



## Navigating green hospitality: Gen Z's role in shaping sustainable hotel practices through conjoint analysis

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### ABSTRACT

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Generation Z (Gen Z) is driving the new age of hospitality, characterized by its environmental consciousness and technological adeptness. The hotel industry must adapt to align with the values and demands of these environmentally aware individuals. However, the need for frameworks to translate Gen Z's environmental objectives into operational strategies is critical. This study utilizes conjoint analysis to identify and prioritize sustainability dimensions that influence Gen Z's hotel preferences. It highlights five determinants: Awareness of Practices (25%), Sustainable Sourcing (22%), Energy Efficiency (20%), Waste Management (18%), and Community Engagement (15%). Transparency in sustainability practices, including certifications and demonstrable actions, emerges as the most significant factor for Gen Z. Ethical sourcing and supporting local products also hold great importance. Greener practices, waste management, and community engagement are key to building trust with this generation. The findings address a gap in the literature regarding Gen Z's eco-sustainability orientation through data-driven insights. The study suggests actionable measures for hotels, governments, and stakeholders, emphasizing transparency, ethical sourcing, and community involvement to attract Gen Z customers. These strategies not only enhance competitiveness but also contribute to global sustainability goals. Academically, the research advances the application of conjoint analysis in the hotel industry, paving the way for future studies. The implications extend beyond academia, urging the hospitality sector to integrate green practices that foster a balanced environment and stronger communities.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study bridges the gap between Generation Z's eco-conscious preferences and actionable hotel practices, using conjoint analysis to prioritize sustainability attributes such as transparency, sustainable sourcing, energy efficiency, waste management, and community engagement. It offers a data-driven framework that aligns Gen Z's values with operational strategies.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The growing influence of Generation Z (Gen Z) as both consumers and employees is a key factor driving the hospitality industry toward more sustainable living. Despite the extensive research focused on Gen Z's environmental and sustainability preferences, a significant gap remains in understanding their identities, interrelations, and restrictions rather than merely analyzing these aspects (Loverio, Shen, & Chen, 2022). For example, studies that used the New Ecological Paradigm scale have shown that Gen Z students in Southeast Asia possess a pro-environmental

worldview and, to some extent, an anthropocentric perspective. This indicates that they believe in turning humanity into a force for good to save the environment (Loverio et al., 2022). In addition, the demography's dependence on digital platforms and outlook towards personalized, tech-enabled, and sustainable experiences are the elements that accentuate their industry-transforming standards (Seyfi & Hall, 2024). Researchers are motivated to conduct this study to find out how Generation Z's values and behaviors impact the hospitality sector and the reasons why some sustainability initiatives cannot attract or retain this group. This research, by comparing the past, shows that stakeholders have largely overlooked the challenges involved in promoting sustainability in various cultural and economic settings. Pulido-Fernández, Casado-Montilla, López-Sánchez, Durán-Román, and Carrillo-Hidalgo (2024) and the records of greenwashing that could distort consumer perceptions of green companies and their services (Rasheed & Balakrishnan, 2023). Furthermore, the study has also presented some other issues, such as the ethical dilemmas related to Gen Z employees in food waste management and the impact of green certifications on consumer behavior. Additionally, it has attempted to show the practical implications for the industry (Velaoras, Menegaki, Polyzos, & Gotzamani, 2025). Children of the future receive this study's results as a guide to a detailed and complicated framework that dissects the interplay between generational values and industry practices. It will also present practical know-how, such as concerning hospitality practitioners targeting green-producing Gen Z, their operation with Gen Z's sustainability expectations. Other advanced inquiries based on this research will be based on solving future generational and environmental challenges.

## 2. LITERATURE OF REVIEW

The hospitality industry has emerged as a critical sector for sustainability transformation, driven by the arrival of Generation Z (Gen Z) in the workforce and as consumers. This cohort, born between 1995 and 2012, has been pivotal in fostering ecological awareness, with their values significantly influencing waste management, alternative energy adoption, and green purchasing practices (Nizic & Butkovic, 2023). As "cloud consumers," their preferences and attitudes towards sustainability are shaping the way hotels align operations with environmental goals (Lavuri, Jusuf, & Gunardi, 2021).

### 2.1. Environmental Consciousness and Eco-Oriented Values

Gen Z's environmental consciousness is deeply rooted in their upbringing during times of intensifying global environmental crises. The New Ecological Paradigm scale has been frequently applied to evaluate this generation's eco-friendly attitudes (Loverio et al., 2022). In the Philippines, hospitality and tourism students exhibit strong inclinations toward universalizing sustainable practices, reflecting Generation Z's commitment to collective eco-oriented values (Loverio et al., 2022). Berezan, Raab, Yoo, and Love (2013) further highlight the impact of sustainable practices on guest satisfaction and loyalty, demonstrating the importance of eco-oriented values in fostering meaningful connections. However, current literature often neglects the impact of cultural and regional factors on shaping these attitudes, presenting a gap that warrants further exploration (Prayag, Aquino, Hall, Chen, & Fieger, 2022).

### 2.2. Energy Efficiency and Green Practices

Green certifications such as ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 14001 and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) have proven effective in enhancing guest satisfaction and loyalty, particularly among younger travelers (Velaoras et al., 2025). Gen Z's preference for energy-efficient practices has compelled hotels to implement these certifications, emphasizing energy-saving technologies and renewable energy solutions (Merli, Preziosi, Acampora, & Ali, 2019). However, as Bastič and Gojčič (2012) suggest, smaller hospitality businesses often struggle with adopting these initiatives due to financial and operational constraints. Ding and Jiang (2023) argue that

perceived collective efficacy and self-efficacy also play significant roles in motivating sustainable practices, underscoring the need for scalable energy-efficient solutions in diverse hospitality settings.

### *2.3. Waste Management and Food Sustainability*

Food waste remains a significant challenge in the hospitality industry, with Gen Z demonstrating heightened sensitivity towards this issue. Studies indicate that Gen Z hospitality employees experience guilt over food wastage, reflecting their ethical commitment to sustainability (Goh & Jie, 2019). Gen Z consumers also advocate for waste management processes aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Huang, Ma, & Yen, 2022). Furthermore, Çalışkan (2021) emphasizes the generational shift towards sustainability in tourism, highlighting innovative solutions to food waste reduction. Despite these efforts, practical strategies for overcoming barriers to effective waste management remain limited, necessitating further investigation into tailored solutions for the hospitality sector (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2024).

### *2.4. Sustainable Sourcing and Green Purchasing*

Gen Z's environmental awareness influences their loyalty to brands that prioritize sustainable sourcing and green purchasing practices (Rasheed & Balakrishnan, 2023). This cohort's preference for transparency in green initiatives underscores the importance of combating misinformation and greenwashing (Lavuri et al., 2021). Research from India highlights the role of clear communication in fostering trust and loyalty among Gen Z travellers, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies to ensure authenticity in green branding (Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya, & Solnet, 2021). Additionally, Kara and Min (2024) explore the influence of social and cultural factors on Gen Z's sustainable consumption behaviors, underscoring the importance of localized approaches to green purchasing. Future studies should focus on frameworks to address these challenges and enhance consumer trust in sustainable sourcing practices (Van Ngo & Ha, 2023).

### *2.5. Transparency and Community Engagement*

Transparency and community engagement are critical components of Gen Z's expectations from hospitality brands. Hotels that adopt sustainable business ethics and actively engage with local communities are more likely to gain the respect and loyalty of this generation (Nizic & Butkovic, 2023). Initiatives such as partnerships with local artisans and environmental projects demonstrate the industry's commitment to sustainability. Ghouse, Shekhar, and Chaudhary (2024) argue that promoting green horizons requires inclusive strategies that address both Gen Y and Gen Z perspectives. However, tensions between global hotel chains and local communities remain underexplored, providing an avenue for future research (Seyfi & Hall, 2024). Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering mutual trust and long-term sustainability in the hospitality sector (Salinero, Prayag, Gómez-Rico, & Molina-Collado, 2022).

### *2.6. Challenges and Future Directions*

Despite Gen Z's strong advocacy for environmental conservation, several challenges persist. Financial constraints, skepticism towards greenwashing, and the limited availability of verified eco-friendly products hinder the widespread adoption of sustainable practices (Ribeiro, Seyfi, Elhoushy, Woosnam, & Patwardhan, 2023). Advanced technological solutions, such as AI-driven waste management systems and validated eco-labels, have the potential to address these issues (Seyfi, Vo-Thanh, & Zaman, 2024). Vila-Vazquez, Castro-González, and Vilela (2023) suggest that the hospitality sector should prioritize guest education to enhance pro-sustainable behavior. However, the long-term implications of these strategies remain unclear, highlighting the need for further research to evaluate their effectiveness in achieving sustainability goals (Çalışkan, 2021).

### 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To discuss the most important sustainability factors of Generation Z in hotel accommodations, emphasizing energy efficiency, waste management, and transparency in green practices.
- To analyze how Gen Z's interest in sustainability affects the places where they stay and then provide hotels with concrete steps to adopt this approach in their solutions.
- To provide the proposed modifications to policymakers that would positively impact the environment by introducing sustainable practices in which Gen Z is interested and balancing this with the hotel industry's sustainable development objectives.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1. Data Sources

The data was collected from 480 respondents aged between 21 and 25 years. For data collection, the Snowball Sampling technique was deployed, ensuring equal probability of participation. The online survey materials were sent to respondents who live in India and South East Asia as city and small-town residents, so groups with mixed interests were covered. It has been carried out using social media channels and email contacts for recruitment.

#### 4.2. Measurements

Conjoint analysis was the method employed to test the preferences among five sustainability dimensions: The subjects had to choose the answers regarding energy efficiency among these levels: standard energy usage, partial energy-saving, and fully energy-efficient systems, which will be implemented.

- Improving energy efficiency: Choices comprised standard energy practices, from only some solutions to zero-waste management methodologies.
- Waste Management: The options range from non-basic recycling concepts to the idea and implementation of the zero-waste concept.
- Sustainable Sourcing: Psyche delivery is a level of sustainability that has very little emphasis placed on it. There is either a partial sustainability phase or no phase at all for the production of eco-friendly materials.
- Transparency: That is, from not revealing the entire prospect to delivering a basic and comprehensive report.
- Community Engagement: The involved options include no empowerment, few community projects, or the promotion of local initiatives.

The participants completed the experiments by analyzing the elements of the mixed hotel description. A 5-point Likert scale was additionally employed as a measuring instrument for assessing the general preferences of the hospitality sector toward sustainable issues.

#### 4.3. Statistical Analysis

SPSS was used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics were helpful in comparing demographic data and understanding the overall preferences of participants. Part-worth indexes and the importance of each attribute were obtained through conjoint analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested through Cronbach's alpha, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Cronbach's alpha.

Attribute	Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation
Energy efficiency	0.82	Good internal consistency.
Waste management	0.75	Acceptable reliability.
Sustainable sourcing	0.8	Good internal consistency.
Transparency in practices	0.85	Excellent reliability.
Community engagement	0.7	Acceptable reliability, slight variability.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics.

Sustainability attribute	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)
Energy efficiency	High-efficiency lighting is essential to me.	4.2	0.8
	I prefer hotels using renewable energy sources.	4.5	0.7
Waste management	I value hotels that have strong recycling programs.	4.3	0.9
	Composting food waste is a significant factor.	4.1	1.0
Sustainable sourcing	Locally sourced food enhances my hotel experience.	4.4	0.6
	Eco-friendly toiletries are important to me.	4.3	0.8
Transparency in practices	Clear communication about sustainability efforts is crucial.	4.6	0.7
	Certifications (e.g., LEED) influence my choice.	4.5	0.8
Community engagement	Supporting local businesses matters to me.	4.2	0.9
	Community service initiatives enhance my stay.	4.1	1.1

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2 presents data collected from Generation Z, which favors environmentally sustainable attributes in hotel accommodation, according to the mean scores. Notably, "Clear communication about sustainability efforts is crucial" (mean = 4.6) and "I prefer hotels using renewable energy sources" (mean = 4.5) emerged as the most important factors, highlighting the importance of transparency and energy efficiency. Among other statements scored highly are "Locally sourced food enhances my hotel experience" (mean = 4.4) and "I value hotels that have strong recycling programs" (mean = 4.3), indicating these are the two most significant aspects of sustainable waste management and sourcing. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.6 to 1.1, suggest a moderate level of consensus among respondents, with some variability in opinions, particularly regarding community engagement initiatives, where statements had higher SDs (e.g., "Community service initiatives enhance my stay" at 1.1). The study findings indicate that green initiatives are important to motivate more Gen Z individuals, who tend to be more eco-friendly in their hotel preferences. Therefore, there is a need for hotels to deliver and communicate sustainable policies more effectively, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 3.** Conjoint analysis.

Attribute	Level	Part-worth utility
Energy efficiency	High-efficiency lighting	0.25
	Renewable energy sources	0.40
	Smart energy management systems	0.10
Waste management	Strong recycling programs	0.35
	Composting food waste	0.30
	Single-use plastic elimination	0.15
Sustainable sourcing	Locally sourced food	0.45
	Eco-friendly toiletries	0.30
	Fair trade products	0.25
Transparency in practices	Clear communication of sustainability	0.50
	Certifications (e.g., LEED)	0.35
	Regular sustainability reporting	0.15
Community engagement	Supporting local businesses	0.40
	Community service initiatives	0.30
	Cultural preservation efforts	0.20

Table 3 presents the data derived from the conjoint analysis, showing that Gen Z is very particular about environmentally responsible features in hotel accommodation. Renewable energy sources (0.40) and clear communication of sustainability (0.50) stand out as the most valuable parameters, emphasizing the importance of renewable warmers and transparency in sustainability efforts, as these are the main priorities for them. Additionally, "Strong recycling programs" (0.35) and "Composting food waste" (0.30) are the most essential waste management

practices, while "Single-use plastic elimination" (0.15) is the least prioritized. Among sustainable sourcing practices, the top choice is locally sourced food (0.45), followed by eco-friendly toiletries (0.30). In community engagement, "Supporting local businesses" (0.40) is preferred over "Cultural preservation efforts" (0.20), which is less admired. To sum up, the findings confirm that Gen Z prioritizes renewable energy, transparency, and local sourcing when choosing a hotel. This highlights their environmentally friendly contributions to society, which are closely related to the confidence hotels gain through their sustainable practices and ambiance.

**Table 4.** Scores.

Attribute	Importance score (%)
Energy efficiency	20
Waste management	18
Sustainable sourcing	22
Transparency in practices	25
Community engagement	15

In short, Table 4 presents the relative prominence of different sustainability features among Gen Z in booking hotel accommodations. The most crucial factor is transparency in practices, with a high score of 25%, which means this is the primary tool for ensuring effective communication about sustainability to Gen Z. Next is sustainable sourcing at 22%, with a 2% preference. Hotels that provide locally produced and sustainable items are most favored by this young generation of consumers.

## 6. CONCLUSION

### 6.1. Summary of Findings

Strategic elements of sustained development have been realized by constructing a framework that expounds on each component of sustainability related to hotel guests from Generation Z. These sustainability strategies include energy efficiency, waste management, sustainable sourcing, transparency, and community engagement. Transparent behavior in sustainability is the prime factor, weighing 25%. After that, sustainability (22%) relates to the supply chain, and energy efficiency (20%) has to do with finding the balance and using renewable energy. Environmental protection (18%) and community engagement (15%) were not the most significant, but they are still undeniably important. The findings demonstrate that Generation Z places a high value on honest and well-explained sustainability activities, especially those carried out by association with a certifying organization, which can thus be verified and authenticated.

### 6.2. Limitations and Future Research

Research is inevitably needed to identify the present study's limitations and target these weaknesses. One weakness of the study is that the findings that the sample participants actually performed the activities they claimed are somewhat confined to the respondents' self-reports. It is possible to alleviate this issue by conducting random, real-life, experimental studies or systematically collecting behavioral data from participants of special interest that cannot be manipulated. Finally, the definitive sample comes from the continent of India and the Southeast Asia region. This, on the other hand, might not reflect the global nature of Generation Z's preferences. Based on the habit of the study, my advice to you in the future is to collect data and gather results from places other than Southeast Asia and Indian cities. The fourth limitation is the fact that the study deals with the theoretical description of hotel companies, but it might be indicative of the actual consumer behaviors. Further research may involve, in fact, the practical assessment of consumer change, for example, through longitudinal studies or field experiments that have implemented green initiatives on the consumers.



### 6.3. Implications

This research holds various implications for the accommodation sector. Primarily, hotels are advised to practice pure and honest communication with their customers and to reach the trust of Generation Z. The second area is the relationship with the local community; locally produced and eco-friendly components, when included in hotel activities, would increase the satisfaction and loyalty of guests. To summarize, a comprehensive approach to sustainability that is technologically innovative and compliant with Generation Z's metaphysics refers to Generation Z's values, beliefs, and sense of purpose that would best help a hotel find its audience and accomplish unwavering success.

Five strategic parameters exist for specializing operations in promoting energy use, waste management, source relations, transparency, and community involvement. First, electricity can be saved by employing energy-saving technologies, urging artificial energy producers to convert to renewable sources, and installing power monitors to reduce current-delivering supplies. Strategic waste management involves reducing waste, setting up segregation, recycling, and passing organic waste through a composting process. Next, as far as sustainable sourcing is concerned, manufacturing companies should prefer buying their items from available and ethical sources; further, they should use eco-friendly elements that are not damaging to the environment. The activity type is determined by introducing sustainability reports and supplier information and the seeking of accreditation to gain acceptance. Community participation in the hotel's welfare may result from getting involved with neighboring businesses, setting up employee volunteer programs, and organizing teaching events on sustainability. The achievement of a more sustainable and responsible operation in the hospitality sector is facilitated by the setting of clear goals, the use of technology, and the participation of all stakeholders.

Based on the study results, several policy suggestions can be made for different players involved in the hospitality industry. These tips practically implement Generation Z's demand for green activities, which prioritize sustainability, transparency, and community engagement. The following are the policy suggestions for different entities:

#### 6.3.1. Hotel Management and Owners

- Transparency in sustainability practices: Execute sustainability strategies that are easily understandable and stand out as very transparent; these should be made clear to the customers. Hotel facilities should feature their environmental programs that a third party accredits, and they can also disclose the details of their environmental performance during a certain period.
- Sustainable Sourcing: Formalize local sourcing by establishing fair-trade policies; such local sourcing is necessary if the products are also ethically produced. Hotels can capitalize on collaboration with sustainability-focused local supply chains in their marketing campaigns, thus achieving two purposes with one act.
- Energy Efficiency Initiatives: Initiate projects promoting energy saving by investing in clean energy techniques such as solar panels or wind energy. Adopt energy-efficient and sustainable lighting, heating, and cooling systems in guest rooms and other public places.
- Waste Management Systems: Introducing a robust waste process, including the recycling and composting of food waste and waste diversion programs, is a great way to go. Develop an internal policy to reduce waste, including single-use plastics and other disposable items in guest rooms and restaurants.
- Community Engagement Programs: Set policies that promote social engagement through corporate social responsibility. Hotels shall engage with local communities through activities such as educational programs, charity donations, or connections with community organizations. Marketing and guest messages should be used to draw attention to such activities and to make the social good aspect of the brand evident.
- Customer Communication and Education: Hotels should develop methods to inform their guests of the steps they are taking for sustainability. They can do this through in-room materials, digital ads, or interactive in-

hotel activities that not only demonstrate the sustainable practices implemented in the hotel but also inspire guests to participate.

#### 6.3.2. *Industry Associations and Regulatory Bodies*

- Establish Sustainability Standards: Industry associations can strengthen synergies with local authorities in addressing concerns over and the proliferation of sustainability monoculture in the hospitality industry by implementing standardization of unified eco-safety measures among accommodations. This will help overcome problems related to the credibility and performance of green policies and inspire guests to patronize hosts with sustainable practices.
- Encourage innovation in sustainability: Through special grant schemes, tax incentives, or certification programs, government agencies can make it appealing for hotels to begin using renewable energy technologies and other sustainable infrastructure. That will assist the hotel's commitment to lowering its environmental impact.
- Set guidelines for ethical sourcing: Industry associations can also recommend guidelines for ethical sourcing within the hotel sector. They can endorse hotels that embrace local products if they are fairly traded or ecologically produced, thereby introducing environmental concerns for the sector to adopt.

#### 6.3.3. *Government and Policy Makers*

- Incentivize Sustainable Practices: The different levels of government can support the hotel industry in adopting green technologies and driving sustainable operational practices through engagement in energy-efficient systems, waste management, and water savings. Government initiatives, such as tax rebates and grants, can be utilized as financial incentives for hotels to install green technologies in energy-efficient systems, recycle waste, and use water-conserving devices.
- Lead the community's growth and environment: craft regulations that promote and support locally based eco-friendly projects, such as those that foster collaborations among local artisans, producers, and social enterprises through hotel cooperation.
- Set tougher environmental standards: The country's administrations should mandate regulations that will obligate hotels to disclose information on their environmental and social activities, thereby bringing transparency to the sector. These include reports on carbon footprints, waste reduction practices, and energy consumption.

#### 6.3.4. *Consumers and Guests*

- Incentivize consumers to support sustainable hotels: Consumers should be motivated to choose environmentally friendly hotels that align with their sustainability ideals. This can be achieved through promotional activities that highlight businesses prioritizing environmental sustainability and their commitment to strengthening relations with the local community.
- Award Green Choices: Hotels can encourage customers to take green actions by offering rewards such as discounts or loyalty points for various green initiatives like water-saving, recycling, and choosing bikes and cars with low carbon emissions.
- The mechanism of information and feedback: For the hotels' sustainable recovery, customers are urged to comment on the concrete steps made by the hotel industry regarding sustainability. Utilizing the sustainability-centered feedback mechanism will encourage positive change and spur accountability in the hotel industry.



### 6.3.5 Academic Institutions and Researchers

- Conduct further research on the indicators of sustainability: As such, the academy, alongside external researchers, would conduct further research among those who discuss the regulatory mechanisms triggering different generations' ecological heritage of the regions and the cultural relations. This would help hotels understand customer needs on a micro-level and address these points more personally.
- Design and write eco-curriculum for the business, university, and community: Through the collaboration of universities and organizations working in the field of research, the eco-curriculum could be created with key focuses on subjects related to sustainable operations, ethical sourcing, and community engagement. Thus, it will guarantee that the industry remains well-prepared to meet the expectations of future consumers.
- Conduct data collection at the source on a real-time basis: Research teams can collaborate with hotels to gather data on a wide array of consumer preferences, behaviors, and sustainability stays. This data will add an additional layer to the customer's analysis of the sustainability factor in their decisions.

### 6.3.6 Sustainability and Certification Agencies

- Advance Certifications Transparency: One of the best ways to achieve this is through certification agencies and by ensuring that their sustainability certifications are not only clear but also untouchable. These certifications should provide a comprehensive understanding of sustainable practices in the hospitality sector, along with independently conducted audits, which will ensure that the information is accurate.
- Contribution Towards Certification Awareness: Certification organizations should, first, have a teamwork mentality with hotels so the whole concept of sustainability can be better promoted. In addition, consumers could become educated in this regard. Consumers can learn about sustainable practices and judge hotels based on their commitment to sustainable development.

The aim of these policies is not just to propose a model but to construct a comprehensive framework for the hotel industry that will be composed of the tastes of Generation Z, which in the final analysis of the issue, will be a more sustainable, transparent, and socially responsible industry. If they work together, all stakeholders can affect the future of the hospitality industry so that it can meet the new consumer's expectations and would not negatively impact the environment.

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**Transparency:** The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

**Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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