



## YOUNG GENERATION'S UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ITS IMPACT ON TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

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### ABSTRACT

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This study explores the understanding of the youth generation about sustainable tourism and its impact on their travel behavior. Indonesia, as a country with significant tourism potential, faces challenges in ensuring sustainable growth in its tourism sector. The youth generation, with high environmental awareness and access to information through social media, plays a vital role in promoting sustainable tourism practices. The importance of this research lies in the need to understand the extent to which the youth generation's understanding can be translated into concrete actions in choosing environmentally-friendly destinations and participating in responsible activities. The aim of this study is to measure the youth's understanding of sustainable tourism and

analyze its impact on their travel behavior. The method used is descriptive quantitative with a questionnaire directed to youth aged 18-35 years in Indonesia. The results show that 76.90% of respondents agree that the youth generation plays an important role in promoting sustainable tourism, but only 68.80% say that this understanding influences their behavior. In conclusion, despite the high awareness among youth, there is a need for improved education and access to information to strengthen this impact. This study provides insights for stakeholders to design more effective strategies to promote sustainable tourism among the youth generation.

**Keywords:** Young Generation; Tourism Sustainability; Tourism Behavior; Tourism Trends

### INTRODUCTION

The younger generation, including students and young professionals, represents a significant demographic group in the tourism industry. Their understanding of sustainable tourism can influence their travel choices and behaviors, which, in turn, impacts the development of sustainable tourism (Rosanto & Carennia, 2022). Sustainable tourism has become a critical issue in the modern era, aligning with the growing awareness of the importance of preserving the environment, culture, and the economic well-being of local communities (Kim & Park, 2020). Unsustainable tourism can lead to environmental degradation, a



decline in the quality of life for local residents, and the loss of cultural heritage. Therefore, the adoption of sustainable tourism practices is becoming increasingly urgent (Nyaupane, 2023).

The younger generation, encompassing Millennials and Generation Z, is a population segment with significant influence on global tourism trends (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). They are known to be more environmentally conscious, technologically connected, and open to change compared to previous generations. With extensive access to information through the internet and social media, the younger generation holds great potential to promote and implement sustainable tourism practices (Hysa, 2021). However, the level of understanding among the younger generation regarding sustainable tourism still requires further exploration, particularly in terms of their knowledge of sustainability concepts and the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities. It is also crucial to assess whether this understanding influences their travel behavior, such as choosing eco-friendly destinations, staying in accommodations that support sustainability, and participating in responsible tourism activities (Passafaro, 2020).

The importance of this research lies in understanding to what extent the knowledge of the younger generation can be translated into concrete actions, such as choosing eco-friendly destinations and participating in responsible tourism activities. This study aims to measure the level of understanding of sustainable tourism among the youth and analyze its impact on their travel behavior (Ardiansyah et al., 2024). The findings of this research are expected to provide significant insights for stakeholders in the tourism industry, including policymakers, industry players, and non-governmental organizations, in designing effective strategies to promote sustainable tourism among the younger generation (Veronica & Rivabelle, 2024). Indonesia, with its vast tourism potential, faces significant challenges in ensuring the sustainable development of its tourism sector. With its remarkable natural and cultural diversity, Indonesia has the opportunity to become a leader in the implementation of sustainable tourism practices (Rosanto & Carennia, 2022). Therefore, the understanding and participation of the younger generation is crucial to achieving this goal (Veronica, 2024).

To achieve this goal, this study will explore the younger generation's understanding of sustainability in the tourism industry and how this understanding influences their travel behavior. The focus of this research includes measuring their knowledge of sustainability principles, as well as their understanding of the environmental and social impacts of tourism activities. In addition, this study will investigate the relationship between the younger generation's understanding of sustainable tourism and their travel behaviors, such as destination choices, accommodation preferences, and participation in tourism activities.

The behavior of young tourists, especially Millennials and Gen Z, is increasingly influenced by factors such as accessibility, cost, and social media-based experiences. According to Dewi et al. (2020), in Banyumas Regency, despite the presence of many man-made tourist destinations with attractive photo spots, 76.92% of young tourists prefer natural tourist destinations. This decision is influenced by ease of access and affordable costs, which are important aspects for a generation that often has limited budgets, such as students. This trend also indicates that young tourists tend to seek more natural and authentic experiences, which they can enjoy with

friends, as 90% of them prefer to travel in groups rather than individually. This is also related to the desire to share special moments through photos and videos on social media.

Sujibto & TS (2021) add that for young tourists, especially Millennials and Gen Z, tourism holds different meanings, from seeking refreshment to experiencing new cultures. This generation tends to prefer nature-based tourism offering a cool and tranquil atmosphere, which they can enjoy while showcasing their experiences on social media, especially Instagram. In this context, selfies and social media posts become ways to capture memories and attract attention, creating a promotional spiral through electronic word-of-mouth. Social media also serves as a platform to find references for tourist destinations and reinforce their travel decisions.

Wiweka et al. (2019) explain that young generations tend to use a "smart" approach in planning their trips, leveraging technology to simplify every stage of their travel journey, from planning to post-trip activities. Social media, particularly Instagram, is the main platform for seeking information and sharing experiences. The primary factor influencing their destination choice is budget, as many of them are students, as well as the availability of leisure time and good health. Furthermore, considerations regarding environmental sustainability, safety, and the well-being of local communities are also important when choosing travel destinations.

This study aims to uncover the relationship between the level of sustainability understanding and the adoption of eco-friendly tourism practices, including its influence on destination preferences, travel styles, and attitudes toward environmental and cultural preservation (Iskandar, 2021). The research findings are expected to provide significant insights for developing more effective educational strategies and campaigns to raise awareness and promote sustainable tourism practices among the younger generation. The results are also anticipated to support environmental and cultural conservation efforts and encourage the emergence of more responsible and environmentally conscious travelers.

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive quantitative method to explore young people's understanding of sustainable tourism and its impact on their travel behavior. The data includes both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through surveys using structured questionnaires with a Likert scale to measure respondents' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding the research topic (Simamora, 2022). The questionnaires were distributed online via social media and messaging apps, employing digital survey distribution best practices to ensure a wider reach (Couper, 2008). Screening questions were incorporated to confirm that respondents met the research criteria, such as age (18-35 years) and having traveled at least once in the past six months.

The sampling method used is non-probability sampling, specifically a convenience purposive sampling technique, chosen for its practicality in exploratory studies where representativeness is secondary to obtaining insightful data (Etikan, 2016). A minimum sample size of 30 was determined, aligning with general quantitative research standards. However, a target sample size of 200

respondents was set to enhance the reliability and generalizability of results (Olsson, 2022).

Data was analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel. These tools facilitated descriptive statistical analysis, including frequency distribution and percentage calculations, to identify respondent characteristics and analyze patterns in responses.

For the Likert scale interpretation, the study employed the following formula to calculate the interval for response categorization (Mondiana et al., 2018):

$$I = \frac{100}{\text{Total score (Likert)}}$$

Using this formula, the interval or range used is as follows:

0% - 19.99% = Strongly Disagree

20% - 39.99% = Disagree

40% - 59.99% = Neutral

60% - 79.99% = Agree

80% - 100% = Strongly Agree

The inclusion of this interval categorization ensures transparency in data interpretation and allows for clear differentiation between varying levels of agreement among respondents.

The descriptive quantitative approach was chosen for its ability to provide an overview of young people's understanding of sustainable tourism and its implications for travel behavior. The use of a Likert scale is theoretically justified as it facilitates quantification of subjective attitudes, making it suitable for capturing complex psychological constructs (Simamora, 2022). Furthermore, the selection of non-probability sampling aligns with the exploratory nature of the study, which prioritizes depth and insight over representativeness.

Secondary data was obtained from reputable sources, including academic journals, government reports, and previous studies on sustainable tourism (Budeanu et al., 2016). This data complements the primary data and provides a broader contextual understanding of the topic.

By utilizing primary and secondary data along with reliable statistical tools, this study adopts a broad and transparent approach to examining young people's views on sustainable tourism.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will present and discuss the research findings to offer a more thorough understanding of the results gathered from the respondents. To begin, the following chart displays the respondent characteristics based on demographic aspects such as gender, age, and occupation. This chart provides perspectives on the participants' profiles, which will serve as the foundation for further analysis in the upcoming sections.

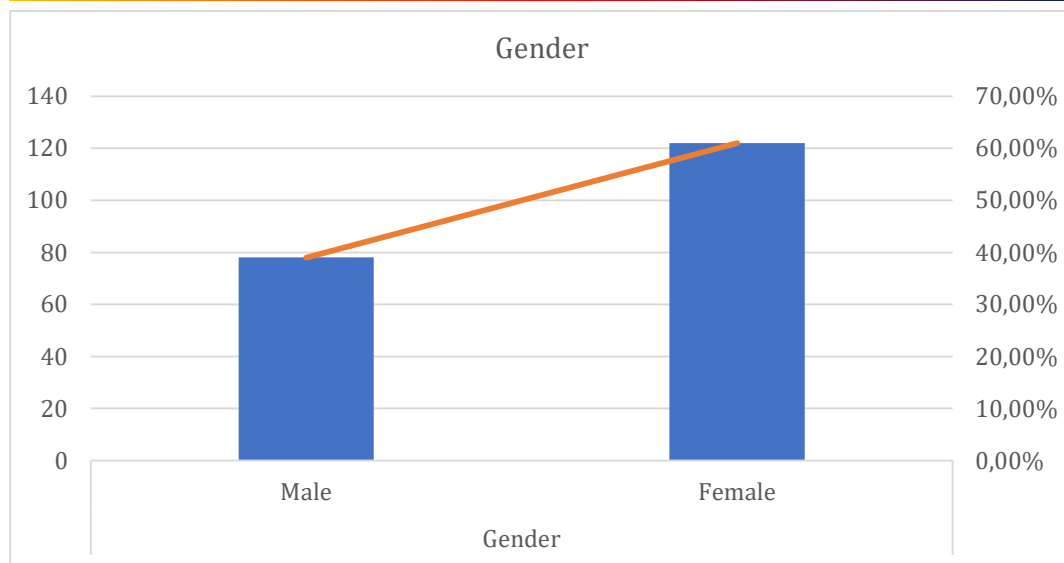


Figure 1. Respondent Characteristics Based on Gender  
Resource: Data processed by the researcher (2024)

In this study, the respondent data collected shows that out of the total 200 respondents who participated in this study, 78 people (39%) are male, while 122 people (61%) are female.

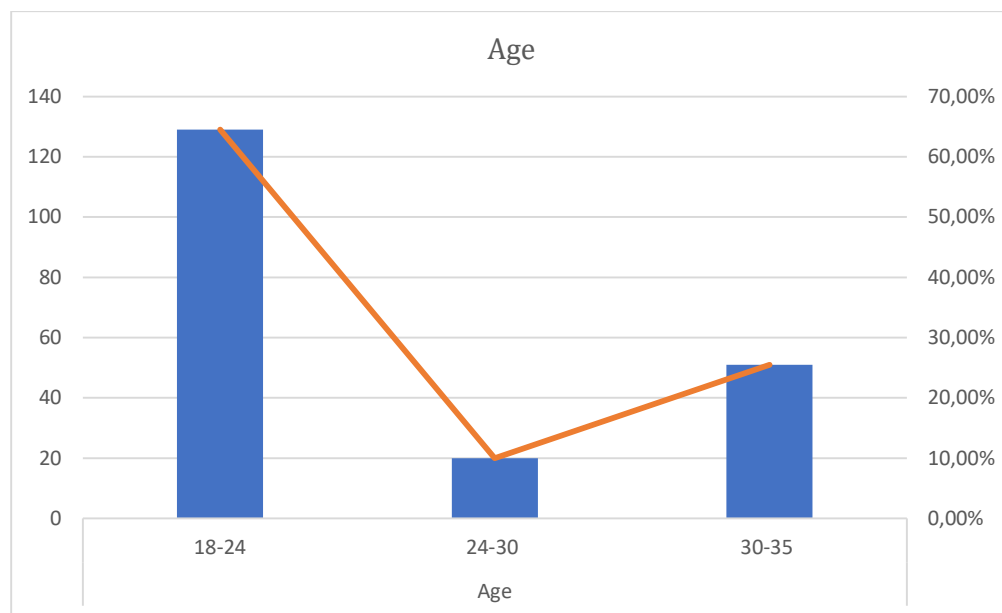


Figure 2. Respondent Characteristics Based on Age  
Resource: Data processed by the researcher (2024)

In terms of age, the majority of the respondents, 129 people (64.5%), are aged between 18 and 24 years. A total of 20 respondents (10%) are in the 24 to 30 years age range, and 51 respondents (25.5%) are aged between 30 and 35 years.

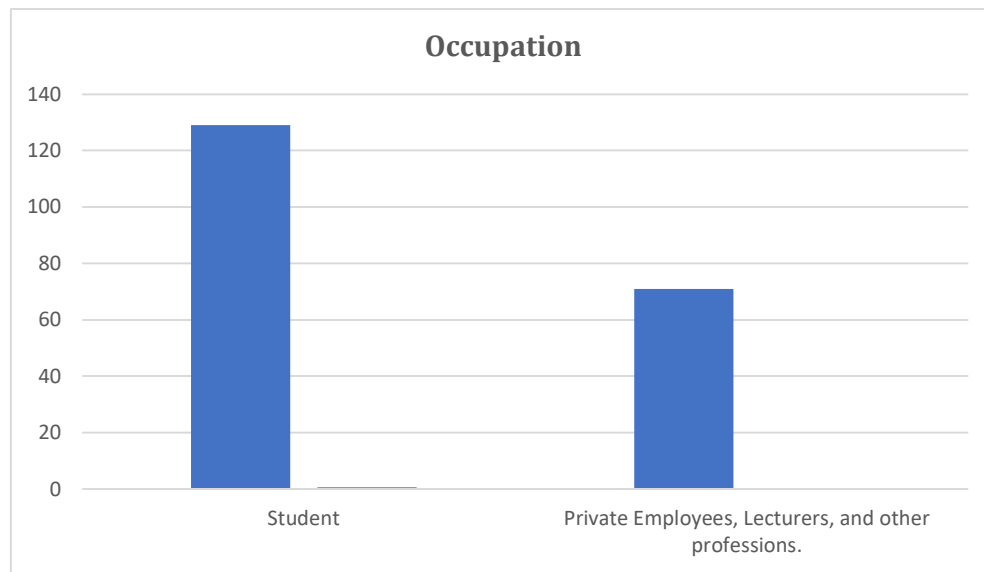


Figure 3. Respondent Characteristics Based on Occupation  
Resource: Data processed by the researcher (2024)

In terms of occupation, the majority of respondents, 129 people (64.5%), are students. Meanwhile, 71 people (35.5%) are private employees, lecturers, or have other professions.

Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents are females aged between 18 and 24 years who are currently pursuing their studies as students.

From the 12 questionnaire questions with a Likert scale, here is a summary of the results from 200 respondents, using the formula:  $T \times P_n$ , where  $T$  = the number of respondents who selected and  $P_n$  = the Likert score number chosen.

Table 1. Summary of Respondent Assessment Results

No.	Question	Score	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1.	The young generation plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism practices.		10	17	36	68	69
2.	Understanding the concept of sustainable tourism can influence the travel behavior of the younger generation.		16	39	33	65	47
3.	The chosen tourist destination supports environmental sustainability and local culture.		23	34	42	62	39
4.	Understanding the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities influences my choice of travel destinations.		12	16	28	78	66

5.	I participate in environmentally and culturally responsible tourism activities.	8	11	44	74	63
6.	I am looking for information about responsible behavior when traveling for tourism.	8	23	40	62	67
7.	I participate in efforts to preserve the environment and culture while traveling.	13	34	41	61	51
8.	Education and awareness about sustainable tourism can shape the travel behavior of the younger generation.	4	3	52	68	73
9.	The younger generation has a moral responsibility to support sustainable tourism for the sake of environmental sustainability.	12	15	34	66	73
10	I look for information about environmentally friendly tourism practices before choosing a travel destination.	23	37	55	42	43
11	I take concrete actions to support sustainable tourism practices, such as reducing waste or supporting local initiatives while traveling.	11	14	42	77	56
12	The younger generation has great potential to educate and promote sustainable tourism practices through social media and the internet.	8	11	41	68	72

Resource: Data processed by the researcher (2024)

After all the results are summed up, the total score for each question is as follows:

Table 2. Total Score for Each Questionnaire Question

Question	Total Score
1	769
2	688
3	660
4	770
5	773
6	757
7	703
8	803
9	773
10	645
11	753

Resource: Data processed by the researcher (2024)

The next step is to find the highest score (Y) and the lowest score (X) for the assessment items using the following formulas:

$Y = \text{Highest Likert score} \times \text{number of respondents}$

$X = \text{Lowest Likert score} \times \text{number of respondents}$

With a total of 200 respondents, the highest score for the item "Strongly Agree" is  $5 \times 200 = 1,000$ , while the item "Strongly Disagree" is  $1 \times 200 = 200$ .

The interpretation of respondents' assessment of the young generation's understanding of sustainable tourism and its impact on tourism behavior is based on the values obtained using the % Index formula, which is:

$$\text{Index Formula \%} = \frac{\text{Total Skor}}{Y \times 100}$$

The criteria for interpreting scores based on the interval are as follows:

0% - 19.99% = Strongly Disagree

20% - 39.99% = Disagree

40% - 59.99% = Neutral

60% - 79.99% = Agree

80% - 100% = Strongly Agree

Here are the results of the calculation for each question item using the % index formula:

Table 3. Results of Item Question Calculation

No.	Question	Total Score	Index %	Criteria
1.	The young generation plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism practices.	769	76,90	Agree
2.	Understanding the concept of sustainable tourism can influence the travel behavior of the younger generation.	688	68,80	Agree
3.	The chosen tourist destination supports environmental sustainability and local culture.	660	66,00	Agree
4.	Understanding the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities influences my choice of travel destinations.	770	77,00	Agree
5.	I participate in environmentally and culturally responsible tourism activities.	773	77,30	Agree
6.	I am looking for information about responsible behavior when traveling for tourism	757	75,70	Agree
7.	I participate in efforts to preserve the environment and culture while traveling.	703	70,30	Agree



8.	Education and awareness about sustainable tourism can shape the travel behavior of the younger generation.	803	80,30	Strongly agree
9.	The younger generation has a moral responsibility to support sustainable tourism for the sake of environmental sustainability.	773	77,30	Agree
10.	I look for information about environmentally friendly tourism practices before choosing a travel destination.	645	64,50	Agree
11.	I take concrete actions to support sustainable tourism practices, such as reducing waste or supporting local initiatives while traveling.	753	75,30	Agree
12.	The younger generation has great potential to educate and promote sustainable tourism practices through social media and the internet.	785	78,50	Agree
Average			73,99	Agree

Resource: Data processed by the researcher (2024)

As many as 76.90% of respondents agree that the younger generation plays an important role in promoting sustainable tourism practices, indicating a high level of awareness among the youth about the importance of promoting responsible and sustainable tourism. Understanding sustainability in tourism positively affects the behavior of young tourists, although not as significantly as other aspects, with a result of only 68.80%. This suggests the need for increased education on sustainability concepts to strengthen their impact on tourism behavior.

Respondents generally agree that their choice of travel destinations supports environmental sustainability and local culture, with a survey result of 66.00%. This shows that sustainability aspects are beginning to be considered when choosing tourist destinations, though further improvements are possible. Understanding the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities greatly influences destination choices, with a survey result of 77.00%, indicating that the younger generation cares about the impacts generated by their tourism activities. As many as 77.30% of respondents agree that they participate in responsible tourism activities, reflecting a high commitment among the youth to contribute to sustainability through concrete actions while traveling.

As many as 75.70% of young people tend to seek information about responsible behavior before embarking on a trip, indicating their concern for the impact of their actions during travel. A total of 70.30% of respondents participate in the preservation of the environment and culture while traveling. Although this can still be improved, it shows an awareness of the importance of conservation. Education and awareness about sustainable tourism are considered very important in shaping responsible tourism behavior, with a survey result of 80.30%. This indicates that educational efforts have a significant impact on influencing the attitudes and actions of the younger generation.

Young people feel a moral responsibility to support sustainable tourism, indicating strong moral values related to environmental sustainability among the younger generation. Although still in the "Agree" category, the search for information about eco-friendly tourism practices before selecting a destination has

the lowest index at 64.50%. This suggests that there is a need to raise awareness and improve accessibility to information related to environmentally friendly tourism practices. Many respondents stated that they take concrete actions to support sustainable tourism practices, showing that young people not only have awareness but are also ready to take practical steps to support sustainability.

The younger generation is recognized as having great potential in educating and promoting sustainable tourism practices through social media and the internet, indicating that social media can be an effective tool in spreading awareness and sustainable tourism practices. Based on the analysis results, the younger generation overall shows high awareness and commitment to sustainable tourism practices, with an average index of 73.99%, falling into the "Agree" category. Education and awareness about sustainable tourism received the highest index at 80.30%, showing a significant impact in shaping responsible tourism behavior. However, the search for information about eco-friendly tourism practices before choosing a destination has the lowest index at 64.50%, indicating an area that needs improvement. The younger generation also plays an active role in responsible tourism activities, seeking information, and taking concrete actions to support sustainability. They also have great potential in promoting sustainable tourism practices through social media and the internet. With improved education and access to information, young people can play a bigger role in supporting sustainable tourism in the future.

To support these findings, various recent quantitative studies emphasize the significant role of young people in the development of sustainable tourism. Research by Osin et al. (2021) shows that millennials actively contribute to the development of local wisdom-based tourist villages through their innovation and commitment to the preservation of culture and the environment. Additionally, research by Šaparnienė et al. (2022) strengthens this by identifying that the majority of young people (50.6%) exhibit behavior oriented toward sustainability, and 71.5% prioritize the long-term socio-economic well-being of their region, which can be achieved through efficient management and active community participation.

Generation Z, in particular, demonstrates significant involvement in promoting sustainable tourism through social media. Research by Eissn (2024) highlights the role of social media in facilitating their participation, with interactive digital content such as Instagram posts and stories focused on sustainable tourism. They are interested in visual content, such as photos of natural landscapes, short videos, and campaigns with hashtags encouraging participation, as well as actively posting about eco-friendly tips and sustainability-themed competitions. This demonstrates their great potential to become agents of change in promoting sustainable tourism, with interactive social media strategies that can encourage them to engage more deeply in responsible and environmentally friendly tourism practices.

Moreover, research by Kurniasari et al. (2024) highlights Generation Z's positive perception of the implementation of sustainable tourism in Borobudur, which includes economic benefits and social empowerment. This destination has successfully created job opportunities for the local community, including the empowerment of women in the tourism sector. However, the main challenge that remains is environmental preservation, which is becoming an increasing concern for Generation Z. They believe that environmental degradation and pollution can reduce the quality of their travel experience. Therefore, destinations like Borobudur

need to focus more on better environmental management to enhance their competitiveness in the global tourism market, especially among young travelers who are increasingly concerned about environmental sustainability in their travel decisions.

However, despite the awareness and knowledge that young people have regarding culture and the potential for cultural tourism, a study by Puspitasari Rochman & Ziauddin Mas'ud (2023) shows that their networking and social interactions in efforts to preserve culture and develop cultural tourism still need to be improved. This aligns with other findings that show, while many young people are aware of the importance of sustainable tourism, they still lack initiative in seeking information about eco-friendly tourism practices before choosing a travel destination. These findings suggest a need to strengthen their initiatives to be more engaged in concrete actions that support sustainability.

## CONCLUSIONS

The younger generation, including students and young professionals, plays an important role in promoting sustainable tourism practices. They generally have a good understanding of sustainability concepts in tourism, but there is still room for improvement, particularly in understanding environmentally-friendly tourism practices before choosing destinations. Their awareness of the importance of responsible tourism is quite high, with the majority choosing destinations that support environmental sustainability and local culture, as well as participating in responsible tourism activities. Education and awareness about sustainable tourism are essential in shaping responsible tourism behavior, with social media serving as a primary tool for spreading information and sustainable tourism practices among the younger generation.

Suggestions for future research include the development of intensive educational programs on sustainable tourism, the integration of sustainable tourism concepts into formal education curricula, and the creation of engaging media and educational materials. Additionally, it is recommended to establish collaborations with industry and government entities. The aim of these suggestions is to enhance the understanding and behavior of the younger generation in supporting sustainable tourism.

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