

Generation Z - Challenges, opportunities and a new trend for the tourism industry

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Abstract

Objective: The success of the tourism industry requires the ability to recognize changes and more importantly the capability to effectively respond to them. Despite the change caused by the Covid-19 pandemic comprising a major but temporary break in tourism, tourism industry players face a greater challenge translated in generational changes. The generational shift represents a major force that will shape the future of tourism (Corbisiero and Ruspini, 2018). Youth travel has grown at an unprecedented level over the past years mostly. In 2017, the youth travel market was estimated to account for 23% of all international tourist arrivals, generating more than €250 billion (IPSOS, 2018). This segment will become even more important as a new technological generation of travellers – Generation Z enters the groups of youth travellers. Although Millennials, have represented a clear break with the past it is our conviction that new and more profound breaks will occur with the younger generation (Gen Z). Christened Generation Z (or Net Generation, iGeneration or post Millennials Generation) this young generation comprises individuals born after 1996 making the oldest members 25 years old (Chhetri et al., 2014). They are the first generation of the twenty first century. Therefore issues such as globalization, terrorism, the 2008 financial crisis, environmental sustainability, technology and more recently the Covid-19 pandemic have shaped Gen Zers' attitudes and beliefs and by extension their travel choices and behaviours. These young individuals have different lifestyles and motivations and they will pave the way for responsible and sustainable tourism. Generation Z travellers are still discovering their consumption preferences which constitutes a huge opportunity for the tourism industry to get to know them and thus predict how future tourism demands could evolve in the near future.

In this context, the main purpose of this exploratory paper is to analyse the future of the tourism segment through generational lenses. The present study intends to explore the pattern of preferences of a sample of Portuguese college students concerning their leisure tourism destination, the company, accommodations and transport options.

Methodology: Data will be collected through an online questionnaire and a qualitative methodology will be used.

Results: Preliminary results indicates that their tourism destination choice is greatly influenced by social media; they prefer living experiences; they prefer products that offer value and reflect real life and they are more likely to embrace shared economy, especially in accommodation as a way to meet new people.

Originality: The originality of the present paper steams from the insufficient studies on this topic.

References

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