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In Search for Meaning? Modelling Generation Z Spiritual Travel Motivation Scale—The Case of Serbia

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Abstract: Spiritual travel is increasingly viewed as an asset for the development of sustainable tourism. A great deal of research has been conducted on travel motivation to comprehend spiritually-motivated travel, but less is known about Generation Z’s travel motivation. This subject is relevant since Generation Z will represent the travel market of the future. Therefore, managers of spiritually-themed locations must understand the characteristics of their prospective visitors (Generation Z) in order to create more comprehensive tourism offerings. We use exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to validate the scale and inferential statistics to analyse the data regarding the main socio-demographic characteristics. Spiritual and Canonical Experiences, Escapism, Ascetic Life, and Social Interactions, Natural and Cultural Values, Religious Events, and Active Participation were identified as the main dimensions in this study. In our conclusion, the ramifications of the findings for destination management and marketing are examined.

Keywords: travel motivation; spiritual travel; Generation Z; sustainability; Serbia



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1. Introduction

Because spiritual tourism is difficult to define, the terms ‘religious,’ ‘faith,’ or ‘pilgrimage’ tourism are often used interchangeably. In truth, most religious sites, monuments, and destinations also draw tourists who may or may not be religious. Some tourists have various motivations for visiting a sacred place, such as religious belief, an affinity to the architecture, relaxation, or curiosity. In a nutshell, spiritual tourism focuses on exploring life factors that lay beyond the individual and contributing to body-mind-spirit balance. These may or may not be religious in nature [1].

Spiritually motivated tourism is considered by most as the oldest form of human travel [2]. Thousands of years ago, people travelled miles away from their homes, steered by religious and spiritual motives. Nowadays, religious and spiritual beliefs are rapidly changing. Apart from religious and spiritual beliefs, traditional religious dynamics in many Western countries have been in constant decline, especially among younger generations. For example, more than a third of US Generation Z (those born after 1995) identify as religiously unaffiliated. It is not only a lack of religious affiliation that distinguishes Generation Z from Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and the Silent generation; they are also far more likely to identify as atheist or agnostic. Case in point, 18% of Gen Z affirmatively identify as either atheist (9%) or agnostic (9%) [3]. Since there are quite a wide array of motives which can drive tourists to visit religious sites, it must be suspected that these motivations

would differ among various generational cohorts as well. Although religious and spiritual travel motivations have been extensively researched in general, less is known about those motivations among the youth, especially among Generation Z [4].

Many see the high number of tourists worldwide as direct support to help preserve cultural sites and artefacts, foster environmental protection, and promote peace and security. In that sense, it is important to understand the travel motivations of Generation Z as future tourists and prepare tourism offerings accordingly [5].

Generally, tourist motivations are straightforward and coincide with predicted behaviour in destinations that draw tourists with a dominant attraction, such as a beach or spa [6]. In other words, understanding spiritual tourist motivations is more challenging, especially in the case of multi-attraction destinations that include historical sites, monuments, museums, art galleries, buildings, and other architectural structures, parks, events, and festivals, night-time entertainment, and a variety of other services that are interconnected with the tourism offerings [7]. This is the reason the study focuses on Serbia as an example of a multi-attraction destination. Serbia is a country with numerous sacred sites which have great potential to be included in the world's religious tourism map. At the same time, the country brands itself is a melting pot full of music festivals (from electronic to traditional and folk music), bustling nightlife, and business events, and also presents rich cultural and natural beauties [6,8–10].

Contemporary spiritual travel is influenced by various motivations, including mainstream travel motivation [11] and increasingly other sorts of niche travel motivations or motivations that are not traditionally associated with sacred sites, such as relaxation [12]. Thus, to provide more complete tourism offerings for spiritual destinations characteristic of their future visitors (Generation Z), managers of the destinations need to understand what types of tourists constitute the major groups.

To this end, this paper tries to provide an answer to the following two research questions:

- RQ₁ What are the dimensions of Generation Z's spiritual travel motivations?
- RQ₂ Are there differences in terms of respondents' gender, level of education, urban/rural environment, and questions about religion in relation to the GZSTMS scale?

The contribution of this research is to test and validate a scale for Generation Z spiritual travel motivation, as the scale dives deeper into understanding specific profiles of Generation Z tourists when visiting spiritual destinations. Further, it gives practical recommendations for destination management and marketing based on the characteristics of tourists' profiles.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Motivations for Visiting Spiritual Places

Religion and spirituality are two of the key reasons people travel; hence many places have integrated spiritual sites and events into their tourism offerings [1,13]. Andriotis [14] identified five interconnected factors that represent the journey to religious places: spiritual, secular, cultural, educational, and environmental. Many motives are defined in the literature; for instance, Brown [15] and Pesut [16] focused their research on travel-related motivations, broadening the definition of spirituality. In religious tourism, spirituality emphasizes the relationship between the experience and secular motivation.

Since spiritual journeys and visits are no longer the primary or predominant reasons for travel, religious tourism is now intimately linked to vacation and cultural tourism. In his study, Keeling [17] stated that worship and prayer are the main activities at most religious places. Keeling also discovered people do not just attend religious journeys for religious reasons. This suggests that religious and secular goals frequently overlap. Indeed, there are a variety of reasons why people travel for religious reasons, including impulsive decisions, family ties to a location, well-known figures or events associated with the location, and cultural motivations like a personal interest in historic buildings or artwork. Similar reasons

for visiting have frequently been documented, including the fact that more people go for cultural, educational, or recreational objectives than for spiritual ones.

According to Smith [18], the present trend in spiritual tourism is focused on the pursuit of self-improvement through physical, mental, and creative pursuits. Religious tourism's four dimensions were enumerated by Richards [19]: the lines between 1. spiritual and secular, 2. individual and organized, 3. inner journey and travel to sights, and 4. pilgrimage and cultural tourism. All are part of the continuum of religious tourism, although they are nevertheless becoming increasingly hazy. Researchers also point out that religious travel has evolved over time. This is a result of how individuals view religion's place in modern society. Intriguingly, a lot of perspectives see spirituality as a means of achieving more sustainable development. In this case, youth will have the final role.

2.2. Spirituality and Sustainable Development

One key question that arises in discussions of the spiritual dimension of tourism is the means through which tourists seek and find significance in their lives, experiences of the divine, and a sense of connectivity as they travel [20]. The ability to trigger significant spiritual experiences and transformative spiritual growth arises because of contact with religious and spiritually relevant places during a visit. Additionally, the cross-cultural communication and interaction that accompany spiritual tourism serve as the cornerstones of respect, tolerance, and understanding, which are the core tenets of sustainability.

The development of spiritual tourism can help alleviate poverty, stop rural flight migration, encourage product diversity, and foster a sense of pride among communities and destinations by making responsible and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources. Above all, attaining sustainability requires that the local traditions, spiritual values, and rich cultural heritage of visited destinations are understood and respected and that host communities can directly reap the benefits of tourism development. To achieve sustainability, it is crucial that host communities directly profit from the growth of tourism as well as the customs, spiritual beliefs, and rich cultural heritage of the places people travel to are recognized and protected [21].

3. Methods Used in This Investigation

3.1. The Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study consists of two parts. The first part measured the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (gender, age, level of education and Urban/Rural environment) and also included questions like: Are you a believing person? Do you practice religious rituals? How often do you visit religious objects, and did you attend any religious courses during your education period? The second part of the questionnaire measured religious travel motives, of which 36 items were derived based on the previous work of the listed authors presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Spiritual travel motives (items).

Spiritual Travel Motives	Source
Express love and respect to God	Stamenković and Vujičić [22]
Ask for forgiveness	Apleni and Vallabh [23]
Get closer to something sacred	Stoddard [24]
Pilgrimage	Božić et al. [25]
Healing—mental	Hyde and Herman [26]
Healing—physical	Andriotis [14]
Prayer over relics	Božić et al. [25]

Table 1. *Cont.*

Spiritual Travel Motives	Source
Prayer in front of a miraculous icon	Apleni and Vallabh [23]
Prayer at the tomb of the saint	Rebuya et al. [27]
Mental rest from everyday life	Božić et al. [25]
Adoption of Christian virtues	Božić et al. [25]
Access to the Holy Mysteries: baptism and marriage	Meethan and Ioannides [28]
Confession	Meethan and Ioannides, [28]
Leaving monetary contributions in religious buildings	Hyde and Herman [26]
Consecration of icons and other valuables	Marine-Roig [29]
Washing with consecrated healing water	Duda, Doburzynski [30]
Connecting with your roots and culture	Stamenković and Vujičić [22]
Gaining new knowledge and experiences	Apleni and Vallabh [23]
Getting acquainted with the rules of the way of life in the monastery	Rebuya et al. [27]
A visit to the monastery leads me to search for the meaning of life and my existence	Andriotis [14]
The trip to the monastery offers me a new reality, which replaces the existing one	Marine-Roig [29]
Travelling to monasteries, I meet new and interesting people	Marine-Roig [29]
Hospitality of the inhabitants of the monastery (monks, nuns and novices)	Collins-Kreiner [31]
A trip to the monastery with friends and family	Stamenković and Vujičić [22]
Escape from the urban to a cleaner and natural environment	Cusack and Norman [32]
Historical value of the monastery	Collins-Kreiner [31]
Architectural value of the monastery	Stamenković and Vujičić [22]
The beauty of the nature in which the monastery was built	Marine-Roig [29]
Exploring a legend—an interesting story	Stoddard [24]
Interest in historical figures associated with the monastery	Apleni and Vallabh [23]
Participation in church councils and fairs	Collins-Kreiner [31]
Following modern trends	Stoddard [24]
Volunteering in monastic events and affairs	Stamenković and Vujičić [22]
Tasting and purchase of monastery souvenirs (wine, brandy, honey, cheese)	Apleni and Vallabh [23]
Participation in the school of church singing (chanting)	Stoddard [24]
Participation in the school of icon painting and fresco painting	Rebuya et al. [27]

3.2. Procedure and Data Analysis

This study combines a convenient method for sampling where quantitative data was collected through face-to-face standard paper and pen surveys of Generation Z respondents in September, October, November, and December 2021. The questionnaire was distributed in Novi Sad and Belgrade, and each interview took approximately 10 to 12 min to complete. Respondents were mainly pupils (from public high schools in Belgrade and Novi Sad) and students of two major Universities in Serbia (University of Belgrade and University of Novi Sad), attracting the largest population of students from all around the Republic of Serbia. All respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were asked and agreed to sign the consent form that remains in the repository of the Faculty of Sciences, University

of Novi Sad. Questionnaires were distributed by official social media accounts of the University of Belgrade and the University of Novi Sad. A total of 483 questionnaires were completed, with 13 having missing values and were thereby excluded from further analysis. A total of 470 valid questionnaires were collected. We used exploratory factor analysis to test the potential dimensions of the Generation Z Spiritual Travel Motivation Scale (GZSTMS). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the measurement scale. The Gen Z spiritual travel motivation factors constructed in the proposed model were tested with the maximum likelihood method of structural equation modelling, which evaluates how well a proposed conceptual model with observed indicators and hypothetical constructs explains or fits the data collected [33,34]. Observing the load of each item on the construction variables and using the fit index to test the model fit ensures scale construction validity. The obtained data were processed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 23 (SPSS), which was used for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) calculus, and for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) analysis, authors applied R and RStudio (lavaan, semPlot, psych and semTools packages). For the final analysis, Independent t-test and One-way ANOVA, the authors again used Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 23 (SPSS).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Study Sample Characteristics

The sample consists of 470 respondents within the Gen Z age category. There is a higher number of female respondents in the sample (64.9%), and more respondents come from urban areas. Most of the respondents are in secondary school (40.9%), followed by MSc (26.3%), and then BSc studies (24.3%), which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (N = 470).

Gender		Education	
Male	35.1%	Secondary school	40.9%
Female	64.9%	Faculty BSc	24.3%
Place of residence		Faculty MSc	26.8%
Rural	29.6%	PhD	8.1%
Urban	70.4%		

4.1.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis—Generation Z Spiritual Travel Motivation Scale (GZSTMS)

EFA was performed on the data set of 470 respondents that were randomly selected measuring latent variable on place attachment. The results of EFA (principal component analysis) with Varimax rotation: factor loadings are presented in Table 3. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure yielded 0.948, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity was 13,179.330 (df = 630, $p < 0.000$), showing high significance, and further factor analysis was appropriate. Four factors were extracted explaining at least 61.541% of the total variance. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s α) of all relevant variables in the rotated factor matrix ranged from 0.712 to 0.963 (Table 3), which is above the 0.7 threshold. According to the factor loading scores for each item, four components are interpreted as four different Generation Z Spiritual Travel Motivation factors, which are (Spiritual and Canonical Experiences—SCE, Escapism, Ascetic Life and Social Interactions—EALSI, Natural and Cultural Values—NCV, Religious Events and Active Participation—REAP).

4.1.2. Measurement Model Validity for Gen Z Spiritual Travel Motivation Scale (GZSTMS)—Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The latent factors measurement model was estimated to check for construct validity and reliability using CFA. Initial model fit indices showed moderate results and moderate fit indices, which were below or above the threshold (Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.899

(>0.95), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.892 (>0.95), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.141 (<0.08), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.115 (<0.08), Degrees of freedom (df) = 630, $p < 0.000$), thus revealing potential problems associated with the model; therefore, the modification indices needed to be used. Several items with high residual were excluded (SCE5, SCE10, SCE11, SCE15, EALSI4, EALSI5, EALSI7, EALSI8, EALSI9, NCV2, NCV3, NCV4, REAP2, REAP3) thus defining the model with satisfactory fit (CFI = 0.974, TLI = 0.970, RMSEA = 0.080, SRMR = 0.051, df = 231, $p < 0.000$). Final scale for spiritual travel motivation factors included four latent factors with 22 items in total (Table 4).

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis results.

Factors and Items	Mean	Factor Loadings	Eigen Value	Cronbach's α	Variance Explained (%)
Spiritual and Canonical Experiences—SCE	3.67		15.333	0.963	30.971
SCE1 Express love and respect to God		0.813			
SCE2 Ask for forgiveness		0.827			
SCE3 Get closer to something sacred		0.822			
SCE4 Pilgrimage		0.687			
SCE5 Healing—mental		0.841			
SCE6 Healing—physical		0.802			
SCE7 Prayer over relics		0.823			
SCE8 Prayer in front of a miraculous icon		0.840			
SCE9 Prayer at the tomb of the saint		0.814			
SCE10 Mental rest from everyday life		0.569			
SCE11 Adoption of Christian virtues		0.729			
SCE12 Access to the Holy Mysteries: baptism and marriage		0.624			
SCE13 Confession		0.738			
SCE14 Leaving monetary contributions in religious buildings		0.583			
SCE15 Consecration of icons and other valuables		0.724			
SCE16 Washing with consecrated healing water		0.737			
Escapism, Ascetic Life and Social Interactions—EALSI	3.71		3.579	0.887	13.811
EALSI1 Connecting with your roots and culture		0.355			
EALSI2 Gaining new knowledge and experiences		0.560			
EALSI3 Getting acquainted with the rules of the way of life in the monastery		0.596			
EALSI4 A visit to the monastery leads me to search for the meaning of life and my existence		0.538			
EALSI5 The trip to the monastery offers me a new reality, which replaces the existing one		0.567			
EALSI6 Travelling to monasteries, I meet new and interesting people		0.738			
EALSI7 Hospitality of the inhabitants of the monastery (monks, nuns and novices)		0.660			
EALSI8 A trip to the monastery with friends and family		0.695			
EALSI9 Escape from the urban to a cleaner and natural environment		0.522			
Natural and Cultural Values—NCV	4.03		1.766	0.712	8.541

Table 3. Cont.

Factors and Items	Mean	Factor Loadings	Eigen Value	Cronbach's α	Variance Explained (%)
NCV1 Historical value of the monastery		0.720			
NCV2 Architectural value of the monastery		0.809			
NCV3 The beauty of the nature in which the monastery was built		0.792			
NCV4 Exploring a legend—an interesting story		0.689			
NCV5 Interest in historical figures associated with the monastery		0.441			
Religious Events and Active Participation—REAP	2.88		1.477	0.788	8.218
REAP1 Participation in church councils and fairs		0.466			
REAP2 Following modern trends		0.470			
REAP3 Volunteering in monastic events and affairs		0.572			
REAP4 Tasting and purchase of monastery souvenirs (wine, brandy, honey, cheese)		0.398			
REAP5 Participation in the school of church singing (chanting)		0.760			
REAP6 Participation in the school of icon painting and fresco painting		0.799			

Table 4. Confirmatory factor analysis results.

Motivation	Component			
	SCE	EALSI	NCV	REAP
Express love and respect to God	0.914			
Ask for forgiveness	0.879			
Get closer to something sacred	0.907			
Pilgrimage	0.819			
Healing—physical	0.832			
Prayer over relics	0.955			
Prayer in front of a miraculous icon	0.959			
Prayer at the tomb of the saint	0.951			
Access to the Holy Mysteries: baptism and marriage	0.853			
Confession	0.765			
Leaving monetary contributions in religious buildings	0.837			
Washing with consecrated healing water	0.871			
Connecting with your roots and culture		0.594		
Gaining new knowledge and experiences		0.633		
Getting acquainted with the rules of the way of life in the monastery		0.897		
Travelling to monasteries to meet new and interesting people		0.725		
Historical value of the monastery			0.681	

Table 4. *Cont.*

Motivation	Component			
	SCE	EALSI	NCV	REAP
Interest in historical figures associated with the monastery			0.897	
Participation in church councils and fairs				0.782
Tasting and purchase of monastery souvenirs (wine, brandy, honey, cheese)				0.854
Participation in the school of church singing (chanting)				0.531
Participation in the school of icon painting and fresco painting				0.688

Scale reliability was assessed through Composite reliability (CR) and Average variance extracted (AVE) indices. The convergent validity of each dimension was examined by calculating the score of the average variance extracted (AVE) [35]. A substantial convergent validity is achieved when all item-to-factor loadings are significant, the AVE score is higher than 0.50, and (CR) is higher than 0.60 within each dimension [35,36]. Results showed that all dimensions had AVE higher than 0.50 and CR higher than 0.60 (Table 5), which indicates good convergent validity.

Table 5. Reliability of the instruments GZSTMS.

Constructs	AVE	CR
Spiritual and Canonical Experiences—SCE	0.77	0.98
Escapism, Ascetic Life and Social Interactions—EALSI	0.52	0.81
Natural and Cultural Values—NCV	0.54	0.64
Religious Events and Active Participation—REAP	0.52	0.81

Discriminant validity was then checked by comparing the square root of each average variance extracted (AVEs) with the correlation coefficients for each latent construct. Fornell and Larcker [35] noted that the discriminant validity is guaranteed when the square root of each AVE is greater than the correlation coefficients estimate.

The square roots of AVE values were all higher than the correlation values of constructs compared to all other constructs; thus, results confirm that all dimensions have sufficient discriminant validity [35,37], which is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Discriminant validity GZRTMS.

	SCE	MALSI	NCV	REAP
SCE	0.99			
EALSI	0.97	0.9		
NCV	0.67	0.78	0.8	
REAP	0.83	0.84	0.69	0.9

4.2. Inferential Statistics Z Spiritual Travel Motivation Dimensions

The discriminativeness of the scale was tested regarding participants (gender, level of education, urban/rural environment, and questions about religion in relation to the GZSTMS scale. Independent t-test showed certain differences among gender, rural/urban environment, and do you practice religious rituals (Table 7). Males are more motivated by the NCV factor than females ($t = 3.098, p = 0.002$). Respondents from rural areas are more motivated by the SCE factor ($t = -2.604, p = 0.01$), EALSI factor ($t = -3.085, p = 0.002$) and REAP factor ($t = -2.771, p = 0.006$), then those who live in urban areas. Respondents who practice religious rituals are more motivated by the SCE factor ($t = -17.885, p = 0.000$),

EALSI factor ($t = -13.501, p = 0.000$), NCV factor ($t = -4.867, p = 0.000$), REAP factor ($t = -11.380, p = 0.000$), then those who do not practice. Respondents who attended some religious courses during their education are more motivated by the SCE factor ($t = -2.271, p = 0.024$) and EALSI factor ($t = -2.504, p = 0.013$) than those who did not attend any of the religious courses during their education.

Table 7. Independent t-Test results.

	Males	SD	Females	SD	t-Value	p Value
SCE	3.86	1.05	3.72	1.19	1.211	0.226
EALSI	3.61	0.96	3.63	1.06	-0.265	0.791
NCV	4.09	0.77	3.84	0.86	3.098	0.002
REAP	2.81	1.01	2.71	1.00	1.038	0.300
	Rural	SD	Urban	SD	t-value	p value
SCE	3.68	1.18	3.98	1.03	-2.604	0.01
EALSI	3.53	1.04	3.84	0.95	-3.085	0.002
NCV	3.91	0.82	3.97	0.88	-0.620	0.536
REAP	2.66	0.98	2.94	1.05	-2.771	0.006
	Do not practice religious rituals	SD	Practice religious rituals	SD	t-value	p value
SCE	2.44	1.12	4.17	0.79	-17.885	0.000
EALSI	2.63	1.03	3.92	0.81	-13.501	0.000
NCV	3.59	0.84	4.03	0.81	-4.867	0.000
REAP	1.88	0.72	3.00	0.94	-11.380	0.000
	Do not Attends religious courses	SD	Attends religious courses	SD	t-value	p value
SCE	3.64	1.24	3.88	1.04	-2.271	0.024
EALSI	3.49	1.09	3.73	0.95	-2.504	0.013
NCV	3.98	0.86	3.89	0.82	1.204	0.227
REAP	2.73	1.03	2.75	0.99	-0.270	0.787

Using One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc LSD Test, further differences were found in regard to age, level of education, and in regard to the questions: are you a believing person and how often do you visit religious objects (Table 8).

Table 8. One-way ANOVA results.

	Age		Education		Believing Person		How Often Do You Visit Religious Objects	
	F	Sig	F	Sig	F	Sig	F	Sig
SCE	2.818	0.007	1.623	0.183	172.200	0.000	29.988	0.000
EALSI	1.062	0.387	0.013	0.998	100.094	0.000	17.381	0.000
NCV	2.151	0.037	2.961	0.032	18.215	0.000	9.191	0.000
REAP	1.496	0.166	0.177	0.912	37.099	0.000	18.584	0.000

Respondents that are 18 and 25 years old are the most motivated, while respondents who are 19, 22, and 24 years old are moderately motivated, and respondents that are 20, 21, and 23 years old are least motivated by SCE ($F = 2.818, p = 0.007$), while respondents who are 19 and 20 are least motivated, respondents who are 18, 21, 22, 23, and 24 are moderately motivated and respondents who are 25 years old are most motivated by NCV ($F = 2.151, p = 0.037$). Respondents in high school are least motivated by the NCV factor, followed by bachelor’s level students with a moderate level of motivation, while PhD students are most

motivated ($F = 2.961, p = 0.032$). Respondents who hold beliefs are highly motivated by SCE ($F = 172.200, p = 0.000$), EALSI ($F = 100.094, p = 0.000$), NCV ($F = 18.215, p = 0.000$) and REAP ($F = 37.099, p = 0.000$) factors, followed with moderate motivation with people who are not sure, while least motivated are atheists. Respondents who visit religious objects several times a week, once a week, several times in a month, and once a month are highly motivated by SCE ($F = 29.988, p = 0.000$), EALSI ($F = 17.381, p = 0.000$), NCV ($F = 9.191, p = 0.000$) and REAP ($F = 18.584, p = 0.000$) factors, while respondents who visit several times per year are moderately motivated, and least motivated are respondents who visit religious objects once a year or do not visit them at all.

5. Discussion

The major objective of this study is to develop a new scale for Generation Z's spiritual travel motivation, namely, what drives them to visit spiritual places and religious destinations. Factor analysis identified four groups of factors (Table 2), resulting in the creation of a four-dimensional Generation Z Spiritual Travel Motivation Scale (GZSTMS). The first dimension is called Spiritual and Canonical Experiences (SCE), and it consists of 16 items. SCE refers to personal contact with something higher (sacred) [23,24], healing, both mentally and physically [14,26], praying and confessions [23,25,27,28], but also leaving monetary contributions in religious buildings [26] or washing with consecrated water [31]. The SCE dimension is mostly spiritual in nature and highly personal.

The second dimension is called Escapism, Ascetic Life, and Social Interactions (EALSI), and it consists of nine (9) items. EALSI is connected to religious places and objects in terms of travelling [29] and spending time in sacral places, gaining new knowledge and experiences [23], escaping from urban environments [32] and travelling with friends [22], further suggesting the monk's way of life, feeling their hospitality [31] and getting acquainted with the rules of the monastery [27]. The EALSI dimension is more connected to social aspects of spirituality and learning about religious objects and people.

The third dimension is called Natural and Cultural Values (NCV), and it consists of five (5) items. NCV describes secular travel motivations connected to the historical [31], architectural values [22], natural surroundings of the monastery/religious place [29], exploring interesting legends/stories about the spiritual place [24], or learning about some historical figures that are connected to the religious place [23]. The NCV dimension is secular in nature and is more connected to historical and cultural aspects of religious objects.

The fourth dimension is called Religious Events and Active Participation (REAP) and consists of six (6) items. REAP is more connected to some skills and competencies, such as learning how to paint frescoes [27] and sing or chant [24], to some modern trends [24] like buying souvenirs and local religious products [23], participating in some events or volunteering [22]. The REAP dimension is also secular in nature and is focused on religious events, religious products and following some modern trends.

The findings are consistent with Keeling's [17] study, which describes the motivations of spiritual travellers not only as religious motivations, such as praying and worshipping but also as an underlying secular part of the motivation that, in most cases, overlaps with religious motivations. Richards [19] defined four dimensions of religious tourism, describing it as a spectrum ranging from pilgrimage/religious motives to secular motives manifested through cultural tourism, also known as an inner-to-outer journey. What is interesting is that the majority of the motives derived are, in essence, sustainable and can positively influence behaviour change and perception during travel. They can instil spiritual values, a sense of pride fuelled by knowledge of history, architecture, or some significant historical figures and legends, and thus contribute to the preservation of cultural/religious heritage.

The role of spirituality is increasingly seen as an important agent of behavioural change that will trigger more sustainable development [20]. In that sense, the COVID-19 pandemic has paved the way for more alternative ways of sustainable development [38], including those that favour so-called companionate tourism that relay on more mindful tourists [39].

Gen Z has high values such as a sense of community, a collaborative economy, entrepreneurship based on the sum of many (crowdfunding), and a strong concern for the environment, and they are also viewed as digital natives [40]. In terms of travel, Gen Z is usually the most open to it, and they feel most at ease in multicultural settings [41,42]. Generation Z uses social media and considers their peers' opinions, gather information about the destination, plan their own trip, and enjoy interacting with the local population [43]. What is more, Gen Z is familiar with solidarity tourism [44]. The majority of previous findings describing Gen Z can be linked to the dimensions defined by this study.

6. Concluding Remarks

To answer RQ₁, this paper identified the main Generation Z spiritual travel motivation dimensions: Spiritual and Canonical Experiences, Escapism, Ascetic Life, Social Interactions, Natural and Cultural Values, Religious Events, and Active Participation. Independent t-tests showed certain differences among gender, rural/urban environment, the question "do you practice religious rituals?" and One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc LSD Test found differences in regard to the level of education. Considering the following questions, "Are you a believing person?" and "How often do you visit religious objects?" provided the answer to RQ₂.

In order to provide long-term economic and social advantages, spiritual forms of tourism should contribute to sustainable development by providing high levels of tourist satisfaction combined with meaningful and distinctive experiences [45,46]. This research has shown that Gen Z, as a less religious generation than others, has a broad set of motives that drives them to visit spiritual places. This must be acknowledged when visiting spiritual attractions. The current study has various theoretical and practical benefits. From a theoretical point of view, it adds to the existing research on spiritual travel motivation, making it possible to learn about different Gen Z tourists and how they are different from other tourists in important ways. The current study focused on four separate Gen Z dimensions: Spiritual and Canonical Experiences, Escapism, Ascetic Life and Social Interactions, Natural and Cultural Values, Religious Events and Active Participation. There are no other studies the authors are aware of that study the spiritual travel motives of Gen Z in the Serbian region.

The findings have important implications for destination management and marketing. A conventional tourism campaign, for example, could be focused on more secular Gen Z visitors, who can be targeted by mainstream marketing tactics. Other more spiritual efforts could be directed at more spiritual ones at the same time. To that end, presenting multiple sides of spiritual destinations could be a successful strategy for addressing Gen Z.

In addition to the benefits discussed, the current study contains certain drawbacks. Longitudinal studies, for example, are required because they provide a clearer picture of defined features. Additionally, the scale for spiritual travel motivation was tested and found to be accurate for Gen Z in Serbia. However, the use of convenience sampling limited the generalizability of the results. As a result, future research should endeavour to use more nationally representative samples. Furthermore, desirability and recollection biases contribute to the distortion of self-reported data. There were more women in the sample than men and a large number of highly educated visitors, which could have affected the results of the study.

Although this study provides insights into Gen Z spiritual travel motivation factors in Serbia, the findings demand more investigation. Spiritual sites in Serbia do not have as much information for visitors as spiritual sites in Europe that receive significant traffic and are familiar, promoted, and understood by visitors.

This study shows that more research is needed in different situations to fill in the missing tourist characteristics. In real-life scenarios, how do tourists motivated by various triggers differ? Dimensions identified in Serbian spiritual places are applicable in other spiritual destinations. This is needed so that very specific and useful suggestions can be made for destination management and marketing in a multitude of different situations.

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