

THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA UPON GENERATION Z IN THE TOURISM ACTIVITY

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Abstract

The impact of vlogging tourism on Generation Z can be significant. Vlogging allows young people to explore different cultures, destinations, and experiences from the comfort of their screens. It can inspire wanderlust, promote cultural exchange, and encourage a sense of adventure.

However, it's important to balance virtual exploration with real-life experiences and ensure that the portrayal of travel is authentic and responsible. Vlogging tourism is a real game-changer for Generation Z. It has given them the opportunity to explore new worlds and connect with different cultures through engaging video content. In addition, it has stimulated young people's creativity and adventurous spirit, encouraging them to share their own experiences and inspire other young people to get out into the world and discover the beauty of travel.

Key words: *experiences, Generation Z, internet, tourism, vlogging.*

JEL Classification: *F68, L83.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry has a significant impact in society, in economic and social life of people. This activity contributes to economic growth, job creation and zonal development of local, but through the niche forms influence the psychologic and social attitude of tourists. Tourism develops cultural exchange, mutual understanding and tolerance between cultures. It offers recreation and relaxation for tourists and provides opportunities to explore and discover new destinations and experiences.[1]

Tourism vlogging is a relatively new phenomenon that started to develop around 2010-2012 years with the rise in popularity of social media platforms and accessible video technology. Travel vloggers share their experiences in a video format, mostly on YouTube.

Since then, it has grown in popularity and continued to develop into a thriving industry. The development of this phenomenon has been accelerated with the increase in the number of travel vloggers and public interest in their content. Today, travel vlogging is a thriving industry that brings a new and exciting perspective to the world of travel.

Generation Z has had a significant impact on travel vlogging. This generation is very familiar with technology and social media platforms, which allows them to easily create and share travel video content. Additionally, Gen Z is interested in authenticity and unique experiences, and travel vlogging gives them the opportunity to discover new destinations and cultures through the eyes of their favourite vloggers.

Information technologies have had a significant influence on how the tourism sector has developed in recent years. At the same time, IoT (Internet of Things), big data, social media have reshaped the way tourists plan their itineraries/trips or tourism companies run their businesses.(Danileț A., Chifan D. ,2023)

In present, a special mechanism for exchanging information among young tourists, and for new destinations and businesses to learn about the attitudes of their markets have travel blogs.

II. VARIOUS ASPECTS REGARDING THE EXPOSED STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIALIZED LITERATURE

In tourism industry, in present, social media has a direct impact on tourists' decision-making process and alters their travel behavior. (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Hudson and Thal, 2013)

Gen Z travellers are very interested in transformational experiences. Virtual Reality (VR) and vlog tourism enables them to have more engaged and diverse tourism activities. More than 84% of consumers around the world would be interested in using VR or Augmented Reality (AR) for travel experiences, and 42% believe that VR and AR are the future of tourism (Kim MJ, Lee CK, Jung T 2020).

Travel vlogs refer to videos that tourists record their trips and share online. Tourist vlogs can be used as data in understanding tourist experiences, behavior, and niche markets (Li & Xu, 2020).

The social media influencers as effective endorsers for tourism destinations and products become very power and have been widely acknowledged.

Short video tourism Vloggers are content creators in online tourism who display tourism experiences and provide tourism suggestions through video-generated content no longer than 5 min, establishing an emotional connection with their followers through interactive communication (Gao, 2018)

Some authors who analysed vlogging tourism studies viewer preferences and discussed their potential for destination marketing (Briciu & Briciu, 2020; Tiago et al., 2019).

Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) suggested that tourist-generated videos can mediate tourist experiences by shaping fantasy and imagination of the place in the videos, or bringing back memories if one has been there

The most intuitive effect of social media in tourism is to increase the number of visits to destinations, which is beneficial to the sustainable development of tourism destination brands (Chen and Zhang, 2015). As a virtual platform for tourists to share their travel experiences and emotions, short videos have gradually become the reference basis for potential tourists to make travel decisions (Chen et al., 2013).

Kim (2012) studied that emotional involvement is a main driver affecting film tourism experiences. Watching short videos may have a positive relationship with tourists

The purpose of the case study is to analyse the close connection between tourism vlogging and Generation Z. Many members of Generation Z use social media to search for travel destination recommendations and inspiration. They rely on influencers and travellers to make informed decisions. Social media allows you to see beautiful images and videos of destinations and offers the possibility to find out real-time information about events or special offers.

The history of social media and the influences of this phenomenon on a national and international level

Today, people spend more and more time on internet connected devices. A study published by Statista in 2021 showed that Romanians from Generation Z spent an average of 7 hours a day on various gadgets connected to Wi-Fi. This is about 10% above the global average. The reasons for this range from personal interests such as online shopping and socializing to work-related interests.

Myspace was one of the first successful social media platforms, founded in 2003, followed by Facebook in 2004, which gained worldwide notoriety with over 3 billion users. In Romania, Facebook currently has over 10 million users. In January 2010, over half a million Romanians were registered on the platform, and in 2023 the number reached over 10 million.

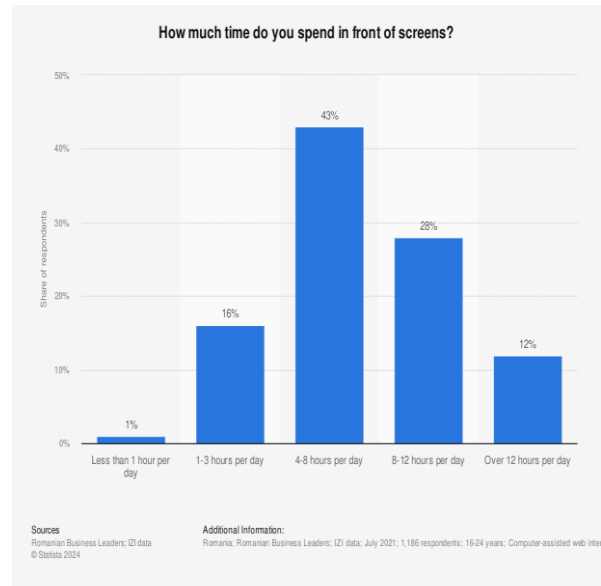


Figure no. 1. Gen Z's average time spent on internet-connected devices

Source: <https://www.statista.com/>

And the pages with the most likes are downright impressive: Inna, Andra and Smiley are just a few of the Romanian artists who have collected millions of likes on their pages from Generation Z. Instagram is not far behind, with over 5.6 million of users in Romania and over 2.5 billion users globally. It's a great platform to share pictures with interesting themes.

Also, the development of mobile technology plays a very important role in providing the necessary support to tourists when they need information, but also for tourism companies that promote their services through applications that allow them to collect data or communicate directly with potential customers. In addition, social media platforms have mobile friendly apps that allow tourists to be always connected to all the news regarding certain properties/locations or various services they are interested in (Kim&Kim, 2017).

III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire with 20 single and multiple-choice questions was developed. The questionnaire aimed to find out the following aspects:

- ✓ How much time respondents spend online every day, with the help of question no 1;
- ✓ Which of the applications representing social media are most often used by consumers - through question number 2;
- ✓ If they had contact with different advertisements or the promotion of different objectives or tourist destinations, objective reached both by question number 3;
- ✓ How many times do I go on vacation during a year - with the help of question number 4;

- ✓ As well as through questions 12 and 13, where it was followed how well-known travel vloggers are in Romania and abroad, where they get inspiration from when they choose the next tourist destination;
- ✓ With the help of question number 7 and finally what were the resulting tourist experiences if they existed according to questions number 3, 12 and 13 – through question number 11.

The scientific research aims to expose the impact of vlogging tourism on Generation Z. Also, the methodology section of the scientific research paper contains information on how the research was carried out, the means by which the target segment was approached, the way in which the questions were thought and then distributed, how effective was this method of data processing and subsequently the interpretation of the results that were obtained.

The research was carried out on a sample of 100 platforms, between January and March, 2024 in the Valea Jiului microregion. We distributed the questionnaire on different social networks: Facebook and WhatsApp, being among the most popular platforms used by young people from Generation Z.

IV RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the survey look at how social media has become an important part of the lives of young Gen Z. It can be seen how Gen Z respondents choose their vacation based on what they see on social media: ads, posts from family, friends, colleagues, but also their opinions after a tourist experience of this kind.

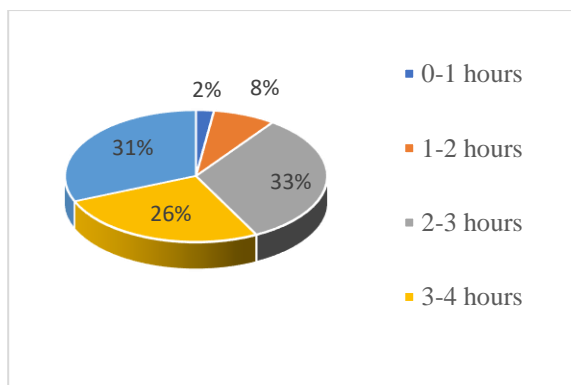


Figure 2. Gen Z's time spent online

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the data extracted from the questionnaire

According to the diagram presented, 2.2% of respondents spend between 0 and 1 hour per day online, 7.7% between 1 and 2 hours, 32.5% between 2 and 3 hours, 26.3% between 3 and 4 hours, and the remaining 31.3% more than 4 hours.

The majority of respondents spend between 2 and 3 hours a day online, a very good percentage,

compared to the average of 7 hours recorded in 2021 for young people from Generation Z in Romania.

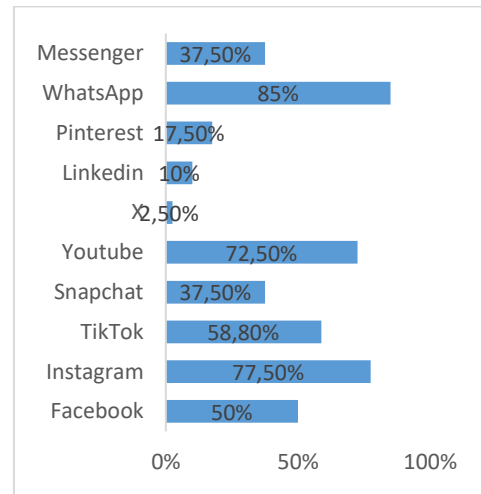


Figure 3. Apps that are part of Generation Z's life

In the graph above, for this multiple-choice question, WhatsApp - 85%, Instagram - 77.5% and YouTube - 72.5% are among the top applications that are part of the respondents' daily life. WhatsApp is an app used by all age groups of Generation Z to keep in touch with family, friends and colleagues from college or work.

Facebook is slowly losing its popularity among young people in Romania, so Instagram is the new Facebook in 2024, the questionnaire being completed mainly by young people, respectively students. Lots of people use YouTube every day, the main reason being listening to music: on the way to college, on the way to work, on the way home, while driving, while studying, while doing housework, at the gym or to various activities.

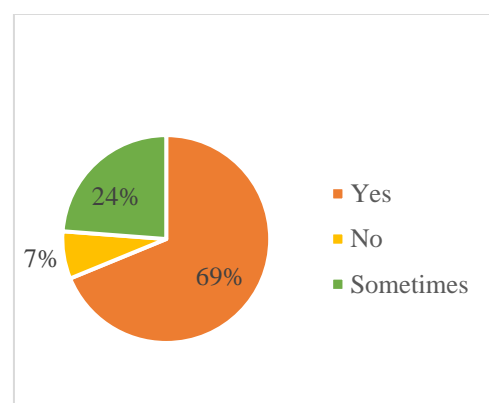


Figure 4. The type of ads mentioned by Generation Z

According to the diagram above, 69% of respondents are recommended various advertisements related to tourism, respectively vacations, when browsing the Internet. 24% say they are occasionally recommended, while 7% say they have never been recommended such ads. The algorithm of social media

and the Internet is vast. From the moment a topic is repeatedly searched on Google or other search engines, it will automatically be played on applications such as Facebook and Instagram in the form of advertisements. 42% of respondents go on vacation once a year, 40% twice, 7% three times, 5% four times, and 6% more than four times. Referring to the minimum gross salary per economy of 3,300 lei in Romania and inflation, people's daily priorities have become utilities, maintenance and food.

Vacations are a distant thought; a 3-4 day stay at the sea or in the mountains once a year being considered a luxury. 68.8% of respondents prefer holidays in the country and abroad, while 16.3% prefer only those outside the country and 15% only those in the country. These approximately equal proportions suggest that the respondents keep the idea of Romanian authenticity, but at the same time they are eager to discover other new cultures, places, mentalities, customs and traditions. 77.5% of respondents travel on their own, 15% on their own and through travel agencies, and 7.5% only through agencies.

For tourism on our own account, we have the advantages of organizing the holiday according to your own will and visiting several places in a short time. A disadvantage is the impossibility of satisfying the demand or satisfying it at parameters lower than their demands due to the concentration in certain periods and the limited capacity of the offer.

For tourism through travel agencies, we have as advantages the guarantee of the realization of the vacation and the receipt of the services in the agreed comfort conditions, along with the freedom from worrying about the organization of the trip. A disadvantage is the restriction of freedom of movement in the sense of accepting and participating in a program that does not fully correspond to his wishes. Friends - 73.8%, family - 55% and TV/online advertisements - 48.8% are the top sources of inspiration for the holiday. Most respondents ask for the opinion of their friends. Young people go on vacations often, because they have fewer responsibilities than adults or their parents. Also, free time is an equally important component, which many people do not have at the moment.

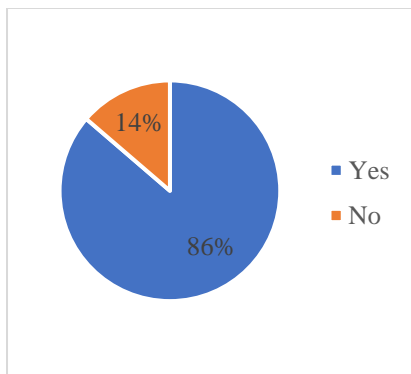


Figure 5. Tourist attractions seen on social media

According to the diagram above, 86% of the respondents have visited tourist attractions seen on social media before, which they found interesting and worth seeing, the remaining 14% have not. The most popular sights in each country are internationally recognized, but plenty of people post or promote lesser-known attractions that are just as interesting.

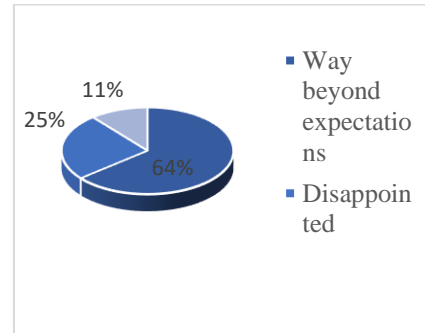


Figure 6. The experience of Generation Z

For 50% of the respondents who answered yes to the previous question it was an experience with the answer both, for 48.6% it was an experience far beyond expectations, and for the remaining 1.4% it was a disappointing experience.

2.5% of respondents do not know or follow any Romanian travel vlogger.

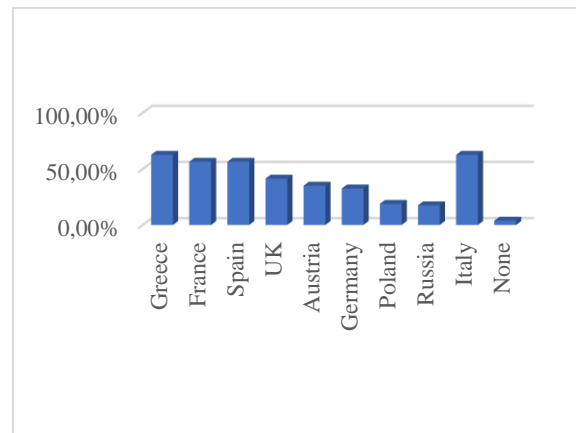


Figure 7. Country visits by respondents

According to the graph above, for this multiple-choice question, the top countries visited by respondents are Italy and Greece - both 63%, France and Spain - 57% and Great Britain - 42%. Italy and Greece are the top destinations for Romanians, promoted especially during the summer on social media: the history of thousands of years, the landscapes and the Mediterranean gastronomy.

France and Spain combine traditions and customs, most Romanians being attracted by Paris, Marseille, Strasbourg, Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, but also by Andorra – the country on the border of the two

countries. Great Britain is promoted on a lot of social networks, without being able to miss the jewel in the crown – London, with its famous buses and royal guards.

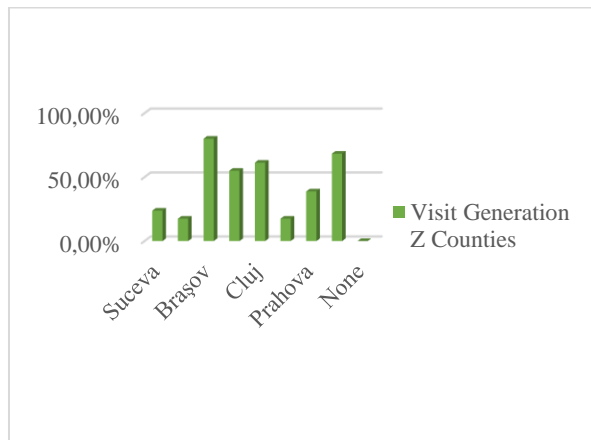


Figure 8. Counties visited

According to the graph above, for this question with multiple answers, Braşov - 80%, Constanţa and Sibiu - 69% and Cluj - 62% are among the top counties that the respondents have visited or want to visit.

Braşov County is an optimal destination for both tourist seasons, as is Sibiu County, where you can photograph and post the mountain landscape or various sights such as castles and museums. Constanţa County is the most important point on the map during the summer, thanks to the sea, but also to festivals like Neversea, where people don't miss the opportunity to immortalize and post every important moment on social media.

Cluj County is the most developed county in the country at the moment, so it's no wonder why a lot of

people have visited it or want to visit it, possibly settling there, especially for the famous Untold festival.

V CONCLUSIONS

Vlogging has become a popular form of expression and entertainment for many young people. Through vlogging, they can share their travel experiences and inspire other young people to explore the world.

Travel vlogging has become a popular form of sharing travel experiences with a wide audience. It offers an engaging way to discover new destinations and share personal impressions. An important aspect of travel vlogging is the ability to capture and convey the beauty and authenticity of the places visited.

Through images, videos and personal commentary, travel vloggers can provide a unique and engaging perspective on their destinations.[5] Travel vlogging can also be a source of inspiration and information for those who want to travel.

Vloggers can provide practical advice, recommendations for accommodation, food and activities, as well as information about local culture and traditions. Thus, travel vlogging can be useful and educational for those who want to explore the world. However, it is important to note that travel vlogging also comes with responsibilities.

Vloggers must be aware of their impact on destinations and promote sustainable tourism that respects the environment and local communities. Transparency and authenticity are also essential in travel vlogging so that the audience can trust the information and experiences presented.

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