Generation Z and the tourist experience: tourist stories and use of social networks

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to understand Gen Zers' tourism experiences and more specifically, through their tourist practices and their use of social networks. It also explores how Gen Zers apprehends the concept of sustainable tourism.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The authors used a qualitative research approach. The study protocol was conducted in two phases. First, the authors did six semi-directive interviews of young people born between 1995 and 2002. For the second stage of the research, the authors chose the narrative research technique by asking 34 students born between 1995 and 1997 to write a micro story from their travel experience.*

Findings – *Although it is often presented as a narcissistic generation, seeking to put forward their "selves", for example by posting selfies, this study reveals that Generation Z seems to show a great modesty during their tourist experiences. The results also show that sustainable tourism is not a key concept for the young people interviewed.*

Research limitations/implications – *Thus, it would be useful to carry out more interviews and to extend the fields of analysis. While certain rules have been respected in the selection of young respondents, the sample does not necessarily reflect all the dimensions characterizing this complex young generation.*

Social implications – *We know that Generation Y has been exposed to social networks, often without a filter. The results show that Generation Z is much more suspicious and vigilant with regard to social networks and their use.*

Originality/value – *This research used an innovative method. It shows how multidimensional this generation is and opens up many ways of research.*

Keywords Social networks, Sustainable tourism, Tourist experience, Generation Z

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

The importance of youth tourism on a global scale is a challenge for both tourists and tourism professionals. The aim of this paper is to discuss Gen Zers' tourism experiences and practices. Through the analysis of narratives and tourist stories, our ambition is to understand to what extent this tourist segment is sensitive to the notion of sustainable tourism. The expression "Generation Z" refers to a new sociological category, nourished by the information technologies, the internet and the social networks. As it is a hyper-connected generation (Ipsos, 2015) with different travel arrangements and needs, the study of their motivations, their representations, purchasing behaviour and tourist practices is a considerable challenge not only for academic research, but also for tourism professionals. Our aim is also to identify if/how this generation apprehends the concept of sustainable tourism through its own tourist practices and its use of social networks.

The first part of this paper specifies the main concepts used and offers a theoretical framework for the analysis. The term "Generation Z", despite its media development, seems to have received little attention by academic research. In the literature review, we identify the characteristics of this generation and clarify its relationship with the notions of consumption experience and sustainable tourism. In the second part of the paper the methodological choices are presented. After discussing the research findings, we conclude on the difficulties and limitations of our study and on its implications for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

Generation Z: a multidimensional concept

While Generation Y, also called "The Millennial Generation", has been the subject of much research, the next generation, Generation Z is still an underexplored issue. This generation has evolved in an environment increasingly permeated by ICT and can be defined as a hyper-connected generation. Research on Generation Z has been conducted primarily in the general framework of generational marketing (see e.g. Agence Française de l'Ingénierie Touristique, 2005; Gentina, 2016). The growth of this tourist segment is a challenge for tourism professionals and requires a rethinking of the tourism models. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2010), youth travel accounts for 20 per cent of international travellers in 2010. Their trips are expected to reach nearly 300 million by 2020. Thus, there is a need to explore both the values and the consumer experience expressed by young people (Sarrasin *et al.*, 2003; Body and Tallec, 2015).

A generation is, however, much more than a consumer group. Attias-Donfut (1991) argues that the concept of generation refers to four dimensions (Ladwein *et al.*, 2009): a demographical dimension; a genealogical and familial dimension; a historical dimension; and a sociological dimension, similar to the notion of a "generational cohort". In this sociological perspective, individuals in each generation are influenced by the political, economic, or cultural context in which they live, and historical events shape their values (Ward, 1974; Holbrook and Schindler, 1989). Generation Z can, thus, be defined as a group of individuals born during the same temporal period in which they shared unique events (e.g. 11 September, 2001) created by their common age situation in history (Mannheim, 1990). Generation Z is growing up in a world surrounded by technology and the internet, with smartphones, video games and screens. The sending of e-mails, SMS, likes, is an integral part of Gen Zers' daily lives. Their live ubiquitously because hyper-connected and their playing field is global. They can start a video game with their neighbour and pursue it with another player on the other side of the planet. This concept is nevertheless linked to the possibility for this generation to have access to the internet[1].

Young tourists are often presented as cultivated, mastering computer science and ICT[2]. This group is described as difficult to retain as its motivations are multiple: young tourists seem both sensitive to the protection of the environment and enjoy a great open-mindedness. Young people expect a great deal from their travels. The consumption of stays often translates into a hedonistic behaviour: tourism is at the same time a moment of conviviality, of socialisation, of implication and of empowerment. All these needs are reflected in specific purchasing behaviours: last-minute decisions, search for opportunities, use of word-of-mouth recommendation sources to choose their destinations, increasing use of low-cost services (Mignon, 2003). This young generation also has a prescribing power. According to the Junior Connect Study 2017 (www.ipsos.com/fr-fr/junior-connect-2017-les-jeunes-ont-toujours-une-vie-derriere-les-ecrans), they give their opinion in 94 per cent of the purchasing decisions of their families and, thus, undoubtedly participate in the choice of the tourist destinations. Research has also highlighted a strong demand for "useful" travel and a growing sensitivity to solidarity tourism (Mignon, 2003). In order to continue the reflection, it seems necessary to clarify these notions, which revolve around the concept of sustainable tourism, in order to understand the attitude and degree of awareness about this concept.

From sustainable tourism to alternative tourism: what approaches?

The idea of a tourism in line with the principles of sustainable development (more equitable and more environmentally friendly) emerged in the 1980s, both on the institutional level and on the tourism professionals' side (Knafou and Pickel, 2011). The concept of "sustainable tourism development" is popularisatised in the 1990s: it is defined as "a tourism activity that respects and preserves natural, cultural and social resources in the long term and contributes positively and equitably to the economic development and to the development of the individuals who live, work or reside in these areas (Council of Europe, 1997)". The adoption of the "Sustainable Tourism Charter" in 1995 is an important milestone[3]. UNEP and UNWTO (2005, p. 11) emphasise that sustainable tourism is neither a specific form of tourism nor a new sector of the tourism industry because the

principles of sustainability are applicable to all forms of tourism and all types of destination. Sustainable tourism makes optimal use of environmental resources and helps conserve natural heritage and biodiversity; respects the cultures of host communities, and contributes to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance; provides socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributes to poverty alleviation. Sustainable tourism (Knafou, 2007) pays attention to environmental issues in rich countries and helps to alleviate poverty in poor countries.

From the professional side, TO and travel agencies are increasingly proposing "sustainable" or "ethical" travel options, and the publication of a number of documents (such as the "Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development, 2003") is proof of the changes involving the tourism supply side (François-Lecompte and Prim-Allaz, 2009, 2011). Sustainable tourism has become an "unavoidable formula" of any discourse on tourism (Stock *et al.*, 2003): the concept does not designate a type of tourism, being a condition of tourism development instead. However, institutional definitions may significantly differ (Knafou and Pickel, 2011) and the concept of sustainable development remains a fuzzy and vague notion (Clément, 2004), also in the tourism sector (Equipe MIT, 2002). Thus, ecotourism concerns natural environments and participates in the protection of the environment (Jegou, 2013). It also incorporates the social and solidarity dimensions. In the social field, the meeting between local cultures and tourists is the key element of solidarity tourism. The involvement of local communities helps promote local development projects. Following Association for Fair Tourism and Solidarity (ATES) "solidarity tourism groups together the forms of alternative tourism that put the man and the meeting at the centre of the journey and which are part of a logic of territorial development". Participatory tourism connects tourists and local communities: however, there is no standardized community participation or involvement procedure. Fair tourism refers to fair trade and requires fair remuneration for all players in the sector. It often involves local communities, supporting their control over resources derived from tourism. As for social tourism, it promotes universal accessibility in travel and tourism.

As early as the 1980s, academic studies mention alternative tourism, capable of opposing conventional and commercial tourism on a global scale, avoiding tourism industry actors and favouring sustainable accommodation capable of encouraging contact between tourists and the local people (Dernoi, 1981). Alternative tourism combines both the rejection of mass tourism and the search for an experience considered authentic (Smith and Eadington, 1992). Various case studies carried out in countries such as Bali, Nepal, Thailand, confirm the importance of alternative forms of tourism experiences (Picard, 1990; Zurick, 1992; Dearden and Harron, 1994). It is, therefore, the tourist's overall satisfaction, as well as the adequacy of the experience he/she has made, which is important. This can be translated into a variety of tourism practices, based on either nature, culture or physical activities.

Starting with these premises, we aim to answer the following questions: does the hyper-connected Generation Z correspond to a travel profile that breaks with conventional tourism through its travel and accommodation choices and its relationship with the environment and the local populations (Van de Walle, 2011)? Would Generation Z be more favourable to forms of solidarity tourism that can contribute to the development of needing countries or with responsible forms of tourism? Do Gen Zers tend to gain authentic experiences, away from mass tourist sites and practices based on the reproduction of standardized tourist experiences (MacCannell, 1973)?

3. Methodology

The data collection

We used a qualitative research approach, at first by planning to interview 20 young people belonging to Generation Z in France. After the completion of a first series of six semi-directive interviews that last on average from 45 to 60 minutes, we changed our methodological choices. It was necessary to constitute a sample capable of representing the different variables involved (age and travel characteristics). The sample was chosen with the aim of differentiating the cases in order to benefit from this diversity (Miles and Huberman, 2003), without however claiming a

representativeness of the studied population. Indeed, this generation does not have a uniform consumption behaviour. Two key criteria guided us in choosing the sample: age and travel experience – alone or with the family. We have, therefore, chosen to question the two ends of this generation. The first marker concerns young adolescents who were born around 2002. Three young 15-year-olds who regularly travel with their parents were interviewed. The second end concerns young people who were born just at the beginning of Generation Z, between 1995 and 1997. In total, six students participated in these interviews. The interviews, carried out by the two authors, were tape-recorded with participant permission. For minors, a parental authorisation was requested in advance.

The second stage of our research is, we believe, innovative. Following our interviews, we modified the study protocol. We opted for the technique of narrative research (Bertaux, 2016) by asking young people to produce autobiographical narrative of their tourism experience (Rickly-Boyd, 2016). This technique, used in the social sciences, especially in sociology, is inspired by ethnography. Narratives provide a highly emotional dimension (Bruner, 2010). Telling a tourist experience helps to build a symbolic universe and to grasp the feeling expressed by the tourist to experience something unique. Narratives have also the advantage of studying action over time. More specifically, we asked 34 students born between 1995 and 1997 to write a micro story starting from their travel experience (maximum two hours of writing). They were invited to reply to the following questions: "Tell me about your travel experiences", "Do you use social networks during your travel experience?". The interviews and tourist narratives collected were integrally transcribed. The narratives were analysed through content analysis, a research method for studying communication in the USA (particularly the analysis of press and political discourses) in the 1920s that, for half a century, has been a growing success in the humanities and in management sciences. Content analysis is now generally referred to as a set of communication analysis techniques aimed at obtaining indicators through systematic and objective descriptions of the content of messages to enable knowledge to be inferred about the conditions of production/reception of these messages (Bardin, 1993, p. 47). To carry out our analysis, we have respected the three chronological poles proposed by Laurence Bardin (1993). The first step is pre-analysis. It consists of a floating reading of the two corpuses and, thus, allows to get a first impression of the experience lived. The second step is the analysis. Stories and interviews were treated separately. As for the interviews, the processing was carried out using the Nvivo text analysis software. During this second phase, we made the choice of coding[4]. The unit chosen for coding is the theme. We found the four dimensions of the consumer experience (Arnould et al., 2002) (Table I).

| Table I. Methodology and sample description			
Methodology	*Study protocol*	*Execution/progress*	*Goals*
Phase 1 Semi-directive interview	6 semi-directive interviews Between 40 and 60 minutes	Face to face Recording and full transcription of interviews	3 themes: Telling a travel experience Use of social networks Sustainable tourism
Profile of interviewees		Travel characteristics	
3 high school students of 15 y.o. 3 students aged 18 to 20 years		Travel with family or alone In France, Europe or outside Europe	
Phase 2 Micro stories	34 micronarratives or stories of life	Writing a two-hour travel narrative in the classroom	Tourist story: Tell me about your travel experiences Do you use social networks during your travel experience?
Profile of interviewees		Travel characteristics	
34 BTS students (two-year technical degree) from the High school Voltaire 18-20 years 20 boys/14 girls Originally from the mining basin of the Nord – Pas de Calais (France)		Very large majority of trips in France Of the 34 students, 11 declare to travel outside the family circle (with friends, with a sports club, an association, etc.)	

4. Findings

The analysis of the corpus revealed a very rich material and highlighted the representations and practices typical of this generation. We used the theoretical framework of consumer experience (Arnould *et al.*, 2002) to structure our findings. The word cloud from interview transcripts (Figure 1) confirms the importance of this "photograph generation" but also highlights the importance of concepts such as travel, family and social networks.

Preparing the experience

It is well known that young people are prescribers in many home buying decisions (Gentina, 2016), but this element does not appear in the interviews and stories collected for our study, especially among the younger ones. When travelling with the family, Generation Zers seem to be guided by the choices of adults: "Basically, I always wanted to make a trip somewhere. And my godmother went to Panama with her company. It was her who organized everything" (Cyril, 15). Participation in the preparation of the experience only becomes apparent when the young person travels alone or with his/her friends. The representational dimension of experience (Ladwein and Ouvry, 2007) begins before the journey. Many excerpts evoke future dreamed or imagined journeys and places to discover: "I watch Russian films, with French subtitles, stuff like that. Generally, if people are like this in movies, can they be they like that in reality? I do not know, I like it" (Noëmie, 15 years).

Living the tourist experience: an extraordinary moment. Both in the narratives and in the interviews, reference is made to the extraordinary aspect of the tourist experience. The trip allows these young people to get out of the routine: "I do not know, I am 16, but I feel like my life is repeating itself, apart from the holidays that allow me to escape […] I feel a little like a prisoner in here, so I have to leave" (Samy, 15 years). In most of the narratives, travel is often equated with a new experience and new tourist practices: bullfighting, surfing on the Atlantic coast, jet skiing, towed buoys, driving a quad, Christmas markets, etc.). Generation Zers describe what they live

Figure 1. Word cloud from interviews
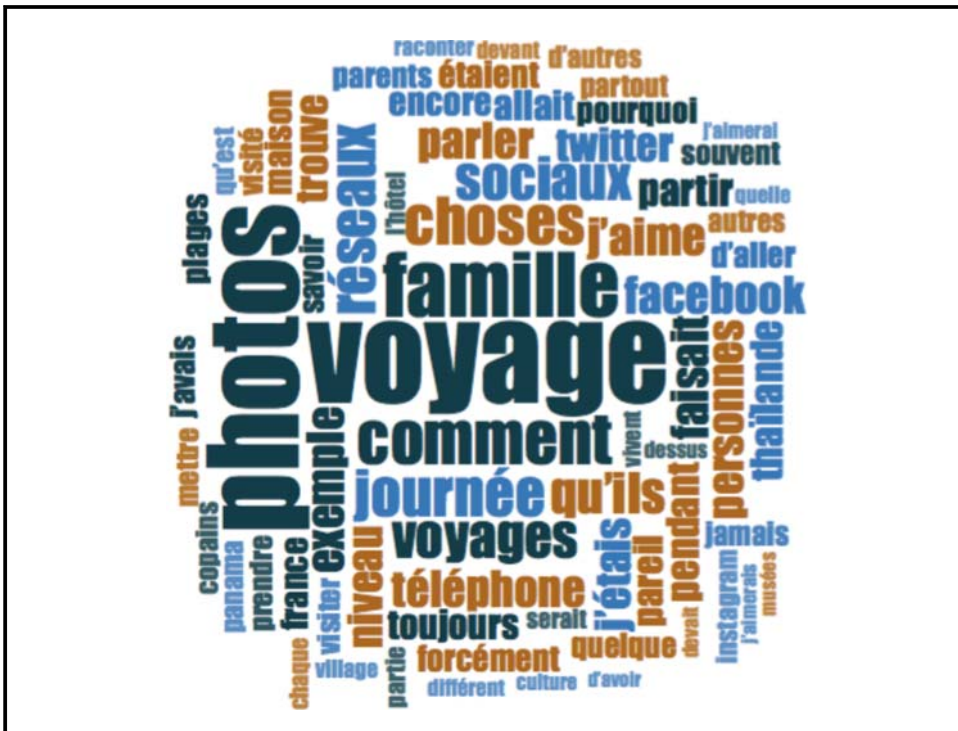
as something extraordinary, exceptional: "My parents took us to see a Monster Truck show, it was fabulous" (narrative no. 9). This "out of the ordinary" presence is linked to activities carried out on site ("five unforgettable days", narrative no. 9) or simply to a landscape and an environment perceived as different (heat, wonderful scenery, sun). "The most surprising thing was the downhill canyoneering, a great experience that I recommend because it is an adrenaline experience and the mountain landscape is splendid" (narrative no. 10).

Interviewees frequently mention the places visited, the destinations discovered and the characteristics of trips (such as presence/absence of parents, the type of accommodation and, more rarely, its duration). The knowledge of geographical locations and territories is approximate. In the interviews, the description of the visited locations and sites is often hasty. Most of the stories also refer to family stays, sometimes old ones. Some of them choose to recall childhood memories and travels. For Generation Zers, the financial constraint remains important in these choices of mobility and displacement. Moreover, the social and geographical origin is also an important bias[5]. Travel experiences are limited, especially those outside of France. Many also refer to school trips or recreational trips.

Travel or vacation: a vague concept. The narratives testify a broad notion of travel: the tourist experience consists of a trip taking place either within the framework of a real tourist stay in France or abroad, a recreational or school-related trip, resulting in a change of location and often in a break with the daily routine. The journey is presented above all as a time of relaxation, rest, pleasure, needed to "recharge", "refuel" (narrative no. 3), to relax: "the only slogan was to have fun (narrative no. 1)"; "To take a break from daily work" (narrative no. 3), to lose the notion of time and imposed time constraints. Not only is this tourist experience perceived as a spatial break, with displacement and environmental change, but it is also seen as a temporal break: "I had more the constraint of schedules, things were planned for the day but never nothing happened as expected [...] the week passed superfast" (narrative no. 7). The young people interviewed differentiate the two concepts: travel is associated with distant mobility, often marked by a high cost, whereas holidays are a simple break in their daily life: "travel, because it is a long-distance experience, can be expensive" (Antoine, 19 years old); "For me, holidays are when students can rest, while travel is when we really leave" (Samy, 15).

Values of the experience: having fun. One of the values underlined by Holbrook (1999) emerges: PLAY (having fun). Conviviality appears essential. This concept feeds the interviews and the narratives and constitutes a highlight of the narratives: "It is good understanding, good mood, the desire to laugh, to have good times, to have stories to tell" (narrative no. 4). In the interviews, the dimension of pleasure and play is very present: "To travel with friends, to see beautiful landscapes and to have fun above all, I think it is the most important" (Antoine, 19); "The holidays with my family, not my close family, my father, my mother and my brothers and sisters, but also with all my uncles, it's really not bad, we share a lot, we have a lot of fun" (Samy, age 15). Moreover, Generation Z seems attached to this family and collective ritual of holidays. The aspiration to independence and self-assertion is little expressed in these narratives.

Cultural discovery and change of scenery are often associated with this idea of travel and holidays: discovering cities, sites, monuments or cultural facilities: "What I love to do with my family is to visit the cities: we have seen a lot of smaller places, we still have a large part of the upper Corsica to visit" (narrative no. 6). "In Etretat, I visited the coasts and beaches of Normandy, and discovered the local culture" (narrative no. 18). The educational dimension (e.g. a school trip) is not necessarily lived or perceived as a constraint ("We visited museums, religious places, Jewish quarters, castles, monuments [...] I visited Auschwitz" (narrative no. 18) and is also fully selected and assumed in the context of family or individual holidays: "We had an appointment with various farmers who shared their know-how with us, Notably the Champagne making process" (narrative no. 16). This rural stay in Champagne-Ardennes allowed the discovery of vineyards and agricultural know-how, visits to cellars, tasting and new sensory experiences: "The goal was to be able to put words on the taste felt, the sensation [...] it was a difficult exercise" (narrative no. 16). This desire to discover is also reflected in the interest given to cultural events, festivals, especially nightlife and more generally to the atmosphere of the tourist resort. The importance of sports, cultural and leisure facilities and the quality of accommodation are often mentioned in the narratives.

Exchanging: a vital need for Generation Z. Generation Z is a social generation, on different levels. The first level concerns the community. This generation constantly seeks to know what is happening within its own group (friends, family, class group, …): "it allows me to be reassured in fact, to be sure of being able to enjoy, I think that even if I'm traveling, if there's something wrong with my family, I do not think I'll live the journey thoroughly" (Antoine, 19 years). The second level concerns the tourist experience and especially the need to make experiences with the local people: "It is useless to travel if there is not a knowledge at the human level; it is cool to see monuments, museums, landscapes but if we have no knowledge of the people living there, in the country we visit, this will leave the travel experience incomplete" (Antoine, 19 years). The opportunity to meet other people and cultures is also the occasion for rethinking the self, like a mirror effect: "Because I visited and discovered things, I learned another culture, I saw how other people live, they do not have the same culture at all, they do not have the same way of living, I even visited a school in a Thai village. It is not at all like our schools, we have desks while they have no school desks" (Margaux, 19 years).

The controlled use of social networks. "When I have nothing more to do in my life, I will look into that of the others", this excerpt from Samy (15 years) is a significant element of the relation maintained by this generation with the social networks. One of the most important findings emerged from our research concerns the use of ICT. During the time of travel the use of social networks is significantly reduced during the day (number of hours of connection) and limited to specific functions, for example to maintain a connection with family and friends. But these exchanges heavily depend on the technical or financial constraints often mentioned, depending on whether the stay takes place in France or abroad and on the possibility of a free Wi-Fi. We propose below a classification of the limits and constraints related to the use of social networks (Table II).

In addition, the phone is the primary device used to take photos "take pictures of the different places I have discovered" (narrative no. 19), keep memories and get practical information during the stay. Paradoxically, the young person does not try to be on social networks as he/she usually does. These periods of travel become a desired time of rest: "I use social networks very rarely since I do not want to spend my time on my phone, I prefer to miss nothing and enjoy the maximum" (narrative no. 4). "When I go on a journey it is to cut me off from the world: I know and discover another" (narrative no. 14). The journey is supposed to break with the daily habits: "to disconnect, to free oneself" (narrative no. 12). It not only provokes a geographical distance linked to the displacement, but also a virtual disconnection, symbol of freedom. "When I'm on vacation I do not miss it at all because I'm busy with something else" (story no. 16). Time during travel is therefore a "full time" and being on social networks means filling a void. Some people say that "turning off your phone means trying to share the same memories as your travel companions" (story 12). The young tourist then favours the present moment: real-life experiences and exchanges prevail over virtual relationships.

Sometimes, the young people interviewed also seek to distance themselves from the collective rituals of sharing ("people feel obliged […]"), and want to protect their privacy by refusing to share these life moments: this can be seen as a form of self-affirmation and individualisation. Nevertheless, real-time photo posting also allows them to "share moments of life" (narrative no. 19), to "immortalize the present moment", "to keep memory of the places visited" (narrative no. 13). The presence on the social networks obeys then a function of sharing a memory, voluntarily limited:

Table II	Limited use of social networks by Generation Z	
		Constraint
	Technical	Moral
Limit		
Imposed	"When I'm traveling I do not often have wi-fi" (Antoine, 19)	"My parents do not appreciate its use on vacation" (Samy, 15)
Wanted/ deliberate	"When I'm on a trip, do not text me. It's my journey and that's it. There is a limit" (Cyril, 15 years)	"I do not want to share with people I do not know" (Samy, 15 years)

"I do not make my life on the social networks, especially during the holidays" (narrative no. 2). Sometimes they become the setting for the visitor and his/her tourist experience, the places he/she discovers and what he/she sees and lives: "quickly post a photo and video of unique things happening in front of me" (narrative no. 3). This is part of the tourist experience, lived and simultaneously shared. In the behaviour of the users, it is probably necessary to differentiate between the simple consultation of the sites and the fact of being active there.

Sustainable tourism: an absent concept. The concept of sustainable tourism is never mentioned in the narratives in a conscious or apprehended way. There are sometimes environmental concerns (clean water, degraded site, over-frequentation of beaches) because they influence the quality of tourist practices. The narrated tourist experience often refers to seaside or urban stays, more rarely to rural or mountain areas. Protected areas seem to be almost absent from narratives and practices. Only rarely mention is made of meetings with the local people and their involvement in the development of tourism. The discovery of the "other" is not a recurrent theme. In these narratives, young tourists are sensitive to the warm welcome of the local population and this is a positive aspect of the experience lived. But few of them consider the importance of sharing experiences with local people.

Conversely, in the interviews, when the young people had the opportunity to go abroad, contact with the local population was one of the strengths of the trip: "Frankly, what I the moment I preferred in Panama is with the people, it was when we talked with them; we interacted with them; That's what I preferred there" (Cyril, 15 years); "It would really show the cultures, and it would really open you up to the outside world because we're teenagers now, we're a lot on games, some on reality TV, some on social networks […] That there would force us to open ourselves to others, to speak to them, to see new cultures" (Noëmie, 15 years).

Our narratives only rarely mention sustainable tourism practices. The choice of staying with the inhabitants through the network "Airbnb" facilitates both the encounter and the cultural discovery: "I am closer to the people who really live in this country. They can help me understand the language, find means of locomotion, show me places that are not meant for tourists but specific to the country" (narrative no. 14). The trip to USA in a school setting allows the young man (19 years) to meet an American family, an occasion to foster cultural and social exchanges. Satisfaction during this tourist experience is expressed through the need to meet the "other", to discover "the civilization, the culture of the inhabitants of this country, to be close to people" (narrative no. 14). Others are in favour of an escape and this openness: "to discover a new culture, their differences. Notably, to meet people and their way of life different from ours" (narrative no. 13).

5. Limitations and future research

This research has sought to explore the experiences and representations of Generation Zers during the tourist experiences. If, on the one hand, this study collected very rich materials, on the other hand, it has methodological limitations. Two types of travel arrangements emerged from the tourism experiences explored: alone or with parents. However, the field of study is much broader, given the wide diversity of travel experiences. Thus, it would be useful to carry out more interviews and to extend the fields of analysis. While certain rules have been respected in the selection of young respondents, the sample does not necessarily reflect all the dimensions characterizing this complex young generation. It would be desirable to adopt a more precise segmentation taking into consideration, for example, the variable "age" (distinguishing the youngest from the oldest). In order to give greater coherence to the narratives studied, it would be useful to collect narratives that are more targeted according to specific criteria: type of trip, seasonality or chosen destination. Many stories are based on stays in France or Europe, much more rarely outside Europe, and especially in countries from the global South where socio-cultural differences are stronger. However, it should be mentioned that this research is based exclusively on the statements of the youth interviewed. Their words may therefore be part of a certain posture. It would be necessary to complete this study with observations on tourist sites in order to better understand the use of social networks by this generation.

6. Practical and social implications

The results of our qualitative research can have major implications. We know that Generation Y has been exposed to social networks, often without a filter, and marketing practitioners have understood the importance of using these channels to capture their attention. Our results show that Generation Z is much more suspicious and vigilant with regard to social networks and their use. Often presented as a narcissistic generation, seeking to put forward their "selves", for example by posting selfies, Generation Z seems to show a great modesty during tourist experiences. Lived as an extraordinary moment (Carù and Cova, 2006), the tourist experience requires to break with the daily routine, and therefore also with the use of social networks. Policy makers should take this element into account and demonstrate their commitment to their future business strategies. In the tourism sector, treating Generation Z as a homogeneous whole would be a mistake. The disparities are strong between young people born in 1995 or soon after and the youngest ones. In the choices made for a tourist destination, one can distinguish two behaviours. Teenagers have little influence on destination choices and have a very basic knowledge of the places visited, but they look for relax and fun. The community aspect, which contrasts with individualism, is also a strong marker of this generation. The friendly network then constitutes a way to express their prescriptive power. Professionals should take these trends into account in order to better target their customers and anticipate the evolution of tourism.

Our study has fostered a more precise understanding of the tourist experiences of Generation Zers, tomorrow's travellers. Emotions, pleasure, enchantment are at the heart of their tourism experience and needs (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). It is, therefore, essential for tourism professionals to identify the emotional levers to activate. Creating an emotional connection will help reinforce the loyalty and empowerment of this young generation. Tourism professionals could also adopt a more pragmatic approach using a strategy "co-design" (Clergeau and Spindler, 2016). This dynamic of "doing together" will add value to the tourist supply chain.

Notes

1. 4 billion people in the world do not have access to the internet. KPCB, in its 2016 report on internet access, proposes a classification in six groups of countries. For example, in group 1 (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, etc.) the internet penetration rate in the population is 18 per cent; for group 2 (Indonesia, Egypt, etc.) it is 20 per cent, for the last group (USA, Japan, Germany, etc.) this rate increases to 82 per cent.

2. The internet is their main source of information: 91 per cent report using the Web to plan their trips (Tourism Directorate, Youth Tourism, Tourism from A to Z, 2008).

3. "Tourism development must be based on sustainability criteria; it must be sustainable in the long term ecologically, economically viable and ethically and socially equitable for local people".

4. It is the headings (nodes) that will make it possible to group the elements of the corpus having analogies.

5. The students who wrote the narratives live in the Pas-de-Calais mining area, an economically fragile region, in full reconversion. Sometimes, they mention the financial difficulties and how these reduce their tourist mobility.

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