

Gen Z and Sustainable Tourism Stay: the Role of Collective Efficacy

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Abstract

Despite the increasing sensitivity of Gen Z towards sustainable issues, sustainable consumer behaviour in young generations seems to face the well-known intention-behaviour gap. Among the main obstacles hindering sustainable consumer behaviour, perceived effectiveness as a patron's beliefs about the influence of the environmental preservation endeavours/activities in decreasing the harm to nature – i.e. self-efficacy – has been considered impactful. However, despite the influence that this variable, both in self and collective dimensions, assumes in sustainable tourism decisions, few studies hitherto focused their attention on the role that this variable might play for young generations. So, recognizing collective consciousness as an underlying mechanism shaping generationally distinct human values and behaviors, this paper aims to investigate the role that collective efficacy exerts on sustainable tourism stay decision in Gen Z. The results of the survey performed on a sample of 278 young consumers show clearly how Gen Zers' choice is built on their collective efficacy perception. More specifically, being impactful with their touristic decisions in contributing to being more sustainable toward the environment shapes their behavioural intentions.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism Stay, Gen Z, Collective Efficacy, Sustainable Consumer Behaviour

1. Short literature review

Gen Z – which includes those born between 1995 and 2010 – deeply cares about sustainable issues (Deloitte, 2020; Dabija et al., 2019). The newly born Fridays For Future (FFF) movement involving students and activists worldwide to protest against climate change makes evident their increasing sensitivity towards these issues. Gen Z

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indeed is interested in creating a positive impact and doing something good, which is why they usually care more than other age groups for global problems. Because they were concerned about social and environmental issues, this generation has been defined as an "activist generation" (GlobalWebIndex, 2019).

Although young generations are now undoubtedly doing more than ever in sustainability and the environment, when it comes to investigating young generations' sustainable consumer behaviour, controversial results emerge. Recent studies indeed evidenced that sustainable consumption in young consumers is still limited (Acharya, 2019; Gupta & Acharya, 2019). Moreover, this generation does not engage in sustainable consumption to a greater extent than the older generations. So, also sustainable consumer behaviour in young generations seems to face the well-known discrepancy between intentions and actual purchases (Carrington et al., 2010; Eckhardt et al., 2010; Rausch & Kopplin, 2020; Bonera et al., 2020), leading researchers to explore why young consumers define themselves as sustainably-conscious but then tend to act contrary to these values (Gabler et al., 2013; Perera et al., 2018; Gupta & Acharya, 2019; Acharya, 2019).

Within the vast literature devoted to identifying factors affecting sustainable consumption (Connell, 2010; Davies et al., 2012; Phan et al., 2017; Acharya, 2019), perceived effectiveness as a patron's beliefs about the influence of their environmental preservation endeavours/activities in decreasing the harm to nature (Han & Yoon, 2015; Straughan & Roberts, 1999), alternatively described as self-efficacy (Han et al., 2017; Judge et al., 2007), is considered impactful on sustainable consumer behaviour (Han, 2021). As the perceived self-efficacy influence peoples' intention to pursue collective interests (Komorita & Parks, 1995) and to pursue sustainable tourism (Zheng et al., 2020). However, despite this evidence, few studies hitherto focused their attention on the role that this variable might assume for young generations, especially about sustainable tourism decisions, even though sustainable decision/behaviour for a tourism product is indisputably influenced by his/her belief about the effectiveness of their conservation effort and activity (Han & Yoon, 2015), both in self and collective dimensions (Dorian et al., 2015, 2017).

2. Research Hypothesis

In light of the theoretical background based on the collective consciousness characterizing Gen Z (Sakdiyakorn, 2021), this paper aims to investigate the role that collective efficacy might assume on sustainable tourism stay decision.

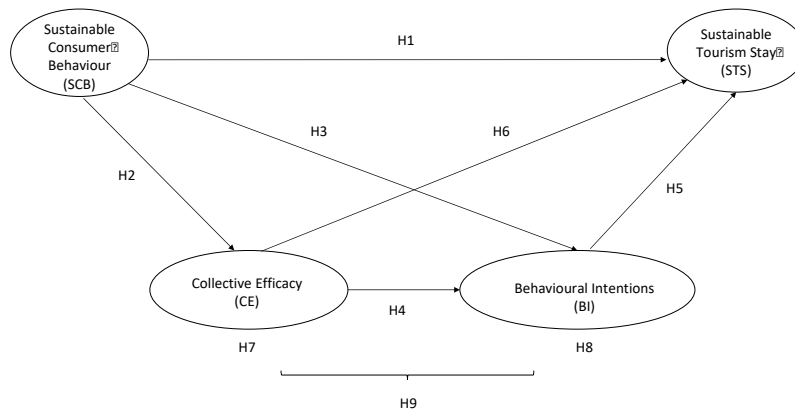
To do that, a parallel mediation model has been developed to test the following hypothesis.

H1: Sustainable Consumer Behaviour is positively associated with Sustainable Tourism Stay

H2: Sustainable Consumer Behaviour is positively associated with Collective Efficacy

H3: Sustainable Consumer Behaviour is positively associated with Behavioural Intentions
H4: Collective Efficacy is positively associated with Behavioural Intentions
H5: Behavioural Intentions is positively associated with Sustainable Tourism Stay
H6: Collective Efficacy is positively associated with Sustainable Tourism Stay
H7: Collective Efficacy mediates the relationship between Sustainable Consumer Behaviour and Sustainable Tourism Stay
H8: Behavioural Intentions mediates the relationship between Sustainable Consumer Behaviour and Sustainable Tourism Stay
H9: Collective Efficacy and Behavioural Intentions operate as serial mediators between Sustainable Consumer Behaviour and Sustainable Tourism Stay

Figure 1 - The Model



3. Methodology

We employed a survey-based approach to collect data from an international sample of Gen Z consumers. The survey was administered through Amazon Mechanical Turk and the authors' contacts. A total of 278 usable questionnaires were collected. The study employed a five-point Likert scale to measure the variables. We also used pre-validated scales for all constructs. More specifically, sustainable Consumer Behavior (SCB) was measured using a twelve-item scale that Dong et al. (2020) developed and validated. Collective Efficacy (CE) was measured using a six items scale developed by Doran et al. (2015), the Behavioral Intention (BI) construct was measured through a five items scale created by Doran et al. (2017) and Sustainable Tourism Stay (STS) was measured with a twelve item scale developed by Fermani et al. (2020). Demographic data were also collected.

To analyze the data, we used the SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 6) to isolate the direct and the indirect effects in the model, in consonance with recent studies (Marshall et al., 2020; Teoh et al., 2020). Furthermore, we chose this macro since it offers the benefit of correcting measurement errors (Hayes, 2017).

4. Main results

Preliminary results confirm all our hypothesis. In our sample of Gen Z consumers, there is a positive, direct and significant effect of SCB on STS ($c=.3506$ SE=.0558, $p<.000$) with a 95% CI excluding zero (.2407-.4606) confirming H1. SCB has a positive effect on CE ($a1=.7017$ SE=.0581, $p<.000$) with a 95% CI excluding zero (.5874-.8160). SCB exerted a positive and significant effect on BI as well ($a2=.7091$ SE=.0689 $p<.000$) with a 95% CI excluding zero (.5735 - .8447), confirming H3. CE has a direct and significant effect on BI as predicted in H4 ($.3239$ SE=.0578 $p<.000$; 95% CI excluding zero .2102 -.4376). Both b paths were significant. Respectively H5 ($b1=.3131$ SE=.0415 $p<.000$, 95% CI .2314-.3949) and H6 ($b2=.2165$ SE=.0420 $p<.000$, 95% CI .1338 - .2991) were confirmed. All the indirect effects were positive and significant:

- SCB->CE->STS (.1519, SE= .0424, 95% CI .0710 - .2347)
- SCB->BI->STS (.2220, SE=.0437, 95% CI .0379 - .3175)
- SCB->CE->BI->STS (.0712, SE=.0201, 95% CI .0379 - .1150)

5. Conclusions and managerial implications

Based on the preliminary results here presented, we confirm that Gen Z consumers pay attention to their choice options when travelling and picking touristic destinations. The drivers of their choices appear to be their values and their attitude toward the environment in general and, more in particular, their perceptions of being influential in shaping the environment. The results show clearly how Gen Zers' choice is built on their collective efficacy perception. More specifically, their idea of being impactful with their touristic decisions in contributing to being more sustainable toward the environment shapes their behavioural intentions; the latter has a positive and significant impact on their final tourism choices. Therefore, this paper theoretically advances and empirically shows that for young consumers, their last options in terms of touristic decisions are driven not only by their habits and attitude toward a more sustainable way of consuming but also by their feeling of being impactful and meaningful in contributing in creating a more sustainable way of travelling. These results open up various implications for policymakers and companies on how to leverage the collective efficacy feeling to increase the positive externalities of such behaviours for Gen Z consumers.

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