

Generation Y and Z Destination Attractiveness Attributes

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Recommended Citation

Jackson-Macon, I. & Ogbeide, G-C. (2020). Generation Y and Z Destination Attractiveness Attributes. *Events and Tourism Review*, 3(1), 26-31.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore Generation Y and Z perceptions of destination attractiveness (DA) and their propensity to visit a destination. The objectives of this research include examining which destination attractiveness factors are critical to Generation Y, and Z tourists, and to compare and contrast Generation Y and Z attractiveness factors to other tourists. College students and recent graduates from multiple universities in the USA were surveyed for this study. The results of this study will contribute to the existing knowledge in the areas of destination marketing and management.

Keywords: Destination Attractiveness, Cultural and Heritage Resources, Natural Resources, General Infrastructure, Hospitality, Generation Y and Z

Introduction

Destination attractiveness and competitiveness factors are very critical for tourism development (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). The sample for most of the past studies on destination attractiveness and competitiveness includes tourists (mostly middle-aged adults) who have visited the specific destinations or both local and national tourists who visited the area. The aforementioned tourists usually respond to questionnaires regarding the destination competitiveness indicators chosen for the study (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008; Crouch 2011; Gupta & Singh, 2015; Law & Lo, 2016). Based on previous studies, it could be surmised that there is a critical need to identify the destination attractiveness factors to attract “future” tourists (Generation Y and Z) to destinations.

Literature Review

There are many factors in various research models used to explore destination attractiveness and competitiveness (Crouch, 2011; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Some of the popular factors consist of core resources, culture, demand conditions, destination management, natural resources, and infrastructure (Crouch, 2011; Dwyer et al., 2004; Gupta & Singh, 2015; Hassan, 2009; Hong, 2009). Some researchers indicated that natural resources and cultural/heritage resources are some of the best resources and destination competitive indicators for attracting tourists (Crouch, 2011; Dwyer et al., 2004; Gupta & Singh, 2015; Hong, 2009; Law & Lo, 2016). Some of the core resources such as shopping, entertainment, and the domestic environment of a destination were not so important for destination competitiveness (Gupta & Singh, 2015; Hong, 2009). However, Generation Y tends to be attracted to meetings and events through entertainment (Ogbeide et al., 2013). Thus, there is a need to determine the factors that attract Generation Y and Z to destinations.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore Generation Y and Z perceptions of destination attractiveness. The objectives of this study include the following:

1. Determine Generation Y and Z critical destination attractiveness factors
2. Compare and contrast Generation Y and Z's attractiveness factors to other tourists

Methodology

Population and Sample Selection

The target population for this study was Generation Y and Z potential travelers in the Midwestern part of the USA. The instrument for this study was adapted from literature (Gomezelj & Mihalic, 2008; Gupta & Singh, 2015). All the questions, except the demographic and psychographic questions, were based on a 7-point Likert scale instrument. The survey questions intended to measure how much each participant agreed or disagreed with the extent to which each statement represented his/her perception of destination attractiveness and propensity to visit a destination. A section of the instrument focused on the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the participants. The validity of the instrument was based on a panel of experts, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to justify its reliability. Data were collected online, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 for Windows, a product of SPSS, Inc. was used for data analysis. Other tourist destination attractiveness factors were based on the literature review.

Result and Discussion

The results of this study indicated the top 15 destination attractiveness attributes (Table 1). The results also indicated eight critical destination attractiveness factors and their mean ranking (Table 2). The similarities and differences within the findings of this study as compared to previous studies indicated eight destination attractiveness factors for US Generation Y and Z, domestic Indian tourists, and international tourists to India. These findings showed that "cultural and heritage resources" are the most important destination attractiveness factors. Other important factors between the three groups are cultural and heritage resources, hospitality, and general infrastructure. The least important factor between the three groups is entertainment. Other interesting observations from this study are Generation Y and Z's interest in local foods/authentic cuisines. Local foods and authentic cuisines were highly ranked attributes in this study and in previous studies about destination attractiveness and competitiveness.

Conclusion and Implication

Cultural dispositions may affect Generation Y and Z's, and other tourists', destination attractiveness factors. For example, natural resources serve as critical destination attractiveness factors to tourists in India, but not Generation Y and Z in the US. Similarly, tourism infrastructure is a critical destination attractiveness factor to Generation Y and Z in the US, but not to tourists in India. Also, shopping is a critical destination attractiveness factor to Generation Y and Z within the US, but not to tourists in India.

The findings of this study have critical policy implications for the authorities responsible for tourism development. They should pay more attention to enhancing the following three factors: cultural and heritage resources, hospitality, and general infrastructure in their

communities to attract future tourists. These three factors were found to be important destination attractiveness factors (Table 2).. Besides, DMO's should showcase the above factors in their campaign endeavors for attracting the attention of different market segments in the global tourism market.

Table 1. Top Destination Attractiveness Attributes

Destination Attractiveness Attributes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Factor Classification
Personal safety and security	362	4.62	0.681	General Infrastructure
Affordable place to visit	361	4.54	0.767	Shopping/Affordability
Availability of local foods and authentic cuisines	363	4.49	0.756	Cultural and Heritage Resources
Good opportunities to experience the unique culture of the area	360	4.47	0.753	Cultural and Heritage Resources
Availability of natural attractions/scenery (e.g., mountains, beaches, lakes etc.)	364	4.45	0.775	Natural Resources
Cleanliness and sanitation of the destination	362	4.42	0.774	Natural Resources
Good lodging facilities	364	4.38	0.774	Tourism Infrastructure
Positive word-of-mouth from friends/family	358	4.26	0.873	Hospitality
Personal income or the availability of financial resources	360	4.25	0.972	Shopping/Affordability
Good destination image/perception	358	4.22	0.905	Hospitality
Good telecommunication systems in place (e.g., Wi-Fi, Internet, and Cell Phone Towers)	364	4.16	1.002	General Infrastructure
Good culinary "foodie" destination	364	4.16	0.901	Tourism Infrastructure
Climate for summer-based activities (e.g., camping, beach, swimming etc.)	364	4.09	0.975	Natural Resources
Access to online and/or mobile travel booking	359	4.08	0.998	Hospitality
Good local transportation systems in place (e.g., Taxis, Uber, Rental Cars and Metro)	364	4.05	0.942	General Infrastructure

One of the important and relevant components of this study is the noticeable difference in some of the destination attractiveness factors between Generation Y and Z within the US and other tourists. Hence, DMOs should be mindful of all these destination attractiveness indicators and differences and utilize the knowledge to create appropriate marketing strategies to attract Generation Y and Z and other future tourists to their communities.

Table 2. Eight Critical Destination Attractiveness Factors and Ranking

Destination Attractiveness Factors	US Generation Y and Z		Domestic Indian Tourists'		International Tourists to India	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Cultural and Heritage Resources	4.17	1	4.13	1	4.87	1
Tourism Infrastructure	4.15	2	2.73	6	2.87	5
Hospitality	4.15	2	3.21	3	3.15	3
Shopping/Affordability	4.10	4	1.46	8	1.90	7
General Infrastructure	4.08	5	3.18	4	2.98	4
Natural Resources	4.03	6	4.01	2	3.90	2
Recreational Activities	3.53	7	2.95	5	2.60	6
Entertainment	3.31	8	1.64	7	1.39	8

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