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CAN GENERATION Z IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TOURISM?

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Abstract

Purpose – In the context of tourism, which is strongly focused on service delivery and a direct relationship with guests, employees can play a key role in implementing sustainability. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the attitudes of students, i.e. Generation Z (1995-2002), as new employees entering the labor market and their role in the implementation of sustainable development in tourism.

Methodology – A qualitative survey was conducted on a sample of 100 students from all years of study at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (N=100) University of Rijeka. The survey was based on existing research. The main research question is: As a new workforce, is Generation Z ready to implement the principles of sustainable development in tourism and do they understand the importance of sustainable development in their early career?

Findings – The results show the perception of Generation Z's attitudes as a new sustainable workforce, i.e., the green generation. Sustainability is important to them, but they put career success first. They place a high value on implementing sustainable development measures in their daily lives, but believe that they cannot make a greater contribution to sustainability at the beginning of their careers. They believe that the key role in implementing sustainability lies with management.

Contribution – Many studies have been conducted on Generation Z as a workforce and how best to identify their wants and needs, but few of them have addressed the link between sustainable development and Generation Z careers in tourism. Therefore, this paper attempts to fill this research gap. Based on the research conducted, the authors analyze the attitudes of Generation Z and conclude that it is necessary to continuously educate students as a new workforce to become a green generation. This conclusion also represents the practical contribution of the work. The contribution of the work will be recognized not only by future researchers working on similar issues, but also by employers who want to attract and retain new workers for tourism.

Keywords: Generation Z, sustainability, tourism, career perceptions, students, green workforce.

INTRODUCTION

A few decades ago, people realised that due to the intensive industrial and economic development in the modern world, no consideration was given to environmental protection and the controlled use of natural resources, resulting in a serious environmental threat (Yu et al. 2020). Since development cannot and must not be ignored, solutions must be found to ensure that the intensity of development does not come at the expense of the environment and social development. The concept of sustainable development provides these solutions (Jahanger et al. 2022).

However, the understanding and implementation of sustainable development are still very questionable and controversial among different generations. According to generational theory, we can improve our understanding of the profile and characteristics of typical individuals by extrapolating cohort differences to the average cohort level of each generation (Twenge et al. 2010).

In the majority of research conducted on generational studies, researchers have often used birth date ranges to define a generation, along with a set of demographic characteristics to describe a particular generation (Cogin 2012). While empirical distinctions between different generations are often based on age groups, age effects may not be entirely unique, and similar characteristics may appear toward the end of a generational cohort and at the beginning of a new generational cohort (Parry and Urwin 2011).

According to a study by Expedia Group Media Solutions (Mandich 2021), Generation Z, which includes individuals born between 1995 and 2000, will be the largest generation by 2030. More than half of them spend more than five hours a day on their smartphones, and about 50% use social media platforms to communicate, access news and more - technology is something this generation is familiar with. This generation has grown up with information readily available to them and is experiencing an ever-evolving world of technology. However, they tend not to exercise patience and quickly move on to something else if their attention is not grabbed and the message is not delivered in a way that speaks directly to them. Therefore, the meaning of sustainable development also depends on the generations that use it, their starting points, the context in which they use it, and perhaps the meaning and understanding of sustainable development depends mainly on the interests and values of the people who want to apply it (Rončević et al. 2012). According to UN “for sustainable development to be achieved, it is crucial to harmonize three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected and all are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies”. (Agenda 2030 UN).

The application of the concept of sustainable development in the economy and in daily life is a long and complex process. One of the prerequisites of this process is certainly the modification and adaptation of the educational system, since education for sustainable development is a key tool for the implementation of the principles of sustainable development. The aim of education should be to acquire the necessary knowledge for critical thinking and to develop the skills of individuals for responsible behavior and decision making (Denona-Bogović and Čegar 2012). If education for sustainable development is continued in the business environment, it can gain continuity and relevance to the overall actions of individuals, and Generation Z can recognize and use the knowledge they acquired during formal higher education when they are hired.

Considering all these points, this paper aims to analyze the attitudes of students at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management University of Rijeka, especially Generation Z as a new workforce entering the labor market and their role in implementing sustainable development in tourism. The students are very familiar with the concept of sustainable development, as it is included in the curriculum throughout their studies.1 A

questionnaire was used to answer the main research question: "Is Generation Z as a new workforce ready to implement the principles of sustainable development in tourism and do they understand the importance of sustainable development in their first years of work?"

The results show that we can call Generation Z the "green generation" because they care about sustainability, but they prioritize career success. They believe that the key role in sustainability implementation lies in the organization's management. The contribution of this paper is evident in the connection between the attitudes of Generation Z and sustainable development in the early stages of their career, and it will be useful to both future researchers in a scientific perspective and employers in a professional context.

After the introductory section, the paper provides an overview of previous studies that have examined Generation Z's perceptions of sustainable tourism development. The methodology is then presented, followed by a presentation of the research findings. The paper concludes with a discussion of its limitations.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the literature, the term 'Green Generation' is usually associated with Millennials or Generation Y and refers to individuals who initiate and promote the sustainable movement through their lifestyle, habits, and behaviors (Sheahan 2005; Smith 2011; Hanson-Rasmussen and Lauver 2018; Bonera, Codini, and Miniero 2020). In addition, it has been asserted that this generation "has the potential to have a major impact on environmental policies and practices" (Hanson-Rasmussen and Lauver 2018). It is also emphasized that this generation has a better understanding of environmental issues and cares more about saving the planet (Schmeltz 2012; Kanchanapibul et al. 2014; Casaló and Escario 2016). One of the purposes of this study is to determine whether the generation after the Millennials or Generation Z has similar values and whether they can also be called the Green Generation.

In order to implement the principles of sustainable development in Generation Z, it is necessary to continuously raise awareness and provide education for sustainable development. Education provides the necessary knowledge and skills to more easily solve today's economic, social, and environmental problems (Črnjar 2015, 156). Therefore, this paper examines the importance of education for sustainable development for Generation Z and how it affects their future careers.

The concept of education for sustainable development emerged in the early 1990s. The link between education and sustainable development began with the questioning of the implementation of Agenda 21. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without the understanding and support of the general population. However, scientific facts and technical solutions do not easily translate into sustainable lifestyles. For this reason, the Commission allocated 5.4 million ECU in 1994 to fund projects aimed at raising environmental awareness throughout Europe. These initiatives range from working with prominent nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) to address critical international concerns such as trade and the environment, to conducting public campaigns to promote

energy efficiency, implementing green tax reforms, managing household waste, introducing eco-labels for certain products, monitoring coastal areas, and improving public transportation (<https://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/agend21/agend21.pdf>).

In 2002, the United Nations adopted the resolution of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, which gave additional impetus to education for sustainable development (Lelal Filho 2015). The goal of the Decade is to implement the values and principles of sustainable development in education to solve the economic, social, cultural, and environmental problems of the 21st century.

The thematic areas of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development include topics such as gender equality, health care, environmental protection, human rights, cultural diversity, peace and security, sustainable urban development, sustainable production and consumption, etc. (Mićanović 2011). The concept of education for sustainable development is based on the assumption that the task of education is to enable people to take responsibility for shaping a sustainable future. Education for sustainable development should establish a close connection between civic education, global learning, environmental education, and health education, including all the challenges that the future brings, such as health, climate, and energy crises (Krstinić Nižić and Blažević 2017). In higher education, the importance and commitment of sustainability has recently increased significantly. Educational institutions are now formulating tailored strategic plans for the medium and long term that are specific to their response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Crawford et al. 2020). These plans recognize the importance of building an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable organization given the ever-increasing complexity of the world in which we live. There is growing recognition of the importance of higher education in educating potential leaders with the expertise and skills necessary to enter and sustain successful careers (Crawford and Cifuentes-Faura 2022). Therefore, education for sustainable development is extremely important for Generation Z.

Studies have shown that members of Generation Z place a high value on being respected and valued for their knowledge, skills, and experiences. They also value collaboration with people from their affinity groups, such as family and friends, and the opportunity to achieve their goals. Organizations implementing sustainable principles need to consider these important aspects, as they are highly valued by the iGeneration (Blauth et al. 2011). Generation Z feels obligated to help society and nature by exhibiting socially responsible behavior and sharing their experiences with their peers. Engaging with these aspects often leads to actions from friends and acquaintances. By sharing their experiences and displaying a sustainability orientation, Baby Boomers seek to inspire their peers to behave proactively, which in turn develops environmentally conscious behavior and is reflected in their daily purchasing decisions (Jain et al. 2014).

Because sustainable development is a very complex and poorly defined concept, it is extremely difficult to define the education that is directly needed by the workforce. Mensah (2019) argues that "the whole issue of sustainable development revolves around inter- and intragenerational equity, which is essentially anchored on three distinct but interconnected pillars, namely environment, economy, and society. Decision makers need to be constantly aware of the relationships, complementarities and trade-offs

between these pillars and ensure responsible human behavior and action at the international, national, community and individual levels." The labor market is rapidly changing and adapting to the fresh and young workforce due to labor shortages in some sectors, especially tourism. The importance of employees as a company's most valuable asset in promoting sustainable development is well recognized by employers. This is particularly true in service-oriented industries such as tourism and hospitality, where employees are in direct contact with customers. Consequently, the contribution of employees is crucial for the implementation of sustainable practices (De Vooght 2022).

Generation Z values collaboration and finding meaning in work beyond established processes. However, the rigid hierarchy in hospitality companies, where processes are paramount, makes it difficult to fulfill this need. General managers can break down silos and vertical hierarchies and introduce collaborative, project-based work to give young employees the opportunity to learn about different operational practices and skills from colleagues in other departments (Goh and Lee 2018). This may inspire some to explore other areas of expertise, making them more attractive to potential employers (ehotelier.com, 2023). Companies can improve their 'job rotation' and 'job extension' systems and provide targeted training courses during the tourism off-season to support the continuous skills development of Generation Z employees. Collaboration with hotel schools and faculties can also help companies develop customized training for young talent (Sigaeva et al. 2022) and make job opportunities more attractive to them.

Generation Z is much more concerned with environmental issues and finding solutions to combat them (Dabija et al. 2017). Although social responsibility and environmental campaigns launched by various organisations may not immediately persuade consumers to purchase the advertised products and/or services, there are clearly customers willing to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly products and those produced in line with social responsibility campaigns and strategies (Ferreira et al. 2010; Pop and Dabija 2013). Destination choice also depends on tourists' preferences. Several authors point out that residents support and promote the sustainable development of their destinations through their actions (Vodeb et al. 2021). Increasing interest in sustainable travel is another emerging trend, driven primarily by younger travellers who are more likely than older generations to consider sustainable travel options at least some of the time (Yi 2022). Baby boomers are also sustainable tourists who conserve natural, cultural, and social resources during their stays and contribute to community economic development through their spending (Haddouche and Salomone 2018). Kim's (2021) survey results show that many people are unaware that some of the choices they make while travelling actually promote sustainability.

Young people believe that they have an active role to play in protecting the environment by adopting sustainable tourism. They take pride in the fact that no finite resources were consumed, and the environment was not polluted for their relaxation benefit. This provides a basis for the intensive development of sustainable tourism, which pays attention to environmental issues, supports socially responsible consumption and the consumption of local products, helps communities, and contributes to the reduction of poverty in disadvantaged countries (Dabija and Bejan, 2018; Dabija et al. 2019). Education for sustainable development is, therefore, the foundation for the future action of Generation Z and other generations. Education for sustainable development enables

people to develop knowledge, values, and skills that will enable them to participate in decision-making at different levels and contribute to a quality life without harming the planet for the future (Terlau and Hirsch 2015). The fundamental role of education for sustainable development is to establish the existing state, define necessary changes, and indicate the directions of action (Borić et al. 2008). A sustainable future is only possible if society is informed and educated according to sustainability principles. Without education and awareness of individuals, its implementation is not possible. The definition of goals, their application, and implementation require a new "culture of dialogue" (Borić et al. 2008).

A new system of values and a new lifestyle cannot be prescribed by administrative actions; they can only be transmitted through communication between all generations of people, in everyday and business environments.

Therefore, education is faced with a great task, which is to equip young people for the role of active citizens in the knowledge society, by developing their abilities and skills to cope with all the challenges and uncertainties, inherited and new problems brought by the modern era.

Young people need relevant knowledge, the development of critical thinking, the ability to evaluate information, and democratic engagement in problem solving, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and a willingness to make responsible decisions. The prerequisite for this is respect for the integrity of human beings and the promotion of their development in the cognitive, social, emotional and physical spheres (Cvitković 2016). Since the goal of education for sustainable development is to change people's consciousness towards creating a sustainable future, continuous implementation of education at all levels is essential.

The government plays an important role in promoting and implementing education for sustainable development. Local governments must also play a critical role in implementing education for sustainable development, as they are the level of government closest to the people. The need for education, training, and public awareness to raise ecological and ethical awareness, respect values, and change attitudes was already stated in Agenda 21 (Pavić-Rogošić 2010, 9), and Agenda 2030 promotes Sustainable Development Goals (Wang et al. 2023).

Therefore, the authors of this paper have taken upon themselves the obligation and responsibility, as members of higher education, to investigate the readiness of Generation Z for the implementation of sustainability in tourism and, depending on the results, to consider improving their work in the higher education system, for example, by using more problem-based learning cases in their teaching, which would certainly produce better prepared students for the labour market. The following section presents the methodological part of the paper with the research results.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research problem

Due to insufficient awareness of the issue of sustainable development and the increasing needs and demands of modern tourists, there is a growing need to implement sustainable development in tourism. In order for young people entering the labor market to be prepared to implement sustainability principles, a systematic and comprehensive approach is needed in studying sustainable development, adapting the education system, training the young population, and improving the skills of professionals. The research problem arises from this issue. The research problem involves studying the attitudes of students at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management regarding their knowledge of sustainable development, their awareness of the impact of their activities on the environment, and the implementation of sustainable development measures in their daily lives.

In addition, students were asked whether they consider Generation Z to be a green generation and whether they consider themselves to be part of this generation. The aforementioned questions are related to the paper of the authors Bonera et al. (2020) who are conducting relationship between green and other existing environmental measures and Smolčić Jurdana and Agbaba (2022) who analyse students' attitudes about the concept of sustainable development and knowledge significant for its implementation in tourism.

Other questions in the survey related to the link between sustainable development and employers; whether they believe sustainability is an important factor in choosing a job, the extent to which sustainability policies are important in choosing an employer, how important it is for employers to pay attention to sustainability in their company, whether employers should invest in training and developing employees in sustainable development, whether employers should be transparent about their sustainability activities, and which office they believe is most responsible for promoting and implementing sustainable development in the company. At the end of the questionnaire, students were asked whether they would prefer to work for a company that is known for its sustainable practices or for a company that is not. The second part of the questionnaire is based on the research conducted by Hanson-Rasmussen and Lauver (2018), which explores Millennials' values regarding environmental responsibility.

2.2. Aim of the research

The aim of this research is to analyse the attitude of the students of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management of the University of Rijeka, i.e. Generation Z, currently entering the turbulent labour market, towards sustainable development, their role in the implementation of sustainable development in tourism and the importance of applying sustainable development in today's business environment, i.e. promoting and implementing sustainability principles in business.

2.3. Population and sample of the research

The research sample consisted of students from the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management at the University of Rijeka. The research was conducted at both undergraduate and graduate level, i.e. in all years of study and in all courses of study, since all participants belong to Generation Z and represent a relevant sample for this type of research. The population and the sample of the survey as well as the socio-demographic parameters of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Tables 1: **Socio-demographic characteristics of participants**

Characteristics (N=100)	%
Gender	
Male	29
Female	71
Age	
18-20	67
21-25	28
25 and older	5
Year of study	
1st year of undergraduate studies	2
2nd year of undergraduate studies	75
3rd year of undergraduate studies	3
4th year of undergraduate studies	2
1st year of graduate studies	18

Source: author's data

The table shows that a total of 100 participants took part in the study, of which 29% were men and 71% were women. As for the age structure, the majority of the participants, 67%, belong to the age group 18-20 years, while the remaining 28% belong to the age group 21-25 years. Only 5% of the participants belong to the age group 25 years and older. Regarding the year of study, most of the participants are in the 2nd year of undergraduate study (75 students, i.e. 75%). The fewest number of students who participated in the survey are in the 1st (2 students or 2%) and 4th (2 students or 2%) years of undergraduate study. Three students, or 3% of the participants, are currently in the 3rd year of undergraduate study, while 18% of the participants are in the first year of graduate study.

2.4. Data collection procedure

The study was conducted from February to March 2023. Data were collected through a survey using an online questionnaire created in Google forms. The survey was conducted at the beginning or at the end of the lectures at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management. It took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. All 100 questionnaires were duly completed.

2.5. Research instrument, data processing, and analysis

A survey questionnaire was used as an instrument for conducting the research. The questionnaire was adapted to the specific research questions. It consisted of an introductory section that briefly explained the purpose and objectives of the research, followed by the first section of the questionnaire that focused on general socio-demographic data of the respondents.

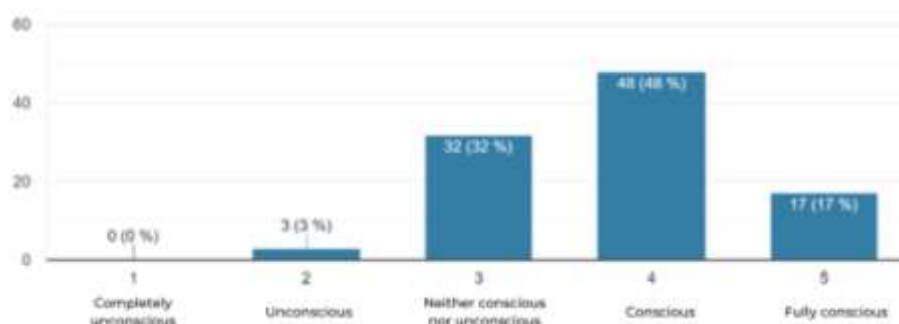
The second section of the questionnaire focused on statements about sustainable development and its implementation, while the third section of the questionnaire referred to the relationship and importance of sustainable development and employer choice. In the second and third parts of the questionnaire, a Likert scale from 1 to 5 was used to evaluate the statements, and the respondents rated the established statements. The collected data were processed using a simple descriptive analysis, and the results are presented graphically and descriptively in the following sections of this paper.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the main research findings are presented, from which basic recommendations for a better implementation of sustainable tourism among Generation Z are derived.

The first question was related to the knowledge of the concept of sustainable development, to which the vast majority of students, 97%, answered positively, indicating that Generation Z is familiar with the said concept. The next question was related to awareness of the impact of one's actions on the environment. A Likert scale was used for this, with 1 representing completely unaware and 5 representing completely aware.

Graph 1: Awareness of the impact of Generation Z activities on the environment



Source: author's calculation

The attached chart shows that the vast majority of respondents are aware of their impact on the environment, as none of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of

their impact at all, while only three respondents chose option 2, indicating that they were not aware of their impact. Most respondents, 48%, answered that they were aware of their impact on the environment, while 17% of respondents indicated that they were fully aware of their impact on the environment.

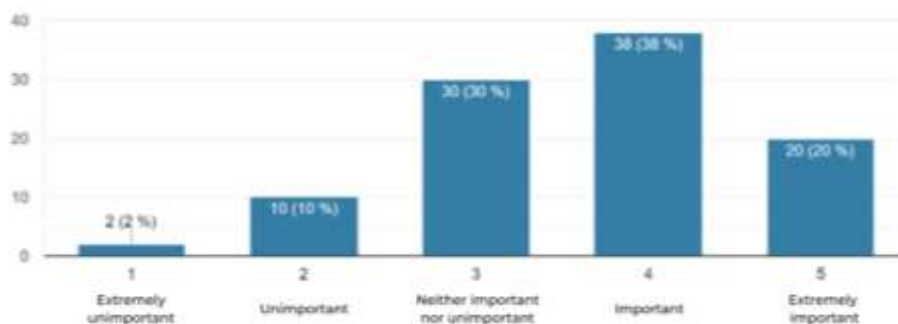
The next question aimed to investigate the implementation of sustainable development measures in the daily life of the respondents. 48% of the respondents answered positively, which means that they implement sustainable development measures, 39% of the respondents could not assess their own impact, while 13% or 13 respondents answered that they do not implement sustainable development measures in their daily life.

The following questions were related to the correlation between Generation Z and the Green Generation. Accordingly, 39% of the respondents consider that Generation Z can be called Green Generation, 35% consider that this is not the case and there is no correlation, while 26% of the respondents could not estimate this. To the question "Do you consider yourself part of the Green Generation?" 45% of the respondents answered positively, 30% think that they are not part of the Green Generation, while 25 respondents could not assess whether they are part of the Green Generation or not.

The following questions of the questionnaire were related to the connection between sustainable development and the choice of employer.

When asked "To what extent is sustainability policy important to you when choosing an employer?", the largest number of respondents (42%) answered neither important nor unimportant, 30% of respondents answered that it is important, 13% answered that sustainability policy is extremely important to them when choosing an employer, 10 respondents answered that this variable is not important to them when choosing an employer, while only 5 respondents answered that it is completely unimportant to them.

Graph 2: Importance of paying attention to sustainability in business (by employers)



Source: author's calculation

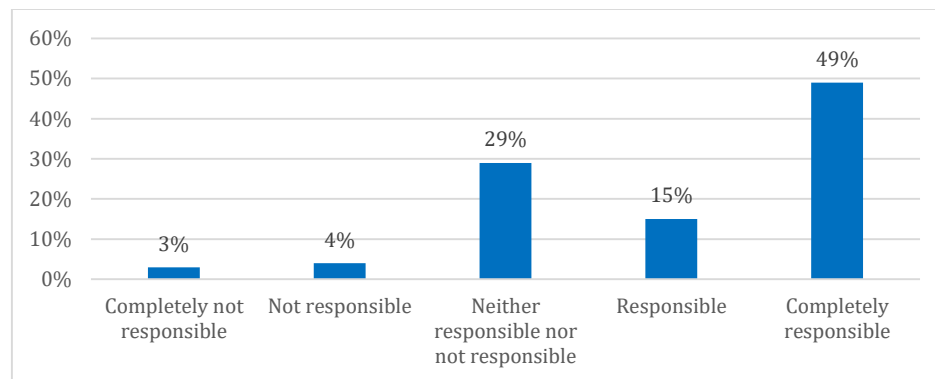
When asked how important it is to them personally that employers pay attention to sustainability within the company, 38% responded that it is important to them, while 20% responded that it is very important. 30 participants believe it is neither important

nor unimportant; only two students believe the variable is completely unimportant, while 10 think it is not important. Chart 2 shows that 38% of Generation Z students think it is very important that their future employers integrate sustainability principles into their businesses.

Regarding the importance of employers investing in sustainability training and development, 88% of respondents answered in the affirmative to the question of whether it is necessary to invest in sustainability training and development, while 10% of respondents could not assess this and only two respondents thought it was not necessary. Regarding the importance of transparent presentation of sustainability activities by employers, 88% of respondents believe that it is necessary for employers to be transparent about their sustainability activities, 9% could not assess this, while only 3 respondents or 3% did not believe it was necessary for employers to be transparent about their sustainability activities.

Regarding the responsibility of units for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development, respondents were asked to indicate on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 stands for not at all responsible and 5 for fully responsible) who they think is the most responsible unit (top management of the company, middle management or employees of the company) within the company for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development. The results are shown in diagrams 3, 4 and 5.

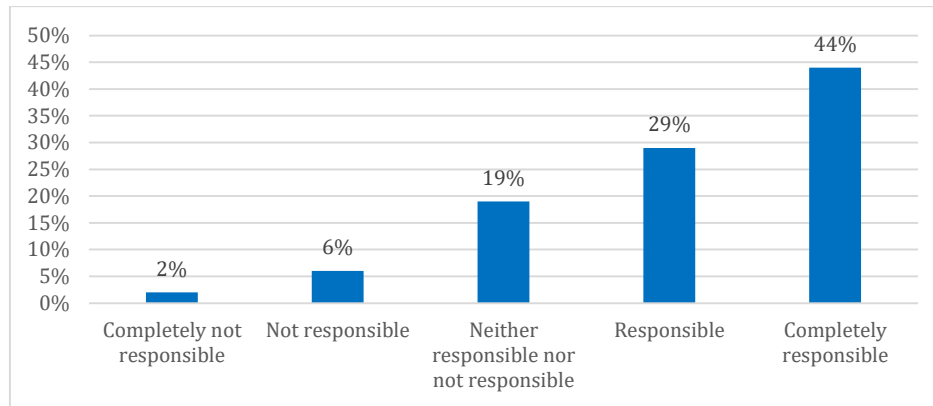
Graph 3: Responsibility of company top management for systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development



Source: author's calculation

As many as 49% of the respondents consider that the company's top management is fully responsible, 15% of them consider them to be responsible, 29 respondents consider them neither responsible nor not responsible; 4 respondents believe that the company's top management is not responsible, while only 3 respondents consider that the company's top management is not at all responsible for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development within the company. These results show that Generation Z attaches great responsibility to the company's top management for the implementation of sustainability in business.

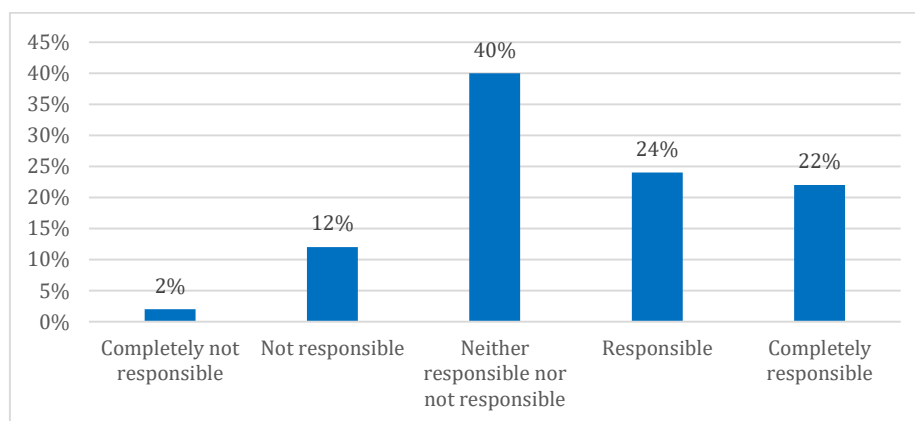
Graph 4: Responsibility of company middle management for systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development



Source: author's calculation

Regarding the middle management of the company, the largest percentage of students, 44, believe that the middle management is fully responsible for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development in the company, 29% believe that the middle management is responsible, 19 respondents believe that they are neither responsible nor not responsible, 6 respondents believe that the middle management is not responsible, while only two students believe that the middle management of the company is not responsible at all for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development in the company. As shown in chart 3, it is clear that Generation Z does not want to put the responsibility on themselves as individuals, but in this case on the middle management of the company.

Graph 5: Responsibility of company employees for systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development



Source: author's calculation

When asked about employees, the largest percentage of respondents, 40%, believe that they are neither responsible nor not responsible for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development in the company. 24 respondents believe that employees are responsible, while 22 respondents believe that they are fully responsible. 12 students believe that employees in the company are not responsible, while only 2% of respondents believe that employees are not responsible at all for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development in the company. As shown in the previous two charts, No. 3 and No. 4, chart No. 5 also confirms that Generation Z - or at least those included in this study - do not want to take responsibility for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development, but rather direct this responsibility to the company's management.

When asked whether they would prefer to work for a company that is known for its sustainable practices or for a company that is not, 95% of the students answered positively that they would prefer to work for a company that is known for its sustainable practices, while only 5% answered the question negatively.

From the presented research results, it can be concluded that the respondents, i.e. students of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management at the University of Rijeka, are largely familiar with the concept of sustainable development and are aware of the impact of their own activities on the environment. Moreover, the results show that the majority of respondents implement sustainable development measures in their daily life. Furthermore, the majority of respondents consider Generation Z to be a green generation and identify themselves as members of this generation.

When analyzing the importance of sustainability as a factor in career choice, the majority of students consider it important, with only 16% indicating that sustainability is not an important factor in career choice. In relation to the previous question, the highest percentage of students indicated that sustainability policies are an important factor when choosing an employer. 58% of respondents indicated that it is important or very important for employers to consider sustainability in their business practices, while only 11% felt it was not important or not important at all. When asked if employers should invest in sustainability education and training for their employees, as many as 88% of respondents answered affirmatively. This situation is identical to the question about transparent reporting of a company's sustainability activities.

Regarding the responsibility for the systematic promotion and implementation of sustainable development within a company, the majority believe that the company management is responsible for this, while they consider the employees neither responsible nor not responsible. Regarding the choice of company, 95% of students would prefer to work for a company known for its sustainable practices.

In accordance with the results presented, it can be confirmed that Generation Z, as the new workforce of today, is ready to implement the principles of sustainable development in tourism and understands the meaning and importance of sustainable development in the early stages of their career.

In conclusion, applying sustainable development concepts in daily life is a long and complex process. In order to achieve a sustainable future, it is necessary to continuously raise awareness of the need for sustainable development and provide education for sustainable development. University teachers face many challenges, as the integration of sustainability content into teaching depends on their motivation.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH: This study has several limitations. The first limitation of the study is its methodology. It is recommended that statistical tools be used in future research. Another area for future research is to conduct more statistical tests to quantify the items from this survey study before generalizing. The salient beliefs identified in this study can be used as questionnaire items in a quantitative follow-up study. To reduce subjectivity and bias, future studies should include Generation Z respondents from other schools and universities. It would also be interesting to analyze the views of students in the Sustainable Development Management program, as this study included Business Economics students whose curriculum does not include courses directly related to sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study examined Generation Z's attitudes toward sustainable development knowledge and its application, and the relationship between employer choice and investment in sustainability principles. Since sustainable development requires the involvement of various structures and actors in society, the study also investigated students' attitudes towards the responsibility of promoting and implementing education for sustainable development. It can be concluded that students have a high level of understanding of the concept of sustainable development and recognize the importance of its systematic implementation and inclusion in the turbulent labor market of the 21st century.

As Generation Z represents the new green generation, higher education institutions must make additional efforts to integrate sustainability into the educational process. In this regard, businesses must also continuously adapt to new sustainability requirements, not only for the green generation representing their future employees, but also for future guests and tourists seeking green services and destinations.

The results of this study have shown that the Generation Z studied represents a new sustainable workforce or green generation. They are interested in sustainability, but feel that they cannot make a significant impact on sustainability at the beginning of their career. They believe that the key role in implementing sustainability lies with corporate management and administration.

The contribution of this paper is reflected in the need to raise awareness for the implementation of education for sustainable development in higher education institutions, with the aim of achieving a sustainable future and the necessary link between higher education institutions, sustainability and the labor market. Higher education institutions are responsible for educating professionals whose career choices will be important for a sustainable future. Since the fundamental mission of universities is to

create new knowledge, their contribution to scientific and technological progress in global society is obvious.

More attention needs to be paid to the relationship between employers and universities, and the dialog between them needs to be improved so that universities have the opportunity to educate and encourage the future workforce to act in the spirit of sustainable development.

In addition, individuals' behavior and lifestyles must change, both locally and globally. Current and future generations must be prepared to change their attitudes toward the environment and society, invest in learning and knowledge, and adapt quickly to the labor market.

Education for sustainable development is not a one-time affair, but requires continuous learning and empowering young people to live and act in ways that contribute to sustainable development. A prerequisite for sustainable action is systemic, critical and creative thinking in local and global contexts. If behavioral changes and new ways of looking at reality are to be achieved, it is of utmost importance that sustainability is seen as part of the culture and not just as an add-on to existing structures. Education for sustainable development is a lifelong process that starts in early childhood and continues through higher and adult education and goes beyond formal education. Formal education must be complemented by life and work experience.

The concept of sustainable development should be present in educational programs and other educational activities, and higher education institutions play a key role in its implementation.

Science and education have always been drivers of social progress, so it is hoped that they will succeed in promoting provisions related to sustainable development.

In conclusion, it is necessary to constantly connect Generation Z and employers and train students on how to implement the principles of sustainability in the tourism industry. The contribution of this paper will be recognized not only by future researchers working on similar issues, but also by employers trying to attract and retain tourism workers.

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