challenge for tourism professionals and requires a rethinking of the tourism models (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018, p. 70). Generation Z customers are heavy online shoppers of apps and customized applications, thus being very important for marketers to understand how their consumer behaviour is related to smart purchase (Priporas, Stylos and Fotiadis, 2017).

3. Research Method

To achieve the article objective a quantitative marketing research was conducted. The method chosen was the survey based on questionnaires, and the sample included students from the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Administration, Transilvania University of Brașov. The research was conducted between 21.01-19.02.2019. The questionnaire used in the research included a number of 10 questions, of which 3 were identification questions. The questionnaire was distributed online through Facebook network, being recorded a number of 228 valid questionnaires completed.

4. Results

Respondents were asked about the frequency for planning tourism activities. Twice a year was the answer chosen by most of the respondents (40%), followed by the answer indicating that respondents have a vacation every 3 months (29%), every month was the choice for 17% out of the respondents, and only once during a year was the answer chosen by 14% of the members in the sample. The answer indicating a rare opportunity to make a travel arrangement was not chosen by any of the sample's members.

Domestic tourism represents the main type of tourism activities for the respondents. Those who choose Romanian tourism destinations in over 50% of the options represent 64% of the whole analysed sample, while 7% out of the respondents are planning tourism activities only in Romania. On the other hand, 29% prefer outbound tourism, 4% out of them having, at most, one of four holidays in Romanian tourism destinations.

At the same time, planning a vacation to a tourism destination that is not near to the residence is the most frequently answer chosen by respondents, i.e. 76% out of the sample's members.

Asked about the characteristics of the tourism activities they prefer, the respondents

had the possibility to choose multiple alternatives (see Figure 1).

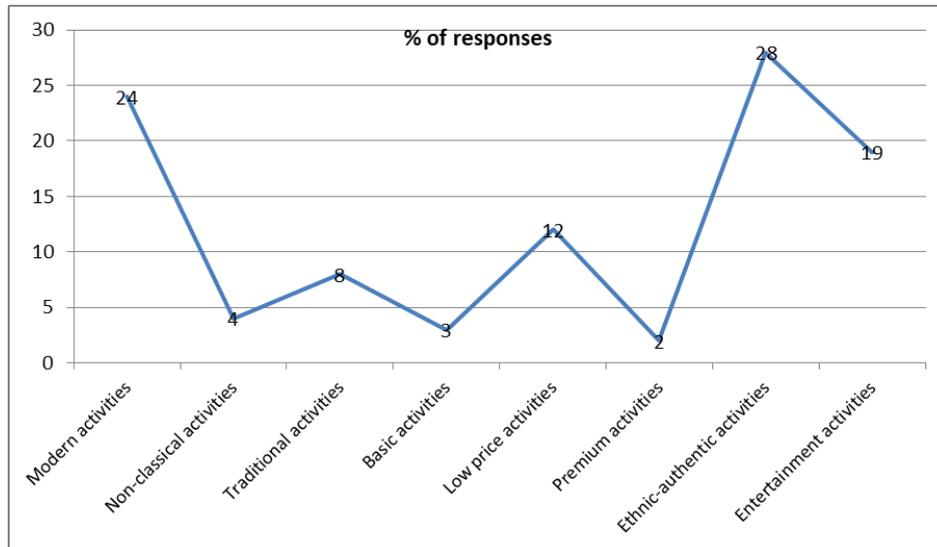


Fig. 1. *Main characteristics of tourism activities*

The consumption of ethnic and authentic activities is the most important of all tourism activities during the holiday. Out of a total of 459 responses recorded for this question, 28% indicated the preference for ethnic-authentic tourist services. Modern activities recorded also an important part of responses (24%), followed by entertainment activities which were indicated as very important during vacations by 19% out of the recorded answers. The less important tourism activities during vacations in the respondents' options were the expensive activities (2%), basic activities (3%), and also the non-classical activities (4%). The low-price activities were chosen in a proportion of 12% and traditional activities in a proportion of 8%.

Another question outlined the main informing and booking means for composing their tourist program. The answer indicating that traditional travel agencies are an option is valid only for 7% out of respondents, followed by online travel agencies which recorded 18% out of responses. The Internet is, by far, the main source of information and booking (75%). 39% out of respondents highlighted the habit to search and book at random on the Internet while tourism blogs and online reservation platforms are used by 36% of the sample's members.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

The consumption of tourist services is an important activity for the members of Generation Z. The majority of respondents indicated that they usually have a holiday trip once at 6 months, but an important part of the sample highlighted their habit to make travel arrangements even more often, every 3 months and also for each month. Domestic tourism is the main type of tourism activities and travelling far away from the residence are genuine patterns for the majority of the sample's members. Generation Z

members select during their vacations mainly ethnic and authentic tourism activities, modern activities and, at the same time, entertainment represents an important part of their tourism consumption behaviour. Although they are at the beginning of their professional activity and their incomes are not very high, they do not resort to low-cost tourist services, neither for basic and traditional tourism activities. Another important element of their tourism consumer behaviour is determined by the mainly use of Internet for gathering tourist information and for booking. The random search on the Internet and, also, tourism blogs and online reservation platforms are frequent options for the members of Generation Z.

There is a clear gap between the older and younger generations in their view toward tourism consumer behaviour. Tourism professionals are facing the challenge of winning the heart of the younger customers (Li, Li a.d Hudson, 2013), as they represent the future dominant consumer segment in the tourism industry. Policy makers should take this element into account and demonstrate their commitment to their future business strategies, to better target their customers and anticipate the evolution of tourism. (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018). Moreover, continuous improvements in consumer loyalty (Nicolau, 2015) a strong relationship and collaboration with customers (Anton and Costache, 2012) and innovations are considered important for every firm, regardless of size (Bălășescu, 2012) in order to adapt and develop a pro-active style.

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