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THE INFLUENCE OF GEN Z'S INTEREST IN ADVENTURE AS A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Abstract

Generation Z is an influential in the tourism industry. Nowadays, their behavior can influence travel preference and perceptions in supporting sustainable tourism development. This generation is also considered a more environmentally conscious generation, so environmental conservation efforts and the implementation of sustainable tourism practices in a destination can increase positive perceptions of the destination. In addition, in the future they will actively participate as tourism stakeholders, by taking into account the factors that will influence and take appropriate measures, it can strengthen its attractiveness Asia cultural tourism destination and take strategic steps for increased sustainable tourism development efforts. For this reason, this study seeks to reveal the factors that influence Generation Z's interest in efforts to increase sustainable tourism at the Pelaruga tourist attraction. The researchers employed qualitative research based on an ethnographic approach. The data collection methods employed observation and in-depth interviews. 2 interview sources, 6 interviewers, and 25 subjects were used to collect the questionnaire. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting subjects based on characteristics that meet the stated objectives. The results of this study found that Pelaruga tourist attraction has provided a pleasant experience for tourists and has the potential to be developed Asia tourist attraction with the application of the principles of sustainable tourism principles. As well as contributing to supporting economic improvement for local communities. However, environmental preservation strategies are still need to be developed and planning needs to be done to collaborate with the government and local tourism organizations.

Keywords: Young Generation, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Adventure

1. INTRODUCTION

Travel is a major necessity nowadays. Many people are planning recreation or looking for a new atmosphere outside their daily lives. This need is based on the many work demands nowadays, one of which affects the level of stress among the younger generation. The Z-generation, which consists of people born between 1997 and 2012, has become a major force in changing the face of the tourism industry. They are now looking for better, more authentic, more interactive and more adventurous experiences than any previous generation. They grew up in the digital age and are highly influenced by the internet and social media.

Gen Z can now plan their trips through online platforms anytime and anywhere. They are now looking for trips full of adventure, natural experiences, hiking, and local wisdom, etc. They are also very concerned about the sustainability and environmental impact of their travels and like to visit areas that promote cultural diversity and authentication. This is the reason why the trend and market of global tourism is now integrated and personalized. Many tourism service providers now have to provide different services in one package. This is the reason why the next generation has to be understood and Generation Z has to be prioritized because it is the main trend setter in adventure tourism.

One such business is the tourism sector. Tourism is one of the leading sectors in the national economy. The numerous flight routes, new tourist destinations, and increasing accommodations demonstrate that tourism has significant potential to boost a country's economy. Tourism will generate significant revenue for regions that recognize its potential in the tourism sector. Regional autonomy has encouraged each region to maximize its potential (Abdillah, 2016).

The tourism sector can create business opportunities and improve the economy, and able to bring positive impact on the welfare of local communities in a location that has tourist attractions. Not only from an economic perspective, but the tourism sector can also contribute greatly to several sectors such as the social sector, culture, and so on. (Mulya et al., 2020).

In light of Generation Z's distinct preferences and consumption behaviours, exploring the nuances of their engagement with tourism is essential for devising effective strategies that resonate with this demographic. With an increasing emphasis on personalized and immersive experiences, Generation Z travellers prioritize authenticity, uniqueness, and meaningful interactions in their journeys (Tata, Sharrock&Westerlaken, 2023). They are attracted to interacting with locals, traditional architecture, and natural environmental characteristics in tourism destinations (Akgişılhan et al., 2022; İlhan et al., 2023).

Adventure tourism has an advantage because it is the development and connection of several tourism attractions, namely: adventure, nature, and village. Adventure tourism destinations have become the choice of tourists to be able to experience the sensation of a free nature, as well as a healthy life with outdoor activities that drain the sweat in each trip. Body rafting is one of the types or forms of adventure tourism activities, these activities are carried out on rivers that have the potential to carry out risky but challenging activities. The purpose of adventure tourism is to explore oneself and enjoy nature.

However, the challenge that arises is the lack of awareness of the younger generation on the importance of preserving the tourism environment. In addition, irresponsible businessmen have also exacerbated the destruction of tourism areas. The concept of eco-tourism or sustainable tourism can be a solution to preserve the environment without sacrificing business activities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The interest of younger generations, particularly Generation Z, has become a central focus in contemporary tourism research. Gen Z is recognized as an active, digitally savvy generation that seeks authentic, challenging, and meaningful experiences while traveling. Simanungkalit and Rukmini (2024) revealed that Gen Z's travel preferences are significantly influenced by the image of a sustainable destination, particularly in regions like Bali that combine natural beauty with cultural heritage. This finding aligns

with Rahjasa, Aspariyanthi, and Rahadiarta (2023), who observed that Gen Z tourists in Bali increasingly prefer adventure tourism experiences that integrate physical exploration with values of sustainability.

In the realm of adventure tourism, several studies have found that activities such as trekking, body rafting, river tubing, and forest exploration are especially attractive to Gen Z. Hartono and Dimyati (2023) highlighted pine forests as natural spaces that appeal to this demographic due to their combination of physical challenge and visual aesthetics. Similarly, Nainggolan (2022) examined the development of adventure tourism in Humbang Hasundutan Regency, emphasizing the growing interest of youth tourists in natural and immersive experiences. On a global scale, Schillat et al. (2016) documented the rise of adventure tourism in extreme locations such as Antarctica, reflecting a broader shift in young travelers' preferences toward unconventional and meaningful travel.

Nevertheless, high interest in adventure tourism must be balanced with sustainability principles. Anggara, Taufik, and Mandala (2024) emphasized the importance of using the 4A approach Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, and Ancillary Services to develop nature-based tourism without degrading the environment. In their study of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone, Suryade et al. (2022) stressed the need for balance between tourism investment and socio-cultural preservation, suggesting that adventure tourism can serve as an alternative model if developed inclusively and responsibly.

Community involvement is also crucial for ensuring sustainability. Studies by Rustini (2021) and Juliana et al. (2022) in community-based tourism (CBT) contexts in West Java found that involving local communities in managing homestays and tourism packages helps create strong cultural connections and economic benefits. Moreover, Fero and Silalahi (2024) noted that Gen Z's digital engagement—particularly through short-form videos and user-generated content—can significantly influence sustainable tourism by shaping destination image and traveler behavior.

Several studies also explore the motivational factors of young tourists. Sari, Ikusumah, and Marhanah (2018) found that Gen Z is primarily driven by a desire for new experiences, relaxation, and adventure when choosing destinations. This is supported by research from Lestari and Azis (2022) on Ngebel Adventure Village and by Prasiasa (2023), who studied adventure-based tourism village development during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both studies underscore the importance of considering environmental carrying capacity and social impact when planning adventure tourism destinations.

Sustainable tourism, according to Saputra (2024), must prioritize ecological balance and minimize negative impacts on local ecosystems. In this regard, Ramadhan, Lubis, and Ulya (2024) emphasized the effectiveness of environmentally conscious digital marketing strategies in attracting eco-aware Gen Z travelers. These insights point to a growing alignment between Gen Z values and the goals of sustainable tourism.

While the relationship between Gen Z, adventure tourism, and sustainability has been explored in various contexts, few studies have directly examined how Gen Z's interest in adventure tourism influences the actual implementation of sustainable tourism practices at specific destinations, such as Pelaruga (Pemandian alam rumah Galuh). Despite its rich natural resources and potential for adventure-based activities, Pelaruga requires careful management to balance visitor demand with environmental and community wellbeing. Therefore, this study is necessary to investigate whether Gen Z's tourism interest actively supports sustainable tourism development and to what extent

their behavior contributes to environmental preservation and the reinforcement of local cultural values.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in writing this research article is qualitative methods. Qualitative research itself is research that based on an ethnographic approach. This study examines the perceptions from two main groups, namely the managers of tourism objects and the visitors, in order to understand their views on the development of adventure tourism. By using a case study methodology the researchers conducted in-depth 2 interview sources, 6 interviewers, and 25 subjects were used to collect the questionnaire. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting subjects based on characteristics that meet the stated objectives. interviews with the managers and visitors of the tourism object. In addition, field visits and direct observations were also carried out in adventure-based tourism areas to enrich the collected data.

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires online. The questionnaire contained questions about respondent's perceptions of the tourism object as a destination, the impacts of tourism activities both positive and negative, their personal experiences related to adventure tourism, as well as the demographic data of the respondents, which were filled in by respondents, namely managers and visitors, including local communities, business actors, and tourists. The questionnaire was distributed online with the aim of reaching respondents widely, and the target of respondents who filled out the questionnaire was 25 people.

Data Results obtained from the distribution of questioner to Gen Z's

Table 1. Types of Tourism Visited by Respondents

Type of Tourism	Percentage
Nature Tourism	92 %
Artificial Tourism	5%
Culture Turism	3%

Source: Researchers (2025)

Table 2. Gen Z's Interest in Tourism Adventure

Category	Percentage
Interested	100%

Source: Researchers (2025)

Table 3. Gen Z's Awareness of Palaruga Tourism Object

Category	Percentage
Aware	96%
Not Aware	4%

Source: Researchers (2025)

Table 4. Assessment of Facilities Available in Palaruga

Assessment	Percentage
Average	16%
Good	56%
Excellent	26%

Source: Researchers (2025)

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sustainable tourism has become very important in maintaining environmental balance because it recognizes the need for developing the tourism sector that not only provides economic and social benefits but also involves responsibility towards the natural environment. In general terms, sustainable tourism encompasses an approach that focuses on the balance between economic growth, environmental conservation, and community welfare. Based on the results from many young generation respondents who agree with the implementation of the principles of sustainable tourism as an effort to minimize negative impacts on environmental insensitivity, such as pollution, ecosystem damage, and the loss of biodiversity due to overtourism that often occurs. Thus, the concept of sustainable tourism involves Generation Z who have the growing interest in adventure tourism much significantly influencing the direction of sustainable tourism practices. Rooted in theof Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), Gen Z's intention to engage in eco-conscious travel is driven by their attitudes toward sustainability, perceived behavioral control, and social norms shaped by digital platforms. Qualitative insights reveal that Gen Z travelers often perceive adventure not merely as a thrill-seeking activity but as a means to connect deeply with nature and local cultures. This deeper connection fosters environmentally responsible behavior, such as minimizing waste, supporting local businesses, and choosing eco-certified tour operators. The preference for authentic, off-the-beaten-path experiences encourages a shift away from mass tourism, reducing pressure on over-visited destinations while promoting less-explored, community-based tourism models.

It is important to involve Generation Z in sustainable tourism because this generation is known for its environmentally conscious characteristics and high social awareness. Generation Z is also the generation that travels the most, with the purpose of refreshing or what is commonly referred to as healing. Pelaruga is an abbreviation of Pemandian Alam Rumah Galuh which is a tourism community in the village of Rumah Galuh, Sei Bingai District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra. This place is known for its natural beauty including the Teroh-Teroh Waterfall, Eternal Pool, and Tongkat Waterfall. To reach this location, visitors must engage in tracking up and down the hills and can choose between tracking or Body Rafting to reach the Teroh-Teroh waterfall. Visiting this attraction is recommended in groups (4-6 people) because the tourism packages offered are mostly in group form with prices ranging around Rp 70,000/person, which includes access to all attractions and guide services. Visitors are advised to prepare their stamina as the access taken is quite challenging and it is not recommended for children under age and the elderly. In addition to its potential as an adventure tourism destination, the tourist attraction of Pelaruga also has a natural beauty that makes this tourist site one of the cons of the district. In langkat district, specifically around the Pelaruga area, there are several types of tourism that have attractions that are not very different from each other. Exploration is an activity of exploration that is carried out to discover something. Adventure tourism exploration in Indonesia has extraordinary potential to be developed as a tourist destination. Thus, sustainable tourism becomes an important pillar in building tourist destinations that are not only economically attractive but also environmentally and socially sustainable.

The concept of sustainable tourism refers to an approach to tourism development aimed at achieving economic growth and social welfare without destroying or sacrificing the surrounding environment. In this context, the concept emphasizes the integration between tourism development and the surrounding environment, minimizing negative

impacts, and maximizing economic and social benefits for local communities. The concept of sustainable tourism encompasses several key principles, such as the sustainable use of natural resources, the empowerment of local communities, and a participatory approach in decision-making. By applying these principles, sustainable tourism is not only directed towards achieving economic growth but also towards environmental sustainability and the well-being of local communities. The Galuh house village has potential that is good for being made an adventure tourism place, even though it has not yet attracted much attention from stakeholders. There is a big chance that this tourism object will develop if the government also participates in the development of local community human resources in managing and promoting this attraction. This tourism object has the potential to be a main choice for tourists to visit and enjoy Langkat besides Tangkahan and Bukit Lawang. Based on the results of the questionnaire that was distributed to 25 respondents, it can be concluded that 100% of Generation Z is very interested in adventure-based tourism. Some respondents suggested limiting the quota of tourists to keep the environment preserved, and some also suggested increasing the number of waste disposal facilities to maintain the ecosystem in the surrounding nature.

5. CONCLUSION

Sustainable tourism has become an essential approach in ensuring environmental balance while also fostering economic growth and social well-being. Generation Z, characterized by high environmental consciousness and a strong interest in travel, plays a crucial role in shaping the direction of sustainable and adventure tourism. This generation actively seeks experiences that are not only exciting and adventurous but also meaningful and responsible aligned with global sustainability values. In the context of Pelaruga (Pemandian Alam Rumah Galuh), located in Langkat, North Sumatra, the destination's natural beauty, physical challenge, and group-based travel offerings make it a perfect match for Generation Z's tourism preferences. Pelaruga offers a unique combination of adventure and nature immersion through activities such as tracking steep hills and body rafting through the Teroh-Teroh Waterfall, Eternal Pool, and Tongkat Waterfall. These features not only provide thrilling experiences but also allow deeper connections with the natural environment and local culture.

Based on data collected from 25 Generation Z respondents, there is a clear and strong alignment between their values and the principles of sustainable tourism. All respondents demonstrated an understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism, with the vast majority expressing agreement with the need for its implementation in tourism practices. Adventure-based tourism emerged as a particularly strong area of interest among them, indicating a shared enthusiasm for activities that offer physical challenge and natural exploration. Additionally, most of the respondents showed familiarity with culinary tourism and reported having visited such destinations, suggesting that their travel preferences also include cultural and gastronomic experiences. The majority accessed these culinary sites using private transportation, and overall accessibility was rated as generally good. When asked about preferred activities, body rafting and trekking were identified as the most recommended, particularly for individuals within their age group. These insights reinforce the idea that Generation Z not only values exciting, immersive tourism experiences but also supports sustainable practices that protect the environment and promote local engagement.

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