



The generational tourist: how age cohorts influence travel product choices

Mitja Gorenak*, Janko Virant**, Tomi Špindler***

*Prof., PhD,
University of Maribor
Faculty of tourism, Brežice,
Slovenia,
mitja.gorenak@um.si

** Independent researcher,
Bistrica ob Sotli, Slovenia,
virant.janko@gmail.com

***Assist. Prof., PhD,
University of Maribor, Faculty of
tourism, Brežice, Slovenia,
tomi.spindler@um.si

©Copyrights are protected by =
Avtorske pravice so zaščitene s
Creative Commons Attribution-
Noncommercial 4.0 International
License (CC BY-NC 4.0) =
Priznanje avtorstva-
nekomercialno 4.0 mednarodna
licenca (CC BY-NC 4.0)

DOI 10.32015/JIBM.2025.17.1.4

Mednarodno inovativno
poslovanje =
Journal of Innovative Business
and Management

ISSN 1855-6175

Abstract: Purpose of the article - The purpose of this article is to explore the correlation between generational values and tourism product selection. It addresses the scientific problem of how socio-historical experiences influence consumer behaviour in the tourism sector. The goal is to identify distinct patterns among Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y that affect travel preferences, including price sensitivity, trip duration, travel style, and desired levels of autonomy.

Research methodology - A two-step research methodology was applied. In the first step, a codebook was created based on the catalogue of trips from a cooperating travel agency. Trips were categorised by seven characteristics such as type, length, and autonomy. In the second step, a dataset of 9605 travellers was analysed using SPSS 24. Generational cohorts were determined based on age, and correlation and cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to uncover significant patterns.

Keywords: generational values, tourism product selection, consumer behaviour, generational cohorts, travel preferences

JEL classification: M10

Generacijski turist: kako starostne kohorte vplivajo na izbiro potovanj

Povzetek: Namen prispevka - Namen prispevka je raziskati povezanost med generacijskimi vrednotami in izbiro turističnega produkta. Prispevek naslavlja znanstveni problem, kako družbeno-zgodovinske izkušnje vplivajo na vedenje potrošnikov v turističnem sektorju. Cilj je prepoznati značilne vzorce med generacijami Baby boom, generacijo X in generacijo Y, ki vplivajo na potovalne preference, vključno z občutljivostjo na ceno, dolžino potovanja, slogom potovanja ter želeno stopnjo avtonomije.

Raziskovalna metodologija - Uporabljena je bila dvostopenjska raziskovalna metodologija. V prvi fazi je bila na podlagi kataloga potovanj sodelujoče turistične agencije oblikovana kodna knjiga. Potovanja so bila kategorizirana glede na sedem značilnosti, kot so vrsta, dolžina in stopnja avtonomije. V drugi fazi je bil z uporabo programa SPSS 24 analiziran nabor podatkov 9605 potnikov. Generacijske skupine so bile določene glede na starost, opravljene pa so bile korelacijske in križne analize, da bi odkrili pomembne vzorce.

Ključne besede: generacijske vrednote, izbira turističnega produkta, potrošniško vedenje, generacijske skupine, potovalne preference

1 INTRODUCTION

The complex interplay between generational identity and consumer behaviour has emerged as a critical area of inquiry in tourism research. Generations, as sociological constructs, are more than mere chronological groupings—they represent cohorts shaped by shared historical events and cultural experiences during formative developmental periods. This study examines the fundamental question: To what extent do generational values correlate with tourism product selection, and how do these preferences manifest across different cohorts? Understanding this relationship is not merely of academic interest but holds profound implications for tourism marketing strategies, product development, and the sustainable evolution of the industry itself.

The tourism sector represents a particularly compelling domain for investigating generational differences, as travel choices often reflect deeply held values and identity expressions. Baby Boomers (1946-1964), shaped by post-war prosperity and social transformation, demonstrate distinct preferences from Generation X (1965-1980), who matured during institutional uncertainty and technological transition, or Generation Y (1981-1996), who came of age in an era of digital ubiquity and global connectivity. These generational differences potentially translate into varied preferences regarding trip duration, destination types, price sensitivity and desired levels of autonomy during travel experiences. All these significantly influence the future of tourism product development within travel agencies. To gain a deeper understanding of the preferences of different generations, we must first look into how generations are formed.

1.1 Understanding generations

In sociological terms, generations are not merely defined by chronological birth years but are shaped by critical socio-historical experiences during key developmental stages. Karl Mannheim (1972) was among the first to assert that generations are more than temporal groupings—they reflect collective identity shaped by major societal events. This idea is further developed by scholars like Rejec (2012) and Kupperschmidt (2000), who define a generation as a group of individuals born in the same period and marked by shared formative experiences. Political, social, or economic events typically occur during adolescence (ages 17-24), a period considered crucial for value formation (Howe & Strauss, 1991). Consequently, values developed during this sensitive time remain relatively stable throughout an individual's life and influence attitudes toward work, consumption, and lifestyle choices (Egri & Ralston, 2004; Parment, 2011). To understand these characteristics, we must first understand the characteristics of each generation. This article will deal with the following generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y.

The Baby Boomer generation, born after World War II, is historically significant for its sheer size and socio-economic influence; as they grew up during a time of economic prosperity and social transformation, this generation is often associated with optimism, individualism, and material success (Howe & Strauss, 1991). Their formative years were marked by pivotal events such as the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the cultural revolution of the 1960s, including the Woodstock Festival and the sexual revolution (Špindler, 2018). Technologically adaptive and physically active, Baby Boomers were deeply involved in creating major corporate and social institutions. Generation X is known for its cynicism, pragmatism, and adaptability. Growing up amid rising divorce rates, political scandals, and economic instability, Gen Xers learned to be self-reliant and sceptical of institutions (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Exposure to mass media and technological advancements during their youth contributed to their media literacy and shaped their worldview. Many were "latchkey kids," forced to become independent early due to absent working parents (Howe & Strauss, 1991). Despite their image as cynical or even apathetic, Generation X is entrepreneurial, technologically capable, and values work-life balance. While less loyal to employers than previous generations, they are achievement-oriented and seek feedback and developmental opportunities in the workplace (Cohen, 2002). Generation Y, often referred to as Millennials, represents the first genuinely digital-native cohort. Their upbringing was deeply influenced by technology, globalisation, and social media, shaping them into adaptive, diverse, and highly connected individuals (Špindler, 2018). As a generation raised by working parents or single-parent households, Millennials were early participants in family consumption decisions, which fostered a sense of agency and consumer awareness from a young age. Millennials are less brand loyal and more price-sensitive than previous generations. They rely heavily on peer reviews, social media, and online platforms when making purchasing decisions (Goldman Sachs Report, 2016). This

generation also desires meaningful work, personal growth, and a strong sense of individuality (Gravett & Trockmorton, 2007). To fully understand the generations, we need to look into major historical events that shaped each generation in their formative years.

1.2 Key historical events and the shaping of generational identity

While often rooted in shared birth years, generational identity is fundamentally shaped by significant historical events experienced during adolescence and early adulthood. These "generational moments" imprint lasting values and perceptions that persist throughout life. As Schewe and Meredith (2004) argue, cohort segmentation enhances understanding of consumer behaviour and provides more accurate marketing and social analysis tools than age alone. The perception and interpretation of formative events differ across regions and cultures, suggesting that global events may be experienced differently depending on local political, social, and media contexts (Berkup, 2014; Špindler, 2018).

Baby Boomers, for instance, were profoundly influenced by the post-WWII recovery period. Events such as the moon landing (1969), the Vietnam War, Woodstock, and the rise of feminist and civil rights movements significantly impacted their worldview. This generation, shaped by a combination of economic prosperity and social upheaval, values personal success, individualism, and social activism. Their experience with early television and societal optimism instilled in them a belief in progress and the power of collective change. Generation X (1966-1985) came of age during a period of institutional uncertainty and technological transition. They were witness to the end of the Cold War, the AIDS crisis, the Challenger disaster, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. These events, coupled with growing divorce rates and the emergence of "latchkey kids," fostered a sense of scepticism, independence, and adaptability. This cohort was among the first to grow up with personal computers and globalised media, experiences that shaped their pragmatism and technological literacy. However, they also harboured deep doubts about authority, partly due to events like the Watergate scandal and economic crises that undermined faith in institutions. Millennials, or Generation Y (1986-2000), were shaped by different circumstances. Their coming of age coincided with the rapid globalisation of the internet, the spread of social media, events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the global financial crisis, and increasing environmental awareness. These events instilled in them a dual orientation: a belief in innovation and progress and a heightened sense of global responsibility. They are often characterised as highly educated, technologically fluent, and driven by values like diversity, inclusion, and environmental sustainability (Špindler, 2018). However, they are also known for their impatience and tendency toward short attention spans, resulting from constant digital stimulation from an early age.

Numerous studies have supported the role of personal experience in shaping these values. For example, Schuman and Scott (1989) found that individuals vividly recall events that occurred during their adolescent years, particularly if those events were traumatic or transformative. That was further stressed by Holbrook and Schindler (1989), who demonstrated that personal preferences—even aesthetic ones—are shaped during adolescence and remain stable over time. These findings support the theory of cohort imprinting, whereby values formed during youth remain stable across the lifespan, guiding attitudes and behaviour, including consumer decisions. Moreover, while major global events can unify across generations, their interpretation and influence often differ by cultural and regional context. For instance, while the U.S. experienced the Great Depression as an economic catastrophe, Germany's economy was revitalised during the same period through wartime mobilisation under Hitler's regime. Similarly, political repression in the 1970s in Brazil fostered a strong generational emphasis on freedom and resistance, values that were less emphasised in other regions (Schewe et al., 2000).

Ultimately, the structure of generational identity is closely linked to the collective memory of formative events and the value systems that arise from them. These values not only shape personal and political beliefs but also have clear implications for consumer behaviour, particularly in the realms of marketing, brand loyalty, and product engagement. Understanding these generational patterns—rooted in the experience of specific historical moments—provides a crucial framework for interpreting the diverse needs and expectations of contemporary populations.

1.3 Generational cohort characteristics and their impact on tourism

Generational cohorts are not merely age-based divisions, but socio-cultural segments shaped by unique life experiences and historical contexts. In tourism, these cohorts serve as valuable

frameworks for understanding consumer behaviour, preferences, and expectations. Parment (2013) emphasises that each generation possesses distinct values and desires that influence purchasing decisions. Understanding these values allows for more precise market segmentation, personalised service, and effective long-term customer relationships—especially in the tourism industry, where experiential elements are paramount.

The Baby Boomer generation has emerged as a significant demographic in tourism. As life expectancy increases and global populations age, this cohort becomes dominant in the travel industry. By 2050, over 22% of the worldwide population is expected to be over 60 years old, doubling the proportion recorded in 2000 (Patterson & Pegg, 2009). Baby Boomers today are healthier, more financially secure, and more independent than earlier senior generations. Having fulfilled major life responsibilities, they now possess time and resources to explore new destinations, often seeking experiences that evoke a sense of youthfulness or nostalgia. Boomers prefer educational and culturally enriching travel, value comfort, and enjoy feeling special. Their preferred activities include city tours, historical site visits, dining experiences, and shopping. Unlike younger travellers, they are less interested in physically demanding adventures, focusing instead on the quality and uniqueness of experiences. Marketing efforts aimed at Boomers must employ storytelling, metaphorical language, and holistic messaging. Patterson and Pegg (2009) stress that this generation is susceptible to authenticity and more profound meaning in advertising, preferring informative content over flashy promotions. This demographic also increasingly relies on online booking platforms, with over half of Boomers purchasing trips through digital travel agencies (Špindler, 2018).

Generation X matured in an era of technological transition and social restructuring. Often referred to as the "middle child" between Boomers and Millennials, Gen Xers value independence, pragmatism, and self-sufficiency. Many grew up in dual-income households, making them self-reliant and technologically adept. However, they are also sceptical and cautious consumers. In the tourism sector, they prioritise detailed planning and risk aversion. They are less responsive to traditional marketing and are more likely to seek extensive information before making travel decisions. This generation typically travels with family and values cultural depth and authenticity in their experiences. Museum visits, historical explorations, and outdoor activities are highly appreciated. Peer reviews highly influence them and are wary of overpriced offers. Because they are not brand-loyal, poor service or misaligned experiences often lead them to switch providers. According to Gardiner et al. (2014), Generation X is especially receptive to co-created travel experiences, such as customisable packages that give them a sense of control. Their preference for personalisation highlights the need for tour operators to design flexible, modular itineraries that allow Gen X travellers to craft their own journeys, enhancing satisfaction and perceived value.

Generation Y represents the most transformative force in contemporary tourism (Kalabova and Petru, 2021). As the largest and most digitally fluent generation, they have redefined how travel is marketed and consumed. These travellers desire meaningful, unique experiences that align with their values—especially sustainability, local authenticity, and social connection. They often favour experiences over material possessions and are willing to invest more in personalised travel that contributes to their identity and social capital. Millennials rely heavily on digital tools, peer reviews, and social media when planning travel. They demand transparent, rich, and easily accessible information. Their impatience with outdated platforms and rigid itineraries has forced the industry to embrace innovation. Parment (2013) notes a striking contrast between Boomers and Millennials in purchasing behaviour: while Boomers begin with a trusted seller, Millennials begin with the product and then seek providers. This generation is impulsive yet informed, social yet self-directed. They prefer to travel in groups but seek opportunities to interact with local cultures. The tourism industry must cater to Millennials through mobile-first communication, real-time feedback, and digital storytelling. Social media presence is critical, as they consume and generate travel content. Millennials are less loyal but highly influential than previous generations, amplifying their experiences across networks. Travel offerings must be visually appealing, ethically responsible, and shareable to generate engagement and advocacy.

Understanding the characteristics and behaviours of generational cohorts offers invaluable insights for tourism planning and marketing. Baby Boomers seek meaningful, well-organised cultural experiences that validate their life stage. Generation X values control, quality, and informed decision-making. Millennials, in contrast, prioritise personalisation, digital engagement, and authenticity. Tailoring tourism products to these generational expectations enhances customer satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term success in the competitive travel market. As the tourism landscape continues to evolve, integrating cohort analysis into strategy remains essential for connecting with travellers on a deeper, more personal level.

2 EMPIRICAL PART AND RESEARCH APPROACH

For the purpose of our research, we have set the following main research question and further developed hypotheses to support the research question: To what extent do generational values correlate with tourism product selection? We set the following hypothesis:

- H1: Younger tourists are more price-sensitive than older tourists.
- H2: There is no correlation between generation and trip duration.
- H3: Younger tourists are keener on selecting a city break style of travel.
- H4: Younger tourists are keener on selecting trips that offer them higher levels of autonomy during travelling.

For the purpose of this article, we have decided to go with a two-step approach to gathering and analysing the data. In the first step, we made a code book based on a catalogue of trips offered by the travel agency that shared their data with us. Seven different categories characterised each itinerary offered in the catalogue. The first category was departure date; through the dates, we determined if the departure was in pre-season, peak season, post-season or off-season. The second category was destination country - as the catalogue only included European destinations, we had all European countries as possible entries. For the third category of trips, we have divided the offer into the following options: city breaks, circular tours, thematic tours, and one-day trips. The fourth category was the length of the trip, where we simply counted the days on tour. The fifth category was the type of transportation used, where we split the trips between airplane, bus, and combination tours. The sixth category was the type of service, where we had standard options of all-inclusive, full board, half board, and overnight with breakfast. The final seventh category was levels of autonomy during the trip, where we divided the tours between those who have mostly pre-organised content and those where tourists could influence their itinerary mainly by their choices/preferences.

The second part of our research used the raw data provided by the travel agency. The dataset comprised a total of 9605 entries, including essential travel and demographic information such as traveller age, gender, destination, and departure date. These raw data were systematically filtered and encoded into a structured dataset for analysis. We calculated each traveller's age based on their date of birth, using June 30, as a fixed reference point to ensure consistency. We subsequently assigned them to generational cohorts (e.g., Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y, etc.) based on standardised age brackets.

This structured approach allowed for precisely segmenting tourism offerings, enabling us to match traveller profiles with travel preferences and extract generational trends. We have used the SPSS 24 statistical tool for all our analysis. The methodological rigour applied in data encoding ensured the accuracy and relevance of our subsequent statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

3 RESULTS

In the first step, we decided to perform a correlation analysis between different age groups and various travel characteristics determined by program itineraries, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation analysis between age groups and travel characteristics
(source: Own work, 2025)

Variable	Age
Price	,122**
Length of trip	,110**
Departure date	,030**

**p = < 0,01

The findings indicate statistically significant but modest positive correlations between age and all three observed travel variables. Specifically, a positive correlation was found between age and the trip price ($r = 0.122$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that older travellers prefer more expensive travel packages. Similarly, age was positively correlated with the length of the trip ($r = 0.110$, $p < 0.01$), implying that older individuals are more likely to participate in longer journeys. Lastly, a weaker but still

statistically significant correlation was found between age and departure date ($r = 0.030$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a slight tendency for older travellers to choose trips during certain times of the year.

Further, we wanted more detailed information on generational preferences and selected itinerary characteristics. For that reason, we have performed a series of cross-tabulation calculations. First, we were interested in how price-sensitive different generations are. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Price bracket comparison to different generations
(source: Own work, 2025)

Generation	Up to 99 EUR	from 100 to 249 EUR	from 250 to 499 EUR	from 500 to 749 EUR	from 750 to 999 EUR	1000 EUR or more
Baby boom	37,48%	48,44%	41,51%	54,27%	58,40%	61,45%
Gen X	43,56%	39,17%	46,72%	38,05%	34,51%	31,07%
Gen Y	18,96%	12,40%	11,77%	7,68%	7,09%	7,48%

Table 2 compares price preferences across three generational cohorts, revealing distinctive patterns in tourism spending behaviour. The data demonstrates a clear positive correlation between age and willingness to invest in higher-priced travel products. Baby Boomers show progressively increasing representation as price brackets rise, dominating the premium segments with 61,45% of purchases at €1000 or more—nearly double their presence in the lowest price category. Generation X exhibits a more balanced distribution across price points, with the strongest representation in the mid-range categories. Most notably, Generation Y (Millennials) demonstrates a pronounced inverse relationship with price, accounting for 18,96% of purchases in the lowest bracket but falling to just 7,48% in the high-end segment.

Further, we wanted to see how the length of travel corresponds with different generations, and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Length of trip and different generations
(source: Own work, 2025)

Generation	1 day	2-3 days	4-7 days	8 days or more
Baby boom	37,06%	45,57%	50,24%	55,97%
Gen X	43,60%	41,49%	40,05%	35,61%
Gen Y	19,33%	12,94%	9,71%	8,42%

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between trip duration and generational preferences. The data shows a clear positive correlation between age and preference for longer trips. Baby Boomers' representation steadily increased from 37,06% for single-day excursions to 55,97% for trips lasting 8 days or more. Generation X demonstrates relatively consistent participation across shorter to medium-length trips (43,60% for 1-day trips and 40,05% for 4-7-day trips) before declining to 35,61% for the longest duration category. Perhaps most striking is Generation Y's strong inverse relationship with trip length, with their participation dropping from 19,33% for single-day trips to merely 8,42% for extended vacations.

Next, we decided to investigate travel style and generations, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Travel style and generations
(source: Own work, 2025)

Generation	City Break	Circular tours	Thematic tours	One-day trips
Baby boom	33,42%	51,93%	67,81%	35,14%
Gen X	54,93%	37,19%	25,12%	44,29%
Gen Y	11,65%	10,88%	7,08%	20,57%

Table 4 provides valuable insights into the relationship between generational cohorts and travel style preferences; data shows that Baby Boomers demonstrate a strong preference for thematic tours (67.81%) and circular tours (51.93%), suggesting an inclination toward structured, comprehensive travel experiences with a cultural or historical focus. Generation X exhibits the highest representation

in city breaks (54.93%) and maintains substantial participation across all travel styles, particularly one-day trips (44.29%). Millennials show the strongest representation in one-day trips (20.57%), followed by city breaks (11.65%).

Ultimately, we also decided to investigate how much flexibility different generations seek when it comes to their itineraries. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Autonomy preferences and generations
(source: Own work, 2025)

Generation	Autonomy preference	
	Yes	No
Baby boom	3,7 %	96,3 %
Gen X	6,9 %	93,1 %
Gen Y	14,3 %	85,7 %

Table 5 reveals compelling insights into generational preferences for autonomy during travel experiences, demonstrating a clear inverse relationship between age and desire for independent exploration. The data shows that while the overall preference across all generations leans heavily toward guided experiences, there are meaningful differences in the degree of this preference. Generation Y exhibits the strongest inclination toward autonomy at 14,3%—nearly four times the rate of Baby Boomers (3,7%) and more than double that of Generation X (6,9%).

4 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant generational differences in tourism preferences, aligning with theoretical frameworks established in the literature. As Mannheim (1972) emphasised, generations are not merely defined by birth years but by shared socio-historical experiences during formative developmental stages. This concept is fundamental to understanding the observed variations in travel behaviours across Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y.

Our results support hypothesis *H1: Younger tourists are more price-sensitive than older tourists*, confirming that younger tourists demonstrate greater price sensitivity than their older counterparts. This finding corresponds with Špindler's (2018) characterisation of Generation Y as more price-conscious consumers. The Goldman Sachs Report (2016) similarly noted that Millennials exhibit less brand loyalty and higher price sensitivity than previous generations. The economic capacity of Baby Boomers, who benefited from post-war prosperity during their formative years (Howe & Strauss, 1991), likely contributes to their willingness to invest in premium travel experiences. This pattern illustrates how generational values formed during adolescence remain relatively stable throughout life and influence consumption choices, as Egri and Ralston (2004) and Parment (2011) suggested.

Contrary to hypothesis *H2: There is no correlation between generation and trip duration*, our study reveals a significant correlation between generation and trip duration, with younger travellers preferring shorter experiences. This finding can be understood through the lens of generational characteristics described by Parment (2013), who noted that Millennials approach purchasing decisions differently than Baby Boomers. The preference for briefer travel experiences among Generation Y aligns with Špindler's (2018) observation that this cohort demonstrates impatience and shorter attention spans resulting from constant digital stimulation. Conversely, having fulfilled major life responsibilities, Baby Boomers now possess both time and resources to engage in extended travel experiences (Patterson & Pegg, 2009).

Regarding hypothesis *H3: Younger tourists are keener on selecting a city break style of travel*, our findings reveal nuanced patterns in travel style preferences. While Generation Y prefers shorter trips, this does not necessarily translate to urban exploration as predicted. This complexity reflects what Schewe and Meredith (2004) described as the multifaceted nature of generational values. The varied preferences may stem from Generation Y's desire for meaningful, unique experiences that contribute to their identity and social capital, as Parment (2013) identified. Their travel choices appear more driven by experiential value than specific destination types.

The data also supports hypothesis *H4: Younger tourists are keener on selecting trips that offer them higher autonomy during traveling, demonstrating that younger tourists prefer higher autonomy during travel*. This progressive increase in desire for independence across generations aligns with Gardiner et al.'s (2014) observation that Generation X appreciates co-created travel experiences and

customisable packages that provide a sense of control. The preference for autonomy is even more pronounced among Millennials, who, according to Parment (2013), are self-directed consumers beginning their purchasing journey with the product rather than with trusted sellers. This trend reflects fundamental shifts in how generations approach travel, with younger cohorts valuing personalisation and flexibility over structured experiences.

These findings collectively reinforce the cohort imprinting theory highlighted by Holbrook and Schindler (1989), which suggests that preferences formed during adolescence remain stable across the lifespan. Baby Boomers, shaped by post-war optimism and economic growth, continue to seek quality and comprehensive experiences. Generation X is influenced by institutional uncertainty and technological transition, values control, and informed decision-making. Generation Y, formed in an era of digital ubiquity and global connectivity, prioritises autonomy, authenticity, and personalisation.

For the tourism industry, these results emphasise the importance of generational segmentation in product development and marketing strategies. As Lancaster and Stillman (2002) and Cohen (2002) noted regarding workplace preferences, generations also demonstrate distinct expectations in their consumption of tourism products. Understanding these generational differences is not merely academic but holds profound implications for creating tailored travel experiences that resonate with each cohort's unique values, expectations, and behaviours.

5 CONCLUSION

Our study investigated the research question: *To what extent do generational values correlate with tourism product selection?* Our findings demonstrate a significant correlation between generational cohorts and tourism preferences across multiple dimensions. Price sensitivity, trip duration, travel style, and desired autonomy all showed distinct generational patterns, confirming that values formed during formative years continue to influence travel consumer behaviour throughout life, as theorised by Mannheim (1972) and reinforced by Holbrook and Schindler (1989).

These findings hold significant implications for travel agency management as innovation is an essential factor in creating a sustainable competitive advantage for companies (Sarkar, Hazhar, Rawa and Rezhwan, 2024). We must understand that successful operation requires a change in market access philosophies and most certainly marketing activities to reach their target customers (Jagodič, 2021).

The apparent generational differences in tourism preferences suggest that agencies should develop segmented marketing strategies and product portfolios. For Baby Boomers, agencies should emphasise quality, educational value, and comprehensive experiences. For Generation X, flexible, modular itineraries that provide control while minimising risk would be appealing. For Generation Y, developing mobile-first platforms with customisable components and authentic experiences would enhance engagement. As Patterson and Pegg (2009) noted regarding Baby Boomers and our findings confirm across generations, understanding cohort-specific values enables travel agencies to create more targeted, satisfying travel products—ultimately improving customer loyalty and business sustainability in an increasingly competitive market.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. Data collection from a single travel agency, though providing a large sample size, may reflect agency-specific customer demographics or product offerings. Additionally, the focus exclusively on European destinations limits the generalizability of findings to broader international travel contexts. Cultural and regional variations in generational experiences, as highlighted by Schewe et al. (2000), may influence tourism preferences beyond what our European-focused data could capture.

Further research should explore these generational differences across diverse geographical contexts and travel segments. Longitudinal studies would be valuable in distinguishing between age-related and truly generational effects. Additionally, investigating how digital transformation reshapes generational travel behaviours, particularly among Generation Y, would provide insights into evolving market dynamics.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of artificial intelligence tools in developing this article. These tools assisted in specific calculations, enhanced grammatical accuracy, and helped to organise references. While artificial intelligence contributed to these aspects, all interpretations, conclusions, and potential errors remain solely the authors' responsibility.

References

- Berkup, S. B. (2014). Working With Generations X And Y In Generation Z Period: Management Of Different Generations In Business Life. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5, 218-229.
- Cohen, D. (2002). I/Os in the know offer insights on Generation X workers. *Monitor on Psychology*, 33, 66-67.
- Egri, C., & Ralston, D. (2004). Generation cohorts and personal values: a comparison of China and the United States. *Organization Science*, 15, 210-220.
- Gardiner, S., Grace, D., & King, C. (2014). The Generation Effect: The Future of Domestic Tourism in Australia. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(6), 705-720. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287514530810>
- Goldman Sachs Report. (2016). *Millennials: Coming of age*. Retrieved from <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/archive/millennials/>
- Gravett, L., & Trockmorton, R. (2007). *Bridging the generation gap*. Franklin Lakes: Career Press.
- Holbrook, M. B., & Schindler, R. M. (1989). Some Exploratory Findings on the Development of Musical Tastes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16, 119-124.
- Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (1991). *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. New York: Quill William Morrow.
- Jagodič, G. (2021). E-business and Marketing Activities for Online Shopping Support. *Mednarodno inovativno poslovanje= Journal of Innovative Business and Management*, 13(1), 29-39.
- Kalabova, M., & Petru, Z. (2021). Trends in the young generation travelling-the pilot research in the Czech Republic. *Mednarodno inovativno poslovanje= Journal of Innovative Business and Management*, 13(2), 93-105.
- Kupperschmidt, B. R. (2000). Multi-generation employees: Strategies for effective management. *Health Care Manager*, 19, 65-76.
- Lancaster, L. C., & Stillman, D. (2002). *When generations collide: Who they are. Why they clash. How to solve the generational puzzle at work*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Mannheim, K. (1972). The Problem of Generations. In Paul Kecskemeti (Ed.), *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (pp. 276-322). London: Routledge.
- Parment, A. (2011). *Generation Y in consumer and labour markets*. New York: Routledge.
- Parment, A. (2013). Generation Y vs. Baby Boomers: shopping behaviour, buyer involvement and implications for retailing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 20(2), 189-199.
- Patterson, I., & Pegg, S. (2009). Marketing the Leisure Experience to Baby Boomers and Older Tourists. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18(2), 254-272.
- Rejec, V. (2012). *Relevantnost dvofaktorske motivacijske teorije pri generaciji X in Y*. Fakulteta za uporabne in družbene študije v Novi Gorici.
- Sarkar, A. S., Hazhar, O. M., Rawa, A. M., & Rezhwan, F. O. (2024). The importance of product innovation in maintaining a competitive advantage. *Mednarodno inovativno poslovanje= Journal of Innovative Business and Management*, 16(2), 1-15.
- Schewe, C. D., & Meredith, G. E. (2004). Segmenting global markets by generational cohorts: determining motivations by age. *Henry Stewart Publications*.
- Schewe, C. D., Meredith, G. E., in Noble, S. M. (2000). Defining Moments: Segmenting by Cohorts. *Marketing Management*, 9(3), 48-53.
- Schuman, H., & Scott, J. (1989). Generations and Collective Memories. *American Sociological Review*, 54, 359-381.
- Špindler, T. (2018). The Influence of Generations and Their Values on Tourism Product Selection - Theoretical Overview. In M. Gorenak & A. Trdina (Eds.), *Responsible Hospitality: Inclusive, Active, Green* (pp. 165-192). Maribor: University of Maribor Press.