



The Generation Effect: Identification of Guest Hotel Attributes Using Conjoint –Analysis

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Abstract: The study explores the attributes leading to the choice of hotel amongst the three generations in the country. A quantitative survey of guests visiting luxury hotels was conducted in India with 230 respondents. SPSS software and conjoint analysis by the tool 1000Minds were used to understand the role of attributes -price, location, facilities and services, safety, and security. The research finding suggests that different generations prioritize different attributes, though all ages have preferred safety and security, facilities and services, and perceived value and facilities and services are next followed by location for someone to select or choose a hotel is also a less preferred attribute with the price being the least preferred attribute. The study results will help to understand the generational perspectives on the attributes leading to the choice of hotels that will help in the growth of hospitality in India by customizing their market offerings.

Keywords: Generations, Hotel Choice, Attributes, Leisure, Conjoint Analysis, India.

1. Introduction

Tourism benefits from economic expansion and specifically amongst emerging economies like China and India (Gardiner et al., 2014). Within the context of hotel industry, guests are most important and utmost priority should be given to their decisions and choices. Hotel businesses must understand the guests' decision-making process, and anticipate their needs prior to a successful business (Baruca& Civre, 2012). Though prior studies have been conducted on the motivation and expectations of the guest on cultural aspects less research have been conducted on age and generation (Yang & Lau, 2015). Understanding the generational difference in their travel views and attitudes helps in having a foresight about consumer travel desire (Gardiner et al., 2014).

Guests are segmented as individuals of similar ages who undergo analogous life experiences and memories that lead them toward similar consumption pattern (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2010) as varied persons of various ages have different preferences, perspectives, priorities, and values in deciding which hotel to select. To better understand the generational influence on the guest's behavior the study focuses on different generations as per the period of their birth- Baby Boomer- 1946-1964; Baby Busters (Generation X)- 1965-1980; Millennials (Generation Y)- 1980-2000; Generation Z- After the year 2000 (Kukoyiet al., 2016). The generational theorists argue that adopting the generational approach provides richer information rather than just segmenting by demographics like age and life stage since generational analysis helps acknowledge the role of historical influence on human behavior (Schewe& Stephanie, 2000). Combining all the generation representing age 18 to 66 years is the largest group of potential travelers for the present and the next decade. Academicians suggest that as the generation passes through various life stages they will travel differently compared to earlier generations (Benckendroff., 2010).

The study considers the body of knowledge by examining the similarities and differences in hotel choices made by Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. The study takes into consideration the factors that will influence the future demand for hotels in the country by different generations and the factors influencing their decisions for a selecting a particular hotel and the channel is being used by different generations for booking hotels. People of different generations select hotels based on the quality of services they provide, where the hotel is situated, the hotel room's price, the facilities they provide, security, attitude of hotel staff, etc. (Soulidou et al., 2018). Research studies have stated that it is very important to understand the needs of the people so that we can provide quality services. Choosrichom stated that to determine the guest's choice, a few factors must be considered such as safety, security, staff service, quality, location, room, and facilities (Choosrichom, 2011). As people have many options; thus, it becomes very crucial for hotel managers to predict the behavior of customers and prepare packages, promotions, and marketing strategies to attract them (Soulidou et al., 2018). Organizations need to understand the customers' needs, as it is advantageous for their gain (Baruca& Civre, 2012). If two hotels are available at the same location, at a lower price and a higher price, the cheaper prices will stand over the higher priced hotels (Yao et al., 2005).

Few researchers have explained the competition among different hotels through vertical and horizontal differentiation (Sánchez et al., 2020). Vertical differentiation is when a customer can measure a product's value in terms of various measurable factors. Price is the main determinant of vertical differentiation. Whereas, chain

affiliation is an example of horizontal differentiation (Becerra et al., 2013). Location is another factor that increases the competition among hotels and analyses how it affects the hotels' sustainability because of the distance (Lee et al., 2015).

Numerous studies have shown that there are differences in hotel selection among different types of travelers as they have different purposes such as preferences, rating patterns, and satisfaction (Radojevic, 2018). Customers select their hotel as per their needs and their preferences. There is a huge difference in the selection of hotel with regard to the different types of travelers (Banerjee & Chua, 2016). Researchers have found that the preferences of business travelers and leisure travelers are different. Business travelers give more importance to a hotel that functions smoothly (Dubé & Renaghan, 1999) and their trip is because of work purposes (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022) whereas leisure travelers give importance to a hotel that provides comfort to the guests (Banerjee & Chua, 2016) because their motivation is to relax, spend quality time with friends and family (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022). According to (Lockeyer, 2002), the hotel selection process is the main important aspect of hotel decision making process.

The generations studied in the research paper are gen X, gen Y, and gen Z. Generation X is realistic, family oriented and are in their mid-career. They have grown up in constant political, technological, and environmental changes. Thus, hotels are adapting to their changing characteristics to serve them in a better manner (Sima, 2016). Millennials or Gen Y and Gen Z want their lives to be simple without complications. They are very much aware of what their needs are and what they want. They are technology-driven; lack patience, when it comes to any products or service, and want it to be very fast. Millennials are looking for making experiences, they are ready to spend money for the experience (Ramgade & Kumar, 2021). As Generation-Z is technology driven, they want everything on their own, learning by using different social media apps. The hotels are today getting ready and technologically developed to serve Generation Z guests (Ramgade & Kumar, 2021). A study conducted in Greece reveals that customers' most important hotel selection factor is cleanliness followed by price and staff behavior (Soulidou et al., 2018). A study in Thailand reveals that safety and security are the most important influential factors when customers are selecting a hotel followed by location, room and facilities, service qualities (Choosrichom, 2011). Thus, the literature reviews show that there are various studies regarding hotel selection process. However, there is a need to study hotel selection process and the factors that affect the thought process of a customer to select a hotel as per their generation from Indian perspective.

Price is what a guest or customer pays for a product or service. The perceived price of a hotel depends upon the guests who are willing to pay (Guillet & Mohammed, 2015). A study by Dolnicar (2002) extracted 173 hotel attributes from 21 different journal articles and stated that price is one of the important attributes. Therefore, we propose the first hypothesis is proposed that

H1: Price is the most preferred attribute while selecting a hotel.

Geographic location is a competitive factor for the hotel and remains a potential factor for a customer while selecting a hotel (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022). Hotels are preferred near city center with transportation facility as location matters to guests (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed

H2: Location is the most preferred attribute while selecting a hotel.

Baruca & Civre, (2012) stated that price is one of the important attributes. Revenue managers segment customers so that they can offer better rates. Safety and security remain one of the main attributes while selecting a hotel. Occupancy rates will be high when the guests are satisfied with the safety and security of the hotel properties (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022). With several terrorist attacks in different hotel properties in Mumbai the hoteliers have become aware and have taken precaution by installing metal detectors, smoke detectors, electronic locks to keep the premises safe (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022). According to researchers, safety and security are considered as important factors (Soulidou et al., 2018). Thus, the next hypothesis is

H3: Safety and security are the most preferred attribute while selecting a hotel.

Facilities and services are also important factors (Losada et al., (2017). Business travelers and leisure travelers need for facilities are different and so are the amenities. For e.g., business travelers would need fast internet connection, parking facility, conference facility whereas leisure travelers will need entertainment, gym, pool, gaming facilities (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022). Researchers (Jang et al., 2018) have found out from different studies that attributes such as services, facilities, cleanliness, security of room, attractiveness, furnishing of room and lobby influence the hotel selection process. Considering the findings, the next hypothesis proposed is

H4: Facilities and services are most preferred attribute while selecting a hotel.

Perceived value is the perception of a person towards a particular product or service. The perceived value is determined by few types of variables. They are hotel attributes, for example price, hotel rating, reviewer's attributes, customers ratings. Hotel attributes such as cleanliness, location, room, quality of service, and sleep quality determine the perceived value (Ramgade & Kumar, 2021). Different studies show that the perceived value of a customer plays an important role in determining decision making, purchase behaviors, and satisfaction. Furthermore, the studies show it also affects decision making behaviors and consumer consumption (Chiang & Lee, 2013). Hence, the next hypothesis is proposed as per the findings of the literature that

H5: Perceived value is the most preferred attribute while selecting a hotel.

Customers consider online reviews are an attribute while selecting a hotel. Few studies have found that there are two components regarding online reviews. Firstly, open ended text comments which indicate the preferences of tourists, and secondly, numeric ratings which indicate the subjective evaluation of tourists(Gao, et al., 2018). Nowadays online reviews are available to all people which helps to know other people’s opinions about the hotel. Online reviews have an impact on how a customer wants to pay for a particular product. Various reviews are available, making customers choose easily (Jang et al., 2018). Customers share their experiences in the form of comments based on their perceptions (Guo et al., 2017). Previous studies state that customers are likely to get influenced and their choices change greatly after reading online reviews on different OTA platforms (Wang et al., 2020). Based on the findings the last hypothesis is proposed that
H₆: Online reviews are the most significant predictor of the selection of hotels.

2. Methodology

The Cue – utilization theory examines how a consumer evaluates the product on diverse cues or signals and how the cues influence the consumer’s attitude leading to purchase intention. The theory states how a product or service quality is evaluated by a series of cues related to the product or service (Olson & Jacoby,1972). The cues could be either intrinsic (physical attributes of the focal product) or extrinsic (not inherently part of the product but varied). It can be stated that when an individual opts to purchase a vacation the specification of the destination is said to be intrinsic while the reviews of the destination are extrinsic. The study examines the effect of various cues on the guest decisions as the researchers have adopted the cue utilization framework to identify the attributes (Kakaria et al., 2023).

This study aims to provide a framework to understand the differences in the selection of hotel, their preferences, and their decision-making process with respect to types of generations- Generation-X, Millennials, Generation-Z. This research result will provide key attributes and criterion which are important for leisure travelers of different generations.

The objective of the study is to identify different attributes- extrinsic and intrinsic which determine the hotel selection process of different generation customers. This research paper uses Cue-utilization theory to find the attributes. Meanwhile, this study result can also help hotels management to provide hotel services that cater to travelers as per their needs, preferences based on their generations. In today's world it has become very important for the managers to understand the behavior of the customers. The attribute score and level values are the other name for part-worth utility. The relevance of each aspect that affects the customer's decision while purchasing something is indicated in numerical numbers. This is also known as conjoint analysis.

The research survey uses conjoint analysis to examine the most preferred hotel attribute while a customer is choosing a hotel. Conjoint analysis is a prominent technique for determining which features a product should have by assessing consumers' trade-offs between discretized factors. This analysis helps the researchers to understand the different cues which are preferred by different customers. The data for this study was collected by an online survey conducted throughout India. A link was circulated through different social media channels to collect the data. A conjoint survey was developed using the web-based software named 1000minds which uses the PAPRIKA method Potentially Pairwise Rankings of all Possible Alternatives (Hansen & Omblor, 2008). The survey participants were Indian residents aged 18 years and above who belong to generations- Gen X, Gen Y, & Gen Z. The response obtained were more than minimum number required for conjoint analysis.

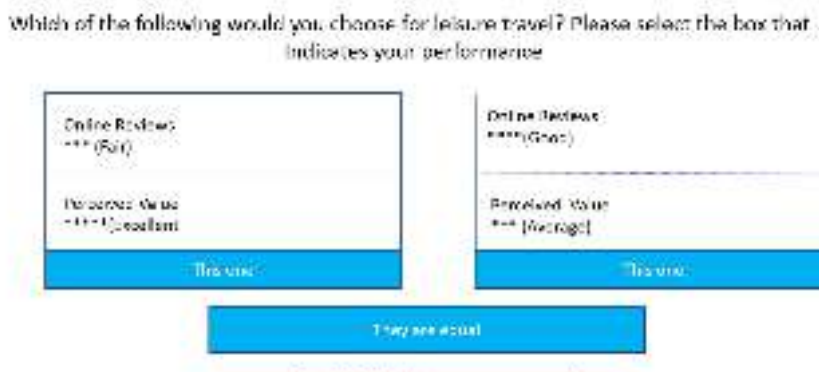


Fig 1. 1000 minds survey question (Source – 1000 minds)

The quality of data will be assessed through the participants' response in different ways using 1000 minds software.

Table 1. Attributes and levels.

Location	1. Outskirts 2. City
Reviews	1. (*) Poor 2. (***) Average 3. (*****) Excellent
Facilities and Services	4. (*) Fair 5. (***) Satisfactory 6. (*****) Excellent
Safety and Security	7. (*) Low 8. (***) Satisfactory 9. (*****) Excellent
Perceived Value	10. (*) Poor 11. (***) Average 12. (*****) Excellent
Price	13. Less than INR 4999/ Day 14. INR 5000 to 9999 15. More than INR 10000/ Day

The research includes 6 attributes, and each has different levels. Participants are asked questions that are adaptively chosen as they respond, and the number of trade-offs that must be made depends on their answers. The potential trade-offs are based on every possible pairing of the two levels of the criteria that may have been asked. Participants either responded directly to them or logically suggested answers to them. The software 1000 minds have created maximum 105 potential trade-offs, based on the consistency of the response of the trade-offs generated in the survey questionnaire. The conceptual framework was tested by a survey method of data collection. Primary data was collected from the three generations namely- Generation- X, Generation-Y and Generation-Z. In this study, the detailed data was examined and interpreted with the help of three different software 1000 minds, SPSS, and Microsoft Excel.

The data for the study was collected from people of different generations. The survey link that was circulated among all generations. For the study 439 survey link was circulated to participants through social media apps from which 312 participated in the survey and 230 participants filled the survey entirely. The data of 230 respondents for conjoint analysis is sufficient as the minimum sample size range is 100-200(Hansen& Ombler, 2008). The data collection methods used by researchers are convenient sampling and snowball sampling. The survey link was shared with all participants through social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn and all participants were requested to share the link with their contacts.

3. Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile

Results on the demographic characteristics of the respondents show that 49.1% are male, 49.6% female, and 1.3% are others. The data collected were 26.52% of participants of Generation Z, 53.91% of them are Generation Y and remaining from Generation X. The main purpose of their visit to the hotel is to visit friends and relatives 27.8% out of all. With regards to the education of the respondents 50.9% of them are post graduated, remaining are graduated who completed high school or have an education level lesser than high school. Regarding income, 71 participants have selected two options for less than 2 lakhs and 2-5 lakhs income. Here we assume they fall into the category of millennials and Gen Z. 69.1% of participants have visited the hotel in the last 6 months. The result also shows that 54.3% of participants have opted for well-known brands, meaning they are more likely to go for well-known hotel brands over unknown, whereas it indicates that 22.2% of participants go for any kind of brands (well known or unknown). In the same case, 23.5% of participants showed that they do not have any preference regarding the brand choice.

It is a complex decision for a guest to make a choice regarding his/her hotel accommodation and even hoteliers have difficulty to fulfil all the changing needs and expectations of guests (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022). The study aims to provide factors that influence the decision-making process and preferences of customers from different generations. In today's world, customer behavior is unpredictable, so it is essential for hoteliers to know about the customers generations to cater to their expectations.

Table 2 Part worth utilities for overall participants

attributes		overall	Gen x	Gen Y	Gen Z	Significance
Safety and Security	(*) Low	0%	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
	(***) Satisfactory	13.1%	11.68	13.08	14.68	3.37*
Perceived value	(*****) Excellent	22.2%	20.93	22.07	24.06	2.97
	(*) Poor	0%	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
	(***) Average	12.9%	12.11	13.52	11.70	2.68
	(*****) Excellent	21.1%	20.08	21.64	20.76	1.28
Facilities and services	(*) Fair	0%	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
	(***) Satisfactory	12.2%	13.46	12.25	10.64	3.16*
	(*****) Excellent	19.6%	20.41	19.31	19.54	.55
Online Reviews	(*) Poor	0%	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
	(***) Average	12.4%	13.44	16.36	11.41	1.76
	(*****) Excellent	19.5%	19.53	19.04	20.88	1.37
Location	Outskirts	0%	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
	City	10.7%	12.31	11.04	8.19	4.93*
price	Less than INR 4999/ Day	0%	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
	INR 5000 to 9999	3.4%	3.79	3.37	3.08	.41
	More than INR 10000/ Day	6.8%	6.73	6.89	6.57	.04

* Relevant relative importance values are in bold and sum up to 100 within a column.

* Zero relative importance represents the lowest level of each attribute.

Table 3. Attribute ranking

Attributes	Overall	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Safety and Security	1	1	1	1
Perceived value	2	3	2	2
Facilities and services	3	2	3	4
Online Reviews	4	4	4	2
Location	5	5	5	5
Price	6	6	6	6



Fig 1. Attributes and Preference Value (in %)

The research finding suggests that price is the least preferred attribute for someone selecting or choosing a hotel. For each generation, findings suggest that price is their last preference, so the hypothesis (H1) is not supported. All other attributes have importance and preference than price. Among the three generations the participants selected the highest-level option- a room price of more than INR 10,000/day. Generation Z (under

the age 22) although lack the buying capacity, still choose the highest possible price option considering their high living cost and want for experience. However, price is an important factor. The research finding shows that price is an essential factor for both leisure and business travelers (Kim et al., 2017).

The location of the hotel property is the 5th preference for all generations. The majority of participants from all generations prefer city hotels rather than staying in a hotel which are in the outskirts. Even generation wise analysis shows that their 5th preference is location. The third hypothesis (H3) which is safety and security has been preferred by all generation people as the first preference. Considering all the facts in today's world everyone might be concerned about safety and security. Therefore, it is an important attribute. The attribute safety and security has been given the most importance by generation Z (24.06%) out of all three generations. Even other researchers have found that safety and security are important factors in selecting a hotel (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022).

Facilities and services (H4) have emerged as the third preferred attribute. Whether a leisure traveler or a business, every guest looks for the facilities and services provided by the hotel. Therefore, 4th hypothesis is accepted. However, there are some differences when we evaluate the data from the different generation wise. As the research, facilities and services have ranked number two for generation X, whereas for generation Y it is three and generation Z the rank is four. Research suggests that perceived value plays a crucial role while selecting a hotel. Thus, hypothesis five (H5) is accepted. A research also reveals that perceived value is an important attribute (Choosrichom, 2011). The data that has been collected shows that for both generation X and generation Z, the perceived value rank is three, whereas for generation Y the attribute rank is two. Through this research study, we can state that online reviews are not as important as safety, security and perceived value. Overall, online review rank in 4. However, when we analyze the data generation-wise, it shows that generation Z prefers to check online reviews before selecting a hotel, which is crucial for them. As mentioned in the introduction and other research papers, generation Z is technology savvy; therefore, the attribute is important.

4. Conclusion

It is an extremely complex decision for a guest to make a choice regarding their hotel accommodation. In this process of choice making, even hoteliers have difficulty to fulfil all the changing needs and expectations of the guests (Nutsugbodo et al., 2022). The study aims to provide factors that influence the decision-making process and the preference of guests from different generations to cater to the needs as per their expectations. Earlier research studies findings suggest that price is a main attribute for guest choice for generation-X and generation-Y but after conducting research it is shown that price is not an important factor for any generation. Although Generation- X has more buying power as compared to Generation-Y, they are more cautious while spending money. Generation-Y has experiences in life and their living standard is high though money is not an important factor for them.

Generation X is tech savvy and use their mobile phone quite often to understand the services that are provided by the different hotels for which online reviews are one of the important factors while selecting a hotel. Generation-X is between the age group of 42-57 who are very cautious about safety and security, while generation-Z is very young, they are not cautious about their safety and security as much as generation-X. The research study has found that safety and security are important factors for all generations. This knowledge about the customers will help the marketing team of hotel to market the services according to the needs and requirements of the customers in different generations. The result of the study shows that the most important attributes that influence customer preference are safety and security. The study findings also suggest that most participants have chosen city as their preferred location to the outskirts. Hence, it is an opportunity for entrepreneurs or chain hotels to open hotels in city areas considering all the attributes of different generations.

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