

Article

# A Bibliometric Analysis of Generation Z and Tourism Research: Insights from VOSviewer Mapping

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**Abstract:** In recent years, Generation Z has had a pivotal influence across global industries, with tourism being significantly impacted. As the first generation fully immersed in digital technology, Generation Z members have travel preferences, behaviours, and values which differ markedly from previous generations, presenting both challenges and opportunities for the tourism sector. This study explores studies on Generation Z in the context of the tourism industry through key research questions, including the primary trends and thematic clusters in the existing literature, the most influential journals and authors, and the temporal evolution of research in this area. To address these questions, this article presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 217 publications on Generation Z and tourism, spanning from 2018 to 2024, sourced from the Web of Science. Using VOSviewer, the analysis maps the main trends, the most influential publications, and the emerging themes, providing insights into how Generation Z is reshaping the tourism landscape. The bibliometric analysis and VOSviewer mapping add a rigorous methodological approach, offering a structured overview of existing research while identifying gaps for further exploration, especially in this emerging field. The study highlights the most published and cited journals, providing a broad contextual view, followed by an in-depth exploration of thematic clusters within Generation Z tourism research. The results indicate that although research on this topic gained attention in 2018, it is still in its early stages, with significant room for expansion. Current studies primarily focus on social media marketing communications for Generation Z, as well as Generation Z tourism experiences and their attitudes and preferences towards tourism, suggesting areas for future exploration.



**Citation:** Ivasciuc, Ioana-Simona, Adina Nicoleta Candrea, Ana Ispas, and Brenda-Andreea Piuaru. 2024. A Bibliometric Analysis of Generation Z and Tourism Research: Insights from VOSviewer Mapping. *Administrative Sciences* 14: 337. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14120337>

Received: 20 September 2024

Revised: 2 December 2024

Accepted: 10 December 2024

Published: 18 December 2024



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**Keywords:** generation Z; tourism; bibliometric analysis; VOSviewer; tourism research trends

## 1. Introduction

Success in the tourism industry hinges on the ability to identify and adapt to changes effectively. Among these, generational change stands out as a significant phenomenon, presenting both opportunities and challenges. The differences between generations are reshaping the tourism landscape, forcing businesses and researchers to stay agile and responsive. As Gardiner et al. (2014) highlight, traveller behaviour will vary across generations, making continuous and thorough analysis of these differences essential for anticipating future trends.

The rise of Generation Z, in particular, has introduced substantial shifts across multiple sectors, including tourism. As the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital age, Generation Z brings unique preferences, behaviours, and expectations to travel, setting them apart from their predecessors. Understanding these shifts is crucial for businesses aiming to cater to the evolving demands of this emerging consumer base.

Given the extensive body of research on Generation Z and tourism, it is imperative to synthesize and understand the existing literature comprehensively. Although numerous studies have been conducted (Morrone et al. 2024; Olsson et al. 2020; Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné 2023; Robinson and Schänzel 2019; Stylos et al. 2021), key aspects of the Generation Z

and tourism relationship remain underexplored. This research seeks to bridge this gap by offering detailed insights into Generation Z and tourism research. This is the purpose of this study. It aims to enhance the understanding of Generation Z within the tourism industry by systematically addressing six research questions. The first research question (RQ1), "Which journals, countries, authors, and institutions have been most influential in shaping research on Generation Z and tourism?", aims to identify the key contributors and pivotal works that have advanced knowledge in this field. The second research question (RQ2), "How has the academic focus on Generation Z and tourism evolved over time?", investigates the trends in publication and citation patterns, examining how interest in this topic has grown and shifted over the years. The third research question (RQ3), "What are the primary thematic clusters within the existing literature on Generation Z and tourism?", seeks to identify the main scholarly themes and areas of focus, offering a structured overview of the intellectual landscape in this emerging field.

The study also aims to identify areas that are underexplored, with the fourth research question (RQ4), "What are the current gaps in Generation Z tourism research?", and the fifth research question (RQ5), "How might these gaps be addressed in future studies?". These questions are essential for highlighting the limitations of the existing literature and suggesting directions for future research to expand and deepen the understanding of this topic. Finally, the study considers the broader implications of its findings through the sixth research question (RQ6), "What insights can a bibliometric analysis provide regarding the relationship between Generation Z's and tourism industry?". This question links the bibliometric results to both practical applications and theoretical advancements, providing a comprehensive view of how Generation Z is shaping the tourism sector.

To answer these research questions, the study employs a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer software. This method is essential, as it will enable the identification of thematic concentrations and trends within the existing research, thus highlighting under-researched areas and potentially influencing future research directions. By mapping out the intellectual landscape, the bibliometric analysis provides a structured and quantifiable overview of the connections between Generation Z specifically and tourism, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the field.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the existing literature on Generation Z and tourism and existing bibliometric studies on Generation Z. Section 3 describes the research methodology, including data collection techniques used in this study. Section 4 presents and discusses the findings and their implications. The paper concludes with a summary of the research outcomes, an acknowledgment of its limitations, and suggestions for future research directions.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Generation Z and Tourism

Since the end of World War II, researchers have identified four distinct generational cohorts: the Veterans (also known as the Silent Generation, born between 1928 and 1945), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (also referred to as the 13th Generation, born between 1965 and 1980), and Millennials (commonly known as Generation Y, born between 1981 and 1995) (Bernstein and Bhugra 2011). Generation Z comprises individuals born in the year 1996 and after, following Generations X and Y, and is also commonly known as Generation I, the Web Generation, or digital natives (Turner 2015). The members of Generation Z have matured during a period marked by a global financial crisis, terrorism, political turbulence, significant climate challenges, and a worldwide pandemic. Simultaneously, this cohort has navigated an increasingly globalized world, enjoying benefits such as a unified currency throughout the European Union and unrestricted mobility across its member states (Benítez-Márquez et al. 2022). These complex and multifaceted global conditions have profoundly influenced Generation Z's character and perspective, making them highly adaptable to a rapidly changing global environment (Magano et al. 2020).

Recent studies have provided valuable insights into the unique travel planning behaviours of Generation Z, highlighting their preferences. For example, [Dimitriou and AbouElgheit \(2019\)](#) propose a novel decision-making model specific to Generation Z, which is characterized by a five-stage process that underscores the impact of social recognition and the utilization of mobile and social applications in planning travel. Their model illustrates the depth and complexity of Generation Z's decision-making process, from initial inspiration to post-booking evaluations.

The research by [Stavrianea and Kamenidou \(2021\)](#) provides an analysis of experiential values and online accommodation booking within the context of digital transformation in the tourism sector, specifically focusing on the Greek Generation Z cohort. The findings indicate that providing the Generation Z cohort with added experiential value significantly influences their propensity towards positive future behaviours.

The research literature has explored the diversity within the Generation Z travel market. In this vein, [Nemec Rudež \(2023\)](#) performed a market segmentation analysis focusing on Generation Z's online information-seeking behaviours. By assessing the significance of various digital travel-related information features, two distinct market segments were identified for targeted digital marketing strategies. The predominant segment, labelled "Practical information seekers," prioritizes accessible and secure information, while the smaller segment, termed "Genuine information seekers," values the authenticity of the information.

In the realm of transportation, a study by [Olsson et al. \(2020\)](#) examined the relationship between public transport use, travel satisfaction, and life satisfaction across multiple generations. The findings highlight that while younger generations, including Generation Z, utilize public transport more frequently than older cohorts, they also report lower satisfaction with their travel experiences. Key factors such as security, safety, and value for money are particularly important to them, and improvements in these areas are likely to enhance both their travel and life satisfaction. Furthermore, [İlhan et al. \(2022\)](#) suggested that Generation Z individuals are open to experimenting with new modes of transportation that they have not previously encountered. Also, the research conducted by [D'Arco et al. \(2023\)](#) delves into Generation Z's pro-environmental intentions within the tourism sector, focusing on their choices regarding sustainable transportation.

No studies have been identified that present Generation Z's preferences for a specific type of accommodation. However, the study by [D'Arco et al. \(2023\)](#) addresses a related aspect by investigating the eco-conscious intentions of Generation Z within the tourism industry, specifically focusing on their preferences for eco-friendly accommodations.

Regarding culinary preferences, [García-Carrión et al. \(2023\)](#) conducted an eye-tracking experiment to explore how social media message congruence affects visual attention and information processing among Millennials and Generation Z in culinary tourism. The study revealed that both cohorts process gastronomy-related comments more cognitively when message congruence is low. Notably, Generation Z exhibits greater attention to culinary visuals, indicating their unique engagement patterns with gastronomic content. Also, [İlhan et al. \(2022\)](#) study conclude that Generation Z expresses a keen enthusiasm for traditional cuisines.

[İlhan et al. \(2022\)](#) examine Generation Z's perception of landscapes within tourism destinations, highlighting the significance of genuine interactions with residents and the allure of traditional architecture. Their research indicates that these factors are particularly appealing to Generation Z, suggesting that such characteristics should be strategically incorporated into tourism planning to attract this age group. The primary motivation for their travel is to escape the monotony of daily life, with a strong preference for traveling during their school and youth years. This demographic shows a pronounced interest in cultural, historical, and architectural sites.

Despite the growing body of literature addressing various aspects of Generation Z's behaviour in tourism, there is still much to explore. Studies have examined their unique travel planning preferences, market segmentation, and transport use, but critical gaps

remain. This research provides a comprehensive analysis of the trends, thematic clusters, and key areas of the Generation Z and tourism relationship.

## 2.2. Bibliometric Studies on Generation Z

The use of bibliometric analysis is increasing (Aria and Cuccurullo 2017) because of its capability to identify trends, map the present state of knowledge, and evaluate the impact of scholarly contributions across various disciplines and perspectives.

There are only a few bibliometric studies on Generation Z. A bibliometric analysis was conducted by Yahya and Mammadzada (2024), offering insights into the trends and patterns of research on marketing to Generation Z. The study indicates a shift towards digital platforms, authenticity, and customized content as key strategies to effectively engage Generation Z. It emphasizes the necessity for marketing approaches to be refined to resonate with the distinctive characteristics and values of this demographic. To elucidate the characteristics of Generation Z in the workforce, Benítez-Márquez et al. (2022) reviewed 102 Web of Science articles focusing on Generation Z employees published between 2009 and 2020. Ortiz-Pimentel et al. (2020) performed a bibliometric analysis on intergenerational studies within business and management journals, analysing various generations including X, Y, and Z, as well as Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation. Their research, conducted using the Web of Science database, revealed a concentration of studies in economically developed regions and identified a significant lack of qualitative research concerning Generation Z. Additionally, Li and Hassan (2023) employed VOSviewer for a bibliometric analysis to map the knowledge structure of Generation Z's purchasing behavior, producing a visual network map.

Despite these contributions, there appears to be a gap in similar studies within the context of tourism marketing and behaviour for Generation Z. Given their growing impact on the tourism industry, it is imperative to conduct bibliometric analyses focusing on the tourism experiences of Generation Z.

## 3. Methodology

Bibliometric studies are essential for analysing academic content, offering valuable insights into publication trends and citation patterns. By examining these trends, we can gain a deeper understanding of the academic discourse surrounding Generation Z in the tourism sector. Web of Science and Scopus, two widely used and comprehensive databases, are commonly utilized for this type of analysis (van Eck and Waltman 2010). In this study, the research data is collected from the Web of Science database.

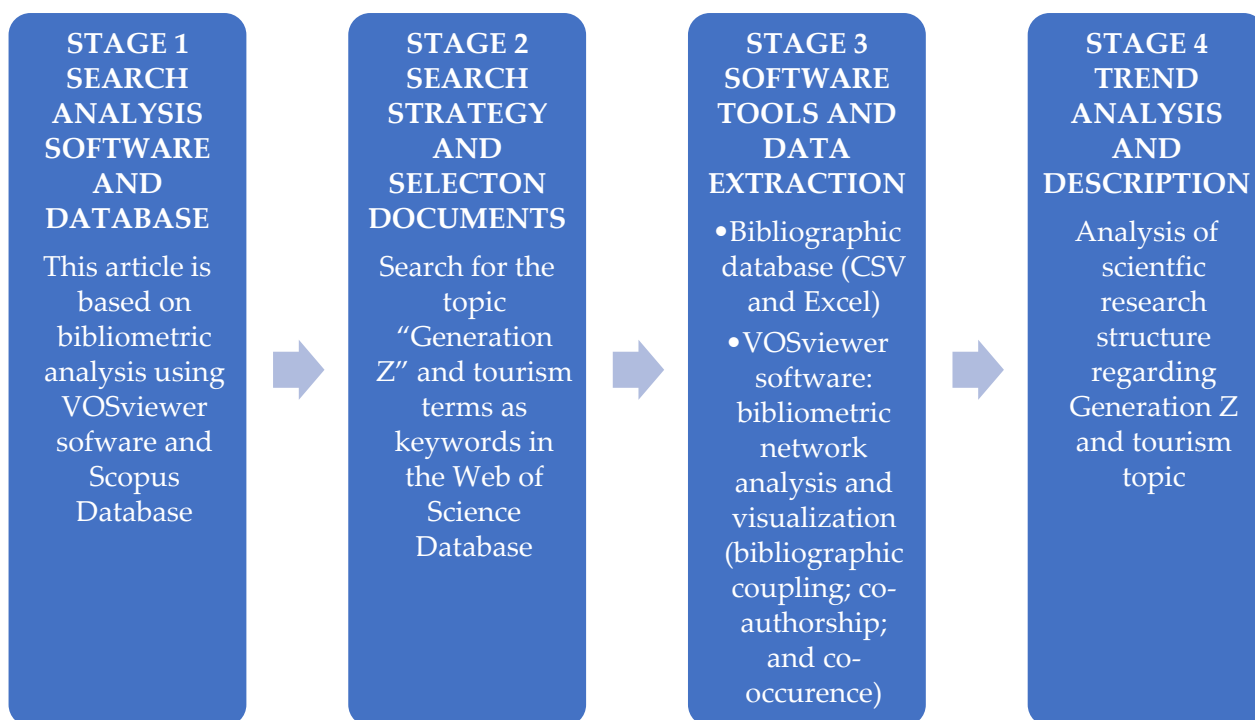
The analysis in this study was primarily conducted using two tools: VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) for co-occurrence network analysis and Microsoft Excel for descriptive statistical analysis. VOSviewer, a Java-based software developed by Van Eck and Waltman in 2009, is specifically designed for the visualization and analysis of bibliometric networks. It is particularly effective in mapping co-occurrence networks, allowing for a clear visualization of scientific knowledge structures (van Eck and Waltman 2010).

Figure 1 presents the research stages.

The documents utilized for this review were sourced from the Web of Science (WoS) database as of 10 July 2024. An advanced search algorithm was created using specific keyword variants related to Generation Z and tourism terms ("travel", "tourism", "tourist" and "traveller"). The search string implemented in WoS was:

$$TS = ("Generation Z" OR "Gen Z" OR "Z Generation") AND TS = ("travel" OR "tourism" OR "tourist" OR "traveller").$$

The use of these targeted terms was intended to ensure a consistent research focus across different studies. While these terms are interrelated, they may be employed distinctly within academic literature.



**Figure 1.** Research stages Source: authors' processing.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Document Type, Subject Categories Overview

To capture a comprehensive range of studies, given the nascent stage of research on Generation Z, no restrictions were placed on publication years (2018–2024), languages, or document types. Most of the documents analysed were articles ( $n = 162$ : 75.46%), followed by early-access articles ( $n = 30$ : 13.39%), reviews ( $n = 16$ : 7.14%), and other types ( $n = 9$ : 4.01%).

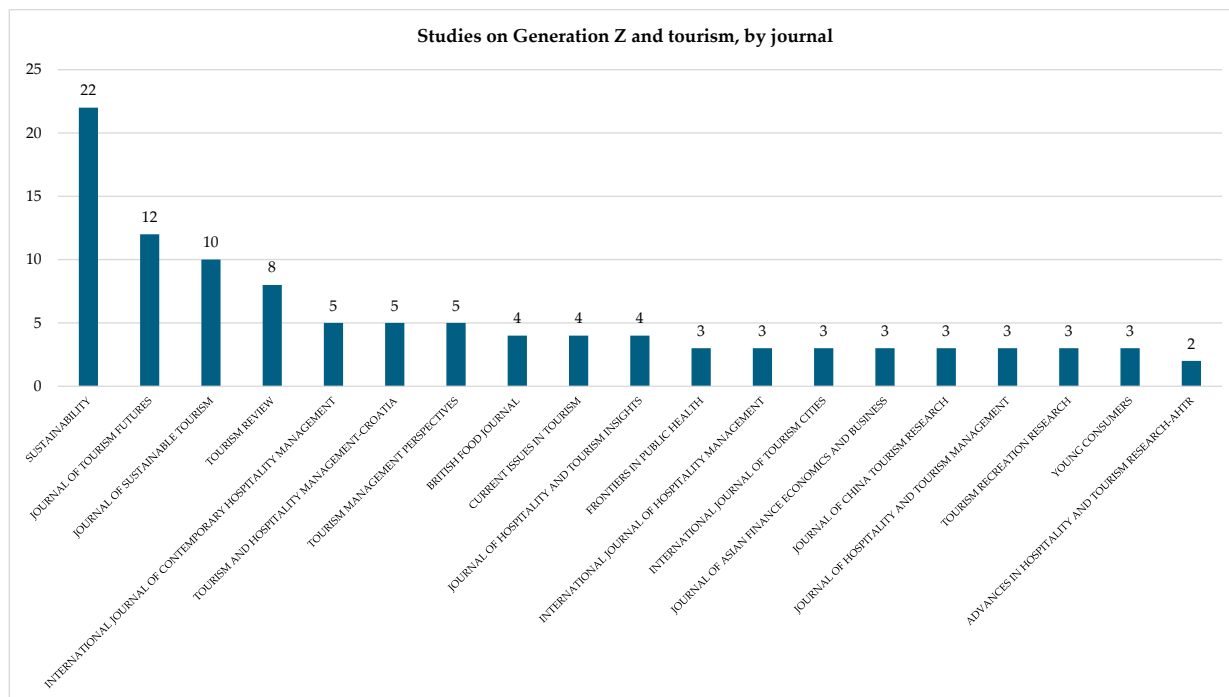
The top three Web of Science subject categories with the highest proportion of documents were "Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism" ( $n = 77$ : 33.03%), followed by "Green & Sustainable Science & Technology; Environmental Sciences; Environmental Studies" ( $n = 22$ : 9.82%) and "Management" ( $n = 17$ : 7.59%).

### 4.2. Most Active Journals

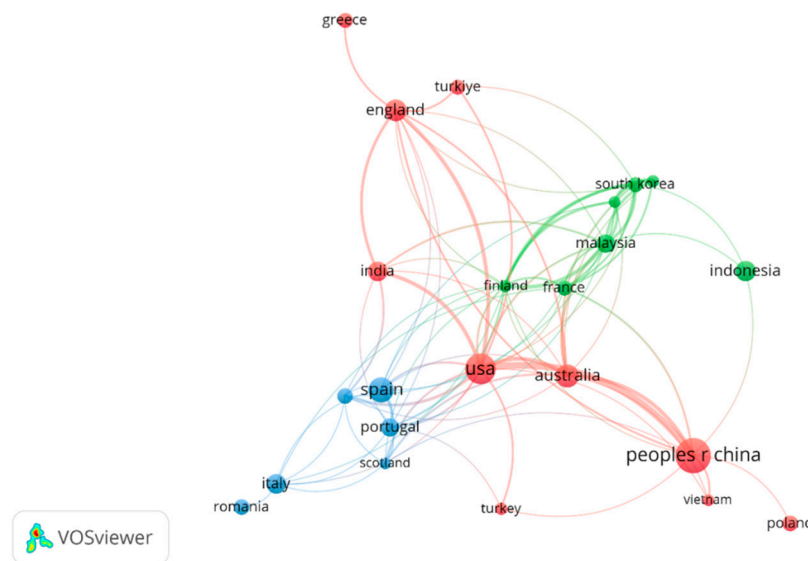
Nonetheless, from Figure 2 we can see that the largest number of articles on Generation Z and tourism are published in the journal *Sustainability* ( $n = 22$ : 9.82%), followed by the *Journal of Tourism Futures* ( $n = 12$ : 5.36%), *Tourism Review* ( $n = 8$ : 4.46%), *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *Tourism and Hospitality Management-Croatia*, and *Tourism Management Perspectives* ( $n = 5$ : 2.23%).

### 4.3. Country Co-Authorship Analysis

Publications analysing Generation Z's purchasing behaviour originated from 23 different countries. According to Figure 3, the People's Republic of China leads in the number of papers published on Generation Z and tourism, contributing with 38 papers, which constitute 16.96% of the total. This is followed by the United States with 30 papers (13.39%) and Spain with 21 papers (9.38%). Within Europe, Spain emerges as a leader with 21 publications (17.21%), followed by England with 16 publications (13.11%), and Italy with 13 publications (10.66%), indicating significant research interest in these regions on the topic.



**Figure 2.** Studies on Generation Z and tourism, by journal. Source: authors’ processing in Excel, using Web of Science indexed articles. Source: authors’ processing.



**Figure 3.** A map of the occurrence of studies on Generation Z and tourism experiences, by country. Source: authors’ processing in VOSviewer, using Web of Science indexed articles. Source: authors’ processing.

**4.4. Most Active Contributors in This Field**

To identify the leading contributors in the study of Generation Z and their tourism experiences, publication data were systematically analysed. The analysis focused on pinpointing the most prolific authors and institutions that are shaping the research landscape in this field. This highlights individual researchers and also emphasizes the institutions that serve as hubs of knowledge and innovation. Table 1 presents the top 10 authors, ranked by their total number of publications. These authors are actively contributing to the research on Generation Z and tourism experiences, reflecting their influence and dedication to advancing knowledge in this domain.

**Table 1.** Top 10 authors, ranked by their total number of publications.

Authors	Record Count
Goh E	5
Hall CM	5
Jiang YY	5
Seyfi S	5
Kamenidou I	4
Okumus F	4
Bara EZ	3
Bollani L	3
Bonadonna A	3

Source: authors' processing.

The outcomes reveal that Goh E, Hall CM, Jiang YY, and Seyfi S are the most prominent contributors, each with five publications regarding Generation Z in the context of the tourism industry. Their work has likely set important precedents for others in the field. Meanwhile, authors such as Kamenidou I and Okumus F, with four publications each, also demonstrate significant involvement in research about Generation Z and tourism.

Additionally, Table 2 highlights the most active institutions contributing to this research domain. These findings offer a comprehensive view of the key contributors and centres of excellence in the field.

**Table 2.** Top 10 active institutions contributing to this research domain of Generation Z and tourism experiences.

Affiliations	Record Count
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA	12
TAYLOR S UNIVERSITY	8
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA	8
UNIVERSITY OF OULU	7
EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY	6
KYUNG HEE UNIVERSITY	6
MACAU UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY	6
INTERNATIONAL HELLENIC UNIVERSITY	5
LINNAEUS UNIVERSITY	5
UNIVERSIDAD DE MALAGA	5

Source: authors' processing.

The State University System of Florida leads the list with 12 publications on Generation Z and tourism. Other institutions, such as Taylor's University and the University of Central Florida, each with 8 publications, also emerge as key contributors. The presence of institutions from diverse geographical locations—ranging from Finland to Australia—illustrates the global nature of this research area.

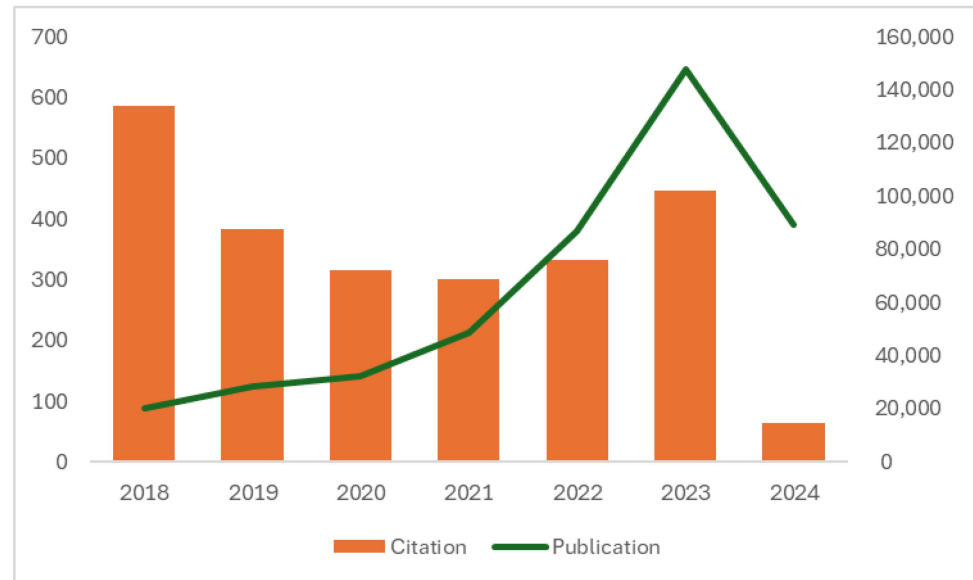
#### 4.5. Trends of Publications and Citations

The annual publication count can serve as an indicator of the developmental state of the research area within this study. The publication and citation trends related to Generation Z and tourism are depicted in Figure 4.

Prior to 2018, there is no research published on this theme. There is a steady increase in the number of publications from 2018 to 2022, starting from under 200 publications in 2018 to approximately 600 in 2022. This indicates a growing interest in the field. In 2023, there is a significant decrease in the number of publications.

The trend in citations does not follow the same trajectory as the publications. While the number of publications consistently rises until 2022, the number of citations peaks in 2023, even as the number of publications begins to decline. This might suggest that works published in earlier years have begun to be cited more frequently. This research analysed

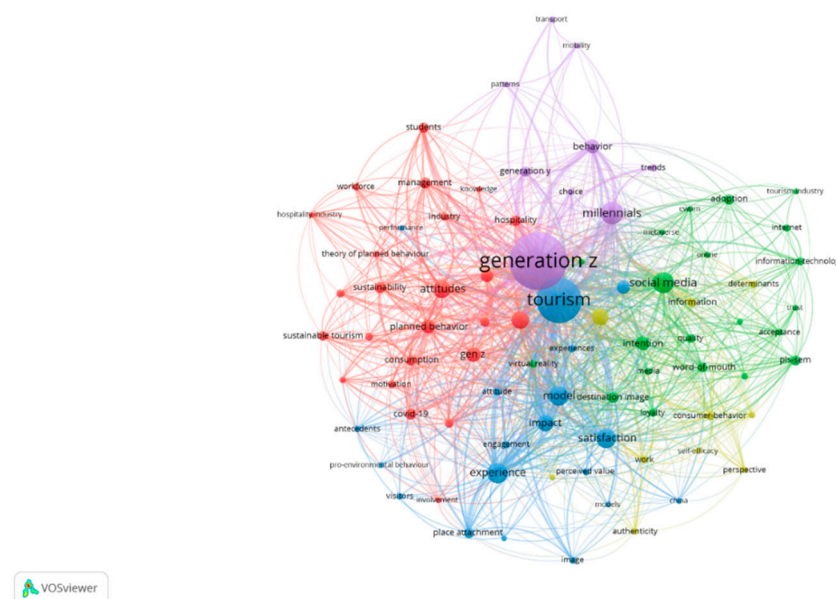
the 10 documents with the highest number of citations, the most cited document being “A workforce to be reckoned with: The emerging pivotal Generation Z hospitality workforce” (n = 225) (Goh and Lee 2018). The average number of citations for the 10 documents was 10.83.



**Figure 4.** Trends of publications and citations on Generation Z and tourism. Source: authors' processing in Excel, using Web of Science indexed articles.

#### 4.6. Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

According to the keyword co-occurrence analysis conducted using VOSviewer (as shown in Figure 5), keywords such as Generation Z, tourism, millennials, social media, experience, model, satisfaction, attitudes, perceptions, travel, and impact, which appear more than 20 times, indicate the main areas of focus in recent research on Generation Z and tourism. These frequently occurring keywords highlight the central themes and topics of interest within this field of study.



**Figure 5.** A map of the occurrences and links for terms related to Generation Z and tourism. Source: authors' processing in VOSviewer, using Web of Sciences indexed articles.

Additionally, this study performed a consistency analysis on keywords that appeared more than 5 times, totalling 83 distinct terms. In the visual representation, each node (dot) corresponds to a keyword found in the research articles. The node size generally reflects the frequency of the keyword's occurrence across these articles. As depicted in Figure 5, the scale of the node is directly proportional to the frequency of keyword usage; larger nodes signify a higher degree of focus on those terms.

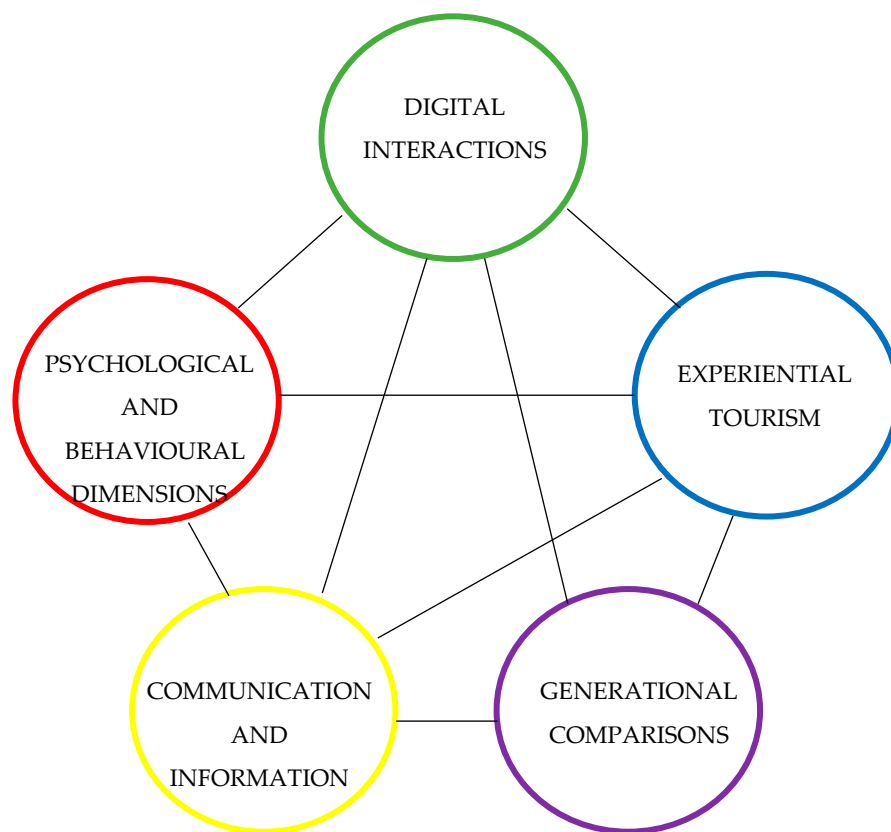
Using VOSviewer, we mapped the most frequently occurring and co-occurring terms to visually interpret the thematic landscape and connectivity among concepts within the scholarly discourse on Generation Z and tourism. The visual map generated by VOSviewer presented in Figure 5 revealed several distinct clusters of research focus. Each of these clusters represents a nuanced area of interest within the broader field of tourism research.

The clusters (groups of nodes) of different colours signify thematic connections between keywords, suggesting that these terms frequently appear together in the literature. Different colours in the visual representation signify distinct clusters, each corresponding to the specific manner in which the connections are established.

- Cluster 1—Red Cluster—focuses on the psychological and behavioural dimensions of tourism studies, particularly examining underlying motives and responses of Generation Z. It mainly explores “attitudes” (Qiu et al. 2022; Sakdiyakorn et al. 2021; Zaib Abbasi et al. 2023), “perceptions” (Dedeoglu et al. 2023; García-del Junco et al. 2021; Jiménez-García et al. 2023; Nagaj and Žuromskaitė 2023; Rončák et al. 2021), and “planned behavior” (Kharuhayothin et al. 2024; Wu et al. 2024). “Coronavirus Disease 2019” (COVID-19) impact on Generation Z's consumption of tourism products is an important research focus (Kamenidou et al. 2023; Poruțiu et al. 2024).
- Cluster 2—Green Cluster—the main research topic features digital and technological interactions, reflecting Generation Z's engagement with digital platforms. This includes research on “social media” (Dimitriou and AbouElgheit 2019; Ek Styvén and Foster 2018; Lee and Lee 2024) and “information technology” (Tsai et al. 2022).
- Cluster 3—Blue Cluster—is oriented towards experiential and destination-specific aspects, illustrating how Generation Z interacts with and perceives their travel environments. The research mainly studies “experience” (Bogicevic et al. 2024; Chen and Lin 2024; Genc et al. 2023), “place attachment” (Jiang and Hong 2023; Kamenidou et al. 2023), and “perceived value” (Rodrigues et al. 2024; Shen et al. 2024).
- Cluster 4—Yellow Cluster—delves into the dissemination and communication aspects within the tourism field, focusing on how information is shared and consumed. The most important research topics involve “travel” (Lončarić et al. 2013; Zhang et al. 2024), “information” (Aras 2023; Machado Carvalho 2024), and “authenticity” (İlhan et al. 2022; Iványi and Bíró-Szigeti 2020; Lebrun and Bouchet 2024).
- Cluster 5—Purple Cluster—includes studies that compare various generational cohorts within the tourism framework. This includes the comparative discussions of Generation Z and Millennials (Generation Y) (Ek Styvén and Foster 2018; Giachino et al. 2021; Szromek et al. 2019; Yeap et al. 2021; Zhang et al. 2024).

The identified clusters—psychological and behavioural dimensions, digital interactions, experiential tourism, communication and information dynamics, and generational comparisons—form a multifaceted framework that collectively shapes Generation Z's tourism behaviours. While distinct, these clusters are interconnected, influencing each other in nuanced ways (Figure 6).

Generation Z's tourism behaviours are profoundly influenced by their interaction with digital platforms, which shape their attitudes, perceptions, and planned behaviours. Social media serves as both a reflective tool and an amplifying mechanism for their psychological and behavioural dimensions. Peer recommendations and influencer-generated content significantly contribute to the formation of their attitudes towards travel destinations and experiences (Machado Carvalho 2024; Ong et al. 2024; Štimac et al. 2020).



**Figure 6.** Interconnections between clusters. Source: authors' processing.

Digital platforms play a critical role in both the promotion and sharing of travel experiences. They enable Generation Z to discover, document, and share memorable moments, reinforcing perceived value and fostering emotional connections to destinations (Losada et al. 2022). This emotional satisfaction, coupled with positive perceptions, strengthens psychological bonds, such as place attachment (Lin et al. 2022), which in turn influences future travel choices and encourages destination loyalty (Iványi and Bíró-Szigeti 2020; Lončarić et al. 2013).

Moreover, communication dynamics function as a central element bridging the psychological, digital, and experiential dimensions of tourism. Authentic, well-structured dissemination of information not only shapes perceptions but also ensures that experiences meet or exceed expectations, thereby enhancing satisfaction and the perceived value of travel (Wang and Park 2023).

Comparative studies between Generation Z and Millennials underscore the distinctive emphasis that Generation Z places on technological integration and authenticity within tourism. These generational differences provide a contextual framework for understanding the unique interactions between the clusters, offering a broader perspective on the drivers of Generation Z's tourism behaviours (Fan et al. 2023; Jevtić et al. 2024; Kim et al. 2024; K. Wang 2024).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Evolution of Research on Generation Z and Tourism

The bibliometric analysis of research on Generation Z and tourism reveals the evolution of this academic field, highlighting its growth trajectory and thematic diversification. Since 2018, when publications on this topic began to emerge, the number of studies has increased steadily, reflecting a growing academic and industry interest in understanding the travel behaviours and preferences of this generation.

The analysis shows that the majority of documents (75.46%) are research articles, with a smaller proportion consisting of early-access articles, reviews, and other types. The wide range of publication types demonstrates the ongoing exploration of the various dimensions of Generation Z's influence on tourism. In terms of subject categories, "Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism" leads the field, followed by studies with an emphasis on sustainability and environmental concerns. This distribution suggests that research on Generation Z within tourism is not only focused on traditional tourism behaviours but also incorporates broader issues like environmental consciousness and sustainability, areas that align well with Generation Z's values. The analysis of journal activity shows that *Sustainability* is the leading publication outlet for studies on Generation Z and tourism, followed by other tourism-focused journals like the *Journal of Tourism Futures* and *Tourism Review*. The prominence of sustainability as a theme reflects Generation Z's increasing emphasis on ethical and environmentally responsible travel practices. This interest in sustainable tourism suggests a potential shift in the industry's future, as businesses must adapt to cater to the environmentally conscious travel preferences of Generation Z.

The steady rise in publications from 2018 to 2022 highlights the expanding research interest in this area, with a notable peak in the number of publications in 2022. However, 2023 saw a decrease in new publications, which could indicate a maturation phase in the research field or possibly a shift in focus towards consolidating and building upon existing knowledge. Interestingly, the citation trends peaked in 2023, even as the number of new publications dropped, suggesting that earlier works have gained recognition and are being referenced more frequently.

The keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals several key research themes. Cluster 1 focuses on attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural responses of Generation Z travellers. Cluster 2 emphasizes social media and digital interactions, reflecting the generation's tech-savvy nature. Cluster 3 explores travel experiences and place attachment, highlighting how this group engages with destinations. Cluster 4 examines how travel information is shared and consumed, with a focus on authenticity. Finally, Cluster 5 compares Generation Z with Millennials, exploring generational differences in travel behaviour. These clusters showcase the diverse research interests surrounding Generation Z and tourism.

### 5.2. Content Analysis of Studies on Generation Z and Tourism

This content analysis examines the contributions of authors in the scientific literature addressing Generation Z's engagement with tourism. The body of work reviewed is interdisciplinary, combining insights from psychology, technology, and cultural studies to provide a holistic understanding of this demographic and its influence on the tourism industry.

Considering this cohort's preferences and motivations, Generation Z travellers prioritize adventure, authenticity, and social interaction in tourism experiences. They seek cultural immersion, local engagement, and gastronomic exploration, often motivated by escapism, perceived value, and culinary interests (Xu and Tavitiyaman 2018). Preferences lean towards seaside and urban destinations, though some favour off-the-beaten-path locations recommended by locals. Accommodation choices reflect economic pragmatism, with a preference for campsites, peer-to-peer accommodation (Airbnb, etc.), and stays with friends or family over luxury resorts (Dimitriou and AbouElgheit 2019).

Studies also identify a hedonistic approach to tourism, characterized by spontaneity, affordability, and cultural engagement (Chen et al. 2022). Gastronomic experiences such as farm-to-table dining, food festivals, and cooking classes foster connections with local communities and support sustainable development (Lebrun and Bouchet 2024). Additionally, Generation Z demonstrates a preference for e-commerce payment systems and staying connected in real time, enhancing travel planning and experiences (Martínez-González and Álvarez-Albelo 2021).

Emerging technologies play a pivotal role in shaping Generation Z's travel preferences, as highlighted in the studied articles. Kılıçarslan et al. (2024) examine the impact of the Metaverse on tourism, particularly in areas such as marketing, customer relationship man-

agement (CRM), and the management of tourist experiences. This research emphasizes the strong connection between Generation Z and virtual events, showcasing the transformative potential of these technologies in redefining travel behaviours. Complementing this, Liu et al. (2023) focus on the influence of social media marketing, highlighting Generation Z's high receptivity to personalized and interactive content. In a similar vein, Xue et al. (2024) underscore the importance of short video content in shaping travel intentions and fostering ecological awareness.

Social media platforms are especially influential in driving Generation Z's tourism behaviours. Meng and Leung (2021) discuss TikTok's ability to shape brand perceptions and travel planning through short-form videos, user-generated content (UGC), and viral trends. YouTube also emerges as a key platform, serving as a source of detailed travel information that combines aspirational storytelling with practical insights (Alegro and Turnšek 2020; Silaban et al. 2022). Across various platforms, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and UGC provide authentic, relatable perspectives that significantly influence travel decisions (Čuić Tanković and Vidović 2023; Pop et al. 2022; Tobon and García-Madariaga 2021; Tran and Rudolf 2022). These studies collectively highlight the critical role of social media and emerging digital technologies in shaping the travel choices and behaviours of Generation Z.

The COVID-19 pandemic's effects on travel behaviours is a critical area of study. Research by Morrone et al. (2024) and Jiménez-García et al. (2023) explores how Generation Z's perceptions of risk and safety measures influence their travel decisions. These studies highlight the increased importance of flexibility and hygiene in their preferences, reflecting a shift towards cautious but adaptive travel behaviours.

The interplay between sustainability and Generation Z's travel decisions is another key theme. Researchers have established a connection between pro-environmental values and sustainable travel behaviours, demonstrating Generation Z's emotional commitment to responsible tourism (Mandić et al. 2024; Pulido-Fernández and López-Sánchez 2016; Seyfi et al. 2023a). However, economic constraints frequently hinder the practical adoption of such sustainable practices. Complementing these findings, Seyfi et al. (2023b) and Nowacki et al. (2023) explore ethical consumerism, highlighting the difficulties Generation Z encounters in aligning their travel choices with ethical principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite this cohort's strong alignment with sustainability, research indicates that sustainable tourism is not yet fully embedded in their travel experiences. While Haddouche and Salomone (2018) and Cavagnaro et al. (2018) find that Generation Z travellers prioritize cultural immersion, local community interaction, and environmental protection, they also note gaps in integrating these values into actual travel practices. This discrepancy is further evidenced by Georgescu and Herman (2020), who reveal that Generation Z's sustainable behaviours are more pronounced at home than when traveling. Even so, the "green image" of a destination significantly influences their decision-making processes (Nowacki et al. 2023).

### 5.3. Future of Research Trends on Generation Z and Tourism

Research trends in related fields can be identified by analysing keywords from the past five years (Li and Hassan 2023). By analysing the keywords related to Generation Z and tourism over the past five years, this study has identified three promising future research directions deserving attention. The first direction is concentrated on the use of social media in tourism by Generation Z. Since 2019, social media has been used as a keyword in the relevant literature 29 times. Social media marketing communications significantly influenced Generation Z because they change their attitudes and behaviours according to the sources they trust, and social media has an important place in their willingness to pay more (Aras 2023). Academics should deepen research into this theme, particularly exploring how social media shapes Generation Z's decision-making and tourism experiences.

In addition, there is another research direction worthy of attention: Generation Z tourism experiences. "Experience" has appeared 28 times since 2019. It refers to the importance of leveraging nostalgia and understanding the emotional connection that

Generation Z has with tourism products (Chen and Lin 2024). Also, experiential marketing has the power to transform experiences, increasing demand and inspiring word-of-mouth sharing (Bogicevic et al. 2024). Research should delve deeper into Generation Z's tourism experiences, focusing on how immersive and personalized travel affects their satisfaction and loyalty. Academics can also explore how digital technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) enhance these experiences.

A third research direction focuses on Generation Z's attitudes and perceptions, both of which have appeared 23 times in studies over the past five years. Exploring Generation Z's attitudes and perceptions towards emerging forms of tourism, such as virtual tourism (Rodrigues et al. 2024) or rural tourism (Poruțiu et al. 2024), could provide valuable new insights into the preferences of this generation.

## 6. Conclusions

While Generation Z's impact on tourism is increasingly recognized, there remains a lack of consolidated knowledge that systematically maps the scholarly discourse surrounding this demographic. Understanding the nuances of this group's travel behaviour is crucial not only for the industry's future strategies but also for advancing academic research. This study aims to fill that gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of the existing literature on Generation Z and tourism. By utilizing VOSviewer for mapping and visualizing bibliometric networks, we provide an in-depth exploration of the key themes, research patterns, and influential contributions within this growing field. The insights drawn from this analysis offer a foundation for further research and practical applications, addressing the unique needs and expectations of Generation Z in the context of global tourism.

The reviewed literature highlights the importance of an integrative approach to understanding Generation Z's dynamics in tourism. Building upon the thematic mapping, this study identifies key contributors and seminal works that have significantly advanced knowledge in the field, addressing RQ1: "Which journals, countries, authors, and institutions have been most influential in shaping research on Generation Z and tourism?" This examination of influential contributions highlights the primary drivers of scholarly discourse and underscores the role of these works in defining and shaping the field. By mapping intellectual networks and identifying key thought leaders, the study establishes a robust foundation for future researchers to expand and refine these areas of inquiry.

In response to the second research question (RQ2): "How has the academic focus on Generation Z and tourism evolved over time?", this study outlines the progression of research priorities over the years. This analysis indicates a maturing research field, transitioning from initial exploratory studies to more nuanced and impactful contributions. The temporal evolution of publications and citations also reflects the increasing integration of Generation Z's unique characteristics—such as their digital engagement, preference for authenticity, and emphasis on meaningful experiences—into broader tourism studies. These trends provide valuable insights for researchers and practitioners, signalling areas of sustained interest and emerging opportunities for future exploration.

By addressing RQ3: "What are the primary thematic clusters within the existing literature on Generation Z and tourism?", the study identified the core scholarly themes in this domain. The thematic clusters include psychological and behavioural dimensions, digital interactions, experiential tourism, communication and information dynamics, and generational comparisons. Together, these clusters form a comprehensive framework that defines and shapes Generation Z's tourism behaviours, offering a structured overview of the intellectual landscape in this emerging field.

Further, the study addressed current gaps in the literature by answering RQ4: "What are the current gaps in Generation Z tourism research?" and RQ5: "How might these gaps be addressed in future studies?" Key gaps identified included the limited exploration of intersections between thematic clusters, such as the interplay between psychological dimensions and digital interactions, as well as the underrepresentation of cultural diversity in shaping tourism behaviours.

Lastly, the study explored the broader implications of the findings by addressing RQ6: “What insights can a bibliometric analysis provide regarding the relationship between Generation Z’s unique characteristics and their influence on the tourism industry?” The research findings offer a cohesive framework of theoretical and practical implications for tourism stakeholders, including scholars, destination managers, and industry practitioners. These insights underscore the importance of aligning strategies with the unique characteristics of Generation Z to enhance their engagement and satisfaction in the tourism sector.

From a theoretical perspective, the study makes significant contributions to the growing body of literature on Generation Z and tourism by identifying key trends and gaps in current research. One critical area highlighted is the limited number of longitudinal studies exploring how Generation Z’s attitudes and behaviours towards tourism evolve over time (Chen et al. 2023; D’Acunto et al. 2024). To address this gap, future research should adopt longitudinal methodologies over extended timeframes, offering a deeper understanding of the temporal changes in Generation Z’s preferences.

From a practical perspective, the study emphasizes several actionable strategies for tourism stakeholders, aiming to bridge the gap between Generation Z’s expectations and the services offered. First, digital engagement strategies must be prioritized, as Generation Z’s tourism behaviours are deeply rooted in their interactions with digital platforms. Stakeholders should focus on creating interactive content, leveraging social media for brand visibility, and integrating seamless digital tools to enhance the overall travel experience.

Second, the provision of personalized and immersive travel experiences is essential for meeting Generation Z’s desire for authenticity and meaningful engagement. Tourism providers should design experiences that foster cultural immersion, local interactions, and activities that align with their quest for social connection and adventure.

Third, stakeholders must address Generation Z’s increasing focus on ethical and environmentally responsible tourism by incorporating eco-friendly practices, ensuring transparency in sustainability initiatives, and offering opportunities for travellers to participate in impactful and responsible travel activities. Such efforts align with this cohort’s values, fostering loyalty and long-term engagement.

Lastly, the importance of generation-specific marketing is emphasized. Distinct campaigns tailored to the characteristics of different cohorts, such as Millennials and Generation Z, can yield better results. For Generation Z, marketing efforts should highlight technology-driven solutions, experiential messaging, and value-based narratives that resonate with their social and environmental consciousness. Despite its theoretical and practical implications, this study has several limitations that could guide future research. First, the data analysed are restricted to literature from the Web of Science database. In this context, the study could be compared to similar bibliometric analyses conducted using different databases, such as Scopus. Also, the study is limited to English-language publications, which may introduce bias in the findings. Second, the majority of the literature is focused on developed countries, with limited representation from emerging markets. Future research could expand by incorporating more diverse data sources and including non-English literature, such as Chinese publications, given that China has the largest Generation Z population, to provide more comprehensive insights.

Furthermore, the reliance on bibliometric methods, though effective for mapping trends and clusters, limits the depth of analysis. Quantitative tools like VOSviewer and databases such as Web of Science overlook the nuanced insights that qualitative or mixed-method approaches could provide into Generation Z’s motivations and behaviours. Future research should incorporate qualitative methodologies, such as content analysis, interviews, surveys, or mixed-method approaches, to capture the rich, context-specific nuances of this demographic.

While VOSviewer is useful for visualizing co-occurrence networks, it offers only a surface-level understanding of research themes. The analysis does not fully explore deeper intersections or theoretical frameworks, reducing its ability to capture the complexity of Generation Z’s engagement with tourism. Future studies could employ advanced

network analysis techniques or delve into case-specific thematic intersections, such as how psychological and digital clusters intersect in shaping experiential tourism.

Additionally, the study heavily emphasizes journal articles, which constituted 75.46% of the analysed documents, while minimally including conference proceedings, policy papers, and case studies. These alternative sources often cover emerging or applied topics critical to understanding innovation and practice in tourism. Future research could integrate diverse document types to capture applied and cutting-edge perspectives, especially from industry reports or grey literature. Moreover, the thematic clusters identified in the study provide a static snapshot of research. While these clusters are valuable, they do not account for the dynamic nature of academic inquiry, where priorities and trends evolve over time. Establishing a longitudinal framework for monitoring trends could provide dynamic insights into how Generation Z's behaviours and preferences evolve in response to technological and societal changes.

Lastly, the study does not address several emerging trends that are becoming increasingly relevant to Generation Z. Topics such as metaverse tourism, blockchain technology, and AI-driven personalization are not presented. Future research should focus on these trends to explore how innovative technologies reshape tourism experiences for this tech-savvy demographic. Comparative studies on the adoption of these technologies across generations could also provide valuable insights.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, I.-S.I., A.I. and A.N.C.; methodology, I.-S.I., A.I. and A.N.C.; software, I.-S.I.; validation, I.-S.I., A.I., A.N.C. and B.-A.P.; formal analysis, I.-S.I. and A.I.; investigation, A.N.C.; resources, I.-S.I., A.I. and A.N.C.; data curation, I.-S.I., A.I. and A.N.C.; writing—original draft preparation, I.-S.I., A.I., A.N.C. and B.-A.P.; writing—review and editing, I.-S.I., A.I., A.N.C. and B.-A.P.; visualization, I.-S.I., A.I. and A.N.C.; supervision A.I.; project administration, I.-S.I.; funding acquisition, A.N.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** The APC was funded by Transylvania University of Brasov, Romania.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Data are contained within the article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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