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CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES: INSIGHTS FROM BABY BOOMERS AND X, Y, Z GENERATIONAL SEGMENTS

This study aims to explore generational differences in consumer attitudes towards sustainable business practices of hospitality and tourism firms. The empirical study adopts a quantitative research methodology based on survey data collection technique using a self-administered questionnaire. ANOVA tests were conducted to determine significant differences between four tested groups. The Tukey HSD test was used to conduct detailed multiple Post-hoc comparative analysis. Findings suggest that there is a significant difference between four generations in their attitudes regarding community and nature-based sustainable business practices of hospitality and tourism companies, while there is no difference regarding eco-friendly business concepts.

This empirical quantitative research advances the generational theory as applied to hotel and restaurant business as well as tourism sectors by exploring behavioral differences and similarities between Baby boomers and X, Y, Z generational segments. On the other hand, it contributes empirical evidence to the holistic knowledge on generational consumer behavior in the under-researched context of Kazakhstan.

Key words: consumer behavior, consumer attitudes, sustainability-oriented business initiatives, baby boomers, X, Y, Z generations.

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Тұтынушылардың тұрақты бизнес-модельдерге деген мінез-құлқы: бэби-бумерлар және X, Y, Z ұрпақтары

Аталмыш зерттеу бэби-бумер және X, Y, Z ұрпақтарының қонақжайлылық және туризм кәсіпорындарда қолданылып жатқан тұрақты бизнес тәжірибелеріне қатысты аттитюдтарындағы айырмашылықтарды анықтауға бағытталған. Эмпирикалық зерттеуде сауалнамалық мәлімет жинау құралымен жүзеге асырылған сандық әдіс қолданылған. Жалпы іріктеме көлемі жас санаттары бойынша жіктелген 285 респондентті құрады. Тұтынушылардың төрт тобы арасындағы айырмашылықты анықтау мақсатында ANOVA – талдауы жүргізілді. Тереңдетілген салыстырмалық талдау барысында Tukey HSD тесті қолданылды.

Алынған нәтижелер төрт ұрпақтың қонақжайлылық пен туризм саласы кәсіпорындарының әлеуметтік бағыттағы және экологиялық жауапкершілікке негізделген бизнес тәжірибелеріне қатысты аттитюдтарында айтарлықтай айырмашылықтар бар екенін көрсетті. Төрт сегмент бойынша жіктелген топтар арасында экологиялық жауапкершілікпен байланысты бизнес тұжырымдамаларға қатысты айырмашылықтар анықталған жоқ. Аталмыш эмпирикалық сандық зерттеу бэби-бумерлар және X, Y, Z ұрпақтары арасындағы тұтынушылық мінез-құлқтық айырмашылықтар мен ұқсастықтарды тереңдете зерттей отырып, туризм, қонақ үй және ресторан бизнесі саласындағы ұрпақтар теориясын одан әрі дамытып, толықтыруға ғылыми үлес қосады. Зерттеу бизнес саласындағы пәнаралық ғылыми жұмыстардың мазмұнын Қазақстан контексіндегі әр түрлі ұрпақтар сегментінің тұтынушылық мінез-құлқы тұрғысындағы мәліметтермен толықтырады.

Түйін сөздер: тұтынушылардың мінез-құлқы, тұтынушылық аттитюдтар, тұрақты бизнес тұжырымдамасы, бэби-бумерлар, X, Y, Z ұрпақтары.

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Поведение потребителей по отношению к устойчивым бизнес-моделям: бэби-бумеры и поколения X, Y, Z

Данное исследование направлено на изучение различий между поколениями в потребительских аттитюдах к устойчивой деловой практике организаций гостеприимства и туризма. В эмпирическом исследовании применяется количественная методология, основанная на методике сбора данных посредством анкетирования. Общий объем выборки составил 285 респондентов, поделенных на подгруппы в зависимости от возрастных категорий. Проведен ANOVA-анализ в целях определения существенных различий между четырьмя тестируемыми группами. Для проведения детальных многократных сравнений применялись поэтапные сопоставления с использованием теста Tukey HSD.

Результаты показали, что между четырьмя поколениями существуют значительные различия в отношении к социально ответственным и природоохранным практикам ведения бизнеса в компаниях индустрии гостеприимства и туризма. В отношении экологически безопасных бизнес-концепций существенных различий между группами не обнаружено. Данное эмпирическое количественное исследование развивает и дополняет ряд исследований по изучению теории поколений применительно к туризму, гостиничному и ресторанному бизнесу путем детального анализа потребительско-поведенческих различий и сходств между бэби-бумерами и поколениями X, Y, Z. Более того исследование дополняет эмпирическими данными знания о потребительском поведении различных поколений в контексте Казахстана.

Ключевые слова: поведение потребителей, аттитюды потребителей, устойчивый бизнес, бэби-бумеры, поколения X, Y, Z.

Introduction

Sustainable business concepts are becoming increasingly important for hospitality business sectors and tourism companies over the past several decades. A greater number of hotels are intensively investing in eco-friendly technologies, which in turn positively affects customer satisfaction and individual guest experiences. Building a sustainable corporate culture and client-oriented strategies cumulatively ensures business advantages and steady competitiveness in today's dynamic market and significantly increases the efficiency of marketing strategies. Modern consumers, for instance, younger Y and Z generations are considered to be more socially and environmentally active, therefore hospitality and tourism firms rely on sustainable reputation while targeting those segments.

In the modern hospitality business and tourism industry a customer market is dominated by three main demographic segments or generations such as the "Baby boomers", "generation X" and "generation Y", while "generation Z" is growing as a powerful potential segment. In current conditions designing new strategies able to attract and satisfy generational consumer segments is becoming important in almost any business sectors (Maletin, 2017). In this regard, the main focus lies on understanding and learning the perceptions and

attitudes of generations towards different types of services and guest experiences offered by tour operating companies and hospitality sectors, due to the powerful purchasing power of these consumer segments. Each generation has individual features, since any generation is born and formed in a specific historical period and is determined by specific socio-cultural as well as behavioural characteristics (Maletin, 2017). Values, attitudes and priorities acquired in youth are preserved unchanged during the entire life. Each of these generations has different needs and expectations in consuming hospitality services or tourism products. The service industries are now facing new problems due to changes in guest behavior patterns that require new approaches to marketing sustainable products and services.

Analysis of behaviouristic multi-generational models is a relatively new direction in Tourism studies or Hospitality research. Although there is a number of works investigating behaviour of various generations in tourism, most of them are fragmented and none of them is able to provide an integral representation of the contemporary consumer behaviour. Moreover, a multi-group analysis is still insufficient. Especially, there is a little knowledge on this issue from sustainability perspectives and the case of emerging Generation Z is still neglected. There is an insufficient industrial knowledge comprehensively describing sustainable

orientations and responsible consumption patterns of four main generational segments in hospitality and tourism. On the other hand, there is only scarce information on Generation Z in general and their sustainable behaviour in particular. This gap has complicated the decision making process and strategic marketing in the field of tourism and hospitality related business sectors, consequently it hinders future industrial projections on sustainable travel and tourism consumption trends. In this regard, this study aims to explore generational differences in consumer attitudes towards sustainable business practices of hospitality companies or tourism firms by the application of the ANOVA test supplemented by the Tukey HSD test.

Literature Review

Over the recent decades there has been an increasing attention to theoretical concepts and issues of sustainability from different realms of research. Due to the theoretical and practical importance the “sustainability” term is considered to be a highly relevant topic not only in business research, but also from a practical point of view, consequently responsible business terms are comprehensively studied from various perspectives, including management (e.g. Koster, 2017; Mariadoss et al., 2016), institutional theory (e.g. Raab, Baloglu Chen, 2017), entrepreneurship (e.g. Gagnon Heinrichs, 2016; Sehnem, 2016), hospitality and tourism (e.g. Prud’homme Raymond, 2013; Sigala, 2014), marketing (e.g. Hurst, 2008), and consumer behaviour (e.g. Kessous, Boncori Paché, 2016; Hume, 2010). Comprising complex dimensions such as economic responsibility, social conscience and environmental care the sustainable business concept functions as a strategic tool leading to a competitive advantage, therefore a modern tourism sector and hospitality enterprises tend to adapt sustainable development practices. For instance, the hospitality sector is intensively implementing sustainability efforts mainly within the environmentally friendly policies based on eco-certification, recycling and energy efficiency. Furthermore, the international tourism market offers different variety of environmentally as well as socially sustainable products well known as ecological, rural, agricultural, heritage or community-based tourism forms. In this regard, a global hospitality sector and tourism market has to clearly understand how modern consumers respond to these changes.

Based on in-depth analysis of existing theoretical materials we argue that in spite of an increasing number of scientific discussions on generational

behavior in marketing and hospitality-related literature, the majority of studies are conceptually disintegrated. Consequently, current works and existing theoretical elaborations have a weak inductive and integrative power to contribute to comprehensive knowledge in the area of sustainable consumption as well as generational behavior. In general, majority of studies considering generational differences are devoted to workforce issues in tourism and hospitality research (e.g. Barron, Leask Fyall, 2014; Gursoy, Chi Karadag, 2013; Gursoy, Chi Maier, 2008), while others examined preferences and destination choices (Vukic et al., 2015; Rishi, Jauhari Joshi, 2015). Despite a sufficient number of empirical evidences and industrial research devoted to primary generations (“Silent Generation”, “Baby Boomers”, “Generation X” and “Generation Y”), justified knowledge and up-to-date information able to give new insights on behavioural intentions, perceptions or attitudes of Generation Z still remains missing (Li, Li Hudson, 2013). Experts, business analysts as well as practitioners of Horwath HTL – the leading consulting company in hospitality industry tend to give high priority to Y and Z generations as potentially growing consumer segments. As it is highlighted by industrial projections service companies have to understand behavioural dimensions and respond to special travel needs of both consumer segments (Tutek et al., 2015).

The modern tourism sector, hotel business including restaurant and service industry is distinguished by multi-generational consumers (Li, Li Hudson, 2013; Glover, 2010). According to the classification suggested by Li, Li Hudson (2013) consumers of a contemporary global travel and hospitality market mainly consists of Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, X and Y Generations. These consumer groups vary considerably in their intrinsic motivations, personal perceptions, individual interests and attitudes. For instance, McMahan (2010) claims that Generation Y compared to Generation X demonstrates a more positive attitude towards sustainability, and also they are more willing to pay relatively higher prices for sustainable offerings. Focusing on a travel mindset of customers and potential consumers Gardiner, Grace and King (2014) discovered differences between X and Y generations and Baby Boomers and how this diversity influences tourism demand. Based on the literature review the following three hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant difference in attitudes of Baby boomers, generations X, Y and Z towards community-based business concepts.

H2: There is a significant difference in attitudes of Baby boomers, generations X, Y and Z towards eco-friendly business concepts.

H3: There is a significant difference in attitudes of Baby boomers, generations X, Y and Z towards nature-based business concepts.

The objective of this study is to generate a contemporary understanding on how modern consumers will respond to sustainable practices of companies. Following this logic, the central research question is formulated as “Do we need to develop new marketing approaches?”. In this respect the study contributes in three directions. First, it advances the generational theory as applied to hospitality business and tourism sectors by exploring behavioural differences and similarities between Baby boomers and X, Y, Z generational segments. Second, it fills the theoretical as well as practical gaps from sustainability perspectives. Third, the analysis is framed into study of emerging (Kazakhstan) economies, which in turn shows the contextual originality of the research.

Methodology

The empirical study adopts a quantitative research methodology based on a survey data collection technique. The survey enables gathering extensive data and comprehensive information about consumers’ attitudes from the local tourism sector or hospitality markets. Data were collected in Almaty region through on-line survey platforms partially by physical distribution of self-administered questionnaires. Questions implying attitudes were measured by 5-points Likert scale: 1 – strongly disagree; 2 – agree; 3 – neither agree nor disagree; 4 -agree; and 5 – strongly agree. The research applied a random sampling technique. The sample size was calculated as 100 for each group of generations which is in total amounted to 400 potential respondents. Potential respondents are classified into 4 groups depending on their age:

Baby Boomers a consumer segment born in a period between 1946-1964;

Generation X a consumer segment born in a period between 1965-1980;

Generation Y a consumer segment born in a period between 1981-1995;

Generation Z a consumer segment born in a period between 1996-2012.

An average response rate was 96%, 86%, 60% and 43%, respectively, for generation Z, generation Y, generation X and Baby Boomers (see Tables 1, 2 and 3) and in total 285 high quality

questionnaires were selected. At the next stage the data were analyzed by SPSS. Initial data were tested for reliability. The test showed Cronbach alpha 0.76 (the internal consistency coefficient), which justifies the reliability of data. The ANOVA tests were conducted to determine significant differences between four tested groups. The Post-hoc analysis was used to conduct detailed multiple comparisons relying on the Tukey HSD test.

Results and discussion

A one-way ANOVA-analysis was used to explore investigate attitudes of four main generational segments towards eco-friendly business concepts in tourism and hospitality sectors, as measured by 5-points Likert scale. Respondents were divided into 4 groups according to their age. There is a statistically significant difference at the $p = 0.05$ for the four generational groups: $F = 7.017$, $p = 0.00$. The Tukey HSD multi group test revealed that the mean score for Generation Z ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.227$) substantially differs from Generation Y ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.079$), Generation X ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.041$) and Baby Boomers ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.950$). Generation Y do not differ significantly from either Generation X or Baby Boomers and there is no significant difference between Generation X and Baby Boomers in their personal perceived attitudes regarding community-based business concepts (See Table 1).

Findings suggest that Generation Z considerably differs from Y and X generations as well as Baby Boomers in their attitudes towards community-based sustainable business practices of hospitality and tourism companies. Moreover, Generation Z is less concerned about community development as compared to other generations, which may imply that this category of consumers possibly will not be interested in hospitality or tourism offerings such as rural accommodation, farm hotels, and heritage, culture, folk or rural tourism.

As a result of testing the second hypothesis the findings indicate that there is no statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ for analysed 4 groups of potential consumers: $F = 2,222$, $p = 0.086$. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test also should that tested groups do not differ significantly from each other. It means that all generational segments demonstrate similar negative attitude ($M = 3.8-3.9$ out of 5) towards eco-friendly business practices of hospitality and tourism firms justified by mean scores: 2.73 (Gen Z), 3.19 (Gen Y), 2.90 (Gen X), 2.79 (BB) distributed for each group respectively.

Table 1 – ANOVA and Tukey HSD Test of attitudes towards community-based business

ONEWAY DESCRIPTIVES								
Tested Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Generation Z (1996-2012)	96	3,27	1,227	,125	3,02	3,52	1	5
Generation Y (1981-1995)	86	3,81	1,079	,116	3,58	4,05	1	5
Generation X (1965-1980)	60	3,97	1,041	,134	3,70	4,24	1	5
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	43	3,95	,950	,145	3,66	4,25	2	5
Total	285	3,68	1,141	,068	3,55	3,82	1	5
ONEWAY ANOVA								
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance			
Between Groups	25,757	3	8,586	7,017	,000			
Within Groups	343,822	281	1,224					
Total	369,579	284						
MULTIPLE COMPARISONS: Tukey HSD Test								
(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval			
Generation Z (1996-2012)	Generation Y (1981-1995)	-,543*	,164	,006	-,97	-,12		
	Generation X (1965-1980)	-,696*	,182	,001	-1,17	-,23		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	-,683*	,203	,005	-1,21	-,16		
Generation Y (1981-1995)	Generation Z (1996-2012)	,543*	,164	,006	,12	,97		
	Generation X (1965-1980)	-,153	,186	,845	-,63	,33		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	-,140	,207	,906	-,67	,39		
Generation X (1965-1980)	Generation Z (1996-2012)	,696*	,182	,001	,23	1,17		
	Generation Y (1981-1995)	,153	,186	,845	-,33	,63		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	,013	,221	1,000	-,56	,58		
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	Generation Z (1996-2012)	,683*	,203	,005	,16	1,21		
	Generation Y (1981-1995)	,140	,207	,906	-,39	,67		
	Generation X (1965-1980)	-,013	,221	1,000	-,58	,56		

Note – compiled by the author based on results of the research

As it has been shown by findings hospitality and tourism firms would expect a negative tendency in consumer demand for eco-friendly concepts and services such as green hotels, ecotourism or organic

food certification. Companies initiating responsible business practices are recommended to implement a more generation-specific approach to marketing hospitality and tourism offerings.

Table 2 – ANOVA and Tukey HSD Test of attitudes towards eco-friendly business concepts

ONEWAY DESCRIPTIVES								
Tested Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Generation Z (1996-2012)	96	2,73	1,277	,130	2,47	2,99	1	5
Generation Y (1981-1995)	86	3,19	1,222	,132	2,92	3,45	1	5
Generation X (1965-1980)	60	2,90	1,298	,168	2,56	3,24	1	5
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	43	2,79	1,125	,171	2,44	3,14	1	5
Total	285	2,91	1,251	,074	2,77	3,06	1	5
ONEWAY ANOVA								
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance		
Between Groups		10,309	3	3,436	2,222	0,086		
Within Groups		434,498	281	1,546				
Total		444,807	284					
MULTIPLE COMPARISONS: Tukey HSD Test								
(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval			
Generation Z (1996-2012)	Generation Y (1981-1995)	-,457	,185	,066	-,93	,02		
	Generation X (1965-1980)	-,171	,205	,838	-,70	,36		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	-,062	,228	,993	-,65	,53		
Generation Y (1981-1995)	Generation Z (1996-2012)	,457	,185	,066	-,02	,93		
	Generation X (1965-1980)	,286	,209	,521	-,25	,83		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	,395	,232	,324	-,20	1,00		
Generation X (1965-1980)	Generation Z (1996-2012)	,171	,205	,838	-,36	,70		
	Generation Y (1981-1995)	-,286	,209	,521	-,83	,25		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	,109	,248	,971	-,53	,75		
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	Generation Z (1996-2012)	,062	,228	,993	-,53	,65		
	Generation Y (1981-1995)	-,395	,232	,324	-1,00	,20		
	Generation X (1965-1980)	-,109	,248	,971	-,75	,53		
Note – compiled by the author based on results of the research								

At the final stage of hypothesis testing attitudes of generations towards nature-based business concepts were analysed. According to the results received on an initial stage of a descriptive analysis there is a significant difference between four generational groups: $F = 2.708$, $p = 0.04$. Post-hoc comparisons showed that the mean score for Generation Z ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.178$) to a substantial extent diverts from Baby Boomers ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.934$). On the

other hand, the test indicates that Generation Y ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.123$) does not differ significantly from either Z ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.178$) and X ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.248$) generations or Baby Boomers ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.934$). Figures indicate that Generation X ($M = 3.03$) and Baby Boomers ($M = 3.28$) are more interested in nature-based business concepts as compared to generation Z ($M = 2.71$) or Y ($M = 2.91$).

Table 3 – ANOVA and Tukey HSD Test of attitudes towards nature-based business concepts

ONEWAY DESCRIPTIVES								
Tested Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Generation Z (1996-2012)	96	2,71	1,178	,120	2,47	2,95	1	5
Generation Y (1981-1995)	86	2,91	1,123	,121	2,67	3,15	1	5
Generation X (1965-1980)	60	3,03	1,248	,161	2,71	3,36	1	5
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	43	3,28	,934	,142	2,99	3,57	1	5
Total	285	2,92	1,154	,068	2,79	3,06	1	5
ONEWAY ANOVA								
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance			
Between Groups	10,628	3	3,543	2,708	,046			
Within Groups	367,674	281	1,308					
Total	378,302	284						
MULTIPLE COMPARISONS: Tukey HSD Test								
(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval			
Generation Z (1996-2012)	Generation Y (1981-1995)	-,199	,170	,647	-,64	,24		
	Generation X (1965-1980)	-,325	,188	,312	-,81	,16		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	-,571*	,210	,035	-1,11	-,03		
Generation Y (1981-1995)	Generation Z (1996-2012)	,199	,170	,647	-,24	,64		
	Generation X (1965-1980)	-,126	,192	,913	-,62	,37		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	-,372	,214	,304	-,92	,18		
Generation X (1965-1980)	Generation Z (1996-2012)	,325	,188	,312	-,16	,81		
	Generation Y (1981-1995)	,126	,192	,913	-,37	,62		
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	-,246	,229	,705	-,84	,34		

ONEWAY DESCRIPTIVES								
Tested Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Generation Z (1996-2012)	96	2,71	1,178	,120	2,47	2,95	1	5
Generation Y (1981-1995)	86	2,91	1,123	,121	2,67	3,15	1	5
Generation X (1965-1980)	60	3,03	1,248	,161	2,71	3,36	1	5
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	43	3,28	,934	,142	2,99	3,57	1	5
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)		Generation Z (1996-2012)	,571*	,210	,035	,03	1,11	
		Generation Y (1981-1995)	,372	,214	,304	-,18	,92	
		Generation X (1965-1980)	,246	,229	,705	-,34	,84	

Note – compiled by the author based on results of the research

Conclusion

Service-oriented industries can efficiently target their market if they have extensive knowledge about generational behavior, because generation-focused marketing tends to be the most efficient and effective instrument of selling right products or services according to individual needs of modern consumers. Modern consumers are becoming more knowledgeable and the majority of experienced consumers are skeptical of advertising and marketing. Baby boomers or X, Y and Z generations are differently affected by marketing strategies, therefore hospitality and tourism companies are expected to rely on new approaches to multigenerational segments. An innovative approach to marketing and advertising strategies is extremely required in attracting different generational segments. With a better understanding of the needs of generational consumer segments, hotel or tourism managers and restaurant owners

will be able to optimize their costs and gain additional competitive advantages.

Based on the research results hospitality and tourism firms are suggested to target Baby Boomers by nature-oriented products or services. In all likelihood, community-based business concepts will be suitable for the generation X. Targeting generation Y by eco-friendly business practices will be the most efficient strategy for service sectors. A new growing generational segment represented by Z-consumers needs to be deeply investigated, because the study does not reveal any strongly pronounced preferences in their behavior. Generation Z is a potential unique opportunity for business, which needs to be exploited through an extensive marketing research and totally different marketing strategies.

The findings provide empirical evidence and directions that could help marketers, managers and business owners to identify important differences in consumer behavior and develop more efficient consumer empowerment strategies on the Kazakhstani market.

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