

NOSTALGIA AND DESTINATION CHOICE AMONG GENERATIONS

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Abstract

It is the first time in history of humanity that five generations with so different preferences are living together in today's challenging world. Travel habits and tastes are shaped by nostalgia, which has a significant impact on destination selections for all age groups. This study looks at how Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z and Alpha Generation choose their travel destinations based on sentimental longings for the past.

The aim of this paper is to research the common attitudes and differences in the preferences of travel destinations among Baby Boomer, X, Y, Z, and Alpha Generation and the role that nostalgia plays. Knowing these subtle differences across generations makes it easier to customize tourism marketing methods, making sure that tourist locations emotionally connect with visitors and eventually increasing their happiness and loyalty.

Keywords: *nostalgia; generations; travel destinations; travel preferences; baby boomer; generation X.*

JEL Codes: *Z30, Z32, J10.*

Introduction

Across generations, nostalgia has a significant impact on travel habits and destination preferences. The draw of going back to locations associated with treasured memories and nontangible goods can be overwhelming for many people. People of all ages are drawn to places that remind them of their family or personal past and provide a reassuring sense of belonging (Russell, 2008, pp. 105-106). Travel decisions motivated by nostalgia vary between generations, reflecting broader socioeconomic shifts and advances in technology. Destinations that provide a feeling of continuity with their history, like historical monuments or places they spent their childhood vacations, may appeal to older generations. Younger generations, on the other hand, might be just as nostalgic but also look for new experiences, so they would travel to places that combine historical relevance

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with contemporary conveniences. According to Yuleva, at the heart of this is, the tourist business which delivers value on the market and applies creative approaches and innovation in meeting the needs and solving the problems of younger consumers (Yuleva, 2019, p.71). The way nostalgia and modern travel styles interact shows how different generations are connecting to their past in different ways through the destinations they choose to visit.

Literature review

Belonging to a generation

A generation is a cohort-group whose limits are set by peer personality and whose length roughly corresponds to the duration of a stage of life. This definition given by Strauss and Howe has the basic elements of the length of a generational cohort-group, and second, its peer personality (1991, p.60). The explanation about the duration of a generational group varies among scientists – some think that the duration should be based on the average age of parenthood, others on the 22 years length of a phase of life in terms of central social roles (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p.60), while over 150 American sociologists say they oppose not labeling generations (Todorov, 2024, p.1). According to the author, the duration is based on a certain historical period that has common economic, technological and socio-political characteristics. For the research aim of this study, the author follows the categorization made by Strauss and Howe (1991), and Sima (2016, pp. 471-472).

Table no 1- Generational Categorization

	GENERATION	BIRTHYEARS	AGE IN 1991	AGE IN 2013	AGE IN 2024
1.	<i>Missionary</i>	1860-1882	109 +	(not alive)	(not alive)
2.	<i>Los</i>	1883-1900	91-108	(not alive)	(not alive)
3.	<i>G.I.</i>	1901-1924	67-90	89-112	100+
4.	<i>Silent</i>	1925-1942	49-66	71-88	82-99
5.	<i>Baby Boomers</i>	1943-1960	31-48	53-70	81-64
6.	<i>Thirteenth (X)</i>	1961-1980	11-30	33-52	44-63
7.	<i>Millennial (Y)</i>	1981-2000	0-10	13-32	24-43
8.	<i>Generation Z</i>	2001- 2009	(not born)	4-12	15-23
9.	<i>Generation Alpha (A)</i>	2010-2021	(not born)	0-3	3-14
10.	<i>Pre-war III Gen</i>	2022-ongoing	(not born)	(not born)	0-3

Source: Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991)/ Sima, C. (2016)/ McCrindle, M., & Wolfinger, E. (2010)/ Modified by the author (2024).

Table 1 shows the generations typology by timeframe with average 17,3 years per period. The start of the war in Ukraine on February 2022, continuing with the Israel-Palestinian war on October 2023, the tensions in Middle East till today, as well as the bank

collapse, the ongoing challenges posed by inflation, the volatile stock markets, lead the author to name the generation from 2022 and on as “*Pre-war III Generation*”. This is based on identifying common geopolitical and economic characteristics with the period before II World War.

Different generations have different education, family experience, money dealing (Patterson, 2012, p.1), work ethic, communication styles, business focus, leadership style, training, development and values. Many researches on shifts and variations in values have been published, drawing on the extensive international value surveys, like World Values Survey and European Values Study (Slagsvold & Hansen, 2021, p.158). Age, gender, education and income are some of the variables that influence people’s value priorities (Schwartz, 2007, p. 162) and educational institution’s role to establish favorable and stimulating environments for learning is equally significant as students' motivation and personal talents (Chahinez & Meriem, 2023, p.3). Involvement of universities as well in training and supporting student entrepreneurs represents a key opportunity to foster innovation and knowledge transfer to the new generations (Bilal, Moussa & Farid, 2024, p.67).

Nostalgia

The word “*nostalgia*” comes from the French word “*nostalgie*” (Consciousness, 2022). The word was designed in Neo-Latin, in 1688, by the Swiss Johannes Hofer, wanting to convey the German word *Heimweh* (*Heim* = *home*, *Weh* = *pain*), the feeling of mental pain felt by the German or Swiss mercenaries who plowed Europe away from their special homeland. Hofer used the Greek building words, *nostos* (*νόστος*=*returning home*) and *algos* (*ἄλγος* =*pain*), but in Greek the word “*nostalgia*” did not appear until the 19th century (Sarantakos, 2023, p.1). In terms of the existing literature, nostalgia has received most attention from folklore, psychoanalytic psychologists and sociologists with interests in trends in culture and society (Brown, Humphreys, 2002, p.6).

According to Russell (2008, p. 104) there are two types of nostalgic tourists: real and historical. The first tourist is the one who seeks to revisit their cultural environment from past period and live again old experiences. The second type of tourist is one who travels to witness an idealized cultural setting that they have only heard about or read about indirectly (via books, movies, or stories, for example). The first type is associated with the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers and Generation X, while the second one with the Y, Z and A.

More specifically, the Silent Generation (Jõesalu, 2018, p.2-3) and the Baby Boomers go back to places associated with their early years in an effort to relive special moments Furno-Lamude, 1994, p.130). Travel preferences of Generation X exhibit a blend of nostalgia and novelty for places that they have already been (Sieler, 2017, p.10).

Millennials are drawn to places that are highlighted in popular media or that remind them of their childhood because they are motivated by a combination of digital culture and nostalgia (Sofronov, 2018, p. 112-113). As about Generation Z and A digital culture and media have a bigger impact (Kamboj & Sharma, 2016, p.76-77), despite of the fact that these generations are losing ground regarding press independence (Wilberg, 2022, p.18).

In relevance with the generation in the research that follows there would be examine the correlation of nostalgia with the preference for destinations with historical or personal significance.

Methodology

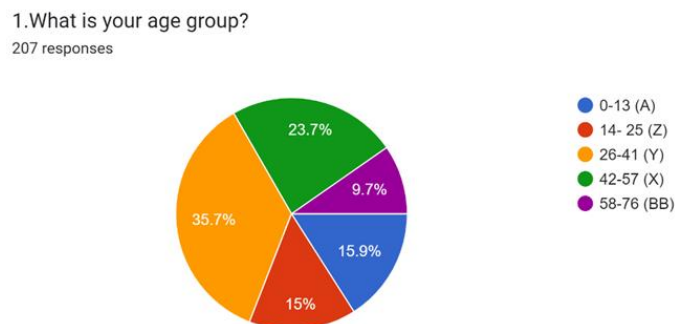
For the purposes of the research, a quantitative study was conducted among Baby Boomers, X, Y, Z, and people from Alpha Generation in order to identify common attitudes and differences in the preferences of travel destinations based on sentimental longings for the past. The research was conducted in the period March-June 2024, using an online anonymous questionnaire via Google forms, having 207 respondents. The hypotheses that were set about “Nostalgia and destination choice” are:

- H1: Nostalgia plays a more significant role in travel destination choice for older generations (X, BB).
- H2: Preference for relaxation and leisure is more common among older generations (X, BB), while younger generations (A, Z, Y) prefer more adventurous and physically demanding activities.

Research Analysis and Discussion

Regarding the respondent’s age, about 1/3 of them belong to the age of group 26-41 while almost 25% of the participants belong to the age group 42-57.

Figure no. 1 Age group

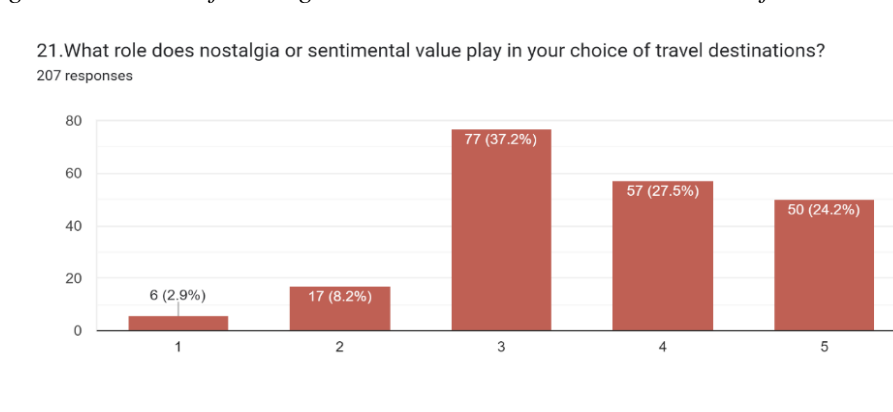


Source: Author’s research (2024)

They are followed by participants who state that they belong to the age group of 0-13 (15.9%) and 14-25 (15%) respectively. Finally, the minority of the sample belongs to the age group of 58-76.

Based on the percentages of responses in Figure 2, it appears that the majority of people (52%) somewhat or completely agree that nostalgia or sentimental value plays a role in the choice of travel destinations. 1/3 of people in the sample agree to a moderate degree. When examine the ages of responders the majority is part of the Baby Boomers and Generation X. The small percentage (11%), which do not agree or only slightly agree with the question's statement belongs to Gen Z and Alpha. The hypothesis made that nostalgia plays a more significant role in travel destination choice for older generations is confirmed.

Figure no. 2 Role of nostalgia or sentimental value in the choice of travel destination



Source: Author's research (2024)

The following question relates to the adaptability of travelers to changes due to unexpected events. About 1/5 of respondents answered that they remain calm and adaptable in the changes, which is the highest percentage (19,3%) in the sample. Next is the 15% of respondents who keep essential documents and contact information easily accessible in case of emergencies. Then, with almost the same percentage is the answer in which respondents consult with locals or hotel staff for recommendations on alternative activities or routes. This is followed by 2 groups of respondents with exactly the same percentage (11.1%), where the first group is preparing to change accommodation or transportation options if necessary and the second group are those who are open to embracing unexpected changes and turning them into new opportunities for exploration or discovery. The Baby Boomers, representatives of Generations X and Y gave the biggest part of answers until here. A few only use technology to stay connected and informed about changing

circumstances, from whom Generation Alpha representatives are the majority. A smaller percentage (7.2 %) is considering alternative modes of transportation in case of disruptions to flights or trains, here we can see a variety of generations. Then, follow who take advantage of travel insurance policies that offer coverage for trip interruptions or cancellations (12 respondents), most of them are from the Silent Generation. Reaching the even smaller percentages –the Baby Boomers and Silent Generation, there are those who said they collaborate with travel companions to make collective decisions and adjustments to plans and those who have a contingency fund available for unexpected expenses related to travel disruptions.

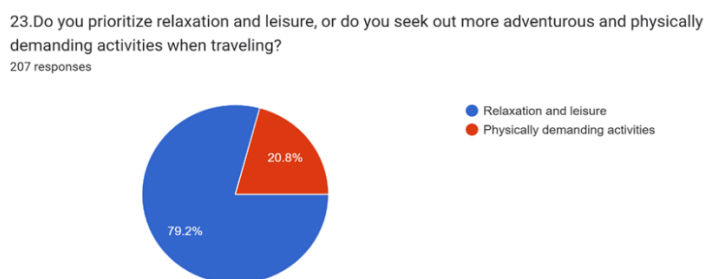
Figure no. 3 Readiness for adaptation in travel changing circumstances



Source: Author's research (2024)

Based on the percentages of responses presented in Figure 3, it appears that an overwhelming majority, namely 4/5 of the total sample, is in need of relaxation and leisure and gives priority to this part, while only 1/5 of the respondents prefer to seek out more adventurous and physically demanding activities.

Figure no. 4 Relaxation or physically demanding activities?



Source: Author's research (2024)

According to the research's data the hypothesis made that preference for relaxation and leisure is more common among older generations -Silent, X, and Baby Boomers, while younger generations -A, Z and Y prefer more adventurous and physically demanding activities is confirmed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Generational differences in choices for destinations are largely due to nostalgia, with each generation displaying particular preferences based on their own historical and cultural backgrounds. Baby Boomers frequently look for travel destinations that let them re-establish ties to their past, going to locations that conjure special recollections or momentous historical occurrences from their early years. This generation is inclined to return to locations where they have important life experiences because they value the emotional comfort and familiarity that nostalgia travel destinations offer. They love travel locations that have both fresh experiences and nostalgic appeal. This generation looks for fresh travel destinations that provide their own families with distinctive cultural and recreational experiences, but they also frequently return to family holiday spots from their youth. The combination of the ancient and the new speaks to their need for development and continuity, which is appropriate given their position as a bridge between two periods. Millennials combine nostalgia with the need for experiences worthy of social media, which is why they frequently select locations that are praised in the media or that bring back childhood memories.

Despite being the generation least affected by nostalgia, Generation Z nevertheless has a tendency toward vintage fashion and vacation choices that are shaped by family. Their travel decisions are frequently influenced by a blend of traditional tales and modern fads. Travelers' stronger ties and loyalty are fostered by the travel industry's ability to create customized marketing tactics that meet their emotional and experiential demands based on an understanding of these generational preferences.

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