# Understanding millennials' tourism experience: values and meaning to travel as a key for identifying target clusters for youth (sustainable) tourism

Elena Cavagnaro, Simona Staffieri and Albert Postma

**Abstract**

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this paper is to better understand the tourism experience of millennials by connecting their value orientations to the meaning that they give to travel. In doing so, it also aims at discovering profiles of young tourists that can be targeted both now and in the future by tourism organisations.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *A survey based on validated scales reached 423 Dutch millennials. An integrated multidimensional research strategy has been applied where models that reduce the gathered data to fewer components (principal component analyses) were followed by a cluster analysis.*

**Findings** – *Ten value orientations (Schwartz, 1994) and four travel meanings have been identified. By combining these ten value orientations and four meanings, nine clusters have been identified representing groups of millennial tourists with different needs. For example, while two clusters fit into the popular description of young travellers seeking only unpretentious enjoyment, millennials represented in two other clusters are strongly motivated by self-transcending values, distance themselves from the travel meaning escapism and relaxation and will therefore not positively respond to a merely hedonic travel offer.*

**Research limitations/implications** – *Replication of this research is recommended in other national contexts, possibly using a longitudinal approach.*

**Practical implications** – *The nine clusters should be approached with a dedicated travel offer. In particular, at least two clusters of millennials may be successfully approached with a sustainable tourism offer.*

**Originality/value** – *The combination of value orientations and travel meanings portrays a detailed and realistic picture of the tourism experience looked for by millennials.*

**Keywords** *Youth tourism, Market segmentation, Sustainable tourism, Meaning to travel, Value orientations*

**Paper type** *Research paper*

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## Introduction

This study aims at better understanding the tourism experience of millennials by connecting their value orientations to the meaning that they give to travel. In doing so, it also aims at discovering profiles of young tourists that can be targeted both now and in the future by tourism organisations.

Young tourists are key for tourism's future at least for three reasons: the sheer amount on young tourists travelling in the present (Richards, 2006; United Nations World Tourism Organisation and World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016); the fact that their original choices may lead to new attitudes towards tourism by the wider society (Fermani *et al.*, 2011; Leask *et al.*, 2013) and the anticipation that young tourists will continue to travel in the future (Barton *et al.*, 2013). This last point is of particular importance form a future perspective because the young generation will move up in the

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demographic pyramid and take in the future the place that is now occupied by older generations, such as Baby Boomers. Today young generation (the so-called GY, GX and millennial generation) have different needs than their parents or grandparents in general (Howe and Strauss, 2000) and in the context of tourism in particular (Glover, 2010). Consequently, the middle-aged tourist in the 2020s and 2030s will, just like the young tourists of today, have different needs and wants compared to the contemporary middle-aged tourist. To be prepared for the future, the tourism sector has to understand and cater for these changing needs.

Catering for changing needs is an essential but not a sufficient measure to guarantee the future of tourism. It has in fact been stated that tourism will have no future unless it becomes sustainable (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2013). In this context, previous studies have shown that young tourists with a specific (i.e. biospheric) value orientation associate travel with being in contact with nature (Cavagnaro and Staffieri, 2015). From a future perspective, this is interesting because biospheric values are the most stable antecedent of sustainable behaviour (Steg and Vlek, 2009). However, the salience to young tourists of different value orientations has not yet been explored. It may therefore be possible that, when contrasted with other value orientations, the biospheric value orientation is revealed to be less relevant to young tourists.

Therefore, as briefly stated above, the study's purpose is twofold: to describe the value orientations of young tourists and to discover profiles of young tourists that can be targeted both now and in the future by connecting value orientations and meaning given to travel. Values are rather stable determinants of behaviour, thus offering an insight not only in present but also in future choices, while meaning expresses the general connotation that a person gives to travelling. The link between values and consumer choices is a strong one. This is even truer in those cases, such as tourism, where consumer choices are loaded with a significant symbolic reference.

Data were collected in the Netherlands, one of the European countries with the highest tourism participation (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS, 2016) and the country where not only two of the authors but also the organisation specialized in market research that helped reach a representative sample, TNS Nipo, is located. A total of 423 youngsters answered a survey on values and the meaning they attribute to travelling based on validated scales. To analyse the data, an integrated multidimensional research strategy has been applied where models that reduce the gathered data to fewer components (principal component analyses (PCA)) were followed by a cluster analysis.

The paper is structured as follows. The theoretical and methodological section critically reviews the major theories on which this study is based, and offers insights on how the study was conducted. After this section, the findings are presented and discussed. The paper concludes by pointing at the professional and theoretical implication of the results.

## Theoretical and methodological section

This section highlights the main theories on which the study is based and the method used to gather and analyse data. It is organised in four subsections. The first three critically discuss from a future perspective theories on youth tourism; on tourism experience and travel meaning; and on value orientations. The fourth and last one is dedicated to the research method.

### *Youth tourism*

Tourism research has begun to focus relatively late on young travellers in general and in particular on those born between 1980 and 2000, the so-called "Millennial" Generation (Richards and Wilson, 2004; Glover, 2010; Pendergast *et al.*, 2010). Youth tourism is defined as all independent trips for periods of less than one year by people aged 16-29 which are motivated, in part or in full, by a desire to experience other cultures, build life experience and/or benefit from formal and informal learning opportunities outside one's usual environment (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2008). Currently (2017), the age group in this definition matches the generation of millennials. The millennial generation is, according to most definitions, born between 1980 and 2000. Generation Y (born between 1980-1994) and Generation Z (born between 1994-to date) include the millennial generation (born from the late 1980s onwards). They can all be considered

youth travellers and their travel experience can therefore be interpreted building upon literature on youth tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation and World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation state that Generation Z comprises about 30 per cent of the world population and counts 29 million international travellers around the world. It also regards Generation Z as millenials on steroids and refers to them as "the-internet-in-its-pocket-generation", a feature that set them apart from previous generations such as the Baby Boomers and even the a bit older Generation Y who was born and grew up before the internet was widely available (WYSE, 2016).

Notwithstanding an increasing interest in the millennial generation, existing research on youth tourism is relatively underdeveloped (Richards and Wilson, 2004; Staffieri, 2016a). This is surprising because young tourists have a substantial material and immaterial impact on the present and future of tourism. First, they represent an increasingly significant economic force: in 2015, almost one in four (23 per cent) tourists were aged 16-29; one in three hotel guests were millennial while the total value of international youth tourism is estimated to reach US$400 billion in 2020 – twice the value of 2009 (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016). Second, compared to older generations, youngsters are more resilient: they tend to keep visiting destinations that are under socio-political or environmental stress (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016). Young tourists tend, third, to skip on travel and accommodation costs to spend more on the destination. Richards (2011) found that on a major trip young people spend on average of US$2,600, which is almost three times more than an average tourist. Millennials, therefore, represent a major economic opportunity in general and for economically and politically fragile regions in particular.

From a socio-cultural perspective, it has been observed that young people are an innovative force and that their choices may lead to new approaches to tourism by the wider society (Martinengo and Savoja, 1993; Fermani *et al.*, 2011; Cavagnaro and Staffieri, 2015). Therefore, changes and developments in tourism behaviour can be foreseen by describing the present travel behaviour of millennials (Leask *et al.*, 2013).

Millennials, though, are not only relevant for their present impact on tourism, they are also the tourists of the future (Richards and Wilson, 2004; UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2008; Pendergast *et al.*, 2010). Millennials are depicted as natural travellers: over 60 per cent of them see travel as an important part of their lives, make 4-5 trips per year and are expected to keep looking for tourism experiences also when older (Ovolo Hotels, 2013; Barton *et al.*, 2013). Gradually millennials move upward through the population pyramids replacing the older generation. If the tourism sector wants to prepare for the future by designing future proof products and services, it has to take this generational change into account. The middle-aged tourist in the 2020s and 2030s will, just like the youth tourist of today, have completely different needs, wants and travel behaviour than the contemporary middle-aged tourist.

All these considerations point to the importance of investigating this target group and identifying antecedents of their tourism behaviour, such as values and the meaning they give to a tourism experience.

### *Tourism experience and meaning to travel*

Leisure has been conceptualised as an experience already in the early 1970s while the first academic article on the tourism experience dates from 1996 (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009). The emotional implications of travelling have strengthened the conceptualization of tourism in terms of experience (Pearce and Lee, 2005). When interpreting youth tourism, the conceptualization of tourism as an experience is even more important because young travellers reject standard or homogenised products and look for new solutions, ideas, and emotions or, in one word, new experiences (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2008; Moisă, 2010). This notwithstanding there is still a lack of proper research on how to measure the (youth) tourism experience (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2012).

The tourism experience consists of three main components: the need to travel, the consummation of the experience itself and its evaluation. The need to travel, in its turn, falls apart in two components: meaning given to and motivation to travel (Staffieri, 2016a). While the motivation ignites the decision-making process leading to a specific travel experience

(Chang, 2007), the meaning given to travel brings to the surface the general needs associated with travelling and is heavily related with the symbolic character of travelling (Staffieri, 2016a). Already in 1976, MacCannell argued that analogously to the religious symbolism of primitive people, tourist attractions express what is considered to be of value in modern society. From the sociological perspective adopted by MacCannell and other researchers on tourism after him, it follows that to understand the travel experience one must consider both the individual and the social frame of reference of the traveller. In other words, the way in which a tourist frames his or her experience depends not only from the individual characteristics of the traveller but also from the social structure in which he stems from and the network of interactions that he has established with others (Blumer, 1969, Staffieri, 2016b). The meaning given to travel is such a frame and, being generated through interaction with others, it is recognisable by all individuals who contributed to its development and, when discovered, has therefore a valence that outweighs the individual sphere (Staffieri, 2016a).

Previous studies on millennials state that travel means to them novelty: the possibility to evade the quotidian, to try a different lifestyle, to live new experiences, to visit new places and to acquire new knowledge (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016). From this perspective, travelling means living an experience of personal development centred on the individual tourist. Yet, considering the reflections above on the collective way meaning is constructed, the youth tourism experience should also be framed with reference to collective symbols recognisable by the traveller's peer-group (Staffieri, 2016a). From this perspective, the meaning given to travel transcends the individual need for novelty and embraces the need to partake in social trends, to socialise with friends and other (local) people, and to be in contact with nature (Cavagnaro and Staffieri, 2015). The self-trascendend nature of meaning is confirmed by studies pointing that the youth traveller travel with a purpose, wants to live like the locals and believes in making a difference in the world (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016). Moreover, lately, a shift has occurred from providing experiences to providing an experience that contribute to the quality of life of the traveller. In this respect, the United Nations speak of the leap "from marketing to mattering" (United Nation Global Compact and Accenture, 2014). Concluding, in order to design travel experiences that make a meaningful contribution to the quality of life of the traveller, it is important to understand his/her travel needs, including the meaning given to travel, and his/her core values.

### *Value orientations*

Values are defined as "desirable transsituational goals varying in importance, which serve as a guiding principle in the life of a person or other social entity" (Schwartz, 1994, p. 21) and are considered to be rather stable antecedents of behaviour (Stern *et al.*, 1995).

Schwartz (1994) found evidence for a general value system in which 56 values are plotted on two axes, one representing openness to change vs conservatism, and the other representing self-enhancement values (reflecting a concern with a person's own interest) vs self-transcendence values (reflecting a concern with collective interests). By clustering values, Schwartz individuated ten value types or value orientations (see Table I). Though Schwartz noticed that respondents failed to see the difference of adjoining value orientations (such as for example hedonism and stimulation), he concluded that they are able to discriminate among these ten value types (Schwartz, 1994, p. 32). This is important because, as Schwartz (1994, p. 23) notices "the pursuit of each type of values have psychological, practical, and social consequences that may conflict or may be compatible with the pursuit of other value types". For example, from a tourism perspective, people who are strongly motivated by hedonic values will choose a different tourism experience than people motivated by universalism (Cavagnaro and Staffieri, 2015).

The distinction between self-enhancement and self-transcendent values has been widely used to explain pro-environmental beliefs, attitudes and intentions. Self-enhancement values that have been proved to have (mostly a negative) impact on pro-environmental choices are social power, wealth, authority, influence and ambition (these values are in italic in Table I). This set of value has been labelled as "egoistic" (Stern and Dietz, 1994; De Groot and Steg, 2008). It has also been argued that two types of self-transcendent values can be distinguished: altruistic (underlined in Table I) and biospheric values (underlined and in italic in Table I). While altruistic values reflect care and concern for other human beings, biospheric values reveal a concern

**Table I** Value orientations and values

| *Axe* | *Value orientation* | *Values* |
|---|---|---|
| Self-enhancement | Security | Clean; national security; social order; family security; reciprocation of favours; healthy; Sense of belonging |
| | Power | *Social power; authority*; *wealth*; preserving my public image; social recognition |
| | Achievement | Successful; capable; *ambitious*; *influential*; intelligent; self-respect |
| Self-enhancement/ Openness to change | Hedonism | Pleasure; enjoying life |
| Openness to change | Stimulation | Daring; a varied life; an exciting life |
| | Self-direction | Creativity; curious; freedom; choosing own goals; independent |
| Self-transcendent | Universalism | *Protecting the environment*; a world of beauty; *unity with nature*; respecting the earth, broad-minded; social justice; wisdom; equality; a world at peace; inner harmony |
| | Benevolence | Helpful; honest; forgiving; loyal; responsible; true friendship; a spiritual life; mature love; meaning in life |
| | Tradition | Devout; accepting portion in life; humble; moderate; respect for tradition; detachment |
| | Conformity | Politeness; honouring parents and elders; obedient; self-discipline |

**Source**: Schwartz (1994) and Steg *et al*. (2012)

for nature for its own sake, without a direct reference to the welfare of human beings (Stern and Dietz, 1994; De Groot and Steg, 2008). Recently (Steg *et al.*, 2012), hedonic values have been added as a fourth value orientation relevant for explaining sustainable beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Hedonic values are strongly linked to a leisurely experience such as travelling (Kim *et al.*, 2012), and are therefore of particular interest when studying a tourism experience. Hedonic values are in bold in Table I.

### *Research method*

In 2014, the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI) initiated a large-scale study among youth in the Netherlands. The study was conducted in co-operation with the Academy of International Hospitality Research (AIHR) and TNS Nipo, a Dutch organisation specialized in market research. The Netherlands was chosen not only because it is the country where TNS Nipo, AIHR and the ETFI are located but also because with 82.2 per cent of the population older than 15 years going at least once a year on vacation, it is one of the European countries with the highest tourism participation grade (CBS, 2016). Together these parties designed a computer-assisted web interviewing[1] survey to gather data on youngster values and the meaning they give to travel. Value orientations were measured using a nine-point Likert scale ranging from "opposed to my principles" to "extremely important in my life" (Schwartz, 1994). To the values individuated by Schwartz, three values were added from recent research (Steg *et al.*, 2012), i.e. specifically two biospheric (protecting the environment and preventing pollution) and one hedonic (gratification for oneself), bringing the total to 59 considered values. Travel meaning was measured using a five-point Likert scale validated by Staffieri (2016a). The scales' internal consistency has been verified trough Cronbach's $\alpha$. The unidimensionality of the value orientations was verified using four PCA[2] (see Table II).

An integrated multidimensional research strategy was applied: multivariate analyses (PCA and cluster analysis) were used to reduce the measured items into fewer components and to uncover segments of young travellers that may be targeted with different tourism offers, including a sustainable tourism offer. Cluster analyses are an appropriate statistical technique for sociological research aimed at individuating and describing variations in the target group under scrutiny, in the present case young tourists. In this study, therefore, the cluster analysis starts from the values orientations and the components for travel meaning identified through PCA. To the factor scores obtained via the PCA a non-hierarchical cluster analysis, k-means method, has been applied (Mac Queen, 1967; Spath, 1980; Everitt, Landau and Leese, 2001), using the statistical software SPSS (Norusis, 2011). The k-means method is a useful tool for the segmentation of consumers (Zani and Cerioli, 2007).

**Table II** Value orientations (Schwartz, 1994) processed from sampled data

| *Value orientation* | *Items* | *Cronbach's α* | *KMO* | *Total variance explained (%)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Security | Clean; national security; social order; family security; reciprocation of favours; healthy; sense of belonging | 0.810 | 0.830 | 47.9 |
| Power | Social power; authority; wealth; preserving my public image; social recognition | 0.782 | 0.810 | 53.9 |
| Achievement | Successful; capable; ambitious; influential; intelligent; self-respect | 0.839 | 0.849 | 56.7 |
| Hedonism | Pleasure; enjoying life; gratification for oneself | 0.796 | 0.690 | 71.1 |
| Stimulation | Daring; a varied life; an exciting life | 0.819 | 0.717 | 73.6 |
| Self-direction | Creativity; curious; freedom; choosing own goals; independent | 0.769 | 0.793 | 52.8 |
| Universalism | Protecting the environment; a world of beauty (divided in beauty of art and beauty of nature); unity with nature; respecting the earth, broad-minded; social justice; wisdom; equality; a world at peace; inner harmony; preventing pollution | 0.903 | 0.909 | 49.7 first component |
| Benevolence | Helpful; honest; forgiving; loyal; responsible; true friendship; a spiritual life; mature love; meaning in life | 0.848 | 0.904 | 48.9 first component |
| Tradition | Devout; accepting portion in life; humble; moderate; respect for tradition | 0.754 | 0.811 | 51.7 |
| Conformity | Politeness; honouring parents and elders; obedient; self-discipline | 0.792 | 0.774 | 62.4 |

## Findings and discussion

A total of 423 questionnaires were received. Respondents' age ranges between 19 and 31 years, in line with the definition of millennial generation and youth tourism presented above. The sample is equally distributed between men and women. 61.1 per cent of respondents had travelled independently, i.e. without an accompanying family member or other tutor (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2008). In line with findings from Ovolo Hotels (2013), on average, respondents visited 4.6 countries.

In line with Schwartz's 1994 study, ten value orientations have ben found (see Table II). It is important to notice that for the value orientations, universalism and benevolence, the PCA individuated two components, of which the second one was composed respectively, of two and one value, and explained a low variance, respectively, 11.6 and 11.3. Due to their low explanatory value, these second components are not further considered.

The 19 items measuring travel meaning can be reduced to four components. These have been labelled: personal, inner development; development through interpersonal exchange; socializing and entertainment; and Escapism and relaxation (see Table III, where the order of the items in the table corresponds to their contribution to the new component). The first component includes items that relate to the meaning of travel as an experience of personal development and growth pointed at by the literature such as "I travel to improve physical/mental health" and "I travel to explore a meaningful path of life" (Staffieri, 2016a; UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016). The second component ties together items where experiencing new cultures and people is central. This is in line with literature pointing to the symbolic nature of travelling and the social construction of its meaning (MacCannell, 1976; UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016). The third component is formed by items where the social nature of travelling is connected to hedonic experiences, such as diving into the night life of the destination. It reminds that travelling is a hedonic experience (Kim *et al.*, 2012). In the fourth and last component, travelling has a hedonic flavour, too. Differently from the third component, though, the experience seems more personal, less connected with other people. Friends appear here only as a possible source of tensions that has to be avoided. In short, the four components of meaning found in this study confirm that travelling may take both a social and an individual meaning for youngsters (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2008, 2016), that travel is sought after as a pleasurable endeavour (Kim *et al.*, 2012) and that having fun with friends and socialising are important needs of young travellers (United Nations World Tourism Organization, and World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation, UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2011).

Following an integrated multidimensional research strategy, as illustrated above, a cluster analysis was then applied to the value orientations and meaning given to ravel found through PCAs. Cluster analysis started from two groups and gradually increased the number until ten (Table IV). A solution

**Table III** Tourism experience – need component (meaning) processed from sampled data

| *Tourism experience* | *Components* | *Items (travel means to me…)* | *Description* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Need | Meaning: personal, inner development | To improve physical health<br>To change<br>To improve mental health<br>To grow<br>To explore a meaningful path of faith<br>To live authentically | First component of the PCA built considering 19 items related to the concept of meaning<br>FC variance explained = 16.9<br>Total variance explained = 55.0<br>KMO = 0.851 |
| | Meaning: development through interpersonal exchange | Discovering and experiencing new cultures<br>To live in contact with local people<br>Explore different ways of life<br>Acquire and deepen knowledge of art, history<br>To live in contact with nature | Second component of the PCA built considering 19 items related to the concept of meaning<br>SC variance explained = 16.6<br>Total variance explained = 55.0<br>KMO = 0.851 |
| | Meaning: socialising and entertainment | Entertainment (night life, local)<br>Being with friends<br>To find new friends<br>To meet many people<br>To have holiday romances | Third component of the PCA built considering 19 items related to the concept of meaning<br>TC variance explained = 12.4<br>Total variance explained = 55.0<br>KMO = 0.851 |
| | Meaning: escapism and relaxation | To rest and relax<br>Escape from everyday life<br>To not have tensions with fellow travellers | Fourth component of the PCA built considering 19 items related to the concept of meaning<br>FC variance explained = 9.1<br>Total variance explained = 55.0<br>KMO = 0.851 |

with nine groups shows the best goodness of fit ($R^2 = 52.7$ per cent) and is therefore considered as the most effective synthesis of the phenomenon under study (Zani and Cerioli, 2007).

ANOVA shows that the value orientations benevolence ($R^2 = 0.703$), conformity ($R^2 = 0.696$), security ($R^2 = 0.672$) and self-direction ($R^2 = 0.647$) have a greater capability to discriminate among the nine clusters than the other six value orientations. For the meaning associated with travel, this role is played by two out of the four meanings: "Development through interpersonal exchange" ($R^2 = 0.385$) and "Escapism and relaxation" ($R^2 = 0.290$).

**Table IV** $R^2$ for each component (PCA) and $R^2$ global for the number of partitions solutions processed from sampled data

| | *Number of clusters* | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Components* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *8* | *9* | *10* |
| Meaning: personal, inner development | 0.029 | 0.078 | 0.103 | 0.182 | 0.151 | 0.246 | 0.213 | *0.253* | 0.193 |
| Meaning: development through interpersonal exchange | 0.000 | 0.026 | 0.090 | 0.138 | 0.322 | 0.359 | 0.395 | *0.385* | 0.442 |
| Meaning: socialising and entertainment | 0.031 | 0.033 | 0.073 | 0.090 | 0.150 | 0.070 | 0.121 | *0.244* | 0.142 |
| Meaning: escapism and relaxation | 0.002 | 0.032 | 0.104 | 0.096 | 0.209 | 0.152 | 0.181 | *0.290* | 0.387 |
| Security value orientation | 0.448 | 0.598 | 0.616 | 0.646 | 0.609 | 0.650 | 0.652 | *0.672* | 0.673 |
| Power value orientation | 0.374 | 0.484 | 0.533 | 0.515 | 0.566 | 0.562 | 0.573 | *0.563* | 0.556 |
| Achievement value orientation | 0.459 | 0.601 | 0.664 | 0.638 | 0.619 | 0.646 | 0.655 | *0.640* | 0.666 |
| Hedonism value orientation | 0.330 | 0.362 | 0.455 | 0.569 | 0.504 | 0.544 | 0.567 | *0.549* | 0.528 |
| Stimulation value orientation | 0.432 | 0.439 | 0.493 | 0.486 | 0.470 | 0.521 | 0.561 | *0.569* | 0.565 |
| Self-direction value orientation | 0.456 | 0.557 | 0.576 | 0.606 | 0.611 | 0.622 | 0.652 | *0.647* | 0.665 |
| Benevolence value orientation (first component) | 0.385 | 0.556 | 0.621 | 0.674 | 0.648 | 0.670 | 0.680 | *0.703* | 0.710 |
| Tradition value orientation | 0.342 | 0.471 | 0.457 | 0.536 | 0.532 | 0.553 | 0.593 | *0.560* | 0.612 |
| Conformity value orientation | 0.479 | 0.624 | 0.636 | 0.663 | 0.662 | 0.682 | 0.679 | *0.696* | 0.727 |
| Universalism value orientation (first component) | 0.362 | 0.500 | 0.509 | 0.514 | 0.605 | 0.618 | 0.610 | *0.609* | 0.567 |
| Global $R^2$ | 0.295 | 0.383 | 0.423 | 0.454 | 0.476 | 0.493 | 0.509 | *0.527* | 0.531 |
| Global $R^2$ increase | | 0.088 | 0.041 | 0.030 | 0.022 | 0.017 | 0.017 | *0.018* | 0.004 |

The result of the cluster analysis presented in Table V will be described and discussed in the rest of this section.

Respondents in the first cluster (23 cases) score the meaning "Personal, inner development" higher and the meaning "Escapism and relaxation" lower than the average. Hedonic value orientation is also scored lower, alongside the value orientation benevolence while the value orientation power is strongly represented. It may be concluded that for this group travelling means to work on themselves to acquire recognition (the value orientation power includes items such as social recognition and preserving one's public image). In line with the United Nation Global Compact and Accenture (2014) study, this group is looking for a meaningful experience that will help them to develop as an individual and strengthen their social position. They will not be attracted by the offer of a merely hedonic experience (Steg *et al.*, 2012) while, if a sustainable tourism experience is framed as status enhancing, they may choose for it (Steg *et al.*, 2014).

With its 66 cases, the second group is the most consistent of the nine clusters individuated. Universalist values are strong in this cluster together with self-direction. This group values, on the one side, the beauty of the natural environment and wishes to see it protected; and on the other side, values creativity, freedom and independence. Differently form the first cluster, this group does not highly value social recognition. In line with their universalist value orientation, the meaning given to travel is "Development through interpersonal exchange", a meaning that includes alongside getting in contact with local people, the wish to live in contact with nature. Self-transcending values, such as universalism, presuppose the ability to surpass the self and meaningfully connect with other people and nature (Schwartz, 1994). They are therefore intimately linked to altruistic values (De Groot and Steg, 2008). Moreover, people who strongly endorse universalism generally value more positively options that benefit the environment (Steg *et al.*, 2014). The present study's results confirms, therefore, Cavagnaro and Staffieri (2015) who found evidence for a core group of young tourists motivated by pro-environmental and pro-social values in their travel choice. To this group, travelling means an opportunity to learn and understand other people's culture in order to create a better world in an open and unconstrained way. A (sustainable) tourism proposition targeting this group should respect their wish for independency and freedom. It should therefore let them feel in control, and insist more on the beauty of the natural environment and the freedom to experience it than on constraints to its fruition.

Benevolence values are salient to the 48 cases composing the third clusters while the hedonic and stimulation value orientations are less salient to this group. Benevolence values are, together with universalism, self-transcendent values (Schwartz, 1994). The meaning given to travel seems at first sight to be contradicting the preference given to self-transcendent values and the mild aversion towards hedonic ones of this cluster: "Escapism and relaxation" and "Personal, inner development". In interpreting this result, it may be considered that travelling is a hedonic

**Table V** Clusters of young people: the number of cases and Final Cluster Centres processed from sampled data

| | *Cluster* | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* | *8* | *9* |
| Meaning: personal, inner development | 0.576 | –0.461 | 0.553 | –0.037 | –0.315 | 0.144 | –0.410 | 0.800 | –0.686 |
| Meaning: development through interpersonal exchange | –0.481 | 0.927 | –0.329 | 0.748 | –0.341 | –0.239 | –0.186 | 0.388 | –1.133 |
| Meaning: socializing and entertainment | –0.307 | –0.009 | –0.519 | –0.941 | 0.246 | –0.357 | 0.350 | 0.549 | 0.748 |
| Meaning: escapism and relaxation | –1.412 | –0.122 | 0.656 | –0.313 | –0.770 | 0.236 | 0.635 | –0.117 | 0.198 |
| Security value orientation | –0.221 | –0.134 | –0.033 | –0.946 | –1.584 | 0.769 | –0.591 | 1.354 | 0.387 |
| Power value orientation | 0.255 | –0.650 | –0.485 | –1.057 | –0.643 | 0.754 | –0.149 | 1.369 | 0.270 |
| Achievement value orientation | –0.336 | –0.015 | –0.524 | –0.925 | –1.402 | 0.772 | –0.346 | 1.394 | 0.323 |
| Hedonism value orientation | –0.752 | 0.252 | –0.781 | –0.845 | –1.344 | 0.494 | 0.049 | 0.994 | 0.749 |
| Stimulation value orientation | –0.081 | 0.232 | –1.022 | –0.589 | –1.016 | 0.594 | –0.538 | 1.297 | 0.366 |
| Self-direction value orientation | –0.643 | 0.318 | –0.579 | –0.519 | –1.608 | 0.661 | –0.531 | 1.281 | 0.382 |
| Benevolence value orientation (first component) | –0.721 | 0.225 | 0.217 | –0.981 | –1.853 | 0.652 | –0.473 | 1.224 | 0.231 |
| Tradition value orientation | 0.179 | –0.272 | 0.016 | –0.948 | –0.727 | 0.728 | –0.864 | 1.415 | –0.095 |
| Conformity value orientation | –0.027 | –0.355 | –0.114 | –1.297 | –1.170 | 0.889 | –0.446 | 1.465 | 0.188 |
| Universalism value orientation (first component) | –0.402 | 0.321 | –0.008 | –0.562 | –1.336 | 0.596 | –0.893 | 1.389 | –0.260 |
| Number of cases in each cluster | 23 | 66 | 48 | 33 | 34 | 56 | 48 | 52 | 40 |

experience (Kim *et al.*, 2012) and that therefore the meaning "Escapism and relaxation" is not by definition grounded in a hedonic and a stimulation value orientation. Arguably in line with UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation (2011), this group needs travelling and the opportunity that it gives to escape from everyday life to give meaning to their own life and the life of others.

The fourth and fifth groups, with respectively 33 and 34 cases, score lower than average on all value orientations. They seem undecided on the guiding principles of their life, and in this indecisiveness, they relate to all value orientations less positively than the other groups. This may reinforce the observation that the millennial generation upholds values that are strongly different from those of older generations (Howe and Strauss, 2000). This indecision, though, may also represent a stage in their development, a step in constructing their own identity. The relative importance of values may in fact change in time (Steg *et al.*, 2014). Though similar in their uncertainty regarding values, these two clusters differ in the meaning they give to travel: cluster 4 highlights "Development through interpersonal exchange" and cluster 5 "Socializing and entertainment". Considering that for cluster 5, the most negatively laden value orientations are benevolence and self-direction (where creativity and independence are valued), it may be argued that they travel in order to find unpretentious, standardised entertainment with like-minded existing and new friends. In cluster 4, the most negatively laden value orientation in conformity, including values such as self-discipline and politeness. This cluster may consider travelling an opportunity to meet new people and break with the beaten path without much regard for others.

Cluster 6 (with 56 values the second largest) and 8 (52 cases) show a picture that seems completely the opposite than cluster 4 and 5: all values score above average. Apparently respondents in cluster 6 and 8 are as undecided on the guiding principle of their life as respondents in cluster 4 and 5, yet – instead of distancing themselves from all values – they embrace them all. Not completely unsurprisingly, then, the value orientations that scores relatively higher than the rest in cluster 6 and 8 is conformity, while hedonism scores a bit lower than the rest. In the meaning they give to travel, though, cluster 6 and 8 differ. Cluster 6 resembles cluster 1 and 3, where "Escapism and relaxation" and "Personal, inner development" also scored higher than average. Cluster 1 and 3, though, had clearer views on the value orientations salient to them. It may therefore be argued that also for the young tourists represented by cluster 6, travelling means an opportunity to escape the daily grind and focus on the own development. This time, thought, not in view of some other benefit (such as strengthening the social position, as in cluster 1, or giving meaning to life, such as in cluster 3) but because that is what travelling is supposed to be. Cluster 8 embraces only the meaning "Personal, inner development". For this group then travelling is not linked to the need to escape everyday life, but means an opportunity for personal development in the broadest sense of the word.

Cluster 7 (48 cases) and 9 (40 cases) are united in their lower than average scores on universalism and tradition and a bit higher than average score on hedonic value orientation. Hedonic values are connected with having pleasure in the present moment (Steg *et al.*, 2012) and, as it has been stated above, do not bring by definition to consider travel as a mere opportunity to have fun. Cluster 7 and cluster 9, consequently, differ in the meaning given to travel. Cluster 7 opts for "Escapism and relaxation", and seems to consider travelling an opportunity to escape from the quotidian to celebrate and enjoy life without much consideration for others or the natural environment. For respondents in cluster 9, travelling means "Socializing and entertainment": they wish to enjoy life without any further consideration, as cluster 7, but wish to include old and new friends in the pleasure that they seek. This is line with literature suggesting that having fun with friends is an important need to young travellers (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2011). With their marked indifference for universalism values, cluster 7 and 9 are the most difficult to reach with a sustainable tourism offer.

Summing up the analysis conducted above, it can be observed, first, that not all young travellers have a clear view on the guiding principles in their life. Some, such as in cluster 6, seem to embrace them all; others, such as in cluster 4 and 5, seem to reject them all. Whether this result points to the emergence of new values typical for millennials or to a passing phase in their personal development cannot be said on the basis of this study. Longitudinal research is needed to further explore this point.

Second, it is interesting to observe that out of the four cluster of young tourists who seem not to have a clear view on their own values, two favour the meaning "Escapism and relaxation" and/or

"Socializing and entertainment", while the other two favour a meaning connected to development. Here, too, only a longitudinal study may be able to assess whether the different meaning given to travel leads to distinctive experiences that may in turn result in variations in the relative importance given to values by these two groups (Steg *et al.*, 2014).

Third, looking at the interplay of the value orientations with the meaning given to travel, clusters 6, 7 and 9 present a common pattern: a preference for escapism is connected with hedonic values higher than average and self-transcendent values lower than average. This preference fits with the popular image of young tourists exploited by TV series such as Oh-Oh Cherso: they seek sheer entertainment without consideration for others and nature. This image, though, as the other clusters show, does not fully correspond with the reality of young tourism. The reality, in fact, is much more variegated and complex than so-called reality show wish us to believe. In short, even when considering all value orientations and not only the four directly linked to sustainable choices, the picture drawn in Cavagnaro and Staffieri (2015) is confirmed. Two clusters (2 and 3) present strong self-transcendent values (respectively universalism and benevolence), opening up the possibility to target these millennials with a tailor made sustainable tourism offer.

Finally, the analysis above has also shown that looking either at values or at the meaning to travel is not enough to understand the subtle differences among millennials. Only by combining the two, a tourism offer can be designed properly answering their needs.

## Conclusion including research's limitations, practical implications and originality

Before discussing the originality and practical implications of this study, it is proper to look at its limitations. This study reaches a representative sample of the Dutch young population, but it will need replication in different national contexts before its results can be widely generalised. Moreover, it considers only one of the components constituting the travel experience, i.e. travel meaning. Future studies should consider more components, such as the choice of a destination and the travel evaluation. Finally, to uncover eventual developments, a longitudinal approach is needed.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study makes an original contribution to the literature on millennials and tourism. To the authors' knowledge, the connection between Schwartz's value orientations on one side and the meaning as a component of the travel experience on the other side has not been attempted earlier. Thanks to this connection, moreover, the present study offers a more sophisticated image of millennial travellers than previous ones. In short, it shows that, notwithstanding all shared characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations, millennials are not a homogeneous tourist group. To better understand the elusive differences among millennials, future studies are needed. These studies may, for example, consider gender or origin differences. Future studies are recommended to follow an integrated approach such as the one chosen for this study.

The main practical implications of the study's results are linked to the refined image that it has revealed of millennials. Tourism organisations in general and destination management organisations in particular should take notice that the millennial target group is not homogenous. To satisfy millennial tourists in the present and future, tourism organisations should consider the different values that they uphold and the different meanings that they give to travel. Specifically, this study has been able to confirm that there is a consistent group of millennials (here represented by cluster 2 and 3) that are pointedly motivated by self-transcending values and that look to the travel experience as an opportunity to learn and understand other people's culture in order to create a better world for themselves and others. This group is open to a sustainable tourism offer and represents an opportunity for the tourism industry to grow without jeopardising its own future (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2008).

## Notes

1. A CAWI survey, though online, is similar to the traditional printed survey. With the CAWI technique, the units are identified through a process of self-selection: they are invited to respond to a questionnaire available on the internet. Immediately after compilation, all information is recorded in a database and can be used for the analysis.
2. Principal component analysis is a statistical procedure aimed at reducing the number of variables (Di Franco and Marradi, 2013).

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