Sustainable Tourism and the Intention of Generation Z to Choose Sustainable Tourism

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Abstract:
Sustainable tourism development is one of the sustainable development orientations. Sustainable tourism development can be impacted by promoting an increased interest in and selection of sustainable tourism destinations. This study aims to clarify the concept of sustainable tourism, examining the current factors influencing the intention to choose sustainable tourism. The subjects of the study are young people of Generation Z, in order to enhance and promote the travel intentions of this potential target group in the future. Based on survey data collected from 314 Gen Z travelers, the factors affecting Gen Z's intention to choose sustainable tourism in Vietnam are clarified.

Keywords: Gen Z, Tourism, TPB, Behavioral intentions, Sustainability

1. Introduction

Tourism is becoming an important economic sector of Vietnam. In 2022, after the epidemic situation is gradually controlled, the tourism industry has had positive signals such as the number of international visitors to Vietnam is 23.3 times higher than in 2021 due to the policy of reopening border gates as well as international routes. According to estimates, Vietnam's tourism in 2022 has contributed 5.2% to GDP [1] and has an overall economic and social impact. However, compared to Southeast Asian countries in the region such as Thailand, the Philippines or Cambodia, this figure is quite modest when tourism contributes to the GDP of countries in 2019 by 20.3%; 22.5%, and 25.8% respectively [1]. Vietnam's goal is that tourism will account for about 15-17% of the country's GDP in 2030. To that goal It is extremely important to promote sustainable tourism to achieve economic benefits as well as ensure harmony of environmental as well as social factors.

There have been many definitions of sustainable tourism, but the most commonly cited definition comes from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). According to UNWTO, sustainable tourism is understood as the process of developing tourism activities to maximize economic, cultural and environmental benefits, while protecting and maintaining cultural resources and biodiversity [2]. In Vietnam, the Law on Tourism 2017 defines: "Sustainable tourism development is the development of tourism that simultaneously meets socio-economic and environmental requirements, ensuring the harmony of interests of entities participating in tourism activities, without harming the ability to meet the demand for tourism in the future" [3]. The Vietnam Tourism Development Strategy to 2030 emphasizes that sustainable tourism development is needed to become a spearhead economic sector, contributing to the economic structure as well as realizing environmental and social goals [4]. Today, as travelers' awareness towards sustainable tourism increases, the proportion of people participating in sustainable tourism is lower [5]. Vietnam is a country with the potential for sustainable tourism development with 40,000 diverse monuments spread across all parts of the country, so the competent authorities need to find appropriate measures to maintain their competitive advantage over other countries.

Research by Bramwell has shown that sustainable tourism has attracted a lot of interest from researchers since the 1970s, becoming the subject of many important studies [6]. Travelers' behavioral intentions are one

of the important factors that lead to travelers' behavior in choosing sustainable travel destinations. Research on behavioral intentions on tourism will contribute to identifying factors influencing travelers' behavior, thereby serving as a basis for promoting sustainable tourism choices [7]. The identification of factors affecting tourists' intentions to choose sustainable tourism will be an important basis for policy makers and stakeholders to take appropriate measures to promote the development of these sustainable models. Studies have shown that there are many factors that affect the intention to choose a sustainable travel destination, including factors belonging to the personality characteristics of travelers such as motivation, satisfaction, loyalty. Cultural factors or external influences such as perceived quality, word of mouth factors... elements belonging to destination characteristics [8]. However, these results are different and limited because depending on the scope of the study and the context of the study, there should be studies on the intention to choose sustainable tourism for each destination, according to each group of tourists [9].

There have been no studies on who factors influence Gen Z's intention to travel to sustainable travel destinations. This study focuses on the study of Gen Z's sustainable travel intentions through the influence of many factors, which shows the broad impact on the study subjects. In addition, the term "sustainable tourism intentions" is a relatively new phrase, because previous studies have not or little mentioned sustainable tourism [10]. Especially with the development of today's society, people are more interested in health as well as spirituality, travel trips not only stop at exploring new lands but also a period of rest, so they will focus on the freshness of the air or the feeling of peace to relax after a series of working days work, study stress [11]. Therefore, sustainable tourism has become more and more popular, environmental protection awareness as well as economic development policies in the resort are increasingly promoted. In addition, the group focuses on Gen Z, a sensitive, influential, dynamic and environmentally conscious generation when approaching sustainable tourism will lead modern social trends [12]. They are interested in eco-friendly destinations, energy-efficient transportation, eco-accommodation, as well as authentic local cultural experiences. Therefore, this article will analyze sustainable tourism and characteristics of sustainable tourism intentions of Gen Z, opening up suggestions to guide Vietnam's tourism industry for sustainable development.

2. Literature review
2.1 Sustainable tourism
Sustainable tourism is a concept developed starting in the 90s of the concept of tourism and has attracted people's attention in recent times. As defined by the World Tourism Organization at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio De Janeiro in 1992, sustainable tourism is the development of tourism activities that meet the current needs of tourists and local people while taking care of the conservation and embellishment of resources for future tourism development [13]. According to earlier research by Butler's (1993), the author showed that the development of tourism will not reduce human adaptation while humans can still prevent negative effects that make development last for a certain period of time and space. And this view also receives quite high consensus of the group authors Murphy and Machado [13,15]. Sustainable tourism development is the development of tourism-related products to meet the current needs of tourists and local communities without affecting the ability to meet the current needs of tourists and local communities without affecting the ability to meet the needs of the world posterior system [14].

In particular, according to research by Ko, Mowforth and Munt these groups of authors have similar views on environmental factors in sustainable tourism development [16,17]. Specifically, in that study, the ecological environment must include tourism ecological aspects, activities including: political, socio-cultural, infrastructure and technology must be related to sustainable aspects. In addition, ecological environment is the activities of tourism to the ecosystem, the local environment, biodiversity, environmental protection policies and people's lives [16]. This indicates that sustainable tourism requires resource management plans to maintain cultural integrity, biodiversity, and ecosystem development. With the three main pillars of economic, social and cultural sustainability, along with environmental friendliness, sustainable tourism is not only a business model but also an important movement in creating inclusive and sustainable development for the future [17].

Economic sustainability: Economic sustainability is not only a matter for local communities but also an important part of global development. Sustainable tourism not only brings fair and stable income to local communities, but also creates business and employment opportunities for a wide range of stakeholders, from tourism businesses to workers directly or indirectly involved in the tourism industry [13]. The development of a sustainable tourism model not only ensures stable economic development but also contributes positively to the overall economic growth of society. Promote the development of supporting industries such as trade, agriculture, transport and construction, create favorable conditions for investment and development of socio-economic infrastructure, thereby creating a long-term and stable business environment for both people and businesses [14].

Social and cultural sustainability: Sustainable tourism is not only a means to discover the natural and cultural beauty of a place, but also an opportunity to promote progress and social justice [6]. At the same time, it also helps preserve and honor the traditional cultural values of the local community. Sustainable tourism activities promote positive interaction between individuals, communities, tourism organizations and local authorities to protect and develop their cultural heritage [2]. From planning, development and monitoring to educating stakeholders about their roles, everyone is involved in this process to ensure that cultural values and national identities are maintained and developed in every stage of tourism activity.

Sustainable, environmentally friendlySustainable tourism plays an important role in protecting natural resources and maintaining environmental balance. By minimizing negative impacts on the environment, while ensuring that current development needs are met, sustainable tourism sets a high standard of environmental sustainability in tourism operations [12]. This means conducting tourism activities responsibly, without significantly compromising on natural resources and the environment, and ensuring their renewability to meet the needs of future generations [13]. One of the important pillars of sustainable tourism development is social and cultural sustainability. In terms of social and cultural sustainability, sustainable tourism encourages stakeholders to preserve and promote traditional cultural values and national cultural identities, from planning, development, monitoring to education and creating awareness in the community about their role in the tourism process.

2.2 Travelers' sustainable tourism intention

Sustainable tourism is becoming increasingly popular and interested by many travelers. According to a recent survey by Booking.com, 87% of travelers said they want to travel in a more sustainable way in the future. There are many reasons for the increase in intentions for sustainable tourism. Some of the main reasons that tourists increasingly want to move towards green tourism such as: environmental safety, sense of responsibility, resource conservation... Tourism contributes greatly to socio-economic development, however, it also has potential negative impacts on the environment [17]. Environmental pollution, waste of natural resources and destruction of natural habitats are thorny issues that the tourism industry is facing. Recognizing these implications, travelers are increasingly interested in sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism aims at the harmonious development of economic, social benefits and environmental protection [18].

In addition, Sustainable tourism is not only tourism, but also a journey to discover the true values of the destination, immerse yourself in the wilderness, experience unique local culture and contribute to environmental protection for future generations. Instead of noisy tourist destinations, travelers opt for sustainable tourism to immerse themselves in the rhythm of local community life [11]. They stay in people's houses, participate in traditional activities, learn unique cultures, thereby understanding more about the people and the land here. This not only gives visitors meaningful experiences but also contributes to supporting local communities, creating jobs, raising incomes and promoting economic development. This form of tourism aims at rational use of resources, limiting negative impacts on the environment and preserving natural and cultural heritages. Visitors use renewable energy, limit waste, participate in environmental and heritage protection activities, contributing to preserving the beauty intact for the next generation [12]. Benefits for visitors not only do they stop at unique, meaningful, and memorable

experiences, sustainable tourism also helps visitors connect with indigenous people, understand more about their culture and traditions, thereby broadening their horizons, cultivating compassion and community spirit.

In particular, the strong development of social networks greatly affects the awareness of tourists, social networks help spread information about sustainable tourism to a large number of users, thereby raising the awareness of the community about the importance of protecting the environment and local culture when traveling [18]. Posts, photos and videos about sustainable travel destinations on social media can inspire people to opt for more culturally and environmentally friendly travel experiences. On the journey to discover interesting things, sustainable tourism opens the door to new, meaningful, and responsible experiences [2]. More than a trend, sustainable tourism is the promise of a bright future for the tourism industry, where people and nature blend, sharing the same pulse of harmonious development.

2.3 Generation Z's sustainable tourism intention

For Generation Z is a group of people born in the period from the mid-90s to the early 2000s, associated with the explosion of development of science and technology, especially the Internet and mobile phones. According to the Oxford Dictionary, Generation Z is defined as a group of people born in the late 1990s to early 2010s, characterized by their association with the Internet and the use of smartphones as a very essential tool in all aspects of life. According to Cho et al. Generation Z is the demographic group succeeded to Millennials (Generation Y) born between 1996 and 2010 [19]. Generation Z, aka Post Millennials, iGeneration, or Homeland Generation, is the next demographic generation after Millennials. Gen Z has different characteristics from other generations in that they have accessed the Internet from a very young age and are greatly influenced by social media, knowing how to recognize and use the power of technology. Some argue that the first-Generation Z started in 1995, others that this generation started in late 2005 [20]. Based on a synthesis of various research sources, Generation Z is defined as the group of people born between 1995 and 2012 [21].

According to Dolot, Generation Z is the generation that opens to the world and is always open to new things [22]. Unlike previous generations, they are not only eager to explore technology but also eager to experience new places and cultures. However, due to the lack of a stable income from work, Generation Z often faces financial constraints. Therefore, they prefer economical forms of travel, especially those recreational activities with family or friends that predominate in this group [12]. Generation Z is seen as a potential generation leading to breakthrough changes in consumer behavior, opening tremendous opportunities and challenges for the tourism and hospitality industry [23].

Different from previous generations, Gen Z possesses unique travel habits. According to Bankrate's research, more than half of Gen Z adults regularly travel, in contrast to previous generations' tendency to travel only when they had a steady income [24]. This is because Gen Z brings skepticism into traditional career paths. Raimee Iacofono, a travel KOL, shares work that is no longer as secure as it used to be. Travel becomes easier, motivating Gen Z to go on the road to explore as soon as possible. According to a report from travel app Hopper, in 2023, searches for Asian destinations by Gen Z and Gen Y will increase by more than 50% compared to before the pandemic [25]. At the same time, Kiwi Report and Contiki, the travel agency, also ranked Thailaand on the list of top destinations for Gen Z travelers in 2023.

Generation Z in Vietnam possesses some outstanding features such as less participation in outdoor activities, unlike previous generations, Gen Z spends more time on online activities than participating in outdoor recreational activities [26]. Using mobile phones frequently, Gen Z is associated with mobile phones as a tool for connection, entertainment, and learning. There is a tendency to be skeptical of the Internet approaching information carefully, analyzing and evaluating authenticity before trusting it. Interested in social issues are the dynamic young generation, with a high sense of social responsibility, eager to contribute to solving common problems of the community. Facing immaturity syndrome due to exposure to the Internet and social networks from a young age, some Gen Z may have many difficulties in adapting to real life, lack life skills and independence.

According to Booking.com's Sustainable Tourism Report 2023 also found that 75% of Vietnamese travelers are willing to pay more for sustainable travel options [27]. In addition, a report by Lalicic & Weiismayer shows that young travelers prioritize choosing destinations that help them learn about local culture, associated with their national roots [28]. Recognizing the important role of culture and history in shaping themselves, Gen Z increasingly pays special attention to learning and discovering traditional cultural values. This is evident in the travel mindset of a part of Gen Z.

2. Research Methodology

The situation analysis was evaluated from research data conducted by the research team. The number of official study samples is 314, the survey sample is Gen Z subjects were collected by random and convenient sampling method. Of the 314 samples distributed, the majority of votes were female, with 239 votes, or 76.1%. The male votes accounted for only 1/3 of the female votes with 75 votes, or 23.9%. The study was aimed at Gen Z, in which the number of respondents aged 19-22 years accounted for the largest proportion with 256 votes reaching 81.5%. This was followed by the 16-18 age group with 15.9% (50 votes). Finally, 12-15 and 23-27 accounted for at least 1% and 1.6%, respectively. Research data collected from questionnaires with study variables designed with a 5-level likert scale (1 - strongly disagree, to 5 - strongly agree).

The consideration factors identified according to TPB theory applied in the study of intentions to choose sustainable tourism include: attitudes towards sustainable tourism, subjective norms, perceptions of sustainable tourism, intentions of visitors to choose sustainable tourism. TPB theory is considered one of the very important theories in the field of psychosocial research to predict human behavior [29]. According to the Intended Behavior Theory (TPB) model, there are 3 main factors that influence the intention to perform a particular behavior, namely: Attitude is the tendency to evaluate consistently towards a particular object, expressed through the willingness to react or behave in a positive or negative way. Subjective norms are social pressures exerted on individuals, encouraging them to perform or avoid a particular behavior. This pressure comes from the expectations of those around you, including relatives, friends, and colleagues,... about whether the individual should follow social norms. Behavioral control perception is an individual's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform a certain behavior, how easy or difficult that depends on the availability of the necessary resources and opportunities.

4. Results about status of Generation Z's intention to choose sustainable tourism
4.1 Evaluating Gen Z travelers' perceptions of sustainable tourism

Awareness is one of the factors that are always present in influencing people's intentions, especially for decisions that have a great impact on sustainable development. The analysis results in Figure 1 can show that the cognitive variable has an average value between 3.61 – 3.89 / 5 points of the Likert scale. Specifically, "NT1- I have the ability to go to sustainable travel destinations" has an average value of 3.68, "NT2- I am confident when I go to sustainable travel destinations" has an average value of 3.61, "NT3- I can decide for myself whether to go to sustainable travel destinations or not" has an average value of 3.75, "NT4- If I had enough time and money, I would go to sustainable travel destinations" has an average value of 3.89.
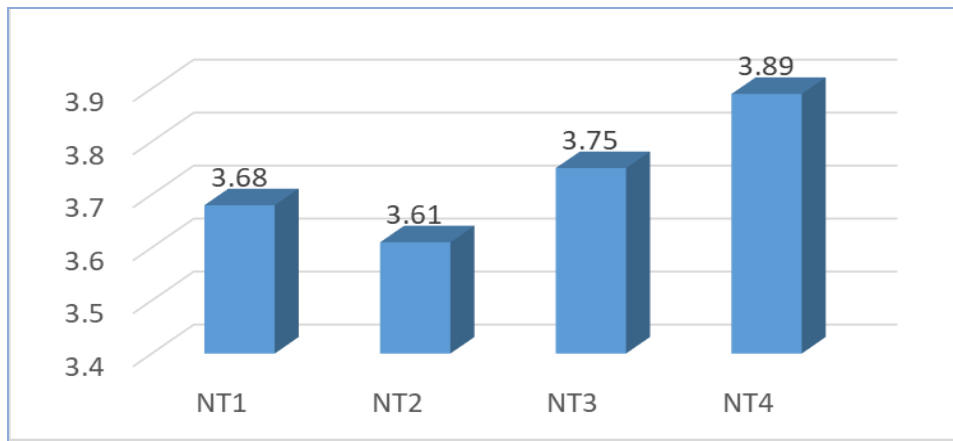
Figure 1: Gen Z travelers' perceptions of sustainable tourism

The answer is spread across all 5 levels. It can be seen that, depending on the meaning of each question, the level of agreement of the respondents on each question is different. This shows that Gen Z's perception has a significant influence on sustainable travel intentions, and it will have a strong impact on tourism development. Overall, awareness will have a big impact on the sustainable travel trend of Gen Z, who like to engage in adventure activities, explore unspoiled nature and learn about different cultures.

4.2 Evaluating Gen Z travelers' subjective norms for sustainable tourism

The perceived value of travel intent to travel to sustainable travel destinations is below 3.5/5 on the likert scale. Specifically, according to the statistics in Figure 2, the average values of "CM1-Most important people to me think I should go to sustainable travel destinations", "CM2-Most important people to me want me to go to sustainable travel destinations", "CM3-People whom I value opinions will prefer me to go to sustainable travel destinations" times 3.49, 3.48 and 3.46, respectively. This shows that the intention to choose sustainable tourist destinations through subjective standards is limited for Generation Z respondents.
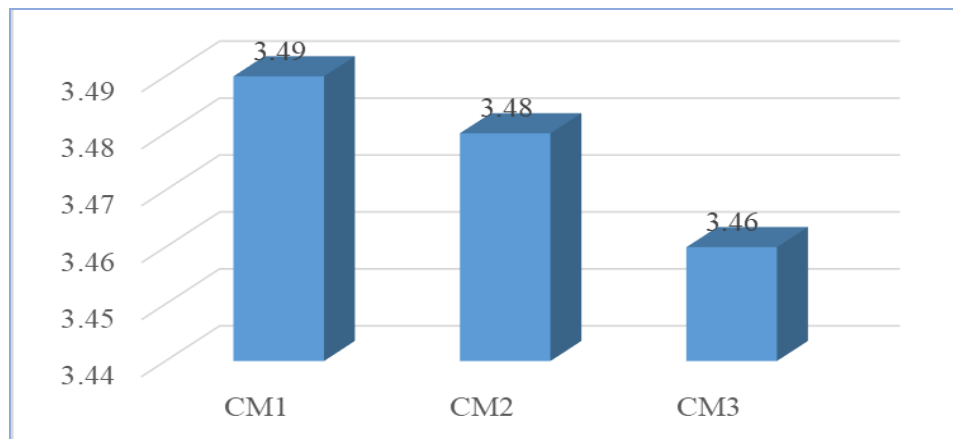

Figure 2: Gen Z travelers' subjective norms for sustainable tourism

The results of this study demonstrate that the pressure that respondents feel from those around them to choose to travel to sustainable travel destinations is quite low. Gen Z respondents have not received any great motivation or motivation from those who are important to their intention to go to sustainable travel destinations.

4.3 Evaluating the attitude factors of Gen Z travelers towards sustainable tourism

With an average of over 3.66/5 points of the Likert scale figure 3. It can be seen that the attitude of Gen Z respondents has a great impact on sustainable travel intentions. According to the figures on the chart of figure 3, the average value of "TD1 - For me, going to sustainable travel destinations is a good view" is 3.89, "TD2 - For me, going to sustainable travel destinations is extremely pleasant" has an average value of 3.71, "TD3 – For me, going to sustainable travel destinations is an extremely smart decision" has an average value of 3.82, "TD4 – For me, going to sustainable travel destinations is something I absolutely desire" has an
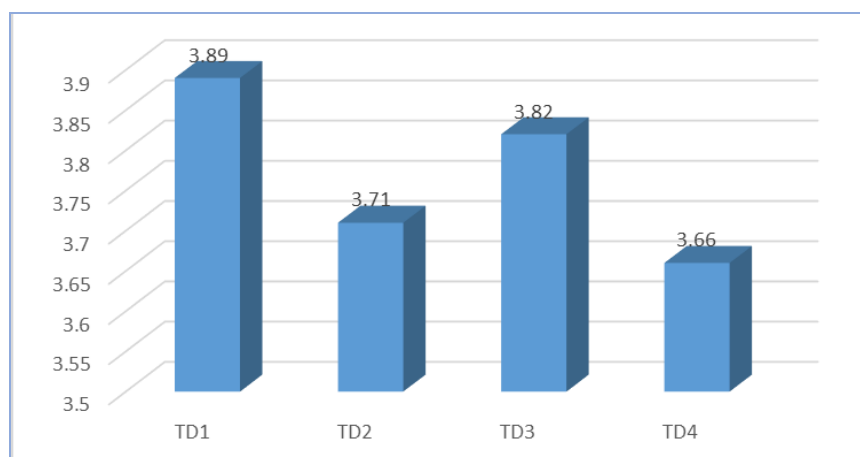
average value of 3.66.

Figure 3: Gen Z travelers' attitudes towards sustainable tourism

As the analysis results, the attitude scale of Gen Z has a positive influence on travel intentions and with the participation of Gen Z, sustainable tourism promises to become an inevitable trend for the future. As a result, the tourism industry will contribute to environmental protection, promote local socio-economic development and bring meaningful tourism experiences to tourists.

4.4 Evaluating of Gen Z's intentions to choose sustainable travel
According to the results presented in Figure 4, the respondents' feelings about their intention to go to sustainable tourist destinations were above 3.67/5 on the 5-level Likert scale. The average value rated by respondents as "YD3 - I will go to the sustainable travel destination on social networks that I am interested in" was 3.79. This shows that when Gen Z respondents are interested in sustainable travel destinations that they see on social media, they will have a higher intention to go there. In addition, the values "YD1 – I will go to sustainable tourism destinations mentioned on social media" and "YD2 - I will give preference to sustainable travel destinations mentioned on social media over other tourist destinations" also had average values of 3.67 and 3.61, respectively. Overall, social media is a factor that will influence gen Z's intention to choose to travel to sustainable travel destinations.
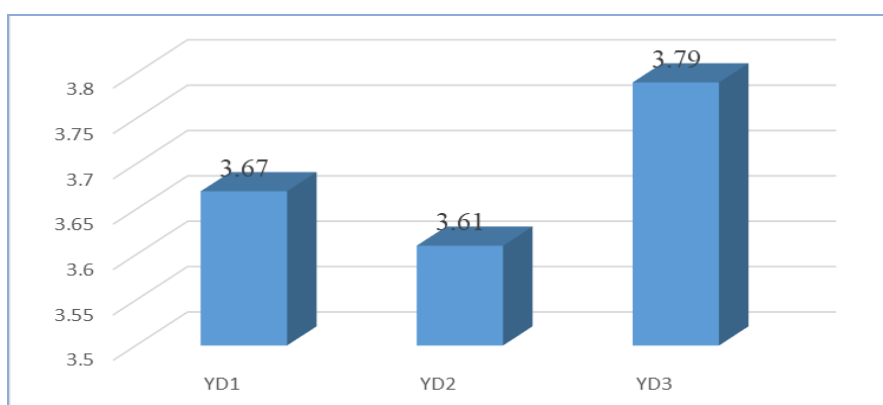

Figure 4: Gen Z travelers' intention to choose sustainable tourism

In Vietnam, Gen Z is a large young generation, accounting for a large number of Vietnam's population, playing an important role in the digital economy and tourism. Gen Z prefers cultural experience travel, sustainable tourism, exploring indigenous values and understanding national roots. Gen Z uses technology regularly, has access to diverse information, is skeptical of the internet, and cares about social issues. Gen Z wants new destinations, strong communication on social networks, emphasizing practical experiences and being associated with nature. In summary, with the increase in size and important role of Gen Z in the economy in general and the tourism industry in particular, capturing the demand for sustainable tourism of this generation is a key factor to build an effective tourism development strategy, meet market trends and

attract future potential customers.

5. Conclusions

In this study, the team used the intent behavior theory (TPB) used as a key theoretical framework, with the goal of analyzing factors such as individual attitudes, views of social pressure, and assessments of control, all of which influence Gen Z's intentions to travel sustainably. The study also integrates theories of sustainable tourism to provide a more holistic perspective on the issue. Through the overview analysis of Generation Z, it shows that Gen Z is an active, tech-savvy young generation that plays an important role in tourism with outstanding features such as Gen Z tends to travel more often than previous generations, prefers to explore new destinations, unique. Interested in tourism to experience culture, promote sustainability, be associated with nature, and learn about national roots. Use the Internet and social networking platforms to exploit travel-related information sources as well as share experiences and feelings during travel. Always pay attention to prices, prioritize economical forms of travel, suitable for the budget. Thanks to the impacts of Gen Z's tourism demand, it will help develop the tourism industry effectively, contributing to socio-economic promotion.

By combining TPB with theories of sustainable tourism, this study aspires to not only assess Gen Z's travel intentions but also analyze the relationship between their actual intentions and behaviors in supporting sustainable tourism. By analyzing these factors, the study helps shape supportive strategies and policies from the tourism industry and the government, to encourage sustainable tourism behavior among the Gen Z community in Hanoi.

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