

Generation Z: Insights into Travel Behavior

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Abstract : Currently, tourism small and medium enterprises (TSMES) face serious economic and financial problems, making recovery efforts difficult. How the pandemic will affect tourists' behavior is still to be known. Will tourists be even more cautious regarding their choices or, on the contrary, will they be more adventurers with an enormous desire to travel in search of the lost freedom? Tourists may become even more demanding when traveling, more austere, or less concerned and eager to socialize. Adjusting to this "new tourist" is an added challenge for tourism service providers. Generation Z made up of individuals born in 1995 and following years, currently tends to assume a particular role and meaning in the present and future economic and social context, considering that we are facing the youngest workforce as well as tomorrow's consumers. This generation is distinguished from others as it is the first generation to combine a high level of education and technological knowledge and to fully experience the digital world. These young people are framed by a new value system that can explain new behaviours and consumption, namely, in the context of tourism. All these considerations point to the importance of investigating this target group as it is essential to understand how these individuals perceive, understand, act, and can be involved in a new environment built around a society regulated by new priorities and challenges of a sustainable nature. This leads not only to a focus on short-term market choices but mainly to predict future choices from a longer-term perspective. Together with the social background of a person, values are considered a stable antecedent of behavior and might therefore predict not just immediate, but also future choices. Furthermore, the meaning attributed to travel has a general connotation and goes beyond a specific travel choice or experience. In other words, values and travel's meaning form a chain of influences on the present and future travel behavior. This study explores the social background and values of Generation Z travelers vs the meaning these tourists give to travel. The aim is to discover in their present behavior cues to predict travel choices so that the future of tourism can be secured. This study also provides data for predicting the tourism choices of youngsters in the more immediate future. Methodologically, a quantitative approach was adopted based on the collection of data through a survey. Since academic research on Generation Z of tourists is still scarce, it is expected to contribute to deepening scientific knowledge in this area. Furthermore, it is expected that this research will support tourism professionals in defining differentiated marketing strategies and adapted to the requirements of this target, in a new time.

Keywords : Generation Z, travel behavior, travel meaning, Generation Z Values

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