



HOW DO MENTAL HEALTH AND INFORMATION SOURCES INFLUENCE YOUNGER TOURISM CHOICES? EVIDENCE FROM A GENERATION Z SURVEY

Abstract

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Purpose - Generation Z belongs to a new youth travel segment, which is already the one with the highest growth. They were exposed to internet technology from birth and grew up in a challenging economic, social, and environmental context, which may have shaped their tourist decisions. This study intends to investigate (i) the main motives to choose a tourist destination and the in-destination activities preferred by members of Gen Z, and (ii) the influence of youth's emotional well-being, translated into anxiety and depression states and tourism information sources on their destination choice and in-destination activities.

Methodology/Design/Approach - An online questionnaire was applied to collect data on young Portuguese people, obtaining a sample of 305 participants. The quantitative analysis was performed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method.

Findings - We found that (i) depressive and anxiety states enhance economic and convenience motives in choosing a destination and encourage engagement in wellness activities, and (ii) information sources influenced the motives to choose a destination and in-destination activities with emphasis on convenience motives and wellness activities.

Originality of the research - This study is the first to explore Gen Z tourism behaviours shaped by anxiety and depression states and dependence on information sources.

Keywords Generation Z; youth tourists; anxiety; depression; information sources; tourism destination; in-destination activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an important economic engine for many countries, making it worthy of special attention. Tourism is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that has received little research attention, mainly from social science. Due to this, one area that deserves special attention is the change in tourism demand, namely, changes in tourist characteristics and behaviours over time. The success of players operating in the tourism industry depends on their ability to recognize and adapt to these changes. In this context, generational cohorts are a tool that allows researchers to analyse, over time, changes in terms of views that are occurring. Differences between generations in terms of values, attitudes, and behaviours can not only explain but also allow for predicting changes in tourist behaviour over time.

A new segment of young tourists arrived in the market: the new generation christened Generation Z – individuals born between 1995 and 2012 (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014). This new generation's motivation and behaviours will certainly influence the characteristics of contemporary tourism. Understanding this generation is essential because, in 2020, it came to dominate the world (representing 32% of the world's population), surpassing the Millennials or Baby Boomers (WEF, 2018). In addition, Generation Z belongs to the youth travel segment, characterized by rapid growth. The youth travel segment represents more than 23% of the more than one billion international tourists annually, generating more than €250 billion (ETC, 2020). Gen Z youth are 100% digital, constantly connected with their international peers, engaged with social networks, and, therefore, highly influenced by what is disseminated online. In addition, young people see travel as an essential element of their lives and not just a passing moment of daily reality (WTO, 2019). Therefore, understanding Generation Z travellers' feelings, attitudes, and behaviours is essential to assess how demand for the tourism sector can evolve in the coming years and its consequences to world tourism.

The general characteristics of Generation Z have been widely discussed in the literature (Duffy et al., 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; ETC, 2020; Çalışkan, 2021) however, few researchers have explored their attitudes, preferences, and habits as travellers (Corbisiero & Ruspini, 2018; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018; Monaco, 2018; Robinson & Schänzel, 2019; Wee, 2019) and none have evaluated the role of mental health on their visit destination intention. Even though the influence of information sources, namely the importance of online sources, on tourism has already been investigated (Llodrá-Riera & Martínez-Ruiz, 2015; Xiang et al., 2015; Kaperonis, 2019) it has not been studied concerning Gen Z travellers nor analysed in an aggregate form. These young people are believed to think differently since they were born and raised in troubled times. Economic, social, environmental, and

health phenomena have marked their life experience. They have witnessed global financial crises and the resulting economic uncertainty/instability, terrorist attacks, environmental crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, and currently, the Russian-Ukraine war. No other generation has experienced so many different events at the same time. For all these reasons, these young people tend to be pessimistic, revealing themselves to be anxious and depressive. In sum, members of this generation may experience negative emotions in their routine life, and their mental states can influence their intentions to travel and their behavior when traveling.

In this context, the present study has a dual objective: i) intends to explore the role of youth mental health disorders, translated into self-rated states of anxiety and depression, and ii) their influence on information sources on their visit tourism destination intention and in-destination behaviours. This article presents the first evidence on whether mental health disorders of the Portuguese Gen Z and whether information sources will influence their choice of a tourism destination and their behaviour in the destination.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Gen Z travel and tourist behaviours

Youth tourism, which includes members of Generation Z, is now and will be even more so in the future, a dominant and the fastest growing segment in the international tourism market. Youth tourism comprises activities carried out by young people between 15 and 29 years old (Horak & Weber, 2000). Although the youth tourism market has considerable potential to increase, Gen Z research is just beginning to emerge (Corbisiero & Ruspini, 2018; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018; Monaco, 2018; Yousaf et al., 2018; Dimitriou & AbouElgheit, 2019; Robinson & Schänzel, 2019).

As is well known, human beliefs, attitudes, and values are shaped by the context in which they emerge. It is believed that members of Gen Z have distinctive features due to the economic and social contexts accompanying their growth. Their personality and life skills are developed in a social and economic context, which is marked by disorder, uncertainty, instability, and complexity (Reynolds, 2024). They reached adulthood in an era of economic recession, more significant inequalities and injustices, job uncertainty, and great social media presence. Young people from Generation Z only know a world with war, financial crises, and terrorism, and as such, they yearn for financial security in particular (Read & Truelove, 2018). These demographic changes are critical drivers for future tourism demand. To some extent, future tourism growth and gaining a competitive advantage in this sector depend on understanding the demographic trends influencing tourist behaviour (Moscardo et al., 2010).

A growing literature describes Gen Z (Duffy et al., 2018; ETC, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2021). Members of Generation Z are more distrustful, pessimistic, tense, anxious, and increasingly aware of the need for a balance between physical and mental health, more advocates of global values, hyper-connected, concerned with technology, with humanity behaviour in particular with consequences of humanity's actions on the environment. At this point in particular, despite extensive literature highlighting the relevance of Generation Z members for sustainability, much literature questions their potential even when it comes to sustainable tourism (Pinho & Gomes, 2023 for a review). These general characteristics will undoubtedly influence their attitudes toward tourism destinations and their behaviours as tourists. Young people have very high expectations of their travels. The consumption of accommodation often translates into behaviour with hedonic characteristics: tourism is, at the same time, a moment of socialization, conviviality, empowerment, and involvement (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). Members of Generation Z may have specific motives for choosing a destination and may prefer certain activities at the destination, and the literature reports very little about these preferences. However, considering their characteristics, namely their different lifestyles, motivations and routines, it becomes difficult to generalize the motives for choosing a tourist destination. Given their youth, Generation Z travellers are still immature in their consumption preferences, allowing the travel industry to deepen its knowledge and gain perspective on how tourist demand may evolve. Therefore, more studies on Generation Z youth are needed to assess and respond to their tourism needs and requests effectively. In this context, the aim is to understand the tourist behaviour of the Portuguese Generation Z members, namely the motives that lead them to choose a destination and their preferred in-destination activities. Hence, the following research questions are intended to be answered:

- RQ1. What are the main motives that lead Portuguese members of Gen Z to choose a particular tourist destination?
- RQ2. What are the main in-destination activities for young Portuguese members of Gen Z?

1.2. Mental health and Gen Z travel motives for choosing a destination and preferred in-destination activities

Mental health reflects our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, affecting our thoughts, actions, and feelings (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health is a basic human right and an integral component of health and well-being that supports individual and collective decision-making and relationship-building capacities (WHO, 2022). Having been taboo for decades, mental health is now being widely discussed. In the psychology literature, emotional well-being involves the balance of feelings (positive and negative) and perceived feelings about happiness and life satisfaction (Radloff, 1977; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010; Kahneman et al., 1999).

Thus, while negative emotions in daily life may impair mental well-being, positive emotions that occur in daily life are related to life satisfaction and optimism (Extremera & Rey, 2018; Wendt et al., 2019). Understanding everyday emotions helps to understand the intention regarding behaviours and improves life satisfaction (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010; Milman et al., 2020).

Despite mental health issues affecting all age groups, they are on the rise with Gen Z. Yet, this generation has been able to report mental health concerns and speak more openly about it than previous generations (Bethune, 2019). Members of Gen Z grow in a different world. Many Generation Z children stopped doing many activities alone, without an adult present, such as playing outside, walking to school, or taking a walk in the park. Then, this tight, hand-holding behaviour sends a message to children that the world is dangerous and harmful things can happen. The natural naivety of childhood has been overshadowed by the exposure of these children to the reality of what seems to be a frightening world, a world in which constant protection is needed. Moreover, their mental health is fuelled by various extreme phenomena ranging from terrorism, financial crisis and austerity, uncertainty about the future, unemployment through climate changes, the COVID-19 pandemic, fear of failure, and technological dependence ending with a physical war. Due to this, they are a worried generation experiencing high stress and anxiety levels. Two of the most common mental disorders in the world are generalized anxiety disorder and depressive disorder (Kellog et al., 2020). Research suggests that Gen Z is the most anxious and depressed generation (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Garnham, 2022). Due to the many situations experienced simultaneously, they can be described as a generation without hope and fear. Recent data found that just 45% of Gen Zers report that their mental health is very good or excellent, compared to 56% of Millennials and Boomers (70%) (APA, 2018).

Regarding mental health, Portugal is in a worrying position. Portugal is among the three European countries with the highest prevalence of depression. In the European Union, four out of 100 people have been diagnosed with depression and five out of 100 with anxiety. In the case of the Portuguese, anxiety exceeds seven cases per 100 people, being the country with the worst results in this indicator (Vos et al., 2020). Besides, Portugal is the fifth country in the OECD with the highest consumption of antidepressants and anxiolytics and, in 2019, had a suicide rate of 11.5 per 100,000 inhabitants (OECD, 2019). A recent study found that the COVID-19 pandemic increased the symptoms of depression and anxiety among young Portuguese people (Branquinho et al., 2020). On a worldwide scale, it was found that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cases of anxiety and depression grew by 25%, with young people being among the most affected groups (Santomauro et al., 2021).

As members of Gen Z will be future travellers, their emotional well-being may influence their intention to visit a tourism destination and their behaviours in the destination. Indeed, previous research on tourism suggests that positive emotions generated while consuming a tourism product can lead to customer satisfaction. Conversely, negative emotions induce a negative intention of travel behaviour (Chang, 2008; Abraham et al., 2021). According to some authors (Li et al., 2013; Šimková & Holzner, 2014), tourists' emotional well-being influences them to travel and visit new destinations. While there is evidence of travel benefits to mental health (Cooper & Buckley, 2022; Sun et al., 2022; Buckley, 2022) and that travel stress could exacerbate existing mental health conditions (White et al., 2021), the influence that negative emotions in routine life (depression and anxiety) can have on willingness to travel has been overlooked in the tourism literature. A recent study investigated tourists' emotional well-being in routine life with travel motivations and intentions during COVID-19 (Man-U & Peralta, 2021). The authors confirmed the effects of emotional well-being in everyday life on tourists' travel motivations – they found that tourists' positive emotions increase the motivation of 'safety and convenience' but decrease the need for 'family socialization. Despite being a development in this matter, this work did not assess the impact of anxiety or the opinion of young travellers (members of Generation Z) only. In this context, two important questions arise:

RQ3: Does young Portuguese mental health influence their motives for choosing a tourist destination?

RQ4: Does young Portuguese mental health influence their preferences for in-destination activities?

1.3. Information sources and Gen Z travel motives for choosing a destination and preferred in-destination activities

As said before, technology is a relevant trigger for mental health disorders. It is widely recognized that for young people today, being online has become an integral part of their lives. This reliance on digital technology is exacerbating feelings of anxiety and depression. According to OECD data, there has been a significant increase in the time spent weekly by a typical 15-year-old student on the internet - the average time increased from 21 hours in 2012 to 29 hours in 2015 (OECD, 2018). Portugal is slightly below the OECD average, but still, the average time spent by day on the internet increased from 100 minutes to around 145 minutes between 2012 and 2015, while in OECD, it rose from 110 minutes to 148 minutes (OECD, 2018). Being 100% digital, growing up, and always connected can lead to intense feelings of isolation and loneliness in some young people. It can also trigger a constant barrage of negative news and shame if they feel they fall short of the dignified standard imposed by social media. (The Annie E Casey Foundation, 2021). Research has investigated the link between technology and youth mental health discords. It has been found that youth are addicted to their cell phones, needing to respond immediately to texts, videos, messages, and other notifications (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Being disconnected for a moment can be alarming and cause great anxiety since they fear missing something while offline – fear of missing out (Reynolds, 2024).

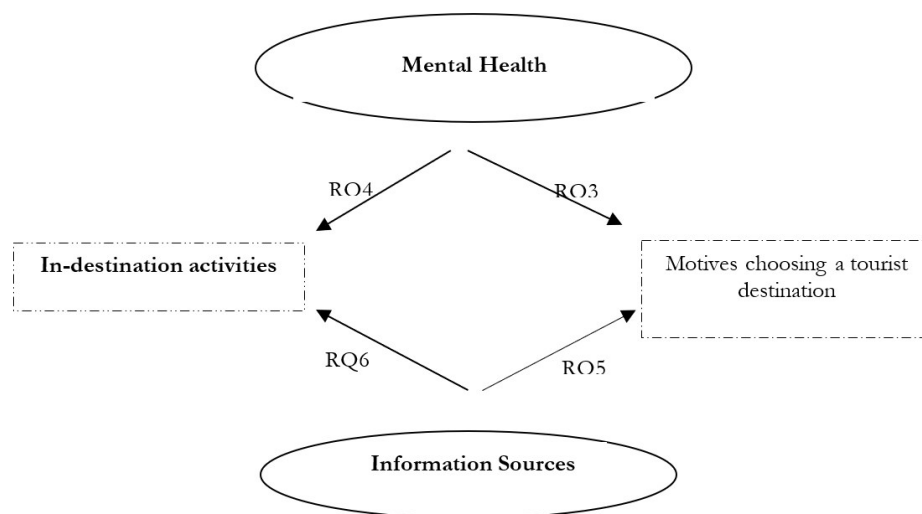
Regardless of the relationship between technology and mental health, technology became, for these digital natives, an essential source of information when choosing a destination. Young tourists are the ones who use the most, new information and communication technologies (Bizirgiannia & Dionysopouloub, 2013). It is known that the held image of a destination is a determining factor in the behaviour of choosing the tourist destination. As some authors recognise, the image reflects an individual's beliefs, thoughts and impressions about a specific place and provides tourists with anticipation (Crompton, 1979). In addition, the image represents the expectations generated about a destination, which can encourage tourists to visit it. (Fakaye & Crompton, 1991). However, since the choice of destination may be associated with some risks, information sources can mitigate these risks. Thus, information sources can influence the perception of destinations and, as such, their decision-making process (Mansfeld, 2006). In addition to information sources, personal factors can also affect the formation of cognitive and affective images about destinations (Beerli & Martin, 2004). The tourist first builds an image of a particular destination based on information sources and then decides whether to travel. The effects of information sources on the construction of individual perception have been the subject of some research (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Seabra et al., 2007; Llodrá-Riera et al., 2015; Chetthamrongchai, 2017). According to Beerli & Martin (2004), information sources can be internal such as friends and acquaintances, induced by the internet, tourist brochures and tour operators, advertising campaigns in the media and staff of travel agencies, or autonomous from the press through documentaries and films, guides, news, articles, reports and programs on destinations. Some empirical literature confirms these information sources' positive impact on visit intention. Indeed, films and TV seem to positively influence viewers' image and choices to visit the depicted places (Domínguez-Azcuet et al. 2021 for a review). It was found that social media influence is an important component of the intention to visit a destination like YouTube, Facebook, and the official website (Tigre Moura et al., 2015; Molinillo et al., 2018). Moreover, travel blog participant perception of destination image could strongly predict their travel intention (Wang, 2012). While the internet has been an important source of information (Yoo & Choi, 2021), friends and relatives are equally important, if not more so (Thompson et al., 2017). However, there is still no evidence that these information sources can influence Generation Z's intentions to visit a tourist destination. Therefore, the research questions are:

RQ5: Do information sources influence young Portuguese motives for choosing a tourist destination?

RQ6: Do information sources influence young Portuguese preferences for in-destination activities?

Our research questions can be represented by a conceptual model - Figure 1.

Figure 1: Structural model to explain the motives to choose a destination and in-destination activities



Note: Research questions 1 and 2 serve to define the latent variables (dependent variables) represented by dashed rectangles

2. METHODS

2.1. Data Collection

The data used in this study were collected through an online questionnaire available between February 2020 and July 2021 on the authors' social networks (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter) and the authors' contacts. The sample is, therefore, non-probabilistic. The inclusion criteria for participants in the sample were individuals residing in Portugal born after 1994. Participation was voluntary, and explicit informed consent was given. All potential participants were informed about the research objective, and anonymity was granted. A pre-test was conducted with fifteen participants to assess their understanding of the questions. The validity and reliability test verified that the sample reveals high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.957).

2.2. Data Measurement

The questionnaire contains four sections, each composed of questions that measure the variables used in the present study. Two dependent variables were used – motives to choose a tourism destination and in-destination activities, and two independent variables – mental health states, translated into feelings of anxiety and depression, and information sources.

Section 1 collected respondents' demographic and mental health (emotional well-being) information. Demographic characteristics comprise age and gender. Respondents' levels of anxiety and depression were measured through the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS). The HADS comprised fourteen items: seven to assess anxiety states and another seven to assess depressive states. Pais-Ribeiro et al. (2007) validated this scale for the Portuguese population. Each item has 4 possible answers, being scored individually from 0 to 3 (with 3 denoting higher levels of anxiety/depression), which allows scores to vary between 0 and 21 for anxiety and 0 to 21 for depression. It has been stipulated (Bjelland et al., 2002) that scores from 0 to 7 on the HADS scale denote no anxiety/depression symptoms, while scores from 8 to 21 denote considerable symptoms of anxiety/depression. Details of the HADS scale are in Table A1 in the appendix.

Section 2 collected information regarding respondents' information sources when choosing a destination and activities to perform. They were asked about the importance attached to seven statements comprising information sources developed and used elsewhere (ETC, 2020): friends' and relatives' opinions, travellers' opinions posted on official sites, circulating on social media, or travellers' blogs, documentaries, series or films, official tourism websites, and tourism magazines and brochures. Respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 – 'Nothing Important' to 5 – 'Very Important'.

Section 3 collected information about respondents' motives for choosing a tourist destination. They were asked about the importance of the nine statements comprising factors/motives developed and used elsewhere (ETC, 2020). The nine motives were divided into three categories: (i) Economic factors, comprising four motives: value for money; availability of cheap flights, availability of cheap accommodations, and special discounts; (ii) Convenience factors, comprising three motives: security in destination, convenient flight schedule and opportunity to live a lifetime experience and (iii) Sustainability factors, comprising two motives: destination respects equality and diversity, and destination is well-known for environmentally friendly practices. Respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 – 'Nothing Important' to 5 – 'Very Important'.

Section 4 collected information concerning respondents preferred in-destination activities. They were asked about the importance of nine statements concerning in-destination activities developed and used elsewhere (ETC, 2020). The in-destination activities were divided into three categories: (i) Experience sensations, comprising two activities: Try locally-produced food/drink and experience the nightlife; (ii) Cultural enrichment, comprising four activities: Interact with locals to understand their culture, do cultural activities, discover local traditions, heritage, and history and attend local cultural events and (iii) Wellness, comprising three activities: Engage in outdoor activities in nature, shop in big stores or a mall and do SPA sessions. Respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 – 'Nothing Important' to 5 – 'Very Important'. Details of the questions can be found in Table A2 in the appendix.

2.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were performed through SPSS(v. 25) to summarize respondents' opinions regarding the four variables used in the present study. The Partial Least Square (PLS) methodology explored the association between the two independent latent variables – mental health and information sources and latent dependent variables – motives to choose a tourist destination and preferences for in-destination activities. The PLS method was also used to perform a Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (CFA). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire design in translating the top three motives for choosing a tourist destination and the top three activities in the destination were assessed by performing the CFA. The PLS method was chosen for the following main motives: (i) due to the non-normal distribution of most of the items that make up this instrument (Hair et al, 2019) and (ii) the data were collected through a questionnaire, with multiple indicators associated with the latent variables (Ringle et al., 2019). The reliability and convergence of the measurement model were assessed using three measures (Hair et al., 2019): (i) Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ($C\alpha > 0.70$), (ii) composite reliability coefficient ($CR > 0.70$), and (iii) Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$). The discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Finally, a bootstrap analysis was implemented to estimate the relationships between variables established in the structural model.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Descriptive Analysis

A sample of 305 young Portuguese members of Gen Z was obtained. In total, 386 responses were collected, albeit only 305 (79%) were considered valid (questionnaires thoroughly answered). The majority of respondents were female (63%), and the age of respondents ranged from 18 to 29 years old. The predominant age was 19 years old (29.5%), followed by 20

years (19.3%), 21 years (17.4%), and 18 years (12.4%). The mean HADS anxiety score was 8.98 (\pm 2.90) and the mean HADS depression score was 5.74 (\pm 2.45). Most participants (66.2%) denote a state of anxiety, while only almost two-fifths of respondents denoted being depressed. In choosing their tourist destination, participants are mainly influenced by official sources and documentaries, series, and movies (mean > 3.5).

A detailed description can be found in Table A2 in the appendix.

3.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Figure 2 presents the factor loading of each survey question of both variables: motives to choose a destination and in-destination activities. There is factorial validity since each item (question) has a factorial load greater than 0.50. Many studies reported that confirmatory factor loads should be greater than 0.50 for better results (Hair et al., 2019). In contrast, in the tourism context, Chen and Tsai (2007) also considered 0.5 as a cut-off for acceptable loadings. Thus, it is concluded that the model is reflective.

Figure 2: Confirmatory factor analysis

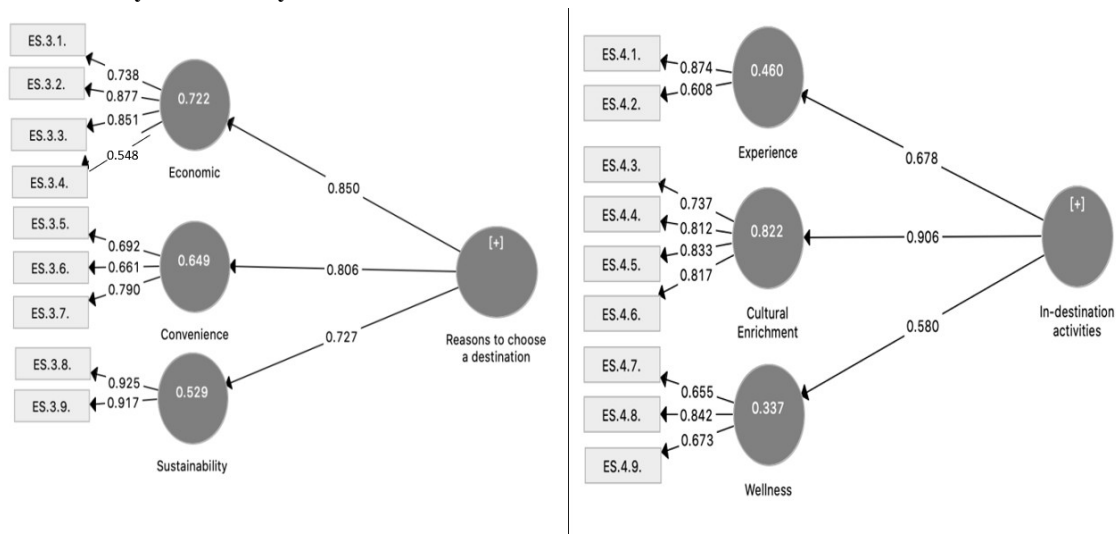
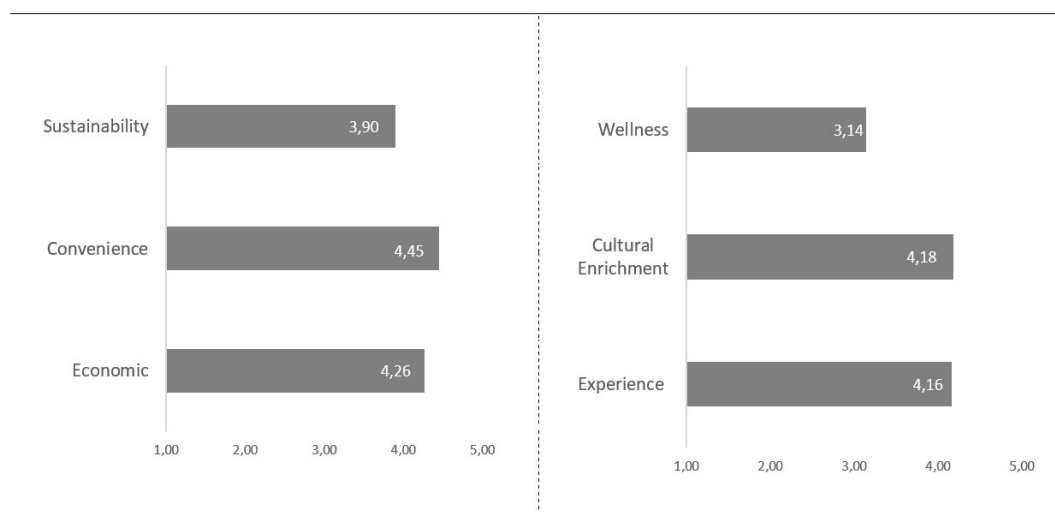


Figure 3 presents the average scores of each sub-group of the dependent variables derived from the questionnaire's third and fourth sections group of questions. The findings suggest that convenience and economics were the motives most valued by respondents when choosing a destination (average scores of 4.45 and 4.26), while cultural enrichment and experience were the preferred in-destination activities (average scores of 4.18 and 4.16). Details can be found in Table A1 in the appendix.

Figure 3: Average scores of both groups of questions composing the dependent variables



Note: The level of agreement with the statements increases from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating the lowest agreement and 5 the highest agreement.

3.3. Assessment of the reflective measurement model

Figure 4 presents the model obtained after applying the PLS method to the proposed structural model. Table 1 presents the evaluation of this reflective measurement model in terms of convergence, reliability, and discriminant validity. The results reveal that the PLS model has high levels of reliability ($C\alpha$ and $CR > 0.70$) and convergent validity ($AVE > 0.50$). Discriminant validity is measured by the Fornell-Larcker criterion (AVE squared in bold). Thus, it is concluded that all variables are reliable and have discriminant validity and factorial convergence. Therefore, the items used to define the dependent and independent variables are suitable for the present investigation.

Figure 4: Reflective measurement model

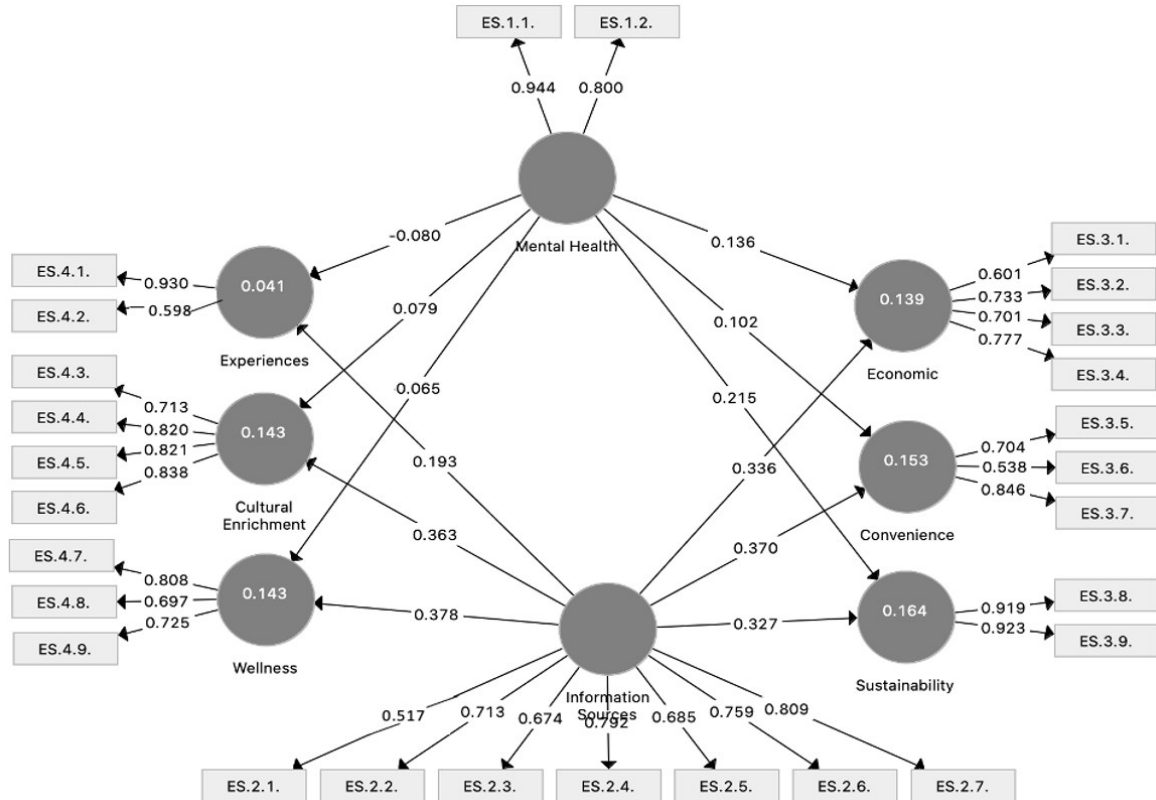


Table 1: Convergence, reliability and discriminant validity

	$C\alpha$	CR	AVE	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Mental Health	0.715	0.866	0.765	0.875							
(2) Information Sources	0.819	0.862	0.584	0.080	0.764						
(3) Economic	0.718	0.797	0.598	0.163	0.347	0.773					
(4) Convenience	0.733	0.744	0.501	0.131	0.378	0.508	0.707				
(5) Sustainability	0.821	0.918	0.848	0.241	0.344	0.368	0.476	0.921			
(6) Experiences	0.753	0.697	0.557	-0.065	0.186	0.161	0.155	0.058	0.746		
(7) Cultural Enrichment	0.812	0.876	0.640	0.108	0.370	0.260	0.219	0.395	0.461	0.800	
(8) Wellness	0.707	0.788	0.555	-0.034	0.080	0.146	0.332	0.278	0.202	0.238	0.745

3.4. Assessment of the structural model

Table 2 presents detailed results regarding the path coefficients, the endogenous latent variables coefficients of determination (R²), and the predictive relevance (Stone-Geisser Q²) based on the cross-validated redundancy approach. The dependent variable “Motives for choosing a tourism destination” presents an R² of 0.139 (R² adjusted = 0.164) and, according to Cohen (1988), large effect size of 0.42 (a reference to large effect - f² > 0.35). The dependent variable “In-destination Activities” has an R² of 0.141 (adjusted R² = 0.143) and, according to Cohen (1988), a large effect size of 0.47.

The model is relevant to predicting the dependent variables (motives in choosing a tourism destination and in-destination activities) since the predictive relevance is greater than zero (Q²>0). The possible collinearity problems were also analyzed through the value of the variance inflation factor (VIF), with the highest VIF being 1.460 and referring to the item “E.S 4.1.” of the “Experience” constructs. As such, there are potentially no collinearity problems. There are significant relationships between the latent variables.

Only some of the research questions formulated have been statistically answered or validated.

Results from Table 2 revealed that mental health directly and positively influences the relevant factors in choosing a tourism destination. Indeed, manifesting depression or anxiety what positively influenced the choice of a destination for (in decreasing order of importance) sustainable (β = 0.215), economic (β = 0.136), and convenience (β = 0.102) motives. Notwithstanding, mental health disorders only positively influenced the intention to engage in wellness in-destination activities (β = 0.065). Regarding the impact of information sources, the results show their statistically positive influence on all types of motives for choosing a tourist destination, with particular emphasis on convenience (β = 0.370), as well as on all kinds of activities, highlighting a more pronounced effect on the wellness (β = 0.378). The emotional well-being has lower influence than the information sources on the choice of a destination and in-destination activities.

Table 2: Direct effects on endogenous variables

Effects of Endogenous Variables	Path (β)	t Value (Bootstrap)	Confidence Interval (2.5% - 97.5%)	RQ Answer
Motives for choosing a tourism destination				
R ² = [0.139; 0.164] Q ² = [0.047; 0.129]				
Mental Health→Economic	0.136	2.079*	Sig (-0.004; 0.251)	Yes
Mental Health→Convenience	0.102	1.713**	Sig (-0.015; 0.214)	Yes
Mental Health→Sustainability	0.215	3.652*	Sig (0.101; 0.327)	Yes
InformationSources→Economic	0.336	5.750*	Sig (0.233; 0.462)	Yes
InformationSources→Convenience	0.370	6.955*	Sig (0.280; 0.489)	Yes
InformationSources→Sustainability	0.327	5.486*	Sig (0.200; 0.435)	Yes
In-destination Activities				
R ² = [0.141; 0.143] Q ² = [0.011;0.082]				
Mental Health→ Experiences	-0.080	1.249	Sig (-0.207; 0.044)	No
Mental Health→ Cultural Enrichment	0.079	1.244	Sig (-0.038; 0.197)	No
Mental Health→Wellness	0.065	1.074*	Sig (-0.184; 0.046)	Yes
Information Sources→ Experiences	0.193	2.893*	Sig (0.078; 0.326)	Yes
Information Sources→ Cultural Enrichment	0.363	6.338*	Sig (0.247; 0.483)	Yes
Information Sources→Wellness	0.378	7.228*	Sig (0.289; 0.486)	Yes

4. DISCUSSION

The triumph of the tourism sector largely depends on the ability of stakeholders to perceive changes and quickly adapt to them. Demographic changes represent both opportunities and challenges for tourism destinations. A new group of tourists made up of young Gen Z will undoubtedly influence the status quo of the tourism sector. It is believed that these young people, born and raised in adverse economic and social conditions and technologically dependent, will suffer from mental health disorders more than any previous generation (APA, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Garnham, 2022). Being digital natives and having poor emotional well-being may affect their preference for a tourism destination. Thus, knowing the factors that condition their choice of a tourist destination and their preference for in-destination activities is paramount.

In this study, a step forward is taken to better understand young tourists better. Thus, six research questions were formulated that focused on exploring (i) the factors that matter most to them when choosing a tourist destination and which in-destination activities they prefer, and (ii) the association between their emotional well-being and the influence of information sources on the previous factors and in-destination activities. The present study allowed all the questions raised to be answered.

Our findings report that convenience, followed by economics, and, at last, sustainability, were the main motives to choose a tourist destination, answering our first research question, 'What are the main motives that lead Portuguese members of Gen Z to choose a particular tourist destination?' Our participants seem aligned with young tourists from the UK, China, the USA, and Germany (ETC, 2020). Our finding also aligns with other empirical findings (Roncák et al., 2021; Zheng et al, 2021). The present study also answered our second research question, 'What are the main in-destination activities for young Portuguese members of Gen Z?' by showing that cultural enrichment and experiences (in particular, tasting local food and drinks) were the most valued in-destination activities by the youth followed by those that promote wellness. The participants from the present study act like their international fellows (ETC, 2020). Moreover, our finding corroborates other empirical studies that point to gastronomy as one of the fundamental elements in the choice of a tourist destination (López-Guzmán et al., 2017; Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Ullah et al., 2022).

The results evidence that the participants in the present study predominantly suffer from anxiety, although only a minority suffer from depression. In this regard, partially positive answers were found to the research questions that dealt with the influence of the respondents' mental state on their choice of tourist destination (third research question) and the choices of in-destination activities (fourth research question). Indeed, a positive association between youth emotional health and all the motives for choosing a tourist destination were found, but only a partial influence was found between participants' emotional states and the choice of in-destination activities. Evidence that suffering from anxiety and depression enhanced participation in sustainability, economic, and convenience motives when choosing the tourism destination (RQ3) were also found, but it only proved to be a determining factor in the search for wellness in-destination activities (RQ4). Although the literature on mental health and tourism behaviours is scant, our findings find support elsewhere (Man-U & Peralta, 2021). Moreover, the results support international evidence that nature tourism and spa and shopping activities improve mental health (Huang et al, 2019; Cooper & Buckley, 2022; Buckley, 2020, 2022; Wu et al., 2022).

Finally, the results evidence that the participants were influenced mainly by induced and independent sources of information, namely official sources of tourist information, documentaries, series, and films. The public credibility of tourist information sources is not consensual in the literature. While some studies report that the public's greater trust in official sites (Jamaludin et al., 2018) others report that user-generated content is more trustworthy (Berhanu & Raj, 2020). Following, a positive answer for the two remaining research questions were found. For the question (RQ5), 'Do information sources influence young Portuguese motives for choosing a tourist destination?', the results evidence that these sources of information positively influenced convenience, economic, and sustainability motives when choosing a destination. At the same time, the same sources of information were also positively associated with the pursuit of in-destination activities of wellness, cultural enrichment, and experiences (RQ6). Our findings confirm empirical evidence that screen tourism has encouraged the expansion of the number of tourists who wish to visit destinations portrayed on TV through films and series (Ismail et al., 2017).

A strength of our study is that it is the first to investigate the tourism behaviours of members of Generation Z concerning the motives that lead them to choose a destination and the preferred in-destination activities shaped by their mental health status and dependence on information sources. A second strength is that it is the first study of this nature to be carried out in Portugal. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no study, to date, has explored the influence of young Portuguese Gen Zers' emotional well-being and information sources on their attitudes regarding the choice of a destination and in-destination activities. Therefore, the present study fits into the existing research gap. However, the results must be interpreted with caution due to the non-random nature of the sample. The results cannot be generalized to the Portuguese Gen Z. However, the aim was to shed some light on the impact of mental health and information sources on Gen Zers tourists' attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, a previously tested scale to measure levels of anxiety and depression was not used in this study. However, the objective was only to assess whether these states of mind would influence their destination choice factors and in-destination activities. Thus, the study only investigated whether young people feel emotional. However, this researchers' contribution overcome these limitations.

In future studies, it would be helpful to collect the opinions of young people from Generation Z from other countries to make international comparisons. Although the mental health of Generation Z has been explored in this study, comparing the mental health levels of Generation Z with other generational groups to validate that they have higher levels has not been explored, so it would be interesting to explore this issue in future studies. Moreover, extending the study to participants from different geographical backgrounds would strengthen its validity. The questionnaire of the present study could be used to explore cultural differences and trace patterns of common preferences and behaviours of members of Gen Z. It would also be interesting to explore in future studies dividing the independent variables for a tourist destination decision into personal motives and destination motives and using, for example, mental health and information sources as moderating variables. Finally, despite the present study investigating the impact of mental health and information sources on tourist choices, it would be interesting to explore this impact by isolating variables, namely exploring only the impact of mental health status on tourist choices using anxiety, states of depression, or loneliness.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the tourist behaviour of young Generation Z when conditioned by their mental health status and available information sources through the formulation of six research questions. By answering these research questions, it was concluded that participants: (i) choose a tourist destination primarily for convenience and economic motives, giving less importance to issues of tourist sustainability; (ii) seek essentially cultural activities at the destination and live experiences, giving less importance to wellness activities; (iii) degradation of mental health had a positive influence in all the motives to choose a tourist destination but only influences the search for wellness activities in the destination and (iv) source of information (mainly induced and independent) had a positive association with all the motives to choose a tourist destination as well as with all the in-destination activities.

The principal finding of the present study is one of opportunity. Practical solid links between young people's mental health (here translated into states of anxiety and depression) and sources of information with their tourist behaviours were found, which will undoubtedly accentuate as Generation Z dominates the tourism sector. This study is one of the few studies investigating youth tourists' emotional well-being and the influence of information sources on their travel attitudes when choosing a tourist destination and their pattern of preferences for activities in the destination. It was found that members of Gen Z are experiencing a decline in their emotional well-being since they are more likely to suffer from depression and or anxiety. The results evidence that mental health and sources of information are drivers of younger tourist behaviour.

This study can serve as a reflection on the need for decision-makers in tourism to adapt to the emerging market segment. Hence, tourism researchers and practitioners should be aware of the mental disorders of Generation Z youth and should implement measures aimed at this market segment with particular needs. Trusting the results of this study, they should strive to develop more sustainable tourism and offer wellness activities. Furthermore, as the members of Gen Z are increasingly digital and highly influenced by information sources, tourist decision-makers must use social media to promote destinations based on tourist sustainability and activities that promote personal well-being.

In short, constant and rapid societal changes create new needs, especially regarding technology and mental health. In this way, governments, policymakers, tourism business planners and managers, and other actors in the tourism sector must develop a greater awareness of the needs of young travellers. Managers of tourist companies need to have a proactive attitude translated into a strong presence on the internet, implementing intelligent strategies that motivate more new travellers from the younger generations.

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APPENDIX

Table A1: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS)

Tick the box beside the reply that is closest to how you have been feeling in the past week. Don't take too long over you replies: your immediate is best

Items	Mental State	Score	Items	Mental State	Score		
#1	Anxiety	I feel tense or 'wound up':	#8.	Depression	I feel as if I am slowed down:		
		Most of the time			3	Nearly all the time	3
		A lot of the time			2	Very often	2
		From time to time, occasionally			1	1 Sometimes	1
		Not at all.	0		Not at all	0	
#2	Depression	I still enjoy the things I used to enjoy:	#9.	Anxiety	I get a sort of frightened feeling like 'butterflies' in the stomach:		
		Definitely as much			0	Not at all	0
		Not quite so much			1	Occasionally	1
		Only a little			2	Quite Often	2
		Hardly at all	3		Very Often	3	
#3	Anxiety	I get a sort of frightened feeling as if something awful is about to happen:	#10	Depression	I have lost interest in my appearance:		
		Very definitely and quite badly			3	Definitely	3
		Yes, but not too badly			2	I don't take as much care as I should	2
		A little, but it doesn't worry me			1	I may not take quite as much care	1
		Not at all	0		I take just as much care as ever	0	
#4	Depression	I can laugh and see the funny side of things:	#11.	Anxiety	I feel restless as I have to be on the move:		
		As much as I always could			0	Very much indeed	3
		Not quite so much now			1	Quite a lot	2
		Definitely not so much now			2	Not very much	1
		Not at all	3		Not at all	0	
#5.	Anxiety	Worrying thoughts go through my mind:	#12.	Depression	I look forward with enjoyment to things:		
		A great deal of the time			3	As much as I ever did	0
		A lot of the time			2	Rather less than I used to	1
		From time to time, but not too often			1	Definitely less than I used to	2
		Only occasionally	0		Hardly at all	3	
#6.	Depression	I feel cheerful:	#13.	Anxiety	I get sudden feelings of panic:		
		Not at all			3	Very often indeed	3
		Not often			2	Quite often	2
		Sometimes	1		Not very often	1	

	Most of the time	0		Not at all	0
#7.	Anxiety	I can sit at ease and feel relaxed:	#14.	Depression	I can enjoy a good book or radio or TV program:
	Definitely	0		Often	0
	Usually	1		Sometimes	1
	Not Often	2		Not often	2
	Not at all	3		Very seldom	3

Table A2: Scale application and descriptive analysis of respondents' opinions concerning dependent and independent variables. Percentage response, Mean and Standard deviation

Independent Variables							
Section 1. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements							
	Frequencies (%)				Mean	Std. Deviation	
ES.1.1. Anxiety					8.98	2.90	
Score 0 <Not Anxious< Score 8	202 (66.2)						
Score 8 ≤Anxious≤ Score 21	103 (33.8)						
ES.1.2. Depression					5.74	.45	
Score 0 <Not Depressed< Score 8	189 (62.0)						
Score 8 ≤Depressed≤ Score 21	116 (38.0)						
Section 2. How much importance do you attach to the following statements							
	Nothing Important	Not very Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	Mean	Std. Deviation
ES.2.1. Opinion of friends and/or family	8.5	17.4	20.1	38.2	15.7	3.35	1.186
ES.2.2. Travellers' opinions posted on official websites (Tripadvisor).	5.1	9.6	24.6	50.2	10.6	3.52	0.981
ES.2.3. Opinions circulating on social media	5.1	15.4	36.9	33.4	9.2	3.26	0.998
ES.2.4. Traveller blogs	6.5	9.9	30.1	39.7	13.7	3.44	1.055
ES.2.5. Documentaries, series and/or movies	3.8	7.5	30.4	42.0	16.4	3.6	0.973
ES.2.6. Official tourism websites	4.4	7.8	22.5	40.6	24.6	3.73	1.056
ES.2.7. Tourism magazines and brochures	7.8	11.9	41.0	29.7	9.6	3.21	1.035
Dependent Variables							
Section 3. How much importance do you attach to the following statements							
	Nothing Important	Not very Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economic Motives							
ES.3.1. Quality-price ratio	0.3	0.7	2.7	36.3	59.9	4.55	0.621
ES.3.2. Availability of cheap flights	0.3	1.7	5.8	43.3	48.8	4.38	0.707
ES.3.3. Availability of cheap accommodation	0.7	1.7	11.0	47.4	39.2	4.23	0.763
ES.3.4. Special discounts	2.4	3.8	23.2	43.7	27.0	3.89	0.926
Convenience Motives							
ES.3.5. Security at destination	0.7	1.4	4.8	27.5	65.6	4.56	0.714
ES.3.6. Possibility to live a great experience	0.3	0.3	2.7	27.1	69.5	4.65	0.587

ES.3.7. Flight flexibility	1.0	5.2	14.5	36.9	42.4	4.14	0.922
Sustainability Motives							
ES.3.8. Sustainable destination (“environmentally friendly”)	4.5	7.6	27.8	41.2	18.9	3.63	1.017
ES.3.9. Respect for equality and diversity	3.1	3.8	14.2	30.4	48.4	4.17	1.016
Section 4. How much importance do you attach to the following statements							
	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experiences							
ES.4.1. Experience local food and drinks	0.3	2.7	6.5	37.1	53.4	4.4	0.759
ES.4.2. Experience the nightlife	3.1	5.1	20.5	39.9	31.4	3.91	0.998
Cultural Enrichment							
ES.4.3. Interact with local people to understand their culture	0.3	3.1	13.3	45.2	38.1	4.18	0.798
ES.4.4. Engage in cultural activities	0.3	3.4	14.3	45.9	36.1	4.14	0.808
ES.4.5. Discover local traditions, heritage and history	0.7	5.1	14.3	41.8	36.7	4.35	0.773
ES.4.6. Attend local cultural events	2.0	5.1	14.3	41.8	36.7	4.06	0.947
Wellness							
ES.4.7. Shopping in large stores or shopping	14.3	22.9	31.4	19.1	12.3	2.92	1.218
ES.4.8. Practicing outdoor activities (eg tracking)	2.4	6.5	23.5	39.1	28.6	3.85	0.987
ES.4.9. Make SPA sessions (eg massages, etc.)	26.6	17.1	31.7	15.4	9.2	2.63	1.277