

GENERATION Z'S ATTITUDES AND SOFT SKILLS SET TO GREEN HOTELS AND SUSTAINABILITY ON THE BASIS OF A HUNGARIAN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract: Generation Z, encompassing individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, is emerging in shaping the future of sustainable tourism. Characterized by their digital fluency, social consciousness, and environmental awareness, Generation Z's preferences and behaviours are influencing various sectors, notably tourism and hospitality. This paper delves into three interconnected aspects: Gen Z's perceptions of sustainability in tourism, their criteria for selecting green hotels, and the skills and competencies they deem essential to foster receptivity towards sustainable practices. In 2024, research on green tourism was started to analyse the factors that play a role in choosing green accommodation. For the study, a questionnaire survey was conducted, which consisted of 26 questions and resulted in 246 responses. Based on the definitions of green hotels and green tourism students gave, it can be seen that they unanimously agree on the green content of hotels and tourism. Although they are committed to green ideas, this is not always reflected in their willingness to pay more for these services. The most important contextual skills for generating this commitment include respect for the environment, efficiency, adaptability and resilience. As the research has proved their strong commitment to environmental principles, we can confirm that Gen Z has emerged as a dominating force in the tourist business today, and their preferences and actions are changing the face of the travel and hospitality sector, particularly with regard to sustainability challenges. It is important to note, however, that one important finding of the research is that openness and receptivity to green hotels does not necessarily correlate with the willingness or intention to pay more for this option.

Keywords: green tourism, green hotels, Generation Z, sustainability, competences, circular society

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INTRODUCTION

Generation Z (often referred to as Gen Z, in short), comprising individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is increasingly recognized as a pivotal force driving global change across various sectors, including tourism and hospitality (D'Acunto et al., 2025). Generation Z is increasingly recognised as a pivotal force across various sectors, including tourism and hospitality (Seyfi et al., 2024b). According to D'Arco et al. (2023), unlike previous generations, Gen Z places a higher premium on values such as environmental responsibility. In parallel, as Sun & Nasrullah (2024) state that the hospitality industry is witnessing a surge in demand for green hotels, defined by their commitment to environmental conservation, energy efficiency, and socially responsible practices. Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene (2026), as well as Perez-Alanda et al. (2026) also emphasise the necessity for tourist lodgings to give environmental issues first priority and inspire youth to make green purchases. By drawing on recent scholarly research (Pan et al., 2022; Nowacki et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Khoa et al., 2025), this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how this generation's values, skills and behaviours are shaping the future of sustainable tourism and in addition to their openness to green ideas, their willingness to pay more for being sustainable, on the basis of a sample of Hungarian students which is quite small for generalisations but may provide us with an insight. In the current study, the authors will analyse the sample along the following questions:

Q1: How do the students surveyed define green hotels?

Q2: What skills do young people think are needed to accept the values represented by green hotels? How do the students surveyed compare with these skills?

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Q3: How open are they to spending their holidays in such green hotels even if it means higher prices, and what skills determine this willingness?

Generation Z's perception of sustainability in tourism and the selection of green hotels

Unlike previous generations, Generation Z places a higher value on sustainability and they are actively engaged in seeking solutions to protect the environment and implement scientific results into business life (Csekő et al., 2024). Several studies (İlhan et al., 2022; Kapuściński et al., 2023; Morrone et al., 2024) highlight the depth of Generation Z's commitment to sustainability while others (Stylos et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2024; Fan et al., 2023) indicate that this generation is more inclined than other generations such as the Millennials to support businesses and organizations that demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability. When examining frugality, the Holmes-Dodds-Frochot model on the attitude behaviour perception gap can be a good predictor of sustainable travel behaviour (Dodds & Holmes, 2025). Sustainable tourism definitely incurs extra costs on the travellers, which is why their willingness to pay can also be measured (de Araújo et al., 2025).

Essential skills to promote receptivity to sustainable tourism

Soft skills such as self-assurance, collaboration, self-motivation, networking, and presenting abilities are thought to be crucial in today's world for how we collaborate and make decisions. Modi (2025) pointed out that communication skills, interpersonal skills and language skills, among others, can be regarded as constantly vital competences in today's changing world of tourism. The SkillsMatch platform is the first to provide training options to improve soft skills (European Commission, 2020) divided into four categories: self-image and vision of the world; context and performance related; social interaction and methodological, intuitive, and lateral thinking (Juhász et al., 2022).

Self-awareness was also incorporated into a sustainability competence framework developed by UNESCO in *Education for Sustainable Development Goals* (UNESCO, 2017), and discussed by Brundiars & Wiek (2021). A study by Gomes et al. (2023) found that critical thinking training programmes foster greater trust in sustainable tourism practices. Saxena (2024) highlights the role of critical thinking in enabling Gen Z to challenge unsustainable practices and drive innovation in the tourism and hospitality sectors similarly to Khuadthong et al. (2025), who pointed out the role of sociological and critical thinking in being aware of sustainability issues in tourism. Communication skills are another critical area highlighted by Bindawas (2025). Effective communication can bridge the gap between sustainable tourism initiatives and public awareness. While analysing tourism students in Thailand, Boonkaew et al. (2025) concluded that work integrated learning in the hospitality industry affected both green mindset and sustainable competencies. As Mahapatra et al. (2022) state, collaborative and leadership skills are essential for driving collective action. According to Promma et al. (2025), training programmes focusing on teamwork, problem-solving, and strategic planning can empower individuals to take active roles in promoting sustainable tourism. As noted by Bindawas (2025), these skills are instrumental in building a culture of sustainability within organisations and communities.

Based on previous research and theories, our first hypothesis was developed in which we wanted to examine their dedication to sustainable tourism, green hotels and the willingness to pay more for sustainable services.

H1: Generation Z respondents participating in the survey correctly define green hotels and green tourism and have positive attitudes toward spending their vacations in green hotels, even if this involves higher costs.

In addition to these skills, we wanted to analyse whether it is respect for the environment and resilience, with some contextual soft skills that make them select green hotels. To this end, in the light of the literature review and our research questions, the validity of two more hypotheses will be tested:

H2: The Generation Z respondents in the study believe that respect for the environment and resilience are the skills that help them accept the values represented by green hotels, and they generally feel strong in these skills.

H3: Generation Z in the study believes that an individual's expectations for accepting the values represented by green hotels are fundamentally determined by soft skills, i.e., context-dependent skills such as a positive attitude, respect for the environment, efficiency, or adaptability.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In 2024, the authors started their research on green tourism to analyse what factors play a role in choosing green accommodation, which is basically aimed to find out how the under-30s, typically Generation Z, perceive sustainability in tourism, how they choose hotels with green considerations and what skills they think are needed to make people more receptive to this approach. For the study, a questionnaire survey was conducted, which consisted of 26 questions. A questionnaire survey consisting of 26 questions was conducted for the study. The questionnaire was prepared by the authors and had to be completed by the respondents in Hungarian. The authors used the skills applied in the questionnaire questions in the research of Juhász et al. (2022). The main reason for this was that Juhász et al. examined a very broad range of skills, which made it possible for the researchers to focus on these in this study, as well.

Furthermore, when compiling the questionnaire, the authors also took into account the study by Ma et al. (2024), whose research was based on the eco-consciousness of Generation Z. Three of the questions required the respondents to provide their own answers, i.e. they were open-ended, while the other 23 questions were closed-ended. These questions were basically composed of metric and categorical variables. For the metric variables, the researchers used a five-point Likert scale, with one (1) being the weakest and five (5) the strongest. The questions analysed in this study were grouped into three major categories. The structure of the questionnaire is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of the questionnaire (Source: Authors' own research, 2024)

Specification of respondents	Definition of green tourism	Acceptance of green tourism
Gender Age Residence Who do you live with? What is your family's per capita income level?	Define green tourism and the concept of a green hotel. Are you open to spending your holidays in a green hotel?	What skills are needed to be open to green hotels and tourism?

The questionnaire was available to respondents via an online interface. The survey was conducted with students at one of Hungary's largest business universities, who completed the questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously. This institute was selected as a sample because it is where students learn about sustainability and tourism and the links between the two in both practice and theory. At the Faculty of Foreign Trade, students were able to answer questions from an online questionnaire. The authors were not able to measure the willingness to respond due to the availability of the internet.

A total of 246 students responded to the questions, and all responses were evaluated. Before completion, the researchers also conducted a test questionnaire to ensure that all questions could be correctly interpreted by the participants. There were 10 students in this study, and no questions that the researchers needed to change came up. The authors also tested the reliability of the questions using another method. The questions were the authors' own and had not been used in previous research. As the questionnaire was not validated, the reliability of the questions will be further investigated by the researchers using split-half method, and the Spearman-Brown coefficient will be evaluated for analysis. The sample is presented below in Table 2.

Table 2. Sample specification (N=246) (Source: Authors' own research, 2024)

Features	N	%
Gender	Female: 152 Male: 94	Female: 61.8 Male: 38.2
Residence	Capital city: 75 City with county status: 31 City: 93 Municipality: 19 Village: 26	Capital: 30.5 City with county status: 12.6 City: 37.8 Municipality: 7.7 Village: 10.6
Who do you live with?	Living alone: 15 Living with parents, family members: 197 Living with a spouse or partner: 21 Living with friends: 21 Other: 3	Living alone: 6.1 Living with parents or family members: 80.1 Living with a spouse or partner: 4.1 Living with friends: 8.5 Other: 1.2
What is your family's per capita income level? (1EUR=400 Ft)	Less than HUF 50,000 net 8 Between HUF 50,000 and HUF 100,000 net 10 Between HUF 100,000 and HUF 200,000 net 59 Net HUF 200,000 or above Net HUF 300,000 76 Net HUF 300,000 or above Net 93	Less than HUF 50,000 net 3.3% Between HUF 50,000 and HUF 100,000 net 4.1 Between HUF 100,000 and HUF 200,000 net 24 Net HUF 200,000 or above Net HUF 300,000 30.9 Net HUF 300,000 or above Net 37.8

The average age of respondents was 19.3 years. There were almost twice as many female respondents in the sample as male respondents. More than 40% of respondents lived in the capital city or county seat. The proportion of respondents living in a municipality with fewer than a city's population was very low, with a total of 45 respondents living in such a municipality. The highest proportions of women and men lived in cities (37.2%-38.7%). Most respondents still lived with their parents (80.1%). 4.1% were in a long-term relationship, and a total of 14.6% were separated from their family. The authors examined how the students lived in terms of income level. 31.3% of the respondents lived on 200,000 or less. 38% of the young people surveyed came from higher-income families. The university students surveyed were in their first three years of university.

For the analysis, the authors used univariate and multivariate statistical methods to prove the hypotheses, such as frequency analysis, analysis of means, analysis of variance, box-plot for graphical control of outliers and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal distribution. Independent samples t-test and correlation were used to check for a significant relationship, and SEM methods were used to construct a model.

The model is built from latent variables, while the latent variables are indicators. The SEM model consists of a measurement model and a structural model. In the measurement model, researchers analyse the relationship between the latent and the indicators, while the structural model highlights the relationships between the latent variables. The independent latent variable is the explanatory variable, and the dependent variable is the explained variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following definition of green tourism was used by the authors in the research and was included in the questionnaire. Green tourism (also known as sustainable tourism) is a form of travel that seeks to conserve natural and cultural resources while providing positive experiences for visitors and benefits for local communities. In the study, as mentioned earlier, students were asked to define what a green hotel means to them. In one or two sentences, they had to define what they think typically describes these hotels. Some of the definitions provided are listed in Table 3, which was compiled anonymously by the students. Most definitions included the following words: 1. environmental protection, 2. closeness to nature, 3. reducing

one's ecological footprint, and 4. striving for sustainability. In another open-ended question, respondents were asked to identify five words that characterise green tourism. The most frequently occurring words were: 1. selective waste collection, 2. forest, 3. sustainability, 4. environmentally friendly, 5. bioenergy, and 6. tranquillity. These factors also cover the definition used by the authors. It is clear that students are aware of the green content of hotels and tourism and unanimously agree on it. The researchers also asked how open young people would be to spending their holidays in a green hotel, who were asked to indicate their willingness on a five-point Likert scale, where one means "not at all" and five means "yes, definitely". The mean of the metric variable based on the responses was 3.81, and the standard deviation was 0.993, indicating that there was a relatively unanimous opinion among respondents and that they were typically willing to holiday in such a hotel.

Table 3. Definition of green tourism

(Source: Authors' own research, anonymous definitions given to open questions in the questionnaire, 2024)

Definitions
"The most environmentally friendly hotel possible."
"The hotel respects nature, is animal-friendly, uses sustainable elements, and is also attentive to tradition and family friendliness."
"The hotel area is rich in plants."
"Most of the materials in the green area of the hotel are recycled, waste is collected selectively, the food is healthy, and guests go there to relax. There are no animals, no noise, great care for nature, lots of greenery and wildlife."
"A hotel that makes a conscious effort to reduce its ecological footprint and does not have a negative impact on nature."

The authors also considered whether they would be willing to pay more for this opportunity. 27.9% would not pay more than for a normal hotel, while 71.5% would. The researchers also looked at whether there was a correlation in the sample between willingness to spend a holiday in a green hotel and the willingness to pay more for it. An independent samples t-test confirmed a significant relationship ($t: -5.437$ $df: 88$. 847 $sig.: 0.000$), showing that those who would not spend more on such a hotel are less open ($M: 3.19$) to spending their holidays in such a place than those who would ($M: 4.05$).

The findings therefore show that the Generation Z participants in the study are well aware of green hotels and green tourism, and although they are basically open to spending their holidays in such places, this willingness is affected by the fact that they have to pay more for such places, and the authors therefore only partially accept their first hypothesis.

To test the second hypothesis, the authors analysed what soft skills are needed to be receptive to the green perception of tourism. To identify the soft skills, the researchers listed 34 of the skills used in the SkillMatch project (Horváth-Csikós et al., 2022; Juhász et al., 2022). On a five-point scale, respondents were asked to rate these variables, with one being not at all important and five being very important. In parallel, the researchers also looked at how strongly respondents felt the skills were important to them, also rated on a five-point scale. The reliability of the questions was tested by the researchers using a split-half method, with Spearman-Brown coefficients of 0.882 and 0.875, which were considered acceptable.

Table 4 below shows the means and standard deviations of the scales tested, as well as the difference in means.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of the scales tested and the mean difference (Source: Authors' own research, 2024)

Skills	What skills are needed to adopt a green approach?		How strong are the students in the soft skills?		M Difference
	M	SD	M	SD	
Leadership	2.89	1.239	3.37	1.152	-0.48
Trial	2.90	1.220	3.30	1.150	-0.41
Coaching	2.95	1.149	2.96	1.151	0.00
Networking (Building Connections)	3.09	1.250	3.39	1.077	-0.29
Customer focus	3.23	1.163	3.26	1.138	-0.03
Diligence	3.37	1.270	3.80	1.003	-0.44
Respect for privacy	3.44	1.220	4.14	0.913	-0.70
Self-management	3.60	1.152	3.68	0.934	-0.08
Initiative	3.63	1.187	3.29	1.134	0.34
Teamwork	3.63	1.190	3.98	1.022	-0.34
Decision making	3.67	1.059	3.59	1.184	0.07
Critical thinking	3.67	1.155	3.91	0.958	-0.24
Organisation	3.69	1.230	3.74	1.101	-0.06
Strategic thinking	3.71	1.173	3.87	0.943	-0.16
Conflict resolution	3.72	1.110	3.95	0.965	-0.23
Motivating others	3.76	1.197	3.76	0.990	0.00
Self-regulation	3.78	1.117	3.93	0.937	-0.15
Personal development	3.78	1.080	4.14	0.838	-0.36
Stay tuned	3.81	1.087	3.95	0.863	-0.13
Quality management	3.86	1.079	3.64	1.027	0.22
Patience	3.87	1.035	3.80	0.950	0.07
Communication	3.88	1.074	3.96	0.925	-0.08
Reliability	3.91	1.114	4.30	0.823	-0.39
Ethical behaviour	3.94	1.033	4.14	0.911	-0.20

Creativity	3.95	1.092	3.95	0.993	0.00
Motivation	3.96	1.074	3.80	0.987	0.16
Efficiency	3.99	1.063	4.00	0.850	-0.01
Problem solving	4.03	0.985	4.14	0.851	-0.11
Goal orientation	4.09	1.016	3.96	0.936	0.14
Respect for diversity	4.12	1.011	4.14	0.920	-0.02
Positive attitude	4.30	0.827	4.04	0.898	0.26
Resilience / Flexibility	4.38	0.852	3.95	0.879	0.43
Adaptability	4.59	0.710	4.07	0.925	0.52
Respect for the environment	4.70	0.611	4.32	0.826	0.39

According to the table, the most important skills in this respect are respect for the environment, adaptability and resilience, which should be very strong in this respect. The low values of the standard deviations indicate that respondents are unanimous on this issue. On average, these three skills of the students are considered to be strong according to the students' opinions and here again the low standard deviations show that the respondents have similar opinions. The differences in means also support the idea that the means of expectations are stronger than the students' own assessment of their skills. The largest differences are for adaptability and flexibility. The results also showed that leadership, trial, coaching, and networking are the skills that are less necessary for someone to be receptive to the green approach. In fact, the students felt moderately strong in these skills, which is due to their age and the fact that they have not yet experienced many situations where these skills were needed.

The authors also analysed how these three attributes, which students consider important, are related to the adoption of green values and thus to spending their holidays in such places. Correlation analyses revealed a positive significant correlation with willingness to act for all three attributes (r : 0.209 for resilience, r : 0.257 for respect for the environment and r : 0.227 for adaptability). In light of these results, the authors accept their second hypothesis.

For further analysis, the researchers put the students' skills into factors. A model was created to test the validity of the third hypothesis. The SkillMatch project, mentioned earlier, grouped these skills into four groups, and these were used as the factors by the authors later. The groups included self-concept and worldview, relating to context and performance, peer interaction, methodological intuition and lateral thinking. Not all of the skills were suitable for building the model, so not all of them were used. In addition to the skill groups, they also created a variable that showed how open students were to green hotels. The structural equations model (SEM), i.e., analysis of variance (PLS), was used to construct the model. The authors used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check normality, but none of the items were normally distributed.

The latent variables in the model were self-concept and worldview, attachment to context and performance, peer interaction, methodological intuition and lateral thinking, and acceptance. The authors created the latent variable acceptance from the following items (Table 5). Respondents were asked to answer the extent to which they were willing to accept the expectations of green hotels. They were asked to rate these expectations on a Likert scale of five, i.e. how much they could tolerate them. A one was not at all, and a five was a full tolerance. These characteristics are among the most common ones that young Hungarians encounter both at home and abroad. The results showed that, typically, respondents were very accepting, with a relatively homogeneous spread of respondents in this respect. In particular, there is no problem with having to collect garbage separately, which is not surprising, as people in Hungary are increasingly paying attention to this issue in institutions and families, so it is not an unusual request from a hotel. It is also particularly important because of air pollution, as hotels use heating, which is also an important issue in the country, and people are trying to pay more and more attention to this problem. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Average and standard deviation of acceptance of green hotel characteristics (Source: Authors' own research, 2024)

Features	Average	Standard Deviation
There is only natural material in the room.	4.02	0.901
It consumes products with minimal energy use.	4.09	0.887
Only environmentally friendly heating systems are used.	4.32	0.770
Waste is collected separately.	4.69	0.575

The authors start presenting their model with the measurement model. Table 6 contains the latent variables and the characteristics of the items that make up the model. The latent variables are as follows: Self and worldview, for context and performance, Social interaction, Methodological intuitive and lateral, and Adoption. The items are labelled with codes next to their names because these are used later in the model. The table includes the standardised factor weights, whose value is good if it is above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2022). For multicollinearity of the indicators, the VIF value was analysed by the researchers, which is acceptable if it is below 5. For the reliability of latent variables, the authors evaluated the Cronbach's Alpha index, which is acceptable if it is higher than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2022). Another such indicator is the CR (composite reliability) value, which should also be above 0.7. To measure convergence validity, the authors interpreted the AVE (average variance extracted) indicator, which is good above 0.5 (Fawad, 2023).

The Fornell-Larcker (1981) test was used to test the discriminant validity of the measurement models. According to this test, the square root of the mean variance extracted by a construct should be larger than the correlation between the construct and any other construct. If this is correct, then the model is good in terms of the discriminant validity criterion. Another test of discriminant validity was cross-loading. In this case, items can express content more strongly in their own latent variable than

in another. In the cross-loading test, if an item has a difference of less than 0.1 during cross-loading, it is recommended not to keep that item in the model (Hair et al., 2022). Table 6 includes the latent variables, the items, and some indicators.

Table 6. Constructs and items (VIF, CR, AVE, Cronbach's Alpha) (Source: Authors' own research, 2024)

Constructs	Skills and acceptance	Code	Factor weight	VIF	CR	AVE	Cron-bach
Self and worldview (SW)	Motivation	SW1	0.805	1.462	0.830	0.550	0.731
	Self-management	SW2	0.682	1.390			
	Initiative	SW3	0.711	1.417			
	Stay tuned	SW4	0.763	1.538			
For context and performance (CP)	Personal development	CP1	0.755	1.543	0.855	0.597	0.777
	Positive attitude	CP2	0.784	1.398			
	Reliability	CP3	0.811	1.829			
	Efficiency	CP4	0.739	1.571			
Social interaction (SI)	Coaching	SI1	0.730	1.930	0.921	0.625	0.901
	Networking	SI2	0.797	2.811			
	Trial	SI3	0.836	4.017			
	Leadership	SI4	0.849	4.194			
	Motivating others	SI5	0.732	1.742			
	Communication	SI6	0.770	1.918			
	Teamwork	SI7	0.812	2.023			
Methodological intuitive and lateral (ML)	Conflict resolution	ML1	0.758	1.964	0.917	0.614	0.896
	Creativity	ML2	0.825	2.446			
	Organisation	ML3	0.813	2.570			
	Decision making	ML4	0.791	2.245			
	Quality management	ML5	0.766	2.053			
	Problem solving	ML6	0.756	1.802			
	Critical thinking	ML7	0.773	2.813			
Adoption (A)	There is only natural material in the room.	A1	0.675	1.389	0.821	0.539	0.709
	It consumes products with minimal energy use.	A2	0.787	1.940			
	Only environmentally friendly heating systems are used.	A3	0.740	1.594			
	Waste is collected separately.	A4	0.617	1.202			

Table 7. Fornell-Larcker criterion (Source: Authors' own research, 2024)

	A	CP	ML	SI	SW
A	0.734				
CP	0.282	0.733			
ML	0.229	0.648	0.783		
SI	0.176	0.644	0.801	0.791	
SW	0.302	0.475	0.539	0.592	0.742

The data in the table show that the performance-related latent variable had a slightly weaker AVE value than the limit. This difference was not considered large by the authors, so the variable was left in the model. To test the validity of the discriminant, the authors used the Fornell-Larcker (1981) test, which, as shown in Table 7, was adequate. The cross-loading test was also acceptable, but its results are not presented by the authors due to quantitative limitations.

The data in the table show that the authors' measurement model meets the above criteria. The measurement model was adopted by the authors in the light of the above results. For the structured model, the authors interpreted the significance of the path coefficients based on bootstrap sampling. The sub-sample size was 5000 ($p = 0.05$).

The authors analysed the significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables thus examining the beta coefficient and also the R-squared values, which is the magnitude of the change in the endogenous variable that is determined by the exogenous variables. The arrows show two numbers: one is the significance level p , and the other is the value β . The following model was developed (Figure 1) during the research. The model shows how the other four latent variables affect adaptation. The data will show that a significant effect was not always verifiable.

The overall effect of the variables is shown in Table 8. The beta value, the T-statistic and the significance level are shown. The value of the T-statistic is appropriate when the value is above 1.96 (Hair et al., 2022). If the significance level p is below 0.05, then there is a significant relationship between the variables.

Table 8. Overall effect ($p=0.05$) (Source: Authors' own research, 2024)

	(β)	T	P values
CP -> A	0.219	2.221	0.026
ML -> A	0.119	1.061	0.289
SI -> A	-0.214	1.968	0.049
SW -> A	0.261	3.172	0.002

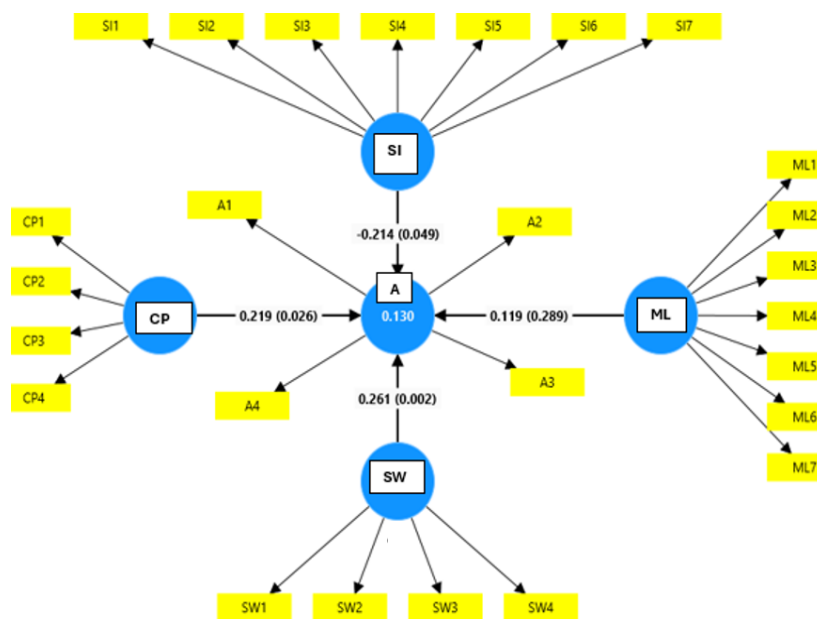


Figure 1. Research model (Source: authors' own editing)

The results confirmed the significant impact of the latent variables of context and performance skill set, self-image and worldview, and peer interaction on the willingness of young respondents to accept the conditions offered by green hotels, even though these conditions may differ from those offered by non-green hotels. Furthermore, the R-squared values confirmed that these latent variables explain almost 13% of the changes in acceptance. The above results confirmed that Generation Z's acceptance of the conditions offered by green tourism is determined not only by contextual skills but also by self-image and worldview, as well as by skills related to social peer interactions, and thus, the authors cannot accept their third hypothesis.

The findings of our research reaffirm that Generation Z is a key driver of sustainability within the tourism sector. However, a significant discrepancy remains between their willingness to stay in green hotels and their willingness to pay extra for such accommodations. This finding aligns with prior research (Gomes et al., 2023; Seyfi et al., 2024a, Dodds & Holmes, 2025; de Araújo et al., 2025) suggesting that while Gen Z prioritizes sustainability, financial constraints and cost-effectiveness remain critical factors in their purchasing decisions.

Education and awareness also play a significant role in fostering Gen Z's commitment to sustainability. In line with Boonkaew et al. (2025) and Mahapatra et al. (2025), this research also found that contextual skills such as adaptability, resilience, and respect for the environment are key drivers of receptivity to green hotels. These findings align with research by Bindawas (2025) and Promma et al. (2025) which suggests that integrating sustainability education into university curricula and workplace training can help bridge the gap between environmental awareness and concrete action.

Despite Gen Z's overall commitment to sustainability, the study revealed that their willingness to adopt green tourism practices is not solely determined by contextual skills. While respect for the environment and adaptability were significant predictors, other skill groups did not have a strong influence on their acceptance of green hotels. This contradicts the initial hypothesis that soft skills alone shape Gen Z's willingness to embrace sustainability in tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

The research showed that respondents are very aware of issues related to green hotels and sustainable tourism. They have strong skills that promote acceptance, which can be classified into several skill groups. Furthermore, acceptance and willingness do not always mean that research participants are more willing to invest in this.

The authors also found that Generation Z's acceptance of the conditions offered by green tourism is primarily determined by self-image and worldview, as well as social interaction skills. At the same time, the Generation Z participants in the study were characterized by respect for the environment and flexibility, which are skills that help them to be more open to accepting the values represented by green hotels. This study is limited to a Hungarian sample, suggesting the need for further research involving cross-cultural comparisons. Studies such as Nowacki et al. (2023) point out that cultural differences influence attitudes toward sustainable tourism, and understanding these differences can provide a more global perspective on how sustainability initiatives can be adapted to different regions.

Furthermore, the sample is limited to students at a Hungarian business university, which limits the generalizability. Since the majority of respondents still live with their parents, caution is needed when interpreting their willingness to pay higher prices. The limitations of the research lie in the fact that the measurement of soft skills based on self-assessment is biased, so it would be worthwhile to conduct the study with a validated questionnaire in the future.

The research is biased in the measurement of self-assessed soft skills, so it would be worthwhile to conduct the study with a validated questionnaire in the future. Future research should examine additional psychological and economic factors, such as personal financial stability, perceived comfort, and external motivating factors, which may influence Generation Z's decision-making process regarding green accommodations.

In summary, although Generation Z strongly supports sustainable tourism, financial considerations, digital influences, and education play a decisive role in shaping their behaviour. Addressing these factors through strategic pricing, transparent communication, and educational initiatives will be key to promoting the widespread adoption of environmentally friendly hotel practices and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry.

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