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A study of the travel preferences of generation Z located in Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais – Brazil)

The aim of this research paper is to identify Generation Z travel profiles from 300 college students who were born between 1993 and 1996 and are located in Belo Horizonte (Brazil). The results of a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) procedure indicate a great preference for sand & sea tourism. These results suggest that those destinations where historical, cultural and religious tourism offerings predominate, which are tourism types less desired by Generation Z individuals, must carry out an effective marketing plan to attract this generation of travelers.

Key words: Generation Z, travel, preferences, product development.

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Introduction

To strengthen their competitive position, tourism organizations globally are developing new segments and an understanding of travel preferences to develop new products. In this scenario, Generation Z has become a segment which has recently been targeted in many countries. The 'youth travel' product is very complex, the primary features are wide accessibility, the safety and the security of transport and tourism facilities, flexibility, and a high quality of service. The activities carried out by young people during their stay correlate with their home country or region. For instance, activities related to nature and wildlife are the most popular among the youth from Eastern Europe (e.g., Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, etc.), perhaps due to income and costs associated with other activities such as shopping or gastronomy, etc. (Moisa, 2010).

Recreational activities of youth travelers depend on the availability of products at the tourist destination. For example, Moisa (2010) suggests that going to the beach is a traditional way to spend leisure time for those youth travelers who visit Greece, Spain, Australia or Thailand; walking appeals to young people visiting Australia, South Africa, Japan, Egypt and Mexico; going clubbing is specific to destinations like Ireland, Australia and Thailand; and cultural events, such as visiting museums and historic sites, are the main activities carried out by young tourists visiting Japan, Egypt, England, Germany and China. India has the highest percentage of young volunteers, followed by Japan and South Africa. England and Sweden are favorite destinations for work & travel programs. The United States and Australia record a high number of young people who travel to study, due to the facility of language and the amenities on offer for youth travelers (Moisa, 2010).

The tourism industry has started to pay more attention to the preferences of young tourists and increasingly seeks to serve them based on studies of a young person's needs;

hence, this has led to a greater integration of youth travel into the tourist market as a niche product (Dionysopoulou & Mylonakis, 2013).

Regarding the characteristics and possible impacts of Generation Z individuals a knowledge gap is observed in the literature in general, and especially, in the tourism literature. As will be shown in the next section, thousands of individuals of Generation Z are already active in the consumer market and this certainly requires major changes for companies seeking to attract them. Therefore, research on Generation Z - particularly on their consumption habits as tourists - is an important contribution for organisations targeting this niche market, and in addition, contributes to academic understandings of Generation Z travelers. This importance was evidenced by Pennington-Gray & Blair (2010) in Kim et al., (2015), who affirmed the necessity to improve the theoretical framework regarding the different attitudes and behavior of trips across generations.

Brazil is now being considered an attractive target market due to its high outbound tourism potential and Brazilians' spending patterns. The aim of this study was to verify the characteristics and preferences of Generation Z in relation to tourism with students who are situated in Belo Horizonte, the capital of the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil, which currently has 2,479,175 inhabitants (IBGE, 2011).

Literature Review

The theoretical basis of this article was market segmentation, which is based "on the assumption that markets are heterogeneous and that through market research, it is possible for businesses to diversify their offerings to suit the needs and wants of specific segments, in a way that creates value for both the customer as well as the company" (Pesonen, 2013, p.7). Market segmentation is a strategic tool to account for heterogeneity among tourists by grouping them into market segments, with each segment representing members similar to each other and dissimilar to the members of other segments (Dolnicar, 2008). Therefore, "the

objective of a market segmentation approach is to identify groups based on behavior, characteristics, or tourist packages. Some studies have incorporated this approach to segment the market into different groups, according to their characteristics, motivations, expenditure, nationality, or other attributes" (Molina et al., 2015, p.192). One of these potential grouping variables is the concept of "generation".

A generation refers to a group of people born in the same era, shaped by the same times, and influenced by the same social markers (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2008). A generation is also defined as "an aggregate of all people born roughly over the span of a phase of life, who share a common location in history, and hence, a common collective persona" (Strauss & Howe, 1997, p. 61). According to generational theory, members of each generation are distinctive in terms of their traits, values, beliefs, interests and expectations (Strauss & Howe, 1997). The generational theory "highlights the fact that each [generation] has its own unique set of influences and generalities, and hence, qualities and attributes" (Pendergast, 2009, p. 5). Li et al., (2013, p. 148) stated that "it should be recognized that a generational theory is a dynamic socio-cultural theoretical framework that pinpoints patterns and propensities at an aggregate level across the generational groups, rather than for the individuals" using the concept as defined by Pendergast (2010). For the tourism industry, insights gained through the lens of generational theory have the potential to guide the industry's incentives, motivators and leadership models (Benckendorff & Moscardo, 2010).

There is no agreement on the exact range of birth dates to establish the generations (Table 1). Specifically, in relation to Generation Z, Spears et al. (2015), Veiga Neto et al., (2015) and Peterson (2014) consider this generation to be from the mid to late 90s, and, from late 2000 to the present day. However, the Generation Z range that predominates in the literature is that from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s (Levy & Weitz, 2000; Levickaite, 2010; Tapscott, 2010; Singh, 2014; Rothman, 2015).

Table 1 Generation Groups by Birth date

Generations Group	Birth date	Maximum age in 2014
Generation Z	1989-2010	25
Y Generation	1977-1988	38
X Generation	1965-1976	49
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	68

Source: adapted from Levy & Weitz (2000).

The three generations of X, Y, and Z profoundly influence the world in which we live, due to marked social, developmental, and psychological differences (Biber et al. 2013). As the tourism industry goes through unprecedented changes, it is the youth that has the most to contribute through innovation, because of its pioneering heavy technology use, and also, its contribution as socially and environmentally conscious customers (UNWTO and WYSE TRAVEL CONFEDERATION, 2011). Youth travel tends to increase the local impact of their expenditure as leakages are reduced. Young people also add atmosphere and 'buzz' to destinations, attracting other visitors and businesses, thereby attracting other tourists to the destination (WYSE TRAVEL CONFEDERATION, 2011).

Generation Z has emerged from the Global Financial Crisis, in a time of growing cultural diversity, global brands, social media and a digital world (Glum, 2015). Generation Z is the most materially endowed, technologically saturated, and formally educated generation our world has ever seen (Singh, 2014). Para Veiga Neto et al., (2015, p.295) stated that one of the characteristics of this generation is to be able to "pay attention to several things at the same time, such as a computer, television, a mobile and a video game". Generation Z is also called the 'Internet Generation' (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015 p.93), characterized in this way due to an innate comfort with the virtual world. For these consumers, the Internet has always existed (Trakšelys & Martišauskienė, p. 130).

The "Z" is based on "zap", that is, to change the TV channels quickly and steadily with a remote control, in search of something that is interesting to see, or hear, or even out of habit. "Zap" means "to do something very quickly" and it also means "energy" or "enthusiasm" (Ceretta, 2011; Toledo and Albuquerque, 2012). Ciriaco (2009) and Veiga Neto et al. (2015) also called Generation Z, the silent generation, because they always have headphones on (in buses, in universities, at home, etc.), listening more and talking less. Hence, this generation can be defined as one that tends towards egocentrism, because its members tend to worry only about themselves most of the time.

Companies must understand that these young people live in a fragmented rhythm, usually multitasking, as they can listen to music, surf the Internet, and watch movies, all at the same time. This is indeed, the generation of young people who grew up online (Tapscott, 2010), who "can get in contact with any person, in any location of the world, in seconds, and share information" (Berkup, 2014, p.224). Finally, Levickaite (2010, p. 173) asserted that "Generation Z is entirely digital and their communication and their social interaction habits turn out to be digital as well". Tapscott (2010) used eight standards to characterize Generation Z, also called the Internet Generation (Table 2).

Table 2 Generation Z Characteristics

Freedom	It wants freedom in everything it does, from the freedom of choice to freedom of expression. Considers the proliferation of sales channels and types of products and brands to be normal.
Customization	It often customizes everything around: the desktop computer, the site itself, the ringing of the telephone, the rest of the screen, the nickname and entertainment.
Scrutiny	It considers search and access to information about companies and products natural, valuing transparency.
Collaboration	It is characterized as the generation which values collaboration and relationships. Collaborates on-line chat groups, video game playing multiplayer, uses e-mail and shares files.
Entertainment	It wants entertainment and fun at work, in education and social life, as it has grown up with interactive experiences.
Speed	It is accustomed to instant answers, chats in real time, which makes communication with colleagues, companies and higher authorities faster than ever.
Innovation	It wants to be innovative, have modern products, as its members envy friends, and such products contribute to their social status and their positive self-image.

Source: Tapscott (2010).

Therefore, it can be inferred that Generation Z, born in the mid-90s, is one that can be characterized as individualist, consumerist, informed and digital (Ceretta, 2011). The individuals of Generation Z cannot perceive the world without the existence of electronic equipment or without any form of electronic communication (Veiga Neto et al., 2015).

These characteristics identified for Generation Z will certainly have an impact on many sectors, including education as illustrated by Rothman (2015, p.1):

> "With online text, learners now spend about eight seconds picking hyperlinked keywords to find answers, instead of reading the whole text, which calculates to 4.4 seconds per 100 words of text. Instructors teaching in 2020 must be prepared to teach using software, hardware, digital solutions, technological and social media. Some instructors will need professional development support to help them move from a traditional to a transformational learning model."

Similarly, Faber (2011) points out that, for Generation Z, long informative texts have become uninteresting, with a significant impact on scientific journals, for example, that try to counteract this trend by displaying more concise articles.

Generation Z spends more time indoors, is less physically active, and is more obese, when compared to previous generations (Smith et al., 2005). Finally, Generation Z is the first generation to be truly globally focused. Not only are music, movies, and celebrities, global for them, as they have been for previous generations, but fashion, food, online entertainment, social trends, communications, and even the "must watch YouTube videos and memes" are also more global for them than for any previous generation (Relander, 2014).

Methodology

The primary data was collected during the period of September to November 2014 from 300 college students who were born between the years 1993 and 1996. They were recruited from the Management, Accountability, Computer Science, Journalism, and Publicity courses at a private university located in Belo Horizonte, capital of the State of Minas Gerais. This city was founded in 1897 (PBH, 2015) and it has a Human Development Index (HDI) equal

to 0.810 (higher than the São Paulo HDI – 0.805) and its Gross National Product (GNP) is more than US$ 35 billion (IBGE, 2011).

A questionnaire containing 16 questions with "multiple choice" questions and "Likert scale" formats was used to generate the quantitative information. The data was collected through the administered questionnaires and they were analyzed with the support of SPSS 20.0 software. The methodology used in this work consisted of descriptive statistical analyses and the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) procedure. Each principal component was assumed to be a linear combination of all the original variables (Varella, 2008). In accordance with Vicini and Souza (2005), the goal of the PCA procedure was not to explain the correlations between the variables, but for finding mathematical functions between the initial variables that explained much of the existing variation in the data and allowed one to describe and to reduce these variables.

The questionnaire was divided into the following two parts: 1) Personal characteristics (birth date, gender and monthly income); 2) The identification of the importance attributed to a set of variables that were related to their touristic preferences.

The research hypotheses were set out as below:

H1: Generation Z values sea & sand tourism and exchange travel more than historical/cultural/religious tourism.

H2: Generation Z avoids "making trips organized by agencies" as well as "following a pre-defined itinerary"

H3: Generation Z tends to attribute "little importance" to the availability of "a swimming pool" and "a gym" and it gives more importance to "Internet/WiFi" and "price".

Data analysis, results and discussion

The initial description of the sample follows below (Table 3). Regarding the types of tourism that the respondents appreciated most (1 meant "I do not like" and 5 meant "I like very much") on the Likert scale, the maximum value was obtained by "sun & sea" – 4.4, followed by "scientific/education" – 3.9. On the other hand, "religious tourism" only obtained a 2.5 rating.

Table 3 Descriptive Results

43% were born in 1993
55.7% are male and 44.3% female
44.3% earn maximum US$ 1.000 dollars
59% preferred 4 to 7 days long trips
69% preferred to travel with their family
51% preferred to stay in hotels
62.7% preferred Sun and Sea as their favorite tourism activity
Most of them preferred to pay the bill by cash (43%) and credit card (30%).

The factors that influenced their travel plans were the presence of family/friends while traveling (36.3%) and a cost benefit in relation to the tour – 28.7% (Table 4). Only 2.76% of the respondents prefer to travel with people of their own generation. Table 4 shows the preferences of Generation Z in following a pre-defined itinerary (29.3%), followed by interacting with the natives of the destination (25.7%).

It was observed that "following a pre-defined itinerary" achieved the highest average among all of the variables related to travel preferences (3.41), followed by "interaction with the natives of a destination" (3.39). On the other hand, "making trips organized by agencies" had the lowest average – 2.60.

Table 4 Travel Preferences

Variables	I do not like (1)	I like somewhat (2)	Neutral (3)	I like somewhat (4)	I like very much (5)	Mean value
Repeat destinations within 2 years	16.0	20.3	29.0	24.0	10.7	2.93
Travel to destinations that are more fashionable	22.3	20.3	36.0	11.7	9.7	2.66
Interact with the natives of a destination	10.0	15.0	25.0	25.7	24.3	3.39
Take trips organized by agencies	28.0	22.7	24.3	10.7	14.3	2.60
Keep your lifestyle / habits even at the tourist destination	10.0	14.3	29.3	20.3	26.0	3.37
Follow pre-defined itinerary	11.3	15.0	23.7	20.7	29.3	3.41

Generation Z most prominently associated "churches and monuments" with historical and cultural tourism (25.6%) while 22.5% associated this type of tourism with a means to "expand knowledge". On the other hand, only 7.5% associated it with "monotony" (Table 5).

In relation to the items that most disturbed Generation Z in terms of accommodation were "inadequate cleaning" – this was the most cited item – 30.3%. The "difficulty in obtaining general information about the destination" caused disturbances for 19.4%. Among all the items analyzed, "trouble connecting to the Internet" was also considered as a major disturbance and was mentioned by 13.2%. Finally, an inadequate supply of TV channels was a big annoyance – also mentioned by 13.2% of the respondents.

Table 5 Generation Z's associations with historical and cultural tourism

Churches and monuments	25.6
Expand knowledge	22.5
Contemplative attitude	11.8
Many similar landscapes	11.1
Long walk	9.6
Monotony	7.5
Remote places/without technology	6.9
Unattractive to go	4.9
Total	100.0

"Contact with nature" was the item that was most associated with rural tourism, mentioned by 24.9%, while 22.1% associated this type of tourism with "tranquility" (Table 6). Further, 3.1% and 2.9% of the respondents stated that "monotony" and "an absence of infrastructure" were associated with rural tourism, respectively.

Table 6 Generation Z's associations with rural tourism

Contact with nature	24.9
Tranquillity	22.1
Hiking trails and mountain range	15.7
Isolation	10.2
Interaction with animals on river/lake tours	8.4
Tour with family	7.0
Remote places	5.7
Monotony	3.1
Absence of infrastructure	2.9

A total of 45% respondents mentioned that a coastal Brazilian State would be their next destination, while 29.1% said that they would travel to other countries. They felt that gastronomy and security were the most important aspects in their travel plans (76%), followed by location of the destination (65%) and price (62%), which were more important than the need of Internet/WiFi, which was rated as important by 30.3%. Access to a gym was not at all important – 43.7% of the Generation Z respondents said that this item was "not important".

Other important results obtained in this study were as follows:

a) The correlation analysis showed that there was no relationship between the preferred length of stay and the preference to go on a sea and sand holiday. The Pearson correlation coefficient showed that there was a direct and positive but rather weak relationship between income and the preferred duration of the stay (Table 7).

Table 7 Correlation of ideal duration of trip - number of days

		Monthly income	Ideal duration of trip - no of days
monthly income	Pearson Correlation	1	.125*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.031
	N	300	300
Ideal duration of trip - # of days	Pearson Correlation	.125*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	
	N	300	300

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

b) The preferences for the types of destinations were grouped into three categories that were extracted from the Principal Component Analysis using Eigenvalues of >1 as the cut-off criterion (Table 8). A larger Eigenvalue means that that principal component explains a large amount of the variance in the data.

Table 8 Variance Explained - Principal Component Analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1,941	24,259	24,259	1,941	24,259	24,259
2	1,312	16,400	40,658	1,312	16,400	40,658
3	1,105	13,815	54,474	1,105	13,815	54,474
4	,961	12,017	66,491			
5	,890	11,128	77,619			
6	,695	8,684	86,303			
7	,634	7,923	94,226			
8	,462	5,774	100,000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The KMO value of the sample is 0.576, i.e., higher than the critical threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2006). Likewise, the Bartlett Test of Sphericity (BTS) test is statistically significant with $p < 0.000$ (Table 9).

Table 9 KMO and Bartlett´s Tests

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.576
Barlett´s Test of Sphericity	**0.000**

A principal component with a very small eigenvalue does not explain a lot of the variance in the data. The percentages of variance explained for the three factors were – Factor 1 (24%): sand & sea, rural and adventure; Factor 2 (16%): gastronomic, historic and cultural tourism, and ecotourism; Factor 3 (13%): exchange but not religious tourism. Factor loadings are the correlations between the original variables and the factors. This means that the higher the factor loading, the greater the correlation with a given factor. Sand & sea tourism, rural tourism and adventure tourism are more associated with Factor 1 (24%); gastronomic, historical & cultural tourism and ecotourism are more linked to Factor 2 (16%). Exchange tourism and the religious tourism are most closely aligned with Factor 3 (13%), although they have different directions: the former has a positive correlation (0.536) and the latter has a negative correlation (-0.740) (Table 10).

Table 10 Factor Loadings

	Component		
	1	2	3
type of tourism_sand and sea	-.006	**.468**	.186
type of tourism_rural	.244	**.706**	-.073
type of tourism_adventure	.352	**.554**	.371
type of tourism_gastronomic	**.572**	-.189	-.255
type of tourism_historic and cultural	**.722**	-.296	-.063
type of tourism_ecotourism	**.765**	.069	.156
type of tourism_religious	.367	.167	**-.740**
type of tourism_exchange	.433	-.363	**.536**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 3 components extracted.

c) High preferences for sand & sea tourism, together with rural and adventure tourism, were independent of income.

d) There was no relationship between "preference for travel party composition" and "preference for a particular type of tourism".

e) The Generation Z tourists who preferred gastronomic tourism, historic/cultural, and ecotourism were also looking for "value for money" (Table 11), although the strength of the

relationship is very weak. On other hand, those tourists who preferred sand, sea, rural and adventure might be influenced by the great distance from Belo Horizonte (which does not have a considerable number of natural tourist attractions) to the nearest sea - more than 300 miles. Maybe if it was a survey done in a coastal city, the results could be different.

Table 11 Correlation between tourism type preference and value for money preference

		REGR factor score 1	Preference for Value for Money
REGR factor score 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.124[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.032
	N	299	298
Preference for Value for Money	Pearson Correlation	.124[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	
	N	298	298

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

f) In relation to preference for an accommodation type, it was observed that most preferred hotel accommodation and almost 30% preferred inns. Together, these two forms of accommodation represented 80%. This high percentage may be because there were few hostels and camping facilities in Brazil – which is not typical in Brazil. After performing crosstab analyses it was possible to observe that there was an association between the preferred accommodation types and importance placed on price, WiFi, swimming pool, and quality of the service at the hotel reception.

g) Statistically significant was the relationship between hotel accommodation and importance attached to the existence of WiFi (t-test = 3.189, sig. = .002) with preference for hotels being linked to higher importance placed on WiFi (Table 12).

Table 12 Relationship between hotel accommodation and importance attached to the existence of WiFi

Group Statistics

	Accommodation preference	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Importance_Internet WiFi	hotel	152	**3.5921**	1.31902	.10699
	other	146	**3.0822**	1.44082	.11924

h) The respondents who preferred accommodation with their parents or friends were less interested in a swimming pool (t-test = -3.158; sig. = .002) (Table 13)

Table 13 Relationship between prefer accommodation with parents or friends and interest in swimming pool and fitness

Group Statistics					
	Accommodation preference	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Importance_swimming pool	accommodation with parents or friends	48	**2.8125**	1.34728	.19446
	other	251	**3.4781**	1.28783	.08129

Conclusion and implications

The results confirmed that only two hypotheses (H1 and H3) could be accepted. Generation Z indicated a preference for sea & sand tourism and exchange travel over historical/cultural/religious tourism (H1). This result requires two considerations: First, the research was conducted in a region far from the sea and this may generate some bias among the respondents in the direction of this preference for sand, sea and sun. Second, this region is principally known as a historical/cultural tourism destination in Brazil. Therefore, Minas Gerais may have difficulty in attracting this generation. In fact, those regions who can offer sea & sand tourism and wish to attract Generation Z tourists should make increased efforts with their advertising. Hypothesis 3 was also confirmed, and it appointed an indicative importance for the hospitality industry, since Generation Z attributed little importance to accommodation that had "a swimming pool" and "a gym". It assigned greater importance to "Internet WiFi" and "price" (H3). Any accommodation must have a good Internet connection no matter where it is in order to attract Generation Z. It should also be concerned about the price charged.

Surprisingly, H2 was not confirmed. The results have shown Generation Z doesn´t necessarily avoid "making trips organized by agencies" and actually likes "following a pre-defined itinerary". Therefore, this means that travel agencies could attract the younger public

with pre-defined itinerary packages, for example. Brazil has a young demographic structure with a massive Generation Z and a growing middle class (IBGE, 2011). Therefore, this research paper has provided relevant perspectives and insights to support the forthcoming marketing activities of several tourist destinations.

1. Positioning based on Products. Efforts should be taken for positioning and targeting specific market segments. As Generation Z of Brazil prefers sea, sun, adventure, and rural tourism, these products must be properly branded and positioned, especially for the Generation Z element in Brazil, by the stakeholders of tourism destinations and by using e-marketing.

2. Infrastructure Development. Tourism destinations need to improve their infrastructure that is related to Internet connectivity at accommodation units and at tourist destinations. Infrastructures related to safety and security for the young travelers should be developed.

3. New Product Development. Gastronomy, Beach, Creative, Rural, and Eco tourism, which all remain the most untapped potentials of tourism, must be co-created in consultation with the service providers and the Generation Z individuals of Belo Horizonte.

4. Online Tour Planner and Destination Guiding App. As Generation Z of Brazil prefers to plan their tours on their own, providing an Online Tour Planner on official websites would be helpful for them. Additionally, institutions should launch a Destination Guiding App to assist Generation Z in building itineraries while traveling at tourist destinations.

5. Research on Youth Tourism. Due to the lack of research in this area, there is a need to have great collaboration efforts between the research institutes and the tourism industry. The important aspects to be researched should be travel preferences, the branding of youth tourism, youth tourism economics, and the socio-cultural impact of youth travelers, etc.

6. Taxes and Prices. Taxes are important components of tourism product pricing. The prices of accommodation and air transport are complex variables and they might have adverse effects on the travel decisions by Generation Z of Brazil.

Similar studies can be conducted at other tourist destinations that are planning to increase their inbound tourism by targeting Generation Z. This study has focused on the travel preferences for one of the most targeted markets i.e., Brazil. Additionally, other areas of research could be a comparative study of the travel preferences among Generations X, Y and Z.

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