PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH ARTICLE 2022, 4(1): 70-82 https://toleho.anadolu.edu.tr/

TOLEHO
Journal of Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality

ANADOLU UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF TOURISM

GEN-Z'S CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOURS IN POST-PANDEMIC TOURISM SECTOR

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KEYWORDS

Generation Z
Tourist behaviour
Marketing
Tourism product
Pandemic

ABSTRACT

Tourism is a dynamic system, and it has grown to a modern form from a conventional form in time. Many alternative products have emerged in the sector and the profile of tourism consumers has also changed in line with the change in the sector. In time, marketers have started to adopt a generational marketing approach more than an age-based marketing approach. This study examined the decision-making processes Generation Z used when deciding on a travel product, comparing their behaviours with those of Generation X and Y as the former generations of Gen Z, based on the stages of Cohen's (1972) Theory of Tourist Behavior; "initiation", "information search", "assessment", "final decision", "during travel" and "post-travel". For this purpose, two research questions were developed exploring the consumption behaviors of Generation Z and comparing the findings of Gen Z with those of Gen X and Y. The quantitative method was used to collect the research data and an online survey was adapted from Husein et.al (2017) and administered to Gen X, Y and Z in Turkey through the convenience sampling method. 2084 participants completed the delivered survey (N for Gen X= 723, N for Y= 710 and N for Gen Z=651). Frequency analysis was performed on the data and the findings were interpreted accordingly. It was found that Gen Z differed from both Gen X and Gen Y in the examined parameters revealing a transformation from traditional tourist behaviour to modern tourist behaviour and relevant conclusions such as multi-generational marketing were drawn for more effective marketing of tourism products in the post-pandemic period.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has experienced a lot of change as a new science, industry or research area. Wiweka and Arcana (2019) claimed that people's move from their original place to other places for different purposes has been observed since the Sumerian times, and it has developed into a "Grand tour" in the 17th and 18th centuries in West Europe. Since those years, tourism has evolved into an industry, and become a mass-produced and consumed phenomenon. The industrial revolution, which took place in the 19th century, has started the development of transformation technologies making it possible to eliminate some factors related to space, time and cost. The development of such technologies has also pushed tourism out of time-related boundaries and helped the emergence of virtual tourism. Tourism has kept changing in each era of history and turned into a huge industry and has started to be known as "mass tourism". Concerning that, the term sustainability, which means providing a chance for future generations to enjoy tourism activities just as the present generation does, has become popular in tourism.

World travel trends report released in 2017 highlighted that during 2015, the generation born between 1980 and 2000 do outbound trips or travel as much as 150 million times (ITB, 2016: p. 26). UNWTO (2016: p. 10) pointed out that 23% of the international tourists are 15-29 years old and their total expenditures are about 190 billion USD by the year 2009 and then it went up 100% by 2014, which meant 286 billion USD. It was predicted that millennial tourists (born between 1980 and 2000) would increase up to 370 billion by the year 2020, and their expenditure is expected to go up to 400 billion USD. This report also highlighted that young travellers have many advantages in forming a strong market segment. They also have a direct impact on local communities as well as having clear purposes for travelling, and giving contributions to other sectors. They can also affect and attract new tourists to new destinations.

Much research has been conducted in the literature on generations' development so far (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Martin & Tulgan, 2002; Oh & Reeves, 2014; Törőcsik, Szűcs & Kehl, 2014: p. 27). This research divided each generation period into different classifications. For example, Oh and Reeves (2014) classified generations into four; Mature Generation (born in 1924- 1945), Boom Generation (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennial Generation (1981- 2000) and Generation Z (2001-2012). Each of these generations is claimed to have

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Received 07.04.2022; Received in revised form 16.05.2021; Accepted 19.05.2022

https://doi.org/10.48119/toleho.1099783

varying characteristics and behaviours in the level of trust, favourite things, loyalty towards the company, career goals, awards, family life, education, and political orientations (Oh & Reeves, 2014).

Generation Z is noted to be very comfortable and keen on the digital world as they have been born in this technology era such as the internet, smartphones, video streaming, and social media. They tend to consume technology very much as well as use the internet and modern tools without much worry regarding their possible impacts. The changes in the behaviours of generations make it difficult for marketers and product suppliers to develop products that exactly meet the needs of each generation (Williams & Page, 2011: p. 12; Cruz et.al., 2017: p. 17). This is the same for the tourism industry in which stakeholders, academics, policy and lawmakers have trouble coming up with a strategy to meet the emerging needs of the market. Therefore, gathering data regarding the active consumer generations in the market would help a lot in preparing the sector for future marketing strategies to be adopted.

1.1. Problem and Research Questions

Countries have been ceasing lockdowns and restrictions having been applied for about two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Such crises are expected to have caused some behavioral changes in consumers regarding the consumption of tourism products as they cause a kind of uncertainty (Işık, Sirakaya-Turk & Ongan, 2020). There is a gap in the literature in terms of empirical data about the most up-to-date consumption behaviors of generations X, Y and Z and tourist profiles in the Turkish tourism context regarding their decision-making process and travel habits specifically comparing the profile of Gen Z with the former active consumer generations in the tourism sector. Thus, marketing strategies to be used for tourism products could be updated for the post-pandemic era. For this purpose, this research aims to identify the consumption behaviours of Generation Z following the Covid-19 pandemic period, comparing their behavior with those of the former generations X and Y to promote quicker recovery in the tourism sector. To achieve the research purpose, the following two research questions have been developed;

1. What decision-making behaviors does Generation Z exhibit regarding tourism products following the Covid-19 pandemic period?
2. How do the decision-making behaviors of Generation Z regarding tourism products differ from the former generations X and Y?

1.2. Contribution of Research

This research contributes to the literature in three ways. The first contribution of this research is that this is the first empirical research in Turkey comparing the behavioral changes of X, Y and Z generations regarding their decision-making processes employed for tourism products, considering that X, Y and Z generations are the focus generations of today's marketing attempts. The second contribution of the research is that the findings will provide empirical data for multi-generational marketing in the Turkish tourism context. Multigenerational marketing goes beyond the needs of one single generation and attempts to satisfy the needs of more than one generation. (Chaney, Touzani & Ben Slimane, 2017) for better marketing outcomes. In other words, this research will help marketers to target their products more effectively in the sector.

The third contribution of this research is that the findings will provide data for the literature on economic policy uncertainty just because this research has been conducted just after an almost two-year uncertainty pandemic period, which had devastating effects on tourism and tourism consumers as well as marketing efforts in the sector. The increase in uncertainty is a reality in today's economic systems, and uncertainty changes the behavior decisions of consumers in the selection of services and goods (Işık, Sirakaya-Turk & Ongan, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic is expected to have changed consumption behaviors regarding tourism products. Considering that Generation Z will be the main consumers of tourism products in the future, it is important to identify their consumption behaviours to be able to redesign and plan future marketing activities comparing their needs with the other two former generations X and Y.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Tourist Consumption Behavior

In the literature, many studies (e.g. Cohen, Prayag & Moital, 2014) have examined the issue of consumer consumption behaviour. It should be remembered that tourists' decision-making processes, attitudes and perceptions are affected by tourists' characteristics. As Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) pointed out, attitudes are usually dependent on individuals' perceptions. Tourist consumption behaviour demonstrates itself in the decision-making as the emergence of travel needs, the increasing need to solve the travel-related problem, the search for existing alternatives, the evaluation of the available options to meet the need, and the decision to buy the services or the offered products, purchase and post-acquisition need (Boukas, 2014). Tourism consumption behaviour covers many concepts related to deciding to buy a service. These include the motivational factors, intrinsic characteristics, decision-making such as expectations, perceptions and expectations as well as trust and sense of loyalty to an activity, economic unit, a certain destination and service (Cohen, Prayag & Moital, 2014). The decision-making consists of the following elements: the motivation producing the desire to visit a destination or to buy a tourist product, the ideas and images created in tourists' minds, the knowledge owned before or during the decision-making, and the roles of family members or friends in the decision-making process (Maoz, 2006).

Another factor that affects tourists' consumption behaviours is the image (Ballantyne, Packer & Sutherland, 2011), in which four steps are involved. The first is that the image is usually affected by external factors. The others are promotional actions, information available on the internet and media and experiences of acquaintances. The second is that when the decision to buy a service or product is made, the target destination image is interiorized, modified, adapted and assimilated by tourists based on perceptions. In the third stage, the image-related experiences change during the holiday, correcting some aspects and adding new details. In the final stage, the post-holiday image influences future images, and it thus affects the future decision-making processes and tourists' consumption behaviours (Ballantyne, Packer & Sutherland, 2011).

The motivations of the choices are the other elements influencing tourists' consumption behaviour, which is then affected by tourists' consumption values. Quan and Wang (2004) claim that tourist consumption values seem to progress more stable over time and have more effect on attitudes and perceptions. Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) propose some other aspects and their influence on tourists' decision-making and consumer behaviours as satisfaction, expectations, self-awareness, personality, and loyalty to a particular product/destination. Baker and Crompton (2000) highlight that expectations are built on experiences, individual or non-individual communication, non-personal communication sources, individual traits, such as the gender or nationality stereotype, ways of motivation and attitudes. Knowing all of the attitude-related details makes it possible for the decision-makers and stakeholders of tourism to adapt to the demand as well as improve services, which will then lead the business to success (Kim, Eves. & Scarles, 2009)). This also helps researchers learn about their motivations, the needs of consumers, the effect of varying promotional strategies, as well as the perceived consumer risks regarding varying tourist activities and destinations.

2.2. Generation Z

No generation has been named as many terms as Generation Z has been done. The most common terms used for Generation Z, which is the main focus of this research, are iGeneration, Online Generation, Post Millennials, Gen Tech, Switchers, Facebook Generation, "always clicking" and C Generation, which comes from the term "connected" as they are always connected to the internet (Świerkosz-Hołysz, 2016: p. 440). Another term used for Generation Z is R Generation as they are considered the responsible generation (Emese, 2016: p. 67). Generation Z is most commonly defined as the generation born in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Differently from former generations, this generation has grown up in a technological environment. Tapscott (2009) claimed that Generation Z is an internet generation, and this generation has lived in the golden era of information. In this era, control over information is considered very important. Generation Z is addicted to the latest technology.

At the first glance, this generation could seem to be very individualistic and has no desire to share with others. It should be noted here that when this generation could be treated appropriately, the outcomes could be just the opposite of what has been claimed about them. Generation Z uses social media and internet-based applications to have a better link with friends and family. Due to their increased technology use, Generation Z spends more time on their smartphones, which has developed online relations into a new norm. Members of this generation are keen on consuming readily available information when compared to former generations. In the USA, it was found that 92% of Generation Z care about social and environmental issues (Cone Communications, 2017). 92% of them say that they are ready to change their brands to another associated with a good reason and 65% of them value the Corporate Social responsibility efforts when purchasing something (Cone Communications, 2017).

Another research has found that 42% of Generation Z members tend to start or deepen a relationship with a business offering products/services with a positive effect on the environment and society whereas 38% of them stopped or decreased their relationship with a business that has a negative effect on the environment and society (Deloitte, 2019). Similarly, 85% of the respondents in another study were found to have been involved, at least occasionally, in the following; avoiding the products or services causing environmental damage, trying to boycott the products and services of the companies which have a reputation of bad behaviour, avoiding the companies harming animals, and purchasing organic or fair trade products (Haski-Leventhal and Manefield, 2018).). Members of this generation wish to achieve a good career very quickly without spending much effort. They like mobility and possess foreign language skills, so they tend to look for a job all over the world as well as in their closest environment. They can very easily change their work and leave their routine. This generation is known to be the most sophisticated and educated one (Steinerowska-Streb, Wziątek-Staśko, 2016: p. 81–82). The representatives of this generation consider self-employment a kind of professional activity as it gives them a sense of independence (Pocztowski, Buchelt & Pauli, 2015: p. 19).

Field experts highlight that members of Generation Z can cope with both the real and virtual worlds, easily switching between the two worlds just because they consider that these two worlds complement each other (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Chomątowska, 2014: p. 407). Members of this generation can check and source any information they need. Another characteristic of this generation is that they can share information very easily, and they use many different communication devices continuously. They are active social media users and they have many contacts (Emese, 2016: p. 68). Generation Z comments on reality, and the environment in which they live, they do not avoid manifesting their views and attitudes through social media platforms. They also tend to share photos and films. The members of this generation not only use the content available on the internet, but they also contribute to content as well as control it (Hardey, 2011: p. 750–753).

2.3. Tourism Marketing

Tourism, as an industry, is the most employment generating industry in the world. The tourism industry needs less investment; however, it still generates billions of foreign currency in host countries. Many countries try to increase their foreign exchange. When this fact is considered, it is seen that the marketing of tourism products and services plays an important role for such countries (Praveenkumar, 2015). Differently from marketing in other fields, marketing in tourism needs a well-planned and integrated approach because when you market a tourism product, you automatically market a country. As claimed by Praveenkumar (2015) marketing of tourism products is integrated with leisure, transportation, communication and service sectors as well as entertainment. In other words, a comprehensive marketing process should be undertaken when marketing a tourism product or service. The marketing of tourism products and services should be done under two main categories; targeting international visitors and targeting domestic visitors. Marketing of tourism products to international visitors brings a lot of foreign exchange, and marketing of tourism products to domestic visitors improves the equal distribution of the income obtained from the international visitors to other sectors across the host country. In short, all other sectors benefit, directly or indirectly, from tourism marketing. As claimed by Praveenkumar (2015). The participants/players involved in the marketing of tourism products could be classified as international/ domestic airlines, local transportation, hotels/ resorts/restaurants, governments (through the provision of safety, taxation, visas), health industry, travel agents, Ministry of Tourism, international and domestic promotional organizations, unemployed educated youths in setting up tourism guide/ information stations, information technology and telecommunications sector.

Some factors that influence consumers' behaviors in tourism are (Praveenkumar, 2015);

1. Consumers' income: When the income of tourists goes down, the demand for tourism also goes down accordingly.
2. Consumers' tastes: when a certain vacation goes out of style, the demand goes down accordingly.
3. Cost of complementary goods: Let us suppose that air travel is a complementary good to tourism. When the price of that complementary good increases, the demand for that tourism product will decrease accordingly.

Internet marketing strategies for the marketing of tourism products have become very popular recently. Four tactics should be focused on when tourism products are promoted (Praveenkumar, 2015); the first of them is newsletters, deals and Tweets. Sending short messages through blogs regarding a tourism product and good deals is very important in the tourism industry. Through quick and concise contact with potential customers, their attraction could be gathered, and they could be easily let know about the tourism product. The second tactic to be used is article marketing. This strategy is about writing interesting and fun articles about the tourism product. With the help of interesting pieces about tourism products or travel tips, additional tourist traffic could be generated for the target tourism products. With the help of search engines, new customers could be gained. The third tactic is content generation. Content is very important for all web-based businesses as it is a very important tool for the marketing of tourism products. Interesting content should be created about the tourism product together with some relevant tips, and the shared content should be easily accessible through keywords to make visitors read more. The content should also be updated. The last tactic is RSS (a web feed allowing users and applications to contribute to websites in a computer-readable format) feeds and API integration (a set of functions allowing applications to access data and interact with external software components). This is a good way of making revenue. When the relevant data in the content could be shared rapidly across the world, it helps travel sites, agencies, airlines and hotels to share the same info and thus to conduct their business (Praveenkumar, 2015).

2.4. The Role of Consumer Behavior in Marketing

The primary purpose of marketing is to provide more value for the targeted customers than their competitors do. Customer value is the difference between the benefits obtained from the total product and the cost of obtaining that benefit (Hawkins & David, 2015). The company providing the service or product has to consider the value through the eyes of their customers. A determined price could be a good deal for the company, but it may not be a good one for the customer. Pricing of a product and service is difficult as firms aim to maximize their best profits as well as increase their sales. Setting a high price for a product does not mean a big profit. Firms aim to increase their sales to help the company survive and grow. Firms need to learn about the needs and reactions of consumers and thus they can offer them the best value for the money paid for their products, which in turn helps them make more profit. Marketing strategies of firms are based on consumer behaviours as seen below (Bakator et. al., 2016):

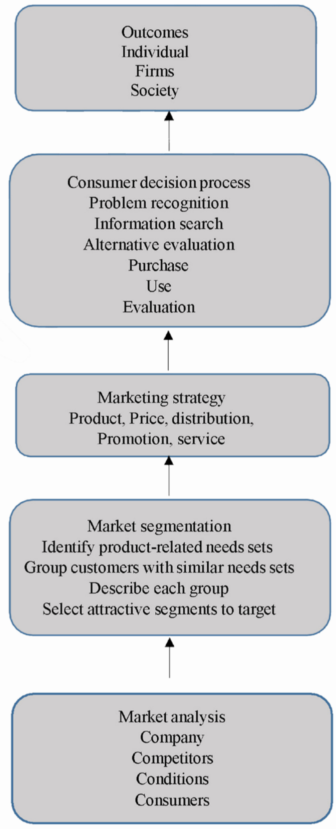


Figure 1: Marketing strategy (Hawkins & David, 2015)

Marketing strategies in the tourism sector always need reformulating, and these reformulated strategies look for new ways to provide the consumer in the sector more value rather than being involved in a competition. The tourism sector has always been prone to economic crises and crises cause an increase in uncertainty as a major factor in today's economic systems because uncertainty affects some macroeconomic parameters as well as the behavior decisions of consumers based on their most recent priorities (Işık, Sirakaya-Turk & Ongan, 2020). Marketing strategies should involve the marketing mix; products, price, communications, distribution and services. All characteristics of a product form the total product, and then this total product is delivered to customers (Customer research method, 2021). The main factors that influence a marketing process are the perception or sensation of the product and the company. What affects the customers and customers' beliefs plays a key role in the marketing strategy to be adopted by a company. Cognition and social influences have a two-way effect on consumers, which means that consumers are influenced by these factors, and the same factors are influenced by consumers. The consumer forms the informal structure of the product delivered to customers. The choices and preferences that customers make are integral parts of a customer. The communication built between the company and the delivered product makes it possible to flow information. All of these are closely based on market research and the development of relevant strategies for delivering high-quality products at affordable prices (Hartline & Ferrell, 2011).

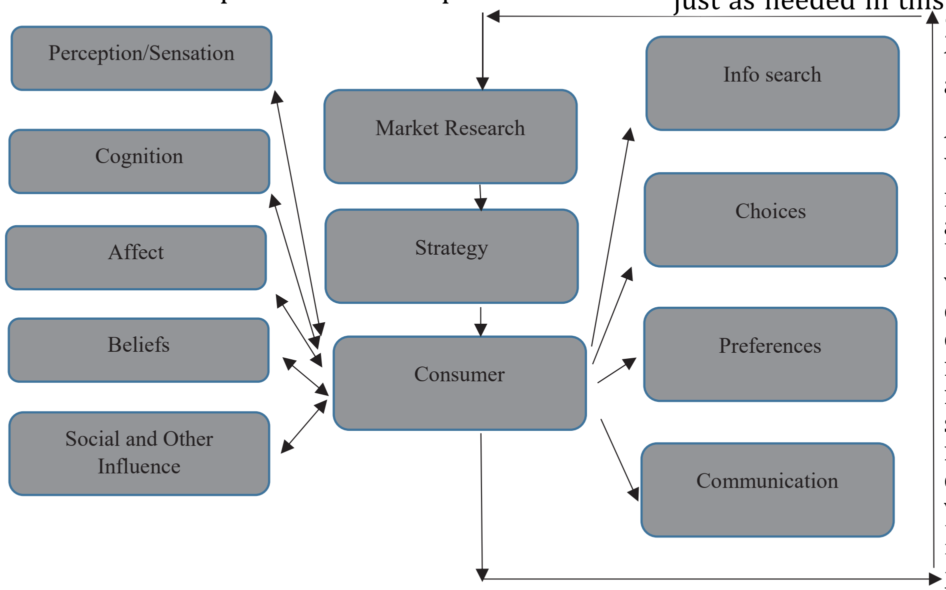


Figure 2: Impact factors on consumers (Hartline & Ferrell 2011)

As seen in Figure 2, all of the factors involved in marketing strategy are integrated into one another. All of these factors should be considered in determining marketing strategy, and thus firms could deliver products and services that will satisfy the needs of target consumers, which will automatically ensure a profit and a good position in the market. As claimed by Bakator et. al. (2016), what consumers perceive about a product and service may differ from what a company may perceive about their services and products, which may be due to misconception of the purpose, quality and price of the delivered product. It is possible to see many products in the market that sell a lot whereas they have lower quality. It is also possible to see many high-quality technological products that firms consider very valuable and so determine a high price for them, but it does not sell as planned in the market. This shows that price is very influential in the perception of consumers regarding a product. In other words, firms could spend a lot of money on developing and advertising a new innovative product or service, but it may still lose the market and money as it failed to attract consumers' interest.

3. METHOD

The universe of this research consists of all ages covered within the scope of Gen X, Y and Z in Turkey, which means that research findings will be generalized to the whole of Gen X, Y and Z. The sample size was taken at least 384 for each generation as suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) to make sure that the sample is a real representative of the universe. This means that at least 1152 participants from the three generations should complete the research questionnaire. The data in the research were collected from respondents using an anonymous online survey and using the convenience sampling method due to time, space and cost-related constraints. The reason to choose the survey method is that it is usually used to gather data about human behavior describing and exploring their behaviors just as needed in this research (Singleton & Straits, 2009). The data collection tool used in this study was adapted from Husein et. al. (2017), which was conducted to examine the profile and behavior of Generation Z in another context. The approval of İzmir Katip Çelebi University's ethics committee was obtained before data collection to ensure data collection from the sample in an ethical manner. The research survey included some self-report measurement items as well as some demographic items, and it was administered in January-February, 2022 in Turkey. Participants could choose more than one response in all items and an "other" option was also provided for each item considering that there might be some options that the researcher might have missed out. The survey was administered online to the participants from Generation X, Y and Z, and their consumption behaviour in decision making for a travel activity based on Cohen's (1972) Theory of Tourist Behavior based on the stage of initiation, information search, assessment, final decision, during travel and post-travel. When necessary, the survey link was sent to the participants via e-mail and digital applications. It took about 5 minutes for each participant to complete the survey and all participants were informed about the purpose of the research.

A pre-test was conducted with 20 respondents first to see if there was any criticism regarding the understanding of the items on the scale, relevant revisions were performed on the scale items when necessary, and the final scale was administered to the members of Generation X, Y and Z. The participants were first asked to choose out of the given options; Gen X (born between 1965- 1979), Gen Y (born between 1980-1999) and Gen Z (born between 2000-2012) and thus it was made sure that no member of other generations could complete the survey. The researcher monitored the participation level during the data collection process to keep the participation from each generation at least close to one another, sending the survey link to the Generation which needed more participation. Frequency analysis was performed on the collected data to respond to the first and second research questions, and the findings were interpreted based on the comparison of the scores in percentages.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Demographic Findings

As seen in Table 1, 2084 participants completed the survey and 723 of them were members of Gen-X, 710 of them were members of Gen-Y and 651 of them were members of Gen-Z.

Generation	Percentage
Gen Z (born between 2000-2012)	31,2 (N= 651)
Gen Y (born between 1980-1999)	34,1 (N=710)
Gen X (born between 1965-1979)	34,7 (N= 723)
Total	**2084**

Table 1: Distribution of Generations

As seen in Table 2, 60, 4% of Gen X participants were female whereas 39, 6% of them were male. 58, 7% of Gen Y participants were female whereas 41,3% of them were male. 61,2% of Gen Z participants were female whereas 38,8% of them were male. As gender is not an issue considered as a variable, no further analysis was performed on the research data based on gender.

Generation	*Male (%)*	*Female*
Gen X (born between 1965-1979)	*39,6*	*60,4*
Gen Y (born between 1980-1999)	*41,3*	*58,7*
Gen Z (born between 2000-2012)	*38,8*	*61,2*

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Gen X-Y-Z

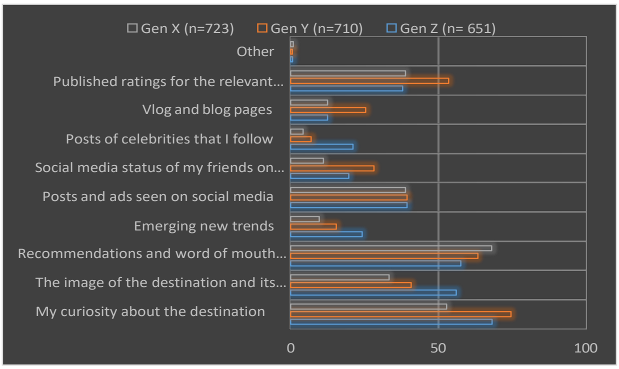
As seen in Table 3, which presents details regarding the educational background of the participants, the percentage of primary school graduates from Gen X was 5,6% and it was 3,7% for Gen Y and it was 0% for Gen Z. The percentage of secondary school graduates from Gen X was 11,8% and it was 8% for Gen Y and it was 10,6% for Gen Z. The percentage of high school graduates from Gen X was 26,9% and it was 9,9% for Gen Y and it was 31,8% for Gen Z. The percentage of undergraduate students from Gen X was 11,8% and it was 11,6% for Gen Y and it was 56,1% for Gen Z. The percentage of the graduate of the university from Gen X was 26,7% and it was 26,7% for Gen Y and it was 1,5% for Gen Z. The percentage of postgraduate from Gen X was 16,9% and it was 28% for Gen Y and it was 0% for Gen Z.

Degree Held	*Gen X (%)*	*Gen Y (%)*	*Gen Z (%)*
Postgraduate	*16,9*	*28*	*0*
Graduate of University	*26,7*	*26,7*	*1,5*
Undergraduate Student	*11,8*	*11,6*	*56,1*
High School	*26,9*	*9,9*	*31,8*
Secondary School	*11,8*	*8*	*10,6*
Primary School	*5,6*	*3,7*	*0*
Total	*100*	*100*	*100*

Table 3. Details regarding the educational background of the participants

4.2. Findings regarding the Initiation stage of Decision-making

As seen in Graph 1, which presents details regarding the factors that influence the decision-making processes of participants when deciding on a trip to any destination, the percentage of those from Gen X was 38,9% and it was 53,5% for Gen Y and it was 37,9% for Gen Z in "published ratings for the relevant destination of social media platform" as a factor influencing their decision- making processes. The percentage of those from Gen X was 12,5% and it was 25,4% for Gen Y and it was 12,5% for Gen Z in "Vlog and blog pages". The percentage of those from Gen X was 4,2% and it was 7% for Gen Y and it was 21,1% from Gen Z in "posts of celebrities that I follow". The percentage of those from Gen X was 11,1% and it was 28,2% for Gen Y and it was 19,7% from Gen Z in "Social media status of my friends on social media" as a factor influencing their decision-making processes when deciding on a trip to any destination. The percentage of those from Gen X was 38,9% and it was 39,4% for Gen Y and it was 39,4% from Gen Z in "Posts and ads seen on social media". The percentage of those from Gen X was 9,7% and it was 15,5% for Gen Y and it was 24,2% from Gen Z in "Emerging new trends". The percentage of those from Gen X was 68,1% and it was 63,4% for Gen Y and it was 57,6% from Gen Z in "Recommendations and word of mouth of others". The percentage of those from Gen X was 33,3% and it was 40,8% for Gen Y and it was 56,1% from Gen Z in "The image of the destination and its impact on me". The percentage of those from Gen X was 52,8% and it was 74,6% for Gen Y and it was 68,2% from Gen Z in "My curiosity about the destination".

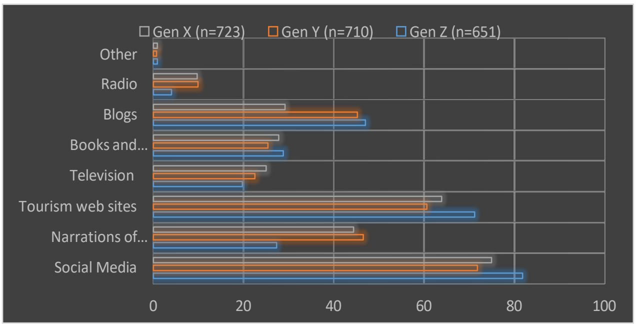


Graph 1: Factors that influence the decision-making processes of participants when deciding on a trip to any destination

4.3. Findings regarding Information Search Stage of Decision-making

As seen in Graph 2, which presents details regarding the channels that participants use to access the necessary information about the relevant destination, the percentage of those from Gen X was 75% and it was 71,8% for Gen Y and it was 81,8% for Gen Z in the channel "Social Media". The percentage of those from Gen X was 44,4% and it was 46,5% for Gen Y and it was 27,3% from Gen Z in the channel "Narrations of others". The percentage of those from Gen X was 63,9% and it was 60,6% for Gen Y and it was 71,2% from Gen Z in the channel "Tourism web sites". The percentage of those from Gen X was 25% and it was 22,5% for Gen Y and it was 19,7% from Gen Z in the channel "Television". The percentage of those from Gen X was 27,8% and it was 25,4%

for Gen Y and it was 28,8% for Gen Z in the channel "Books and magazines". The percentage of those from Gen X was 29,2% and it was 45,2% for Gen Y and it was 47% from Gen Z in the channel "Blogs". The percentage of those from Gen X was 9,7% and it was 9,9% for Gen Y and it was 4% from Gen Z in the channel "Radio". The percentage of those from Gen X was 0,9% and from Gen Y was 0,7% and it was 0,9%



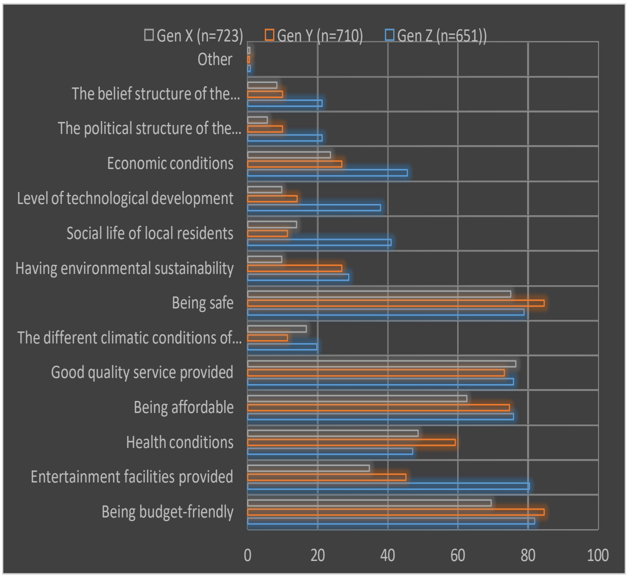
Graph 2: I access the necessary information about the relevant destination through the following channels;

from Gen Z in "Other"

4.4. Findings regarding Assessment Stage of Decision-making

As seen in Graph 3, which presents details regarding the points that are important in participants' search for information about a particular destination, the percentage of those from Gen X was 69,4% and it was 84,5% for Gen Y and it was 81,8% from Gen Z in "Being budget- friendly". The percentage of those from Gen X was 34,7% and it was 45,1% for Gen Y and it was 80,3% for Gen Z in "Entertainment facilities provided ". The percentage of those from Gen X was 48,6% and it was 59,2% for Gen Y and it was 47% for Gen Z in "Health conditions". The percentage of those from Gen X was 62,5% and it was 74,6% for Gen Y and it was 75,8% for Gen Z in "Being affordable". The percentage of those from Gen X was 76,4% and it was 73,2% for Gen Y and it was 75,8% for Gen Z in "Good quality service provided".

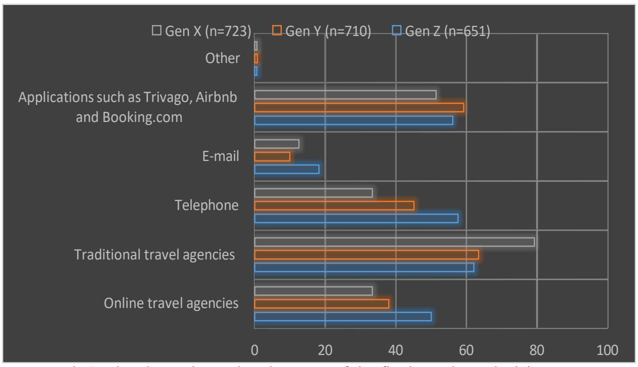
The percentage of those from Gen X was 16,7% and it was 11,3% for Gen Y and it was 19,7% for Gen Z in "The different climatic conditions of the destination from where I live". The percentage of those from Gen X was 75% and it was 84,5% for Gen Y and it was 78,8% from Gen Z in "Being safe". The percentage of those from Gen X was 9,7% and it was 26,8% for Gen Y and it was 28,8% for Gen Z in "Having environmental sustainability". The percentage of those from Gen X was 13,9% and it was 11,3% for Gen Y and it was 40,9% for Gen Z in "Social life of residents". The percentage of those from Gen X was 9,7% and it was 14,1% for Gen Y and it was 37,9% for Gen Z in "Level of technological development". The percentage of those from Gen X was 23,6% and it was 26,8% for Gen Y and it was 45,5% for Gen Z in "Economic conditions". The percentage of those from Gen X was 5,6% and it was 9,9% for Gen Y and it was 21,2% for Gen Z in "The political structure of the destination". The percentage of those from Gen X was 8,3% and it was 9,9% for Gen Y and it was 21,2% for Gen Z in "The belief structure of the destination". The percentage of those from Gen X was 0,7% and it was 0,5% for Gen Y and it was 0,6% for Gen Z in "Other".



Graph 3: The points that are important in the search for information about a particular destination

4.5. Findings regarding the final decision stage of decision-making

As seen in Graph 4, which presents details regarding the channels used by participants at the stage of final purchase decision, the percentage of those from Gen X was 33,3% and it was 38% for Gen Y and it was 50% for Gen Z in "Online travel agencies". The percentage of those from Gen X was 79,2% and it was 63,4% for Gen Y and it was 62,1% for Gen Z in "Traditional travel agencies ". The percentage of those from Gen X was 33,3% and it was 45,1% for Gen Y and it was 57,6% for Gen Z in "Telephone". The percentage of those from Gen X was 12,5% and it was 9,9% for Gen Y and it was 18,2% for Gen Z in "E-mail". The percentage of those from Gen X was 51,4% and it was 59,2% for Gen Y and it was 56,1% for Gen Z in "Applications such as Trivago, Airbnb and Booking.com". The percentage of those from Gen X was 0,6% and it was 0,7% for Gen Y and it was



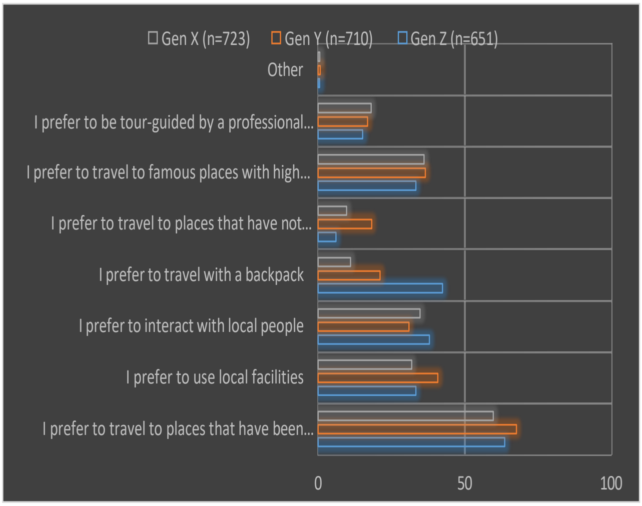
Graph 4: The channels used at the stage of the final purchase decision

0,6% for Gen Z in "Other".

4.6. Findings Regarding the During Travel

As seen in Graph 5, which presents details regarding what participants prefer when they are travelling, the percentage of those from Gen X was 59,7% and it was 67,6% for Gen Y and it was 63,6% for Gen Z in "I prefer to travel to places that have been visited by others before". The percentage of those from Gen X was 31,9% and it was 40,8% and it was 33,3% from Gen Z in "I prefer to use local facilities". The percentage of those from Gen X was 34,7% and it was 31% for Gen Y and it was 37,9% from Gen Z in "I prefer to interact with local people". The percentage of those from Gen X was 11,1% and it was 21,1% for Gen Y and it was 42,4% from Gen Z in "I prefer to travel with a backpack".

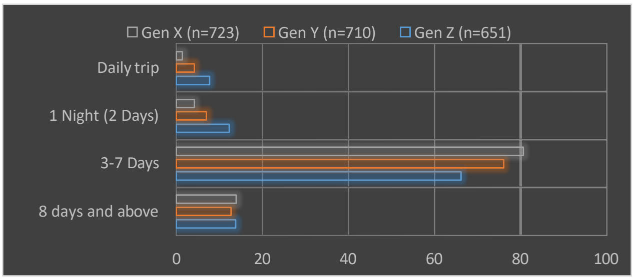
The percentage of those from Gen X was 9,7% and it was 18,3% for Gen Y and it was 6,1% from Gen Z "I prefer to travel to places that have not been visited much before and do not have many tourist facilities". The percentage of those from Gen X was 36,1% and it was 36,6% for Gen Y and it was 33,3% from Gen Z "I prefer to travel to famous places with high-quality facilities". The percentage of those from Gen X was 18,1% and it was 16,9% for Gen Y and it was 15,2% from Gen Z "I prefer to be tour-guided by a professional tour guide". The percentage of those



Graph 5: What participants prefer when they are travelling

from Gen X was 0,5% and it was 0,7% for Gen Y and it was 0,6% for Gen Z in "Other".

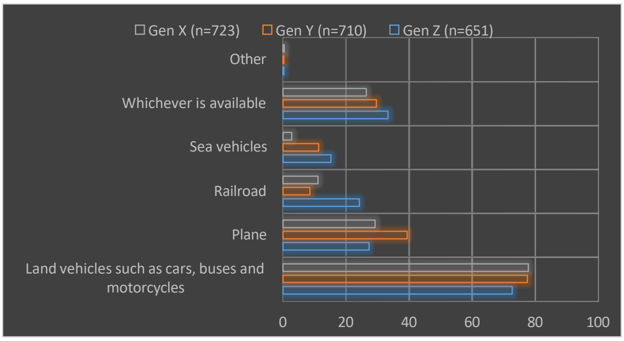
As seen in Graph 6, which presents details regarding the average duration of participants' trips, the percentage of those from Gen X was 13,9% and it was 12,7% for Gen Y and it was 13,8% from Gen Z in "8 days and above". The percentage of those from Gen X was 80,6% and it was 76,1% for Gen Y and it was 66,2% for Gen Z in "3-7 Days". The percentage of those from Gen X was 4,2% and it was 7% for Gen Y and it was 12,3% for Gen Z in "1 Night (2 Days)". The percentage of those from Gen X was 1,4% and it was



Graph 6: Average duration of participants' trips

4,2% for Gen Y and it was 7,7% from Gen Z in "Daily trip".

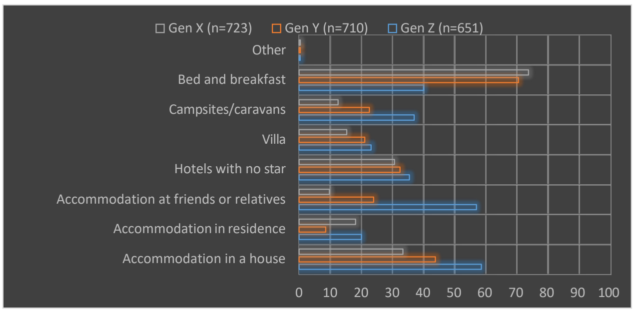
As seen in Graph 7, which presents details regarding the preferred travel vehicles of the participants, the percentage of those from Gen X was 77,8% and it was 77,5% for Gen Y and it was 72,7% from Gen Z in "Land vehicles such as cars, buses and motorcycles". The percentage of those from Gen X was 29,2% and it was 39,4% for Gen Y and it was 27,3% for Gen Z in "Plane". The percentage of those from Gen X was 11,1% and it was 8,5% for Gen Y and it was 24,2% for Gen Z in "Railroad". The percentage of those from Gen X was 2,8% and it was 11,3% for Gen Y and it was 15,2% for Gen Z in "Sea vehicles". The percentage of those from Gen X was 26,4% and it was 29,6% for Gen Y and it was 33,3% for Gen Z in "Whichever is available". The percentage of those



Graph 7: Preferred travel vehicles of the participants

from Gen X was 0,3% and it was 0,3% for Gen Y and it was 0,4% from Gen Z in "Other".

As seen in Graph 8, which presents details regarding the participants' preferences for accommodation during their travels, the percentage of those from Gen X was 33,3% and it was 43,7% for Gen Y and it was 58,5% for Gen Z in "Accommodation in a house". The percentage of those from Gen X was 18,1% and it was 8,5% for Gen Y and it was 20% for Gen Z in "Accommodation in residence". The percentage of those from Gen X was 9,7% and it was 23,9% for Gen Y and it was 56,9% for Gen Z in "Accommodation at friends or relatives". The percentage of those from Gen X was 30,6% and it was 32,4% for Gen Y and it was 35,4% from Gen Z in "Hotels with no star". The percentage of those from Gen X was 15,3% and it was 21,1% for Gen Y and it was 23,1% for Gen Z in "Villa". The percentage of those from Gen X was 12,5% and it was 22,5% for Gen Y and it was 36,9% for Gen Z in "Campsites/caravans". The percentage of those from Gen X was 73,6% and it was 70,4% for Gen Y and it was 40 % for Gen Z in "Bed and breakfast". The percentage of those from Gen X was 0,3% and it was 0,4% for Gen Y and it was 0,4 % from Gen Z



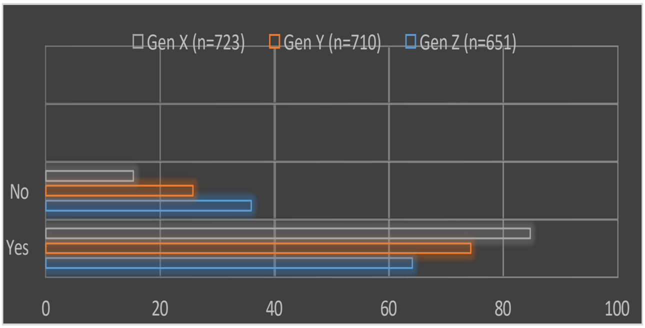
Graph 8: Participants' preferences for accommodation during their travels

in "Other".

4.7. Findings Regarding Post-travel

As seen in Graph 9, which presents details regarding whether participants provide positive or negative feedback on the products and services offered after their trip, the percentage of those from

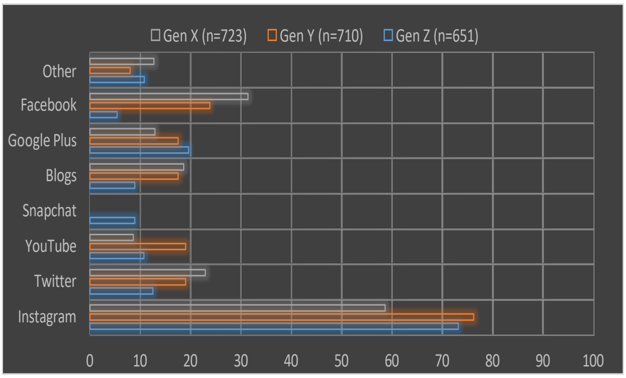
Gen X was 84,7% and it was 84,3% for Gen Y and



Graph 9: Participants' provision of positive or negative feedback on the products and services offered after their trip

it was 64,1% from Gen Z in "Yes". The percentage of those from Gen X was 15,3% and it was 25,7% for Gen Y and it was 35,9% from Gen Z in "No".

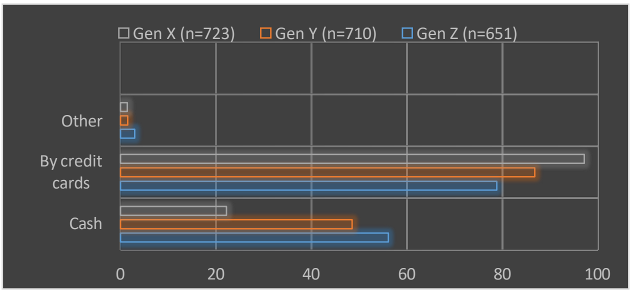
As seen in Graph 10, which presents details regarding the channels that participants use to provide feedback on products and services that they have used during their travels, the percentage of those from Gen X was 58,6% and it was 76,2% for Gen Y and it was 73,2% from Gen Z in "Instagram". The percentage of those from Gen X was 22,9% and it was 19% for Gen Y and it was 12,5% for Gen Z in "Twitter". The percentage of those from Gen X was 8, 6% and it was 19% for Gen Y and it was 10, 7% for Gen Z in "YouTube". The percentage of those from Gen X was 0% and it was 0% for Gen Y and it was 8,9% for Gen Z in "Snapchat". The percentage of those from Gen X was 18,6% and it was 17,5% for Gen Y



Graph 10: The channels that participants use to provide feedback on products and services

and it was 8,9% for Gen Z in "Blogs". The percentage of those from Gen X was 12,9% and it was 17,5% for Gen Y and it was 19,6% for Gen Z in "Google Plus". The percentage of those from Gen X was 31, 4% and it was 23, 8% for Gen Y and it was 5, 4% from Gen Z in "Facebook". The percentage of those from Gen X was 12,7% and it was 8% for Gen Y and it was 10,8% for Gen Z in "Other".

As seen in Graph 11, which presents details regarding the preferred payment method of the participants at the purchase stage, the percentage of those from Gen X was 22,2% and it was 48,5% for Gen Y and it was 56,1% for Gen Z in "cash". The percentage of those from Gen X was 97,2% and it was 86,8% for Gen Y and it was 78,8% from Gen Z in "by credit cards". The percentage of those from Gen



Graph 11: Preferred payment methods of the participants at the purchase stage

X was 1,4% and it was 1,5% for Gen Y and it was 3% from Gen Z in "other".

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the participants from the three generations; X, Y and Z covering representatives from all educational backgrounds and genders to make the research sample a real representative of the examined three generations. The almost equal distribution regarding gender, educational background and gender in the study is the proof that this has been achieved. When the number of total participants from the three generations is considered, which is 2084, this research could be claimed to have covered X, Y and X generations, already exceeding the minimum number of participants calculated to be 1152 at the start of the research. It is important to highlight that the focus of this research is Gen Z, and Gen X and Y were included in the research just to make clear the behavioral changes in Gen Z regarding their decision-making processes for tourism products comparing the findings from the examined generations based on the stages of Cohen's (1972) Theory of Tourist Behavior; initiation, information search, assessment, final decision, during travel and post-travel. Therefore, the discussion and implications in the study have been made from Gen Z's perspective considering that Gen Z will be the dominant consumers of tourism products and services soon. To sum up, Gen Z was found to have been affected by posts of celebrities that they followed on social media more than the former generations X and Y, so celebrities are expected to play a major role in the marketing of tourism products in the future.

Gen Z was found to have been affected by the new trends in tourism much more than Gen X and Y in their decision-making processes for travel. Gen Z was found to have been affected by the image of the destination more than Gen X and Y. What is interesting is that the three generations examined within the scope of the study were found to have been almost equally affected by posts and ads on social media platforms in deciding for a certain destination. Another interesting finding of the research is that Gen Z was affected by recommendations and word of mouth, which is considered a traditional marketing tool, less than Gen X and Gen Y. When the examined generations were considered in terms of the channels used to access information needed for a destination, it was found that Gen Z used blogs, tourism websites and social media more than Gen X and Y. However, the use of radio, TV and narrations of others were found to be used less by Gen Z than Gen X and Y.

Regarding the points that are important in participants' search for information about a particular destination, the factors such as "entertainment facilities provided", "being affordable", "different climatic conditions of the destination from where participants live", "having environmental sustainability", "the social life of residents", "level of technological development", "economic conditions", "the political structure of the destination", "the belief structure of the destination" were found to be more important for Gen Z than Gen X and Y. What is another interesting finding of the study is that Gen Z pays less attention to the health conditions than Gen X and gen Y, which is very attention-grabbing when the fact that this research was conducted following Covid-19 pandemic is considered. This reveals that Gen Z is not keen on hygiene as expected due to the Covid-19 pandemic period. It was also found that Gen Z gave more importance to budget-friendliness than Gen Y, but less than Gen X, which reveals that Gen Z members are more careful in spending money for tourism products. Regarding the channels used at the stage of final purchase decision, email, online travel agencies and telephone were found to have been used more by Gen Z than Gen X and Y whereas Gen Z used traditional travel agencies less than Gen X and Gen Y. Gen Z was found to have used apps such as Trivago, Airbnb and Booking more than Gen X, but less than Gen Y.

Regarding what participants preferred when they are travelling, Gen Z was found to have preferred travelling light with just a backpack and interacting with the local people when travelling, more than Gen X and Gen Y. Gen Z were found to have preferred to be guided by a tour guide and to travel to famous places with high-quality facilities less than Gen X and Gen Y, which is in parallel with another finding which suggests that Gen Z preferred to travel to places that have not been visited before and that do not have many tourism facilities less than Gen X and Gen Y. Therefore, Gen Z members could be expected to be interested in the niche and alternative tourism forms more than the former generations.

Regarding the average duration of participants' trips, Gen Z was found to prefer daily and one night-two day tours more than Gen X and Gen Y, which reveals that Gen Z tends to be more mobile than former generations. Regarding the preferred travel vehicles for their travel, Gen Z was found to have preferred travelling by railroad and sea vehicles as well as whichever is available as long as it is convenient more than Gen X and Gen Y whereas they preferred to travel by plane and land vehicles less than Gen X and Gen Y. Regarding the participants' preferences for accommodation during their travels, campsite and caravan, hotels with no star or hostels, rental houses, staying at friends and relatives were found to have been preferred more by Gen Z than Gen X and Y. Bed and breakfast type accommodation was found to be preferred by Gen Z less than Gen X and Gen Y. These findings show that Gen Z does not give much importance to luxury in their accommodation and travel means.

Regarding the provision of positive or negative feedback after the trip on the products and services, Gen Z was found to have provided feedback about the products and services much less than Gen X and Y, which highlights the importance of ensuring the satisfaction of Gen Z travellers by tourism establishments as they will have no chance to get feedback about the delivered service and product to repair any dissatisfaction and improve their services. In other words, it is expected that Gen Z will be difficult to make loyal customers. This means that members of Gen Z directly stop consuming tourism services and products once they are not satisfied and they do not try to improve the service by providing feedback, positive or negative. Regarding the channels used by generations to provide feedback on products and services used during their travels, Google Plus was found to have been used most whereas Facebook was used the least by Gen Z as well as less use of blogs, YouTube and Twitter than Gen X and Y. Instagram was found to be a very common channel used by Gen Z to deliver their feedback; however, what is interesting is that Gen Y was found to have used Instagram more than both Gen X and Z.

This research aimed to make a comparative analysis of Generation Z's consumption behaviours of tourism products as they are considered the biggest challenge for marketing efforts in the future (Morgan, 2016). Ozkan and Solmaz (2015) researched this generation and found that they tend to seek happiness and independence, which is in line with the findings of this research. This study also revealed that Gen Z corresponds to a travel profile breaking traditional tourism understanding through their accommodation and travel-related choices and their relationship with the local people and environment of the visited destinations as agreed by Van de Walle (2011). What this study contradicts with the literature is that cultural contents play a less important role compared to the former generations as suggested by Negrușa & Toader (2018). The findings of this study also agree with some of the findings of the research by Mignon (2013) in search for opportunities but disagree with the use of word of mouth recommendations to decide on their destination and increased use of low-cost services. The increase in the inclination of Gen Z to low- cost services could be due to their lack of economical freedom, which could change once more of them start to make their own money. As this study aimed, Gen Z requires a rethinking of the tourism model as also claimed by Haddouche & Salomone (2018: p. 70). This study aims to highlight the importance for marketers to pay more attention to how Gen Z's consumer behaviours are related to a smart purchase as highlighted by Priporas, Stylos & Fotiadis (2017)

The findings of this research suggest that Generation Z members choose mainly authentic tourism activities during their vacations. Another important finding is the high use of the Internet for gathering tourist information as well as booking online for their tourism products. The search on the Internet, as well as the use of online reservation sites and tourism blogs, are frequently used options for Generation Z members. It is clear that, when Gen Z and Gen X are compared, there is a very clear difference between the younger generation and older generations' way of consuming tourism products and services. Marketers of tourism products and services should face the challenge of winning the younger generations as suggested by Li et. al. (2013) without excluding the needs of former generations. Therefore, tourism professionals dealing with the task of tourism marketing should take consider this in their future business activities, to better address their potential customers and be prepared for the changes in the field of tourism (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). Moreover, a good relationship with customers (Anton & Costache, 2012) and innovations should be considered important for every tourism firm, no matter how big they are (Balasescu, 2012) to adapt and develop a proactive style for any crisis affecting tourism.

When the varying consumption behaviours of Generation X, Y and Z in this study are considered from a multi-generational marketing perspective, it is clear that no marketing attempt will solely focus on generation Z and will exclude former generations X and Y just because both Gen X and Gen Y will keep their demand for tourism products but Gen Z will have an increasing demand for tourism products. Therefore, marketing of tourism products should move from an age perspective, which is based on that individuals' perceptions, tastes, lifestyles and attitudes tend to change significantly over a lifetime and specific behaviors match with specific age groups, so marketers should use this match for segmentation, targeting and positioning (Chaney, Touzani & Ben Slimane, 2017), to multi-generational marketing perspective, which is based on that marketers go beyond unique needs of members of one generation and aim to satisfy members of more than one generation (Chaney, Touzani & Ben Slimane, 2017). Gen X, Y and Z are the three dominant consumers in the market now whereas Y seems to be the most demanding generation in numbers in the market. However, marketers should remember that Generation Z is the future of marketing activities for tourism products. Therefore, considering that each generation is characterized by unique lifestyles experiences, unique expectations, demographics and values (Williams & Page, 2011, p. 1), this study aimed to reveal the consumption behaviors of three generations, specifically concerning the decision-making behavior of tourism consumers in line with the stages suggested by Cohen (1972).

This research contributed to the literature by providing empirical data comparing the consumption behaviors of generations X, Y and Z regarding tourism products. This study also contributed to the literature suggesting multi-generational marketing rather than age-based marketing. The third contribution of this research is that this research was conducted just after an almost two-year-Covid-19 pandemic period, which means a two-year uncertainty, and uncertainty changes consumers' behavior decisions in the consumption of services and goods. Therefore, the findings of this research could be used to redesign future marketing activities of tourism products in the post-pandemic era.

The following issues should be considered in future marketing strategies in the tourism sector;

- Experiences should be sold rather than products.
- Video content is the key, so more video content should be developed and used on varying platforms. Gen Z members should be hooked through interesting and interactive video content
- Major influencer campaigns should be implemented.
- Firms should engage with customers building more interaction through digital channels
- Privacy should be ensured in the marketing methods as members of Gen Z is keen on privacy.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research examined the consumption behaviors of Generation X, Y and Z, compared findings among generations and has drawn some conclusions regarding the marketing experiences and products in tourism from Generation Z's perspective. Therefore, future research in the field could focus on the effect of marketing experiences and products on varying generations. This research has also found that influencers have an effect on the examined generations as a marketing tool, so future research could focus on the degree of this effect on varying generations through a comparative analysis.

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