

# The most effective marketing tactics for Gen Z in the hotel industry in Croatia

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**Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad**

**2023**

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# **The most effective marketing tactics for Gen Z in the hotel industry in Croatia**

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May 8th, 2023

**Abstract**

The Gen Z population represents the near future of consumers and, due to vastly different demands and desires than earlier generations, is a challenging topic that has yet to be thoroughly explored. With the emergence of new trends created by social media and the internet in general, Gen Z's hotel and travel preferences are changing rapidly and if those trends are not followed, a hotel can quickly become uninteresting to the Gen Z consumer. This research was intended for determining exactly what are the most effective marketing tactics that a hotel can apply in Croatia based on the results of the survey conducted in this study. The online survey was completed by 105 Croatian Gen Z participants between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. The survey measured Croatian Gen Z's hotel and travel preferences, social media engagement, travel-related app usage, environmental consciousness, and loyalty program involvement. Results indicate that Croatian Gen Z members are extremely active on social media and demand that hotels follow online trends while remaining unique.

**Keywords:** Gen Z, Hotel industry, Social Media, Travel, Eco-friendly, Loyalty program, Travel apps, Marketing tactics, Effective

## **The most effective marketing tactics for Gen Z in the hotel industry in Croatia**

### **Gen Z Traveling Preferences and Spending Habits**

According to the Pew Research Center (2020), Generation Z consists of people born between 1997 and 2012. The primary goal of this research paper is to identify the most effective tactics when marketing a product or service in the hotel industry to the Croatian Gen Z demographic. For the purposes of this research paper and its accuracy in delivering the desired conclusions, Gen Z will be defined as a young adult between the ages of 18-24 years old, due to the younger than 18-year-old demographic being significantly less likely to travel and afford a hotel.

Gen Z developed a unique viewpoint on travel due to the significant increase in globalization that has occurred throughout their lifetime. Worldwide trends surrounding travel and accommodation preferences within the Gen Z demographic are growing more adventure oriented and focused on delving into the unknown rather than picking the more traditional accommodations. Previously, accommodation options were restricted to hotels and motels, both of which were predominantly situated in places with a significant tourism market. The Gen Z generation is beginning to prefer alternative accommodation options such as Airbnb and other OTAs (Online travel agencies) that provide unconventional lodging options far more than hotel chains. This indicates that vacation and accommodation options will no longer be confined to only major tourist destinations as they previously were (Gibbons, 2022).

According to a Booking.com (2022) survey, despite being technology-driven, Gen Z has the second largest percentage of travelers (57% of Gen Z) among all other generation groups who

travel intending to disconnect and not use technology while traveling. This provides hotels with a remote location an opportunity to promote their hotel as an isolated, peaceful, and traditional accommodation for Gen Z travelers that fall in the previously mentioned 57%.

According to „Set Jet” CEO Tom Smith (2022), the journey is just as essential as the destination for Generation Z. They prefer a high-quality, exclusive travel experience that meets all their demands on a flexible schedule. They want to begin their vacation as soon as they get to the airport, avoiding the inconveniences of commercial travel. Businesses that wish to capture the attention of Generation Z must concentrate on enhancing and personalizing their user experience, as well as making them feel special and the center of attention.

Since Gen Z is highly tech-oriented and very active on social media and other various internet websites, they usually prefer to travel to areas and businesses with a strong social media presence and are tech-friendly in general. Therefore, every business that is not applying technology to their service and marketing efforts is most likely losing more than half of potential Gen Z customers (Gibbons, 2022).

According to a Booking.com (2022) survey, despite being technology-driven, Gen Z has the second largest percentage of travelers (57% of Gen Z) among all other generation groups who travel intending to disconnect and not use technology while traveling. This provides hotels with a remote location an opportunity to promote their hotel as an isolated, peaceful, and traditional accommodation for Gen Z travelers that fall in the previously mentioned 57%.

Davis (2020) has found that Gen Z currently has over \$140 billion in spending power and accounts for about 40 % of global consumers this year. 62% of Gen Z of Booking.com users stated that they used technology as a tool for money-saving while planning a trip, according to a

Booking.com (2022) survey. For reference, in the same category the Millennial generation ended up with the highest statistic of 69%, followed by Generation X with 66%, and in third place was Gen Z, while the Baby Boom and the Silent Generation ended with 55% and 43%, respectively.

## **Marketing to Gen Z**

Even though Gen Z is spending substantial amounts of money and is a prominent potential audience, they come with very different viewpoints, desires, and expectations than earlier generations.

According to an article by the Future of Commerce (2022), five marketing approaches can be applied to appeal to Gen Z consumers:

- 1.) Use data to unify commerce experiences - Gen Z desires ongoing worldwide trends applied wherever they travel, while also wanting it tailored to their specific requirements.
- 2.) Stay current with preferred channels and devices - Monitor changing Gen Z mindset to see whether they're switching away from particular electronics or social media sites.
- 3.) Keep the supply chain flowing – Gen Z is believed to have short attention spans and lacks patience. Therefore, if a business is not meeting its demands as soon as they request them, it will likely move on to other products and services.
- 4.) Prioritize sustainability – Gen Z is concerned about the environment, environmentally friendly actions, and sustainable business practices. In a separate article, the Future of Commerce news site found that: “three-quarters of them view sustainability as more important than brand names when making purchases.”

5.) Reimagine physical store settings - Companies must provide distinctive in-person experiences that customers will remember and appreciate.

Gen Z has strong views on a wide range of social topics. They prefer spending their money with companies that contribute to a better world. A business must be sincerely and fully committed because phony activism and fake charity are two things that Gen Z can quickly detect (Aldea, 2022).

According to a Word Stream (2022) article, Gen Z consumes twice as much online content as millennials among which YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms. On the other hand, Facebook and Snapchat are quickly but surely dying in popularity in the eyes of Gen Z. Monica Aldea (2022) from Word Stream suggests that the following marketing effort proved to work best for Gen Z:

- 1.) UGC – User-generated content and influencer posts through which a business can connect with the Gen Z group.
- 2.) Visually captivating ads – Unique and aesthetically appealing ads will capture their interest.
- 3.) Video and static ads – According to a Creatopy survey, the replies were approximately evenly divided when questioned to choose between static and video advertisements. This demonstrates that both advertising methods could be extremely effective if utilized properly.
- 4.) TV & print – Studies show that Gen Z still trusts traditional advertising methods above most other ones.
- 5.) Transparency – In order to gain Gen Z's trust, businesses must be transparent with their usage of personal data, as well as their product and services intentions.

On the other hand, Aldea (2022) discovered that the following marketing strategies are ineffective:

1.) Wokevertising – When brands create advertisements that coordinate with Gen Z's social beliefs but are not honestly passionate about those issues, Gen Z is naturally trained to see through the fake „Woke“ advertisements and ultimately disregard that brand.

2.) Clickbaity ads – Gen Z dismisses clickbait advertising and exceptionally long advertisements due to their lack of patience.

3.) Personal data – Gen Z dislikes and is conscious of unwanted personal data collection. According to Aldea (2022), 60% of respondents would not give personal data for a more personalized experience, and 75% believe ads that rely on personal data are invasive.

### **Marketing to Gen Z in the hotel industry**

According to a scientific paper written by Nikolaos Stylos & Roya Rahimi & Bendegul Okumus & Sarah Williams (2021) the unique services that the brand offers and the user reviews provided by previous customers are extremely important to Gen Z. Technology such as smart devices and applications play a crucial role when it comes to Gen Z-related marketing and creating those highly demanded unique services. From the perspective of Gen Z, who are continuously seeking time-saving and modern business approaches, the implementation of applications that supply and guide visitors through vital information about the hotel's offers and services would be a great convenience and advantage. Another potential advantage in the eyes of Gen Z customers would be for the hotel to have smart apps that do not require internet access. Establishing and marketing



yourself as a technology-friendly hotel is one of the primary Gen Z preferences and can be achieved through the following implements (Ozdemir-Guzel & Nilay Bas 2021):

- 1.) Augmented Reality – a 360-degree tour of the hotel and its facilities.
- 2.) Applications – Information regarding the hotel and a map of the hotel within an app.
- 3.) Online Check-In/Check-out – More efficient and easier procedure.
- 4.) Mobile Room Keys – Unlocking the hotel door with an application.
- 5.) Voice-Controlled Services – Services and reservations are done by voice control (Revfine.com 2019).
- 6.) Virtual Reality – Exploring hotel facilities and discovering hotel products and services through Virtual reality-supported devices.

According to a Booking.com (2022) survey, despite being technology-driven, Gen Z has the second largest percentage of travelers (57% of Gen Z) among all other generation groups who travel intending to disconnect and not use technology while traveling. This provides hotels with a remote location an opportunity to promote their hotel as an isolated, peaceful, and traditional accommodation for Gen Z travelers that fall in the previously mentioned 57%.

### **Gen Z in Croatia**

A survey by the DIALOG (2019) agency was conducted amongst 1667 members of the Gen Z group in the country of Croatia. The results of the survey indicate that 87% of them use social media platforms on a daily basis, and 92% of them consider Instagram to be the most popular one. 94% of respondents claimed they watch YouTube, with a quarter of them stating they spend

their whole day on YouTube. A mobile phone is used by 87% of the respondents and primarily use them for watching YouTube (45%). Virtually all members of Gen Z (97%) follow an influencer, and 59% consume items and services promoted by that individual.

Travel is more important than material possessions to Croatia's Generation Z (Al Gergawi, 2019). According to a Journal (2019) survey, out of 600 respondents, as many as 50% of Croatia's Generation Z members intend to travel to at least three other continents in the next ten years. During their travel, 56% of them want to partake in an activity such as bungee jumping or paragliding, and 52% are interested in doing something adrenaline filled. 62% of Croatia's Gen Z demographic have already created a travel wish list (what they want to visit or do in their lifetime). Sixty-four percent of Croatia's Gen Z female members have already created such a list, compared to sixty percent of male members. 44% of Croatian Generation Z individuals were inspired to visit certain locations and try out experiences suggested by online influencers.

## **Method**

### **Purpose**

The survey was designed to gather information about the most efficient marketing tactics for the hotel industry in Croatia among Gen Z.

### **Data source**

Exclusively participants between the ages of 18 and 24 who were living in Croatia at the time of the survey were eligible to complete the survey.

The nonprobability convenience sampling method was used to recruit participants, which involved reaching out to the author's acquaintances and college colleagues who were within the age range and met the residence requirement. The researcher found the nonprobability convenience sampling method to be the most appropriate for distributing the survey, considering the small sample size of the participants and the ease of accessibility of the chosen method

### **Instrument**

The survey was conducted through Google Forms and was distributed solely online. At the beginning of the survey, a disclaimer was written to inform participants about the purpose of the research and to obtain their consent to participate. Google Forms was chosen as the survey platform due to its ease of use and ability to offer confidentiality.

The survey is structured into five distinct categories. Specifically, the survey consisted of one question inquiring about the frequency of travel, two questions related to factors influencing hotel selection, and eight questions focused on social media engagement. Additionally, the survey included three questions about loyalty programs and two questions related to demographic information.

Specifically, the survey consisted of 17 questions, including multiple-choice questions and 5- and 7-point Likert scales. Non-demographic questions were adapted from Aldea's (2022) and Stylos' et al. (2021) work. The questions were designed to gather information about participants' preferences for different aspects of the hotel industry in Croatia and their personal preferences. The survey contained questions regarding the participants' age, gender, hotel preferences, social media engagement, sustainability awareness, loyalty program involvement, and usage of travel-related apps.

The survey was conducted online between April 7<sup>th</sup> and April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, with a total sample size of 105 participants.

Participants were asked how frequently they travel for leisure and what aspects they consider important when selecting a hotel. The survey also investigates the effect of various hotel promotional offers on participants and how frequently they engage with social media platforms. It also examines how users use mobile applications to book hotels and how many travel-related apps they have installed on their devices.

The survey also analyzes participants' involvement with hotels on social media and how engaging they find various types of social media content. It also asks whether participants have ever considered joining a loyalty program or if they have participated in a hotel loyalty program.

Lastly, the survey looks at the significance of eco-friendly hotel amenities and initiatives to participants, as well as their gender and age.

The survey was available in the Croatian language to ensure that participants could understand and respond to the questions appropriately.

## **Results**

The research was conducted with the purpose of establishing what could be the most effective marketing tactics that hotels can utilize to attract the interest of Gen Z consumers. This was achieved through a series of questions pertaining to Gen Z's hotel and travel preferences, social media engagement, travel-related app usage, environmental consciousness, and loyalty program involvement.

## Sample specifications

Through the non-probability convenience sampling method, the survey acquired 105 respondents in total, 62 (59%) of whom were female and 43 (41%) of whom were male. The survey subjects were separated into two age groups: those who are presently in college (18-21 years old) and those who have just graduated from college (22+ years old). Those who are currently in college numbered 60 (57%), while those who recently graduated numbered 45 (43%). The research began by determining how frequently the respondents traveled within a year. Please see Table 1.

Table 1.

### *Demographic characteristics of the sample size*

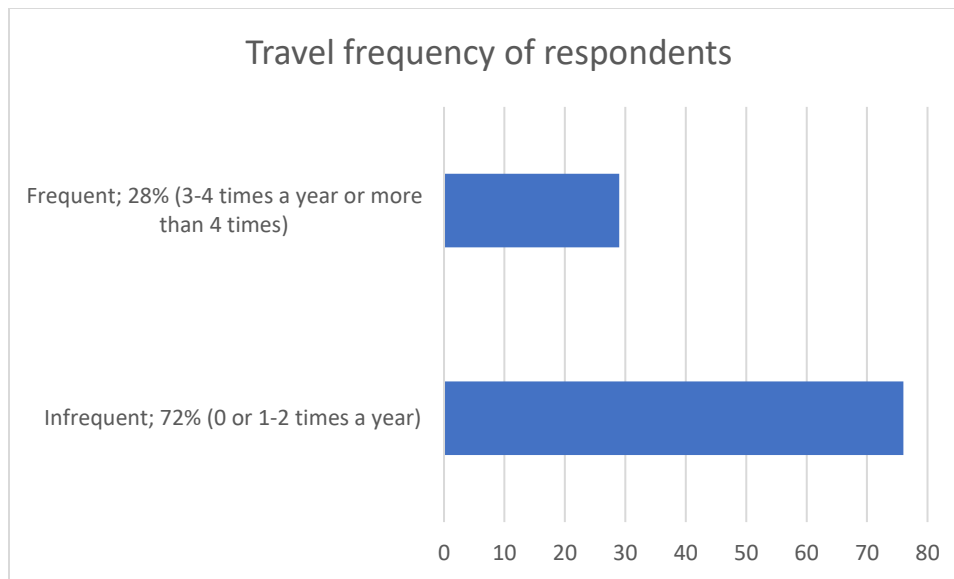
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	
AGE	Gen Z respondents (n=105)
18-19	20
20-21	40
22-23	41
24	3
25	1
FREQUENCY OF TRAVEL	
0; I don't travel for leisure	7
1-2 times a year	69
3-4 times a year	20
More than 4 times a year	9

Figure 1 categorizes respondents as frequent (27,2%; 29 respondents) or infrequent travelers (74,8%; 76 respondents). Those who answered “0; I don't travel for pleasure” or “1-2 times a year” were classified as infrequent travelers, while those who answered “3-4 times a year” or “4+”

times a year” were the frequent ones. According to the findings, 65.7% of participants travel for leisure 1-2 times per year, 19% 3-4 times per year, 8,6% more than 4 times per year, and 6,7% do not travel for leisure. Please see Table 1.

### Figure 1

*Frequency of travel among Gen Z respondents within a year*



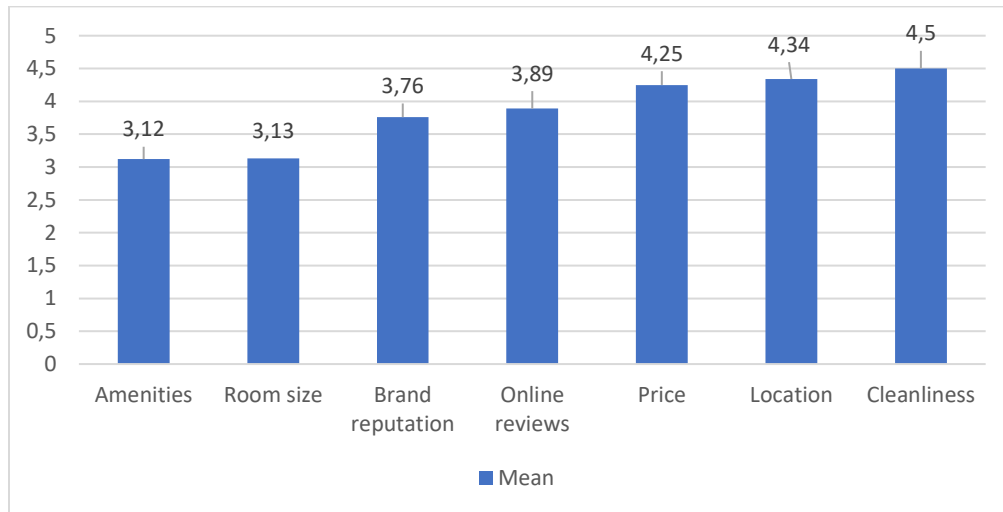
### Gen Z hotel preferences and promotional offer inclination

Figure 2 shows the result for the most important factors for Gen Z when selecting a hotel for leisure purposes. The respondents rated “Cleanliness” (M=4.50, SD=0.71) and “Location” (M=4.34, SD=0.73) as the most important factors when selecting a vacation hotel, with a sizeable percentage of respondents ranking them as “Very important”. “Price” (M=4.25, SD=0.74) and “Online reviews” (M=3.89, SD=0.78) earned high scores as well, with 50% of

respondents ranking them as “Important” or “Very important”. “Amenities” (M=3.12, SD=0.95) and “Room size” (M=3.13, SD=0.84) were rated the least important.

**Figure 2**

*Most important factors for Gen Z when selecting a hotel for leisure purposes*



**Table 2**

*T-test p-values for head-to-head differences in important factors for selecting a hotel for leisure purposes*

	Price	Location	Amenities	Cleanliness	Brand Rep.	Room size
Location	0,35					
Amenities	5,01E-18***	1,55E-20***				
Cleanliness	0,01**	0,105	5,1E-25***			
Brand Rep.	2,9E-05***	6,1E-07***	1,1E-06***	2,4E-10***		
Room size	7,3E-20***	1,1E-22***	0,94	1,1E-27***	4E-07***	
Online reviews	0,00***	1,8E-05***	1,2E-09***	7,3E-09***	0,29	1,7E-10***

\*  $p < 0.10$

\*\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

According to Figure 2 and Table 2, the top three most important factors for hotel selection are price, location, and cleanliness since they have the greatest mean values while remaining significantly different from the other factors (as indicated by the p-values). Online reviews and brand reputation, on the other hand, might be categorized as the second tier of the most important factors when selecting a hotel, while amenities and room size were deemed the least important.

Figure 3 describes how much of an influence certain hotel promotional offers have on the participants' booking decisions. This question consisted of a 7-point Likert scale as opposed to a 5-point one. According to the survey results, discounts and promotions had the most influence on respondents booking decisions ( $M= 4.96$ ,  $SD=1.80$ ). Targeted ads on social media were the option that respondents were most undecided about whether it affected their booking decision ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=1.71$ ). Influencer collaborations proved to be the least influential to the participants when asked whether it affected their booking decision ( $M=2.14$ ,  $SD=1.55$ ). After influencer collaborations, email marketing campaigns came in second place in terms of the number of participants that consider them non-influential ( $M=2.48$ ,  $SD=1.52$ ).



**Figure 3**

*Influence of hotel promotional offers on the respondents booking decisions*

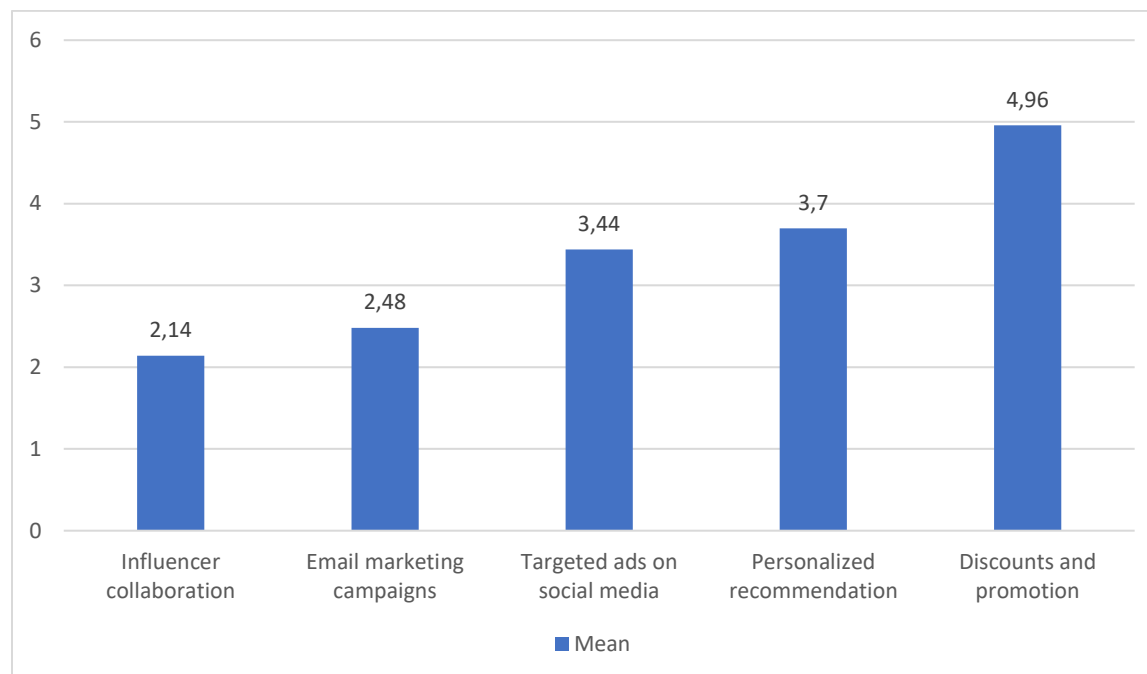


Table 3.

*T-test p-values for differences in the influence of hotel promotional offers on respondents' booking decisions*

	Discounts and promotions	Influencer collaborations	Targeted ads on social media	Email marketing campaigns
Influencer collaborations	6,39E-26***			
Targeted ads on social media	2E-09***	3,24E-08***		
Email marketing campaigns	9,09E-22***	0,12	2,62E-05***	
Personalized recommendations	2,48E-06***	1,65E-09***	0,32	1,26E-06***

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

According to Figure 3 and Table 3, the most influential promotional offer when it came to respondents' booking decisions was discounts and promotions, while the combination of targeted ads on social media and personal recommendations was considered the second most influential promotional technique. Finally, email marketing campaigns, along with influencer collaborations, were the least impactful promotional offers.

### **Engagement in social media and advertising platforms**

Figure 4 demonstrates the respondents' frequency of engagement with various social media platforms. Instagram had the most engagement for respondents ( $M=4.18$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ), and was the only platform that the respondents used more than "sometimes". As can be seen from the standard deviation results, respondents were the most divided regarding active engagement with TikTok ( $M=2.99$ ,  $SD=1.62$ ) and Facebook ( $M=2.64$ ,  $SD=1.31$ ). TikTok was the most frequently visited social media network after Instagram. However, TikTok also had a considerable percentage of participants who replied "Never" (35 respondents; 33%). Facebook had an approximately evenly divided number of replies for each category. Twitter ( $M=1.48$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ) and Snapchat ( $M=1.65$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ) were the social media platforms that the respondents used the least.

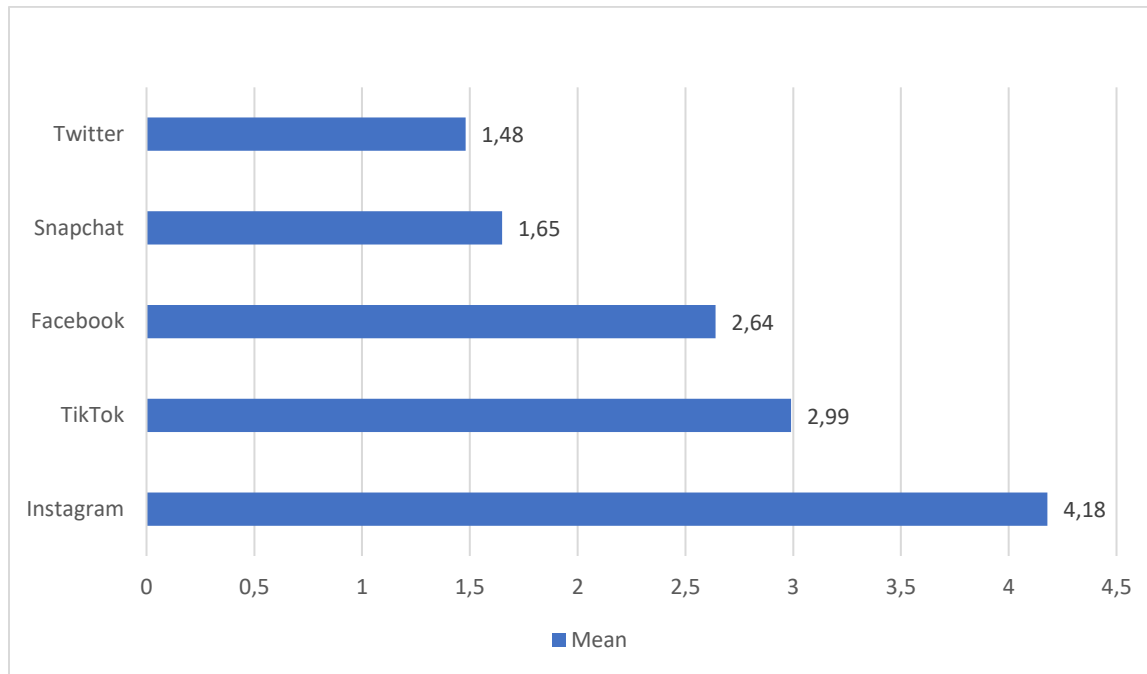
**Figure 4***Active engagement with specific social media platforms*

Table 4.

*T-test p-values for differences in specific social media platform engagement*

	Facebook	TikTok	Instagram	Snapchat
TikTok	0,08*			
Instagram	1,64E-16***	5,96E-09***		
Snapchat	3,84E-08***	1,13E-10***	2,23E-36***	
Twitter	4,79E-12***	3,77E-14***	7,67E-45***	0,25

\*  $p < 0.10$ \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

P-values from Table 4 indicate that all social media platforms were significantly different in terms of respondents' engagement, with the exception being the pairing between Snapchat and Twitter, the social media platforms the respondents least engaged with.

Figure 5 illustrates how engaging specific social media content is to survey respondents. This question consisted of a 7-point Likert scale as opposed to a 5-point one. Photos of hotel amenities and services proved to be most engaging ( $M=6.14$ ,  $SD=1.34$ ), followed by videos showcasing hotel facilities and experiences ( $M=6.07$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ). User-generated content ( $M=5.69$ ,  $SD=1.51$ ) and promotions and discounts ( $M=5.84$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ) were almost equally as likely to gain the respondent's attention as photos of hotel amenities and services and videos showcasing hotel facilities and experiences, with user-generated content being the second least engaging social media content ( $M=5.69$ ,  $SD=1.51$ ), and promotions and discounts being the least engaging ( $M=5.84$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ). None of the social media content had a mean value of less than 5.69, indicating that all of these forms of social media content may be considered effective as a part of a marketing tactic.

**Figure 5**

*Level of engagement for specific social media content*

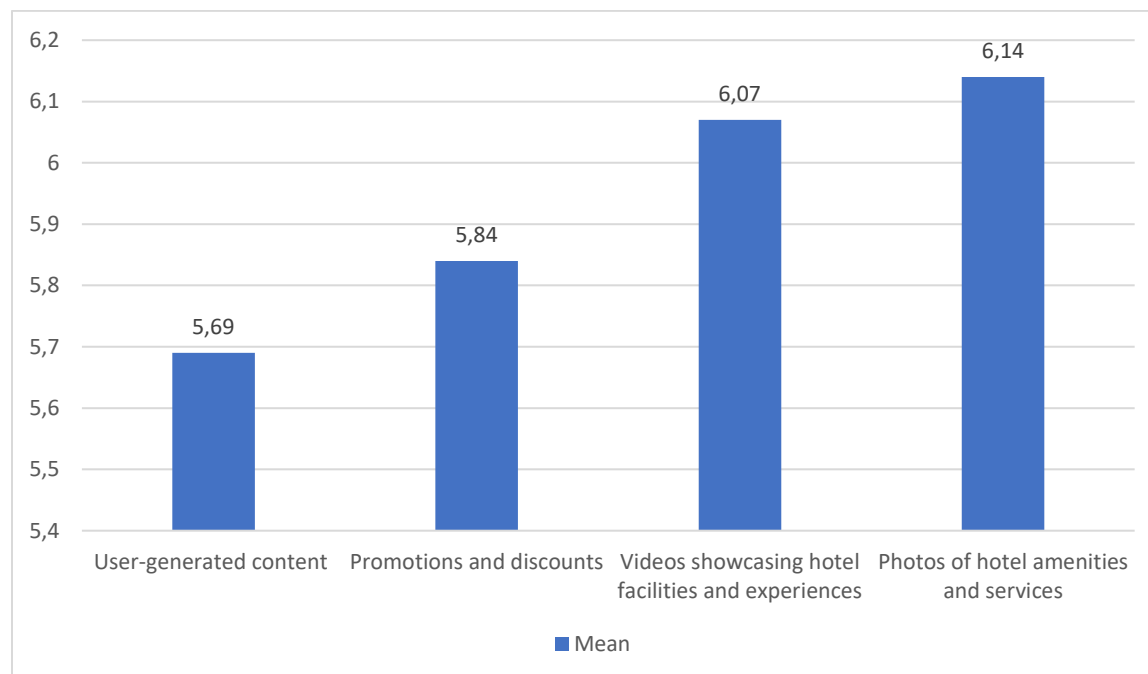


Table 5.

*T-tests for differences in the level of engagement for specific social media content*

	Photos of hotel amenities and services	User-generated content	Videos showcasing hotel facilities and experiences
User-generated content	0,021**		
Videos showcasing hotel facilities and experiences	0,67	0,049*	
Promotions and discounts	0,09*	0,43	0,19

\*  $p < 0.10$

\*\*  $p < 0.05$

Table 5 demonstrates that there were no significant differences between most of the social media content presented to the respondents. The pairing between photos of hotel amenities and services and videos showcasing hotel facilities proves to be the most effective when attempting to increase engagement from the respondents.

Figure 6 reveals the likelihood of the respondents engaging with and/or following a hotel's account on specific social media platforms. Instagram was the platform that respondents were most likely to actively follow ( $M=3.23$ ,  $SD=1.32$ ). On the other hand, Snapchat was the platform that the participants were least likely to engage with actively ( $M=1.26$ ,  $SD=0.56$ ). The fact that the highest mean value is just slightly greater than 3.00 ("Sometimes") suggests that a hotel's account on these social media platforms is unlikely to be actively followed by the Gen Z demographic.

### Figure 6

*Likelihood of respondents' engagements with a hotel's account on social media platforms*

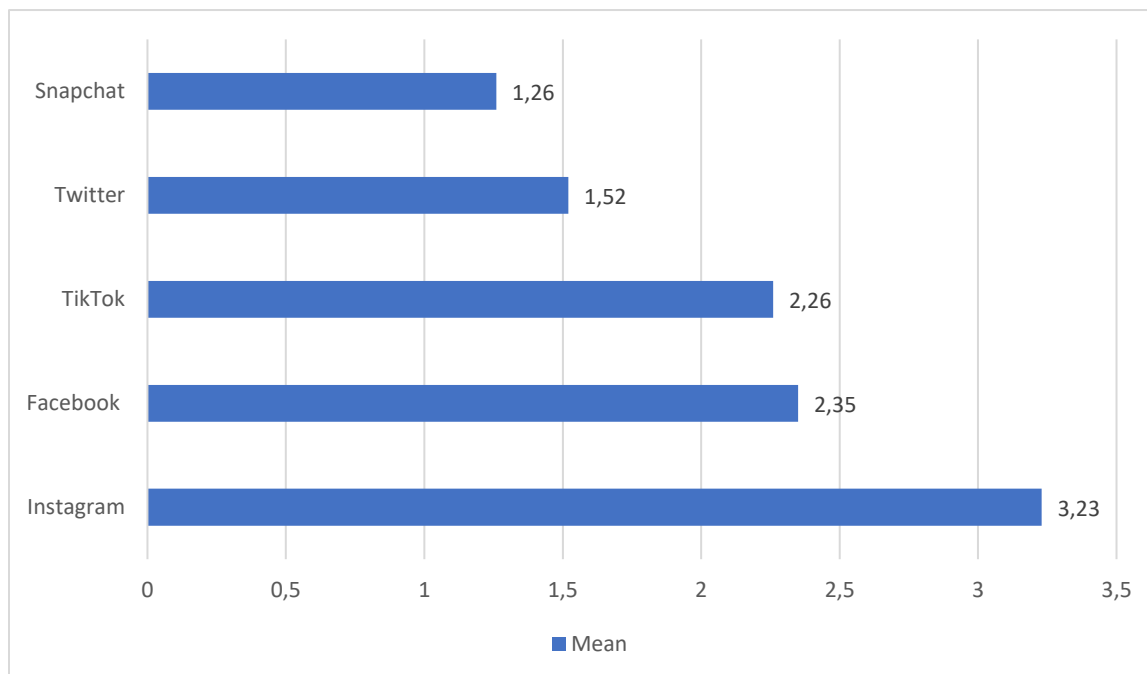


Table 6.

*T-tests for differences in the likelihood of the respondents following a hotel's account on social media platforms*

	Facebook	Instagram	TikTok	Snapchat
Instagram	3,9E-06***			
TikTok	0,61	4,4E-07***		
Snapchat	2,6E-12***	1,7E-28***	1,6E-10***	
Twitter	3,9E-07***	7,5E-22***	7,7E-06***	0,01**

\*  $p < 0.10$

\*\*  $p < 0.05$

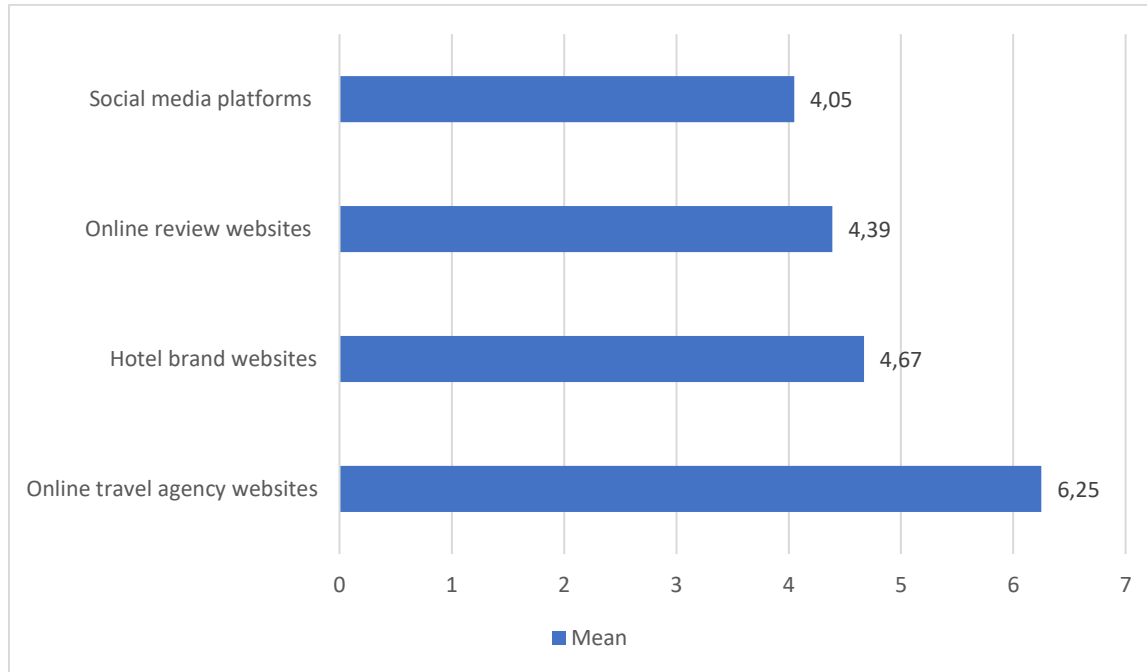
\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 6 reveals that the majority of the social media platforms were significantly different from one another, with the exception of Facebook and TikTok.

Figure 7 indicates how likely participants are to use specific platforms while searching for a hotel for their trip. This question consisted of a 7-point Likert scale as opposed to a 5-point one. Survey participants are most likely to use online travel agency websites (Airbnb, Booking.com, etc.) while seeking a hotel for a trip ( $M=6.25$ ,  $SD=1.47$ ). On the other hand, the majority of the respondents stated that while researching hotels for a vacation, they use social media platforms the least ( $M=4.05$ ,  $SD=2.04$ ).

**Figure 7**

*Participants usage of specific platforms when researching a hotel for their trip*

**Table 7.**

*T-test p-values for differences in the likelihood of participants using specific platforms when searching for a hotel*

	Online travel agency websites	Hotel brand websites	Social media platforms
Online review websites	1,3E-09***		
Social media platforms	2,8E-16***	0,03**	
Online review websites	5,4E-13***	0,32	0,22

\*  $p < 0.10$

\*\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$



Table 7 suggests that the majority of the platforms were significantly different from each other, with the exception being hotel brand websites and online review websites, as well as social media platforms and online review websites.

Figure 8 displays through which channels the survey participants prefer to receive hospitality offers. The respondents' preferred way of receiving hospitality offers is through social media advertisements (M=3.12, SD=1.18). Survey takers were the least interested in receiving hospitality offers via text messages (M=1.96, SD=1.17).

### Figure 8

*Channels through which the survey participants prefer to receive hospitality offers the most*

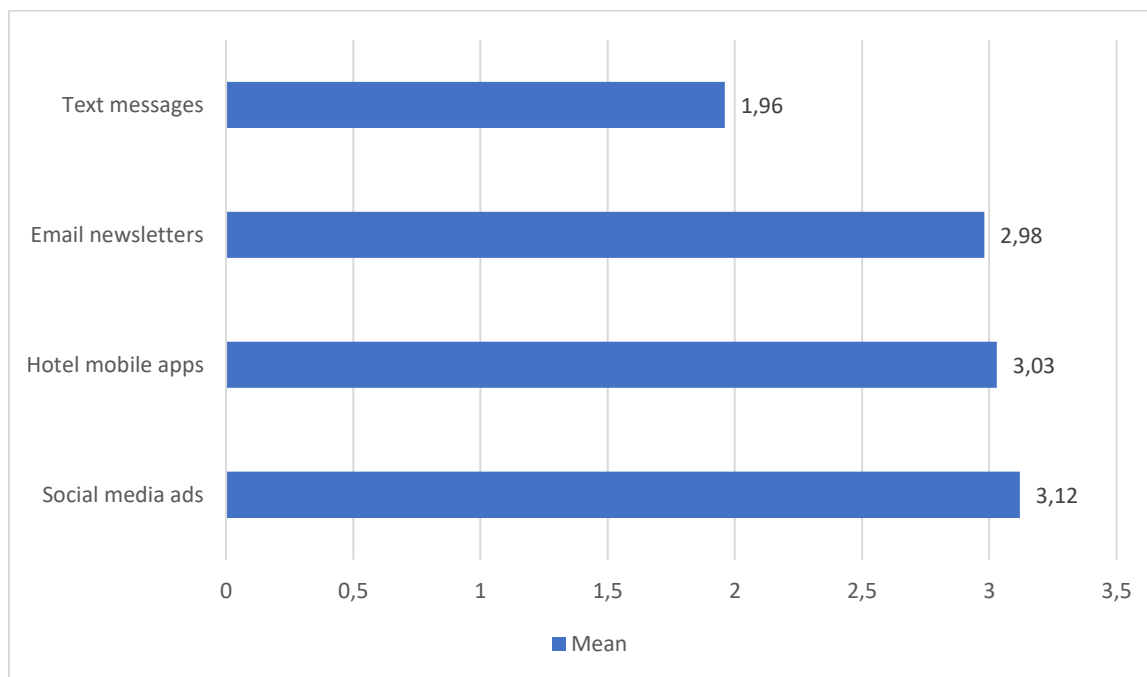


Table 8.

*T-tests for differences in respondents' preferences for channels through which they receive hospitality offers*

	Email newsletters	Social media ads	Hotel mobile apps
Social media ads	0,41		
Hotel mobile apps	0,79	0,58	
Text message promotions	1,2E-08***	1,3E-11***	3E-09***

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

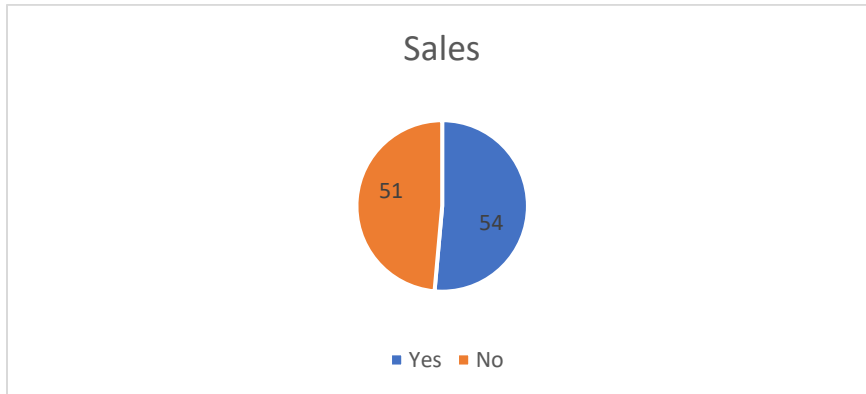
Figure 8 and Table 8 show that, with the exception of text messages, respondents are mainly indifferent to the channel through which they receive hospitality offers. Text message promotions are respondents' least preferred channel to receive hospitality offers.

### **Travel-related mobile app usage**

Figure 9. shows the number of people that made a reservation for a hotel through a mobile app is somewhat evenly distributed, with 51 (48.6%) respondents answering "No" and 54 (51.4%) replying "Yes."

Figure 9

*Number of respondents that made a reservation for a hotel through a mobile app*

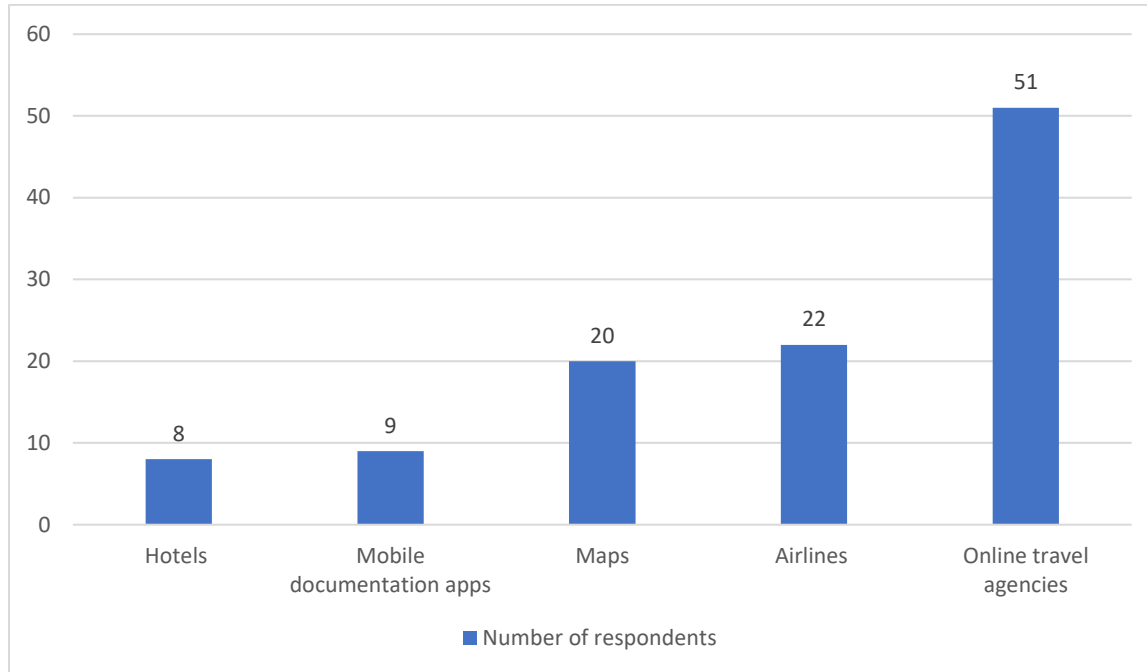


Respondents were asked to specify how many travel-related apps they currently have on their phones. According to the results, 36 (34.3%) of the participants had only one travel-related app on their phones, while 33 claimed to have no travel-related apps on their phones at the time. 19 (18.1%) of the participants had two applications, 8 (7.6%) of them had three apps, 5 (4.8%) had four apps, and only 4 (3.8%) had four or more travel-related apps on their phones.

Figure 10 shows which aspects of travel the participants' mobile apps are related to. The most frequently used mobile app on respondents' phones was one related to online travel companies (51 respondents; 46%). The second most apps the respondents had were related to airlines (22 respondents; 20%), followed closely by apps connected to maps (20 respondents; 18%). Mobile documentation and hotel-related apps were the least represented, with 9 (8%) and 8 (7%) respondents.

**Figure 10**

*Aspects of travel the respondents' mobile apps are related to*



### **Loyalty program involvement**

Participants were questioned whether they were ever a part of a hotel's loyalty program. The results suggest that the majority of the respondents have never been a part of a hotel's loyalty program, with 96 (91.4%) of them answering "No", and only 9 (8.6%) of them answering "Yes".

The survey participants were additionally asked if they had ever considered joining a company's loyalty program, to which a majority of them disagreed, with 69 (65.7%) replying "No" and 36 (34.3%) replying "Yes".

Figure 13 demonstrates what incentives are most likely to entice the respondents into joining a hotel's loyalty program. A t-test was used to compare the means of different variables within the potential replies to this survey question. The results determined that the mean for the "exclusive discounts or promotions" category (M=3.96, SD=1.07) was not significantly different from the mean for either the category "Free room upgrade" (M=3.88, SD=1.09), or the "Points or rewards for each stay" category (M=3.91, SD=1.11).

**Figure 13**

*Incentives most likely to encourage respondents into joining a hotel's loyalty program*

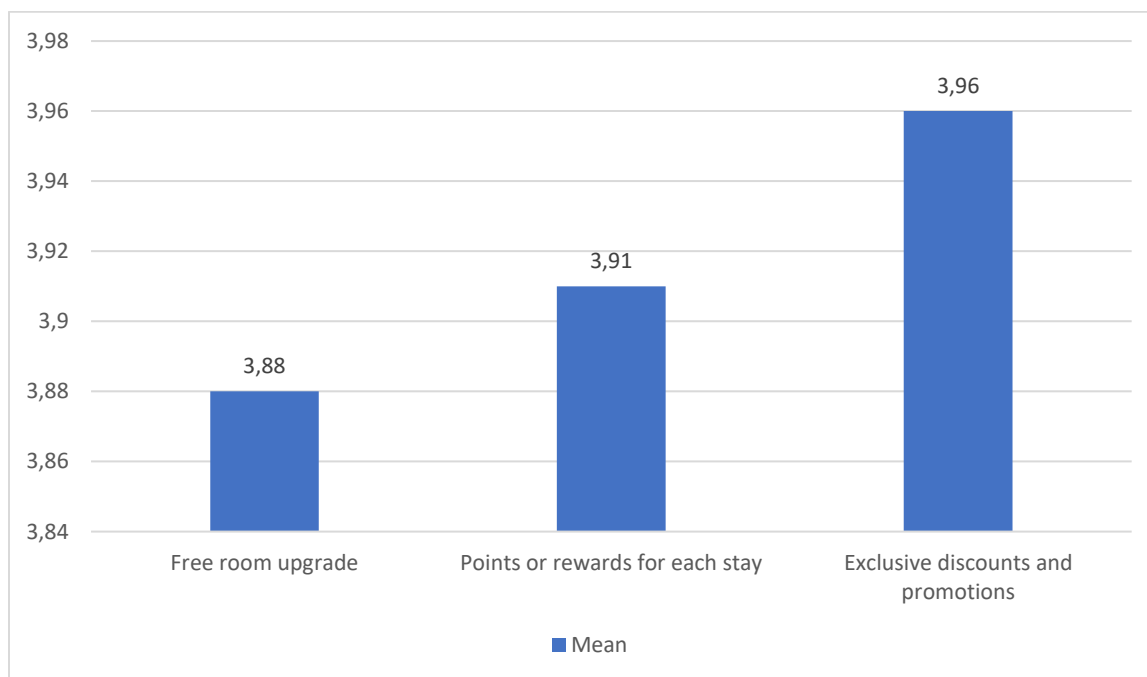


Table 9.

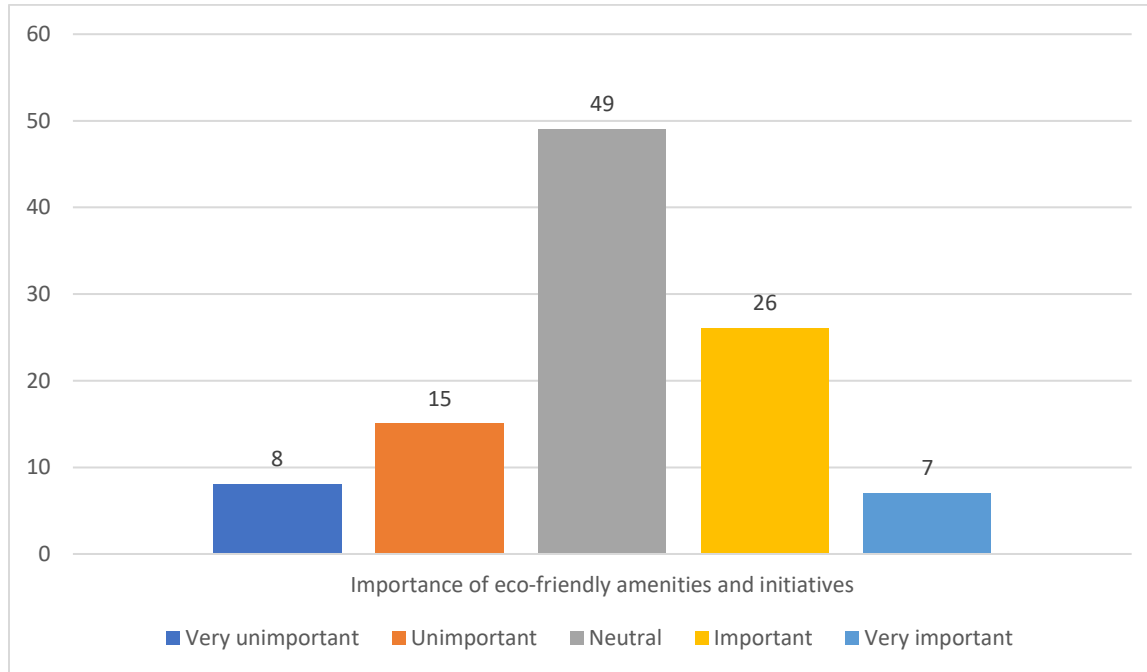
*T-tests for differences in the incentives most likely to encourage respondents into joining a hotel's loyalty program*

	Exclusive discounts and promotions	Points or rewards for each stay
Points or rewards for each stay	0,75	
Free room upgrade	0,57	0,80

Table 9's p-values indicate that the respondents have no preferred form of incentive to join a loyalty program.

### **Importance of eco-friendly amenities and initiatives**

Figure 14 depicts how important eco-friendly amenities and initiatives are to survey respondents in terms of hotel offerings. The majority of the participants claimed that they are indifferent as to whether the hotel offers eco-friendly amenities and initiatives ( $M=3.09$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ). Therefore, a t-test was done between the individuals who marked "Very unimportant" and "Unimportant" and those who marked "Important" and "Very important." (These groups will be termed Unimportant and Important). There were 33 (31%) respondents in the variable that included "Important" and "Very important" replies, and 23 (22%) respondents in the variable that combined "Unimportant" and "Very unimportant" responses. The results of the t-test concluded that the means between those two variables were significantly different.

**Figure 14***Importance of eco-friendly amenities and initiatives in a hotel*

The data acquired in this survey were examined for significant differences between the two eco-related populations (23 who consider eco-friendly amenities and initiatives unimportant, and 33 who consider them important). In three regards, the two eco-related samples differed significantly: personal recommendations are more important for the eco-important sample; online travel agencies are favored by the eco-unimportant sample; and email hospitality offers are more accepted by the eco-important sample. Surprisingly, there is not a significant difference in travel frequency between the two samples. Finally, it was noticed that older members of this study's sample (those out of college) indicated more interest in eco-friendly amenities and initiatives.

## **Discussion**

The overall objective of this research paper was to determine the most effective marketing tactics for Gen Z in the hotel industry in the country of Croatia. When considering what factors influence Croatian Gen Z's hotel booking choices, this research reveals that hotels should emphasize value for money, the convenience of location, and cleanliness the most. Hotels can emphasize value for money through various promotions and discounts such as package deals, group discounts, and loyalty programs. When it comes to emphasizing the location, hotels can use the positive sides of their location and promote exclusively that. For example, if a hotel is in an isolated location, it can emphasize the peacefulness and mystique of its surroundings. On the other hand, if its location is in an urban area, it can emphasize the exciting activities and opportunities surrounding the hotel. Hotels should strongly consider implementing hygiene protocols and training and encouraging their staff to practice them regularly. Additionally, this research question could be divided into three tiers according to their importance to the respondents and their significant differences. If a hotel has the three factors in the first tier (Price, location, cleanliness), then the results of the research suggest that this hotel is highly likely to appeal to the Croatian Gen Z demographic.

The social media engagement of the respondents largely supports the literature (Aldea, 2022) in the sense that Croatia's Gen Z demographic is extremely active on social media. According to the results regarding their social media engagement, hotels should establish a strong social media presence, primarily on Instagram and Facebook. Additionally, investing in unique and aesthetically appealing Instagram and Facebook ads that include videos and photos of the hotel facilities and experiences could be an effective strategy for gaining the interest and attention of



the Croatian Gen Z demographic. The responses for the social media platforms the respondents are most likely to actively follow a hotel's account on could be divided into three categories, ranging from most to least likely. This additional research suggested that Instagram was the most appealing to the respondents regarding hotel content and could be classified as tier one. Tier two consists of Facebook and TikTok, while tier three consists of Twitter and Snapchat.

Even though social media ads are the channel through which the survey participants prefer to receive hospitality offers, additional results conclude that hotel media applications and email newsletters could be almost equally as effective and are not significantly different from social media ads.

Loyalty programs proved to be of minimal importance to the respondents and for the majority of them an unexplored aspect of the hotel's offer. When it comes to attracting Gen Z's interest in joining a hotel's loyalty program, modifying the loyalty program to appeal to the Gen Z demographic could prove to be a viable approach. For example, hotels could implement specialized discounts and promotions aimed solely at Croatian Gen Z, such as student discounts and social media challenges. The absence of significant differences between the options in the survey question addressing incentives most likely to entice respondents to join a hotel's loyalty program might suggest respondents' indecisiveness and the need for specialized and more innovative discounts and promotions.

Across the entire sample, eco-friendly amenities and initiatives were considered not important by the respondents, with a majority being indifferent to their implementation. Eight respondents consider them very unimportant, fifteen of them unimportant, and forty-nine are indifferent. However, eco-friendly amenities and initiatives proved to be more important to the older members of the Gen Z population (those out of college), which suggests that hotels should

continue with the implementation of eco-friendly practices due to a significant chance of the younger members becoming more environmentally conscious as they mature with age.

To summarize, the results indicating the most effective marketing tactics for Gen Z in the hotel industry in Croatia suggest that hotels should invest in Instagram and Facebook advertising that incorporates unique and visually appealing photographs and videos of their facilities and experiences. Implementing sanitation procedures and highlighting hotel cleanliness are essential factors in both attracting and retaining potential Gen Z customers. The amount of environmentally conscious Gen Z travelers is presumably growing with their age and is an indicator for hotels to implement eco-friendly amenities and initiatives. In order for loyalty programs to gain the interest of Croatian Gen Z travelers, hotels might consider more creative incentives which are oriented towards the wants and needs of the Croatian Gen Z demographic.

### **Limitations**

There are two limitations to the results of this research paper. The first limitation is that the sample size might not be large enough to provide the most accurate results for this research paper. The second limitation is the fact that due to the usage of the non-probability convenience sampling method, the answers do not reflect the opinions of all Croatian Gen Z members.

### **Future research**

We believe that future research should focus on how Gen Z participants respond to different specialized incentives within a Loyalty program, as well as a more detailed analysis of which specific eco-friendly amenities and incentives respondents find more important, and which they find less important. Furthermore, further research might investigate the relevance of influencers

on different aspects of social media with regard to their influence on the Croatian Gen Z demographic.

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