



GENERATION Z TRAVEL DECISION-MAKING AND DIGITAL INFLUENCE IN MALAYSIA

Editor
SITI YULIANDI AHMAD, PhD

PREFACE

Tourism among youth in Malaysia is undergoing a meaningful transformation. Travel is no longer viewed merely as leisure or escape from routine, but increasingly as a platform for learning, wellness, identity expression, and responsible engagement with society and the environment. Generation Z travellers in particular are redefining tourism through values that emphasize sustainability, authenticity, inclusivity, and memorable experiences. This eBook, Values, Sustainability, and Experience-Oriented Tourism Among Youth in Malaysia, brings together a collection of studies that explore these emerging shifts in contemporary youth travel behaviour.

The chapters in this volume present diverse tourism contexts ranging from sustainable tourism in Langkawi, wellness tourism, homestay participation, adventure travel, overtourism in heritage destinations, perceived brand quality, ecotourism sustainability in Royal Belum, and accessibility-friendly tourism for persons with disabilities. Although each chapter addresses a distinct theme, they are united by one common perspective, namely the voices, motivations, and expectations of young travellers in Malaysia.

These studies demonstrate that young tourists are not passive consumers. They seek experiences that align with their beliefs, emotional wellbeing, and social awareness. They are influenced by digital media, peer networks, ethical concerns, and expectations of quality service. At the same time, they value destinations that protect culture, nature, and community welfare.

This eBook is intended for students, academics, tourism practitioners, policymakers, and destination planners who wish to understand the changing landscape of youth tourism. The findings offer practical insights for designing tourism products and policies that remain relevant to future generations.

It is hoped that this collection will inspire more thoughtful tourism development in Malaysia, one that listens to youth aspirations while balancing economic growth with sustainability, inclusiveness, and meaningful human experiences.

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SYNOPSIS

Values, Sustainability, and Experience-Oriented Tourism Among Youth in Malaysia examines how young Malaysians engage with tourism in ways that extend beyond recreation and consumption. Focusing primarily on Generation Z and young adults, this eBook explores the motivations, perceptions, and behavioural intentions that shape contemporary travel participation in Malaysia.

The volume begins by discussing sustainable tourism behaviour among young tourists in Langkawi, highlighting the importance of attitude, social influence, and perceived behavioural control in encouraging responsible travel practices. It then explores youth participation in wellness tourism, showing how mental wellbeing, relaxation, and perceived value increasingly influence travel choices.

Further chapters examine Generation Z motivation to participate in the Malaysian Homestay Programme, where cultural curiosity and authentic community experiences emerge as significant attractions. Adventure tourism is represented through a study on white-water rafting intention, illustrating how excitement, challenge, and readiness shape participation among youth.

The book also addresses critical contemporary issues such as overtourism in Georgetown, Penang, where tourism growth creates pressures on heritage conservation and planning. Another chapter investigates perceived brand quality among Malaysian travellers, emphasizing the continued importance of trust and service excellence.

Attention is also given to ecotourism sustainability in Royal Belum State Park, where community participation, environmental management, and technology are shown to contribute to long-term destination competitiveness. Finally, the volume examines behavioural intention toward disability-friendly tourism, revealing how accessibility awareness and inclusive values influence Generation Z travellers.

Overall, this eBook presents youth tourists as informed, reflective, and values-driven individuals. Their tourism decisions are shaped not only by enjoyment, but also by ethics, wellbeing, inclusivity, and purpose. The collection offers useful insights for researchers, industry practitioners, and policymakers seeking to build a more sustainable and youth-responsive tourism future in Malaysia.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG TOURISTS IN LANGKAWI

By Muhammad Aiman Bin Khalid

INTRODUCTION

This study explores sustainable tourism behavior among young tourists in Langkawi, Malaysia. Tourism growth has contributed significantly to economic development; however, it also introduces environmental and social challenges such as pollution, excessive resource consumption, and pressure on local infrastructure. As tourism continues to expand, the importance of responsible and sustainable travel behavior becomes increasingly evident. Young tourists represent a major segment of travellers and play a crucial role in shaping future tourism trends. Understanding their behavior and the factors influencing their sustainability decisions is essential for preserving Langkawi's environmental and cultural heritage.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Sustainable tourism refers to tourism practices that aim to minimize negative environmental impacts while supporting local communities and preserving cultural identity (UNWTO, 2018). As an island destination with fragile ecosystems, Langkawi has placed increasing emphasis on sustainable tourism initiatives since being recognized as a UNESCO Global Geopark. The destination attracts millions of domestic and international visitors annually due to its natural landscapes, biodiversity, and recreational attractions. While tourism development contributes significantly to local economic growth and employment opportunities, rapid increases in visitor numbers have also resulted in challenges such as waste accumulation, environmental degradation, and the overuse of natural resources (Ridzuan et al., 2024).

Young travellers represent a growing segment of the tourism market and are frequently exposed to sustainability education, environmental campaigns, and social media advocacy related to responsible travel. Despite this heightened awareness, research indicates that their actual travel behavior does not always align with sustainable practices (Wut et al., 2023). Many young tourists continue to prioritize affordability, convenience, and personal enjoyment over environmental

considerations when making travel decisions (Nowacki et al., 2023). This inconsistency between awareness and action highlights the presence of an attitude–behavior gap and underscores the need to examine the psychological and social determinants that influence sustainable tourism behavior among youth (Ajzen, 1991).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although awareness of sustainable tourism has increased, young tourists' actual behavior often remains inconsistent with environmentally responsible practices. In many destinations, including island tourism settings, issues such as improper waste disposal, reliance on single-use plastics, and preference for convenience-based transportation continue to be observed (UNWTO, 2018). This reflects an attitude–behavior gap, where positive environmental beliefs do not consistently translate into sustainable actions during travel (Wut et al., 2023).

Social pressure and peer norms play a significant role in influencing this behavior. Young tourists are highly affected by friends, family, and digital communities, which may either encourage or discourage sustainable practices (Nowacki et al., 2023). Additionally, perceived behavioral control influences behavior, as limited access to eco-friendly facilities, insufficient information, and higher costs may restrict sustainable actions despite positive intentions (Sato et al., 2024; Jaitley et al., 2023).

Despite the importance of sustainable tourism in Malaysia, empirical research focusing specifically on young tourists in Langkawi remains limited. Most studies address general tourist behavior rather than youth as a distinct group, limiting the development of targeted sustainability strategies (Ridzuan et al., 2024). Therefore, this study seeks to address this research gap by examining factors influencing sustainable tourism behavior among young tourists in Langkawi.

RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of attitude, social influence, and perceived behavioral control on sustainable tourism behavior among young tourists in Langkawi. To achieve this aim, the study is guided by the following objectives:

- To describe the levels of attitude, social influence, perceived behavioral control, and sustainable tourism behavior among young tourists in Langkawi.
- To examine the relationships between attitude, social influence, perceived behavioral control, and sustainable tourism behavior.

- To determine the strongest predictor influencing sustainable tourism behavior among young tourists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Variable Of Study

Attitude towards Sustainable Tourism

Attitude refers to an individual's evaluation of a behavior as favorable or unfavorable. In sustainable tourism, it reflects young tourists' perceptions of environmentally responsible practices such as waste reduction, resource conservation, and community support (Ajzen, 1991). A positive attitude indicates recognition of the importance and benefits of sustainability in tourism.

Previous studies show that tourists with strong pro-environmental attitudes are more likely to engage in responsible travel behavior, including choosing eco-friendly accommodations and low-impact activities (Lee & Jan, 2017). However, positive attitudes do not always lead to actual sustainable actions, as situational factors such as cost, accessibility, and time constraints may limit behavior (Wut et al., 2023).

Social Influence

Social influence, or subjective norm, refers to perceived social expectations or pressure that shape an individual's behavior (Ajzen, 1991). For young tourists, this influence commonly arises from friends, family, and digital communities, particularly through social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

Young travelers are highly responsive to social approval and peer norms. When sustainable tourism practices are positively promoted within social groups, individuals are more likely to adopt such behaviors (Nowacki et al., 2023). Conversely, when unsustainable actions are normalized, responsible behavior may be neglected despite positive attitudes, highlighting the strong role of social norms in influencing sustainable tourism behavior among youth (Sato et al., 2024).

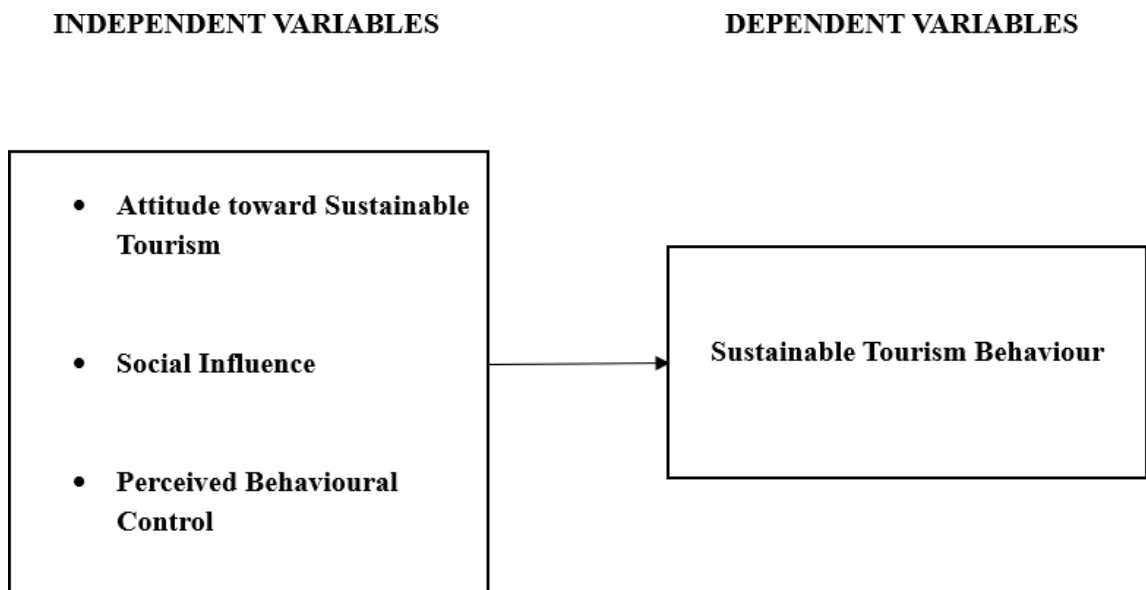
Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform a behavior based on available resources and personal capability (Ajzen, 1991). In sustainable tourism, this includes access to eco-friendly facilities, affordability of green accommodations, availability of sustainable transportation, and access to relevant information. Even with positive attitudes and intentions, tourists may not act sustainably if such behaviors are perceived as inconvenient or costly.

Among young tourists, perceived behavioral control is influenced by economic constraints, travel flexibility, and the availability of sustainable infrastructure. Research indicates that when eco-friendly services are accessible and reasonably priced, tourists are more confident and willing to engage in responsible behavior (Jaitley et al., 2023). Conversely, limited or expensive sustainable options may discourage such actions despite awareness, highlighting that sustainable tourism behavior depends not only on awareness but also on practical feasibility (Putra & Andjarwati, 2025).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior, which proposes that behavior is influenced by attitude, social influence, and perceived behavioral control. These three variables act as independent variables predicting sustainable tourism behavior as the dependent variable.



METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine factors influencing sustainable tourism behavior among young tourists in Langkawi. A quantitative approach was chosen as it allows behavioral variables to be measured numerically and analyzed using statistical techniques to produce objective findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms using social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram. Participation was voluntary, and responses were kept confidential. This method was selected due to its efficiency and suitability for youth-focused research (Veal, 2017).

The study targeted young individuals aged 18 to 30 who had visited or were familiar with Langkawi. A convenience sampling technique was applied, resulting in 30 valid responses, which is acceptable for exploratory analysis (Green, 1991).

The questionnaire included demographic items and measures of attitude, social influence, perceived behavioral control, and sustainable tourism behavior using a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, including reliability testing with Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression to identify the strongest predictors of sustainable tourism behavior.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION RELIABILITY TEST

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire items were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha generated through SPSS software. This statistical technique is widely recognized for evaluating the internal consistency of a set of variables and determining how effectively multiple items measure a single latent construct. According to Kline (2000), Cronbach's Alpha values can be interpreted as follows: values above 0.90 indicate excellent reliability, while values above 0.70 are considered good and acceptable for research purposes. The reliability test results are presented in Table 1, which shows that all measurement items recorded alpha values exceeding 0.70. Therefore, all constructs in this study demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency and are deemed reliable for further analysis.

Table 1 Cronbach Alpha

Variable	Number Of Items	Cronbach Alpha Value
IV1 Attitude toward Sustainable Tourism	7	0.947
IV2 Social Influence	7	0.89
IV3 Perceived Behavioral Control	7	0.935
DV Factors Influencing Sustainable Tourism Behavior	8	0.909

PROFILE RESPONDENT

The sample profile summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents as presented in Table 1, including age, gender, education level, residence, and travel history to Langkawi. Most respondents were aged between 18 and 21 years (46.7%), with an equal gender distribution of 15 males and 15 females. Half of the participants were degree-level students, indicating a relatively well-educated sample. The majority resided outside Kedah (66.7%), while only a small percentage lived in Langkawi. Most respondents had previously visited Langkawi, primarily for vacation purposes, and many had travelled there once or two to three times. Overall, the profile reflects young individuals with adequate familiarity and exposure to Langkawi as a tourism destination.

Table 2 Profile Respondents

Characteristic	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Age	18-21	14	46.7
	22-24	9	30.0
	25-27	4	13.3
	28-30	3	10.00

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Descriptive results revealed generally high mean scores for all variables examined in this study. Attitude toward sustainable tourism recorded the highest mean score, followed by sustainable tourism behavior, perceived behavioral control, and social influence. These findings indicate that respondents demonstrated positive attitudes, a strong sense of capability, and a relatively high level of engagement in sustainable tourism practices during their visits to Langkawi, although the influence of social factors varied among individuals.

Table 3 Profile Respondents

Gender	Male	15	50.0
	Female	15	50.0
Education Level	Secondary	4	13.3
	Diploma	9	30.0
	Degree	15	50.0
	Others	2	6.7
Place of	Langkawi	1	3.3

Residence	Kedah (other than Langkawi)	9	30.0
	Other states in Malaysia	20	66.7
Have you ever visited Langkawi	Yes	23	76.7
	No	7	23.3
Frequency of visits	Once	11	36.7
	2-3 Times	9	30.0
	More than 3 times	3	10.0
	Not yet	7	23.3
	Vacation	18	60.0
	Study trip	4	13.3
	Visiting family/friends	4	13.3
	Non applicable	4	13.3

Table 4 Summary of All Variables

	Mean
Attitude towards Sustainable Tourism	4.414
Social Influence	4.153
Perceived Behavioral Control	4.3
Sustainable Tourism Behavior	4.338

PEARSON PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATION

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the three independent variables including attitude, social influence, and perceived behavioral control towards dependent variables which is sustainable tourism behavior among young tourists in Langkawi. The results, as shown in Table 4, indicate that all three variables have significant positive correlations with sustainable tourism behavior. Attitude demonstrated a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that stronger positive beliefs about sustainable tourism are associated with more sustainable actions. Social influence exhibited a strong positive correlation, indicating that encouragement and expectations from peers and family have a substantial impact on promoting sustainable behavior. Perceived behavioral control also showed a strong positive relationship, meaning that the more capable respondents feel about engaging in sustainable practices, the more likely they are to perform such behaviors. These results affirm that all three variables play meaningful roles in predicting sustainable tourism behavior.

Independent Variables	P	Dependent Variables Sustainable Tourism Behavior Among Young Tourist in Langkawi
Attitudes toward Sustainable Tourism	.001	.559
Social Influence	.001	.862
Perceived Behavioral Control	.001	.704

Table 5
Pears on
Correl
ation

CONCLUSION

This study examined the factors influencing sustainable tourism behavior among young tourists in Langkawi using the Theory of Planned Behavior, focusing on attitude, social influence, and perceived behavioral control. The findings show that young tourists generally possess positive attitudes toward sustainability and feel capable of engaging in environmentally responsible practices. These results indicate a high level of awareness regarding the importance of protecting Langkawi's natural and cultural resources.

However, the regression analysis revealed that social influence is the only significant predictor of sustainable tourism behavior. Although attitude and perceived behavioral control were positively related to behavior, they did not significantly predict actual actions when analyzed together. This highlights the strong role of peer expectations, social norms, and external encouragement in shaping young tourists' behavior. The findings also confirm the existence of an attitude-behavior gap, where positive beliefs do not always translate into consistent sustainable practices due to situational and social constraints.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of incorporating social-based strategies, peer engagement, and visible sustainability initiatives in promoting responsible tourism behavior among young tourists. By leveraging social influence and improving access to eco-friendly facilities, tourism stakeholders can encourage more sustainable travel practices and support the long-term sustainability of Langkawi as a tourism destination.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING YOUTH PARTICIPANT IN WELLNESS TOURISM

By Nor Athirah binti Mohammad Nor

Introduction

This chapter discusses an overview of the study regarding the relationship between tourist attitudes (encompassing satisfaction and perceived value), social reference groups (including family, peers, and social media influencers), and psychological mechanisms like the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). It explores how these elements shape the behavioral intentions and willingness of Generation Z travelers to engage in wellness tourism experiences in Malaysia. This chapter outlines the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, and the significance of the study. It also addresses the limitations of the research, provides operational definitions of key terms, and details the overall structure of the study.

Research Background

Participation of Generation Z in wellness tourism has evolved from a luxury trend into a proactive tool for mental health restoration and stress relief (Gedecho et al., 2023). For this demographic, travel is increasingly viewed as a tool for psychological escape and happy well-being (Huang et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025). In Malaysia, youth are specifically seeking nature-based wellness activities and spa retreats to mitigate the emotional disturbances and stresses caused by modern academic and work-from-home environments (Subramaniam & Thuraiselvam, 2025; Bhatti & Sharma, 2023).

However, the decision-making process for youth is complex. Research indicates that young travelers are heavily inspired by digital stimuli, where Social Media Influencers (SMI) shape "wellness awareness" and create a "Fear of Missing Out" (FoMO) (Xu & Furkan, 2025; Yudhistira et al., 2025). Beyond the digital world, subjective norms the attitude of participants play a critical role which is when these social reference groups value a healthy lifestyle, youth are more likely to adopt similar behavioral intentions (Kaya & Özdil, 2025; Aziz et al., 2023).

Despite this high interest, actual participation is often hindered by behavior gap. Many Generation Z individuals are budget-conscious and prioritize perceived value and authenticity over luxury (Hsu et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2025). They look for high-quality, memorable experiences that offer clear health benefits for a reasonable price, as financial constraints remain a significant barrier for younger travellers in the post-pandemic era (Gan et al., 2023; Latief et al., 2024). While existing literature has largely focused on older, there is a lack of understanding regarding the unique drivers of Gen Z in Malaysia. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how social media, attitude, and personal health goals work together to influence youth participation in wellness tourism.

Problem Statement

Although wellness tourism offers significant opportunities for psychological escape and long-term health benefits, the industry faces a major challenge in converting initial interest into long-term adoption and advocacy (Lin & Lu, 2023; Zhou et al., 2025). A primary concern is that while youth travellers seek memorable wellness experiences, their tourist attitude formed by the interplay of satisfaction and perceived value—does not always translate into sustained loyalty or destination

advocacy (Hsu et al., 2023; Martins et al., 2025). This suggests a gap in how practitioners create lasting value that resonates beyond a single visit.

Furthermore, the influence of subjective norms is becoming increasingly complex; while traditional social reference groups like family and peers remain relevant, their impact varies significantly across different wellness niches compared to the modern influence of social media influencers (SMI) (Kaya & Özdil, 2025; Aziz et al., 2023). This is compounded by psychological mechanisms such as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and the search for perceived authenticity, which mediate how youth respond to digital marketing (Yudhistira et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025).

Despite the rising trend of wellness travel in Malaysia, there remains a critical gap in understanding how these diverse social influences and psychological mediators jointly shape the behavioral intentions of Generation Z (Subramaniam & Thurai selvam, 2025). While previous research has largely focused on older, affluent demographics, there is limited insight into how youth navigate the pressure of digital trends against their desire for authentic, high-value wellness experiences (Zuo et al., 2025; Asri et al., 2025). Addressing this gap is essential for stakeholders to move beyond generic marketing and develop niche-specific strategies that foster genuine health advocacy and inclusive participation among the next generation of travellers.

Research Aim

This research aims to investigate the factors that influence youth intention to participate in wellness tourism by analysis the factors from attitudes, motivation such as social media and perceived value.

Research Question

The three research questions for this research are as follows:

1. What is the level of Social Media Influence, Attitude, and Perceived Value among Generation Z in participating in wellness tourism?
2. What is the significant relationship between Social Media Influence, Attitude, and Perceived Value in participating in wellness tourism among generation Z in Malaysia?
3. Which is the strongest predictor between Social Media Influence, Attitude, and Perceived Value in influencing the willingness of Generation Z to participate in wellness tourism?

Research Objectives

The study is intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of social media influence, subjective norms, and perceived value among youth in participating in wellness tourism.
2. To measure the significant relationship between social media influence, attitude, and perceived value on the willingness of youth to participate in wellness tourism.
3. To access the strongest predictor among social media influence, attitude, and perceived value in influencing the willingness of youth to participate in wellness tourism.

Literature Review

Attitude towards Wellness Tourism

Attitude is defined as a learned predisposition to respond consistently in a favorable or unfavorable manner toward a given object (Hsieh et al., 2016). In the context of wellness tourism, attitude represents the youth's mental evaluation of whether health-focused travel is beneficial, enjoyable, or necessary.

Recent studies utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) have identified that a positive attitude is a primary predictor of the intention to visit wellness destinations (Widhiasthini et al., 2024). For the younger generation, attitudes are increasingly shaped by a global shift toward preventive health and holistic living (Bardukova, 2024). Unlike older demographics who may view wellness through a curative lens (medical), youth attitudes are driven by the belief that wellness is a "proactive process" of self-improvement and mental restoration (Martins et al., 2025). Furthermore, social media plays a crucial role; user-generated content and influencer endorsements act as "social proof," strengthening positive attitudes by portraying wellness as an aspirational lifestyle (Sultan et al., 2021).

Motivation towards Wellness Tourism

Motivation is essential to comprehending youth behavior in the health sector, and researchers have investigated its various dimensions as a driver for seeking restorative experiences. Motivation towards wellness tourism is a burgeoning topic in tourism and hospitality, as individuals increasingly seek travel that enhances their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Various factors contribute to an individual's motivation to engage in wellness travel, such as personal health consciousness, socio-cultural shifts toward self-care, and the desire for holistic healing (Çöp et al., 2020). These studies have revealed that wellness motivation is a complex phenomenon, influenced by both internal health goals and external environmental factors (Han et al., 2020). For instance, Pizam and Mansfield (2012) emphasize the importance of understanding the specific health-related drivers that push individuals to engage in different therapeutic tourist activities.

Understanding youth motivation is essential for anticipating shifts in the wellness industry. Personal interests in mindfulness and physical fitness influence intrinsic motivation, whereas extrinsic motivation is often influenced by social media trends or peer validation. Assessing wellness motivation is complex, necessitating various methodologies to capture the nuance of why individuals prioritize health over traditional leisure.

Perceived Value of Wellness Tourism

Perceived value is the consumer's "trade-off" assessment—weighing the benefits received against the costs (time, money, effort) sacrificed (Zeithaml, 1988). In wellness tourism, this is a multidimensional construct:

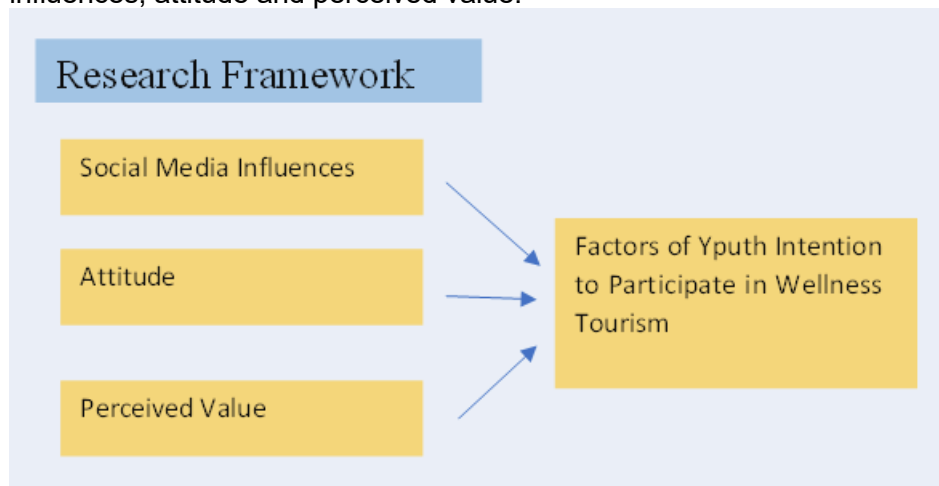
- **Functional Value:** The quality of treatments and facilities (Ahn & Kwon, 2020).
- **Emotional Value:** The feeling of serenity and joy derived from the experience.
- **Social & Epistemic Value:** The status gained from being health-conscious and the knowledge learned as example a new mindfulness skill (Liu et al., 2023).

Recent research highlights that the ability to help a person recover from mental fatigue as a key driver of overall value (Emerald Publishing, 2025). For youth, "value" is no longer just about price; it is about the efficacy of the restorative experience. If a destination is perceived as providing high spiritual or mental value, the "sacrifice" of high travel costs is considered

justified.

Conceptual Framework

shows the independent variables that are being studied in this research, which are social media influences, attitude and perceived value.



METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study employs a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between social media influences, attitude, perceived value and the intention of youth to participate in wellness tourism. This correlational research aims to identify and measure the strength of associations among the variables through the use of structured surveys and statistical analysis. A cross-sectional design is adopted to collect data from a diverse sample of youth participants at a specific point in time. The survey instrument consists of standardized and validated scales to ensure reliability and accuracy in capturing respondents' influence on social media, attitude of the participants, the perceived values and their intention to participate in wellness tourism. The findings are expected to offer insights into the key factors that motivate or hinder Gen Z's participation in wellness tourism and provide recommendations for stakeholders in education, policymaking and program development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reliability Analysis

Table 1 The reliability analysis demonstrated a high level of internal consistency for all measurement constructs. The Cronbach's alpha values for the variables ranged from 0.896 to 0.951, which significantly exceeds the widely accepted threshold of 0.70. Specifically, the construct for Attitude toward Wellness Tourism recorded the highest reliability at 0.951, followed by Perceived Value of Wellness Tourism (0.943) and Motivation for Wellness Tourism (0.896). These results confirm that the measurement instrument is highly reliable and that the items for each construct are cohesive and well-aligned.

Table 1: Pilot Study Cronbach Alpha of All Variables

Cronbach's Alpha Score	Level of Reliability
0.0-0.20	Less Reliable
>0.20-0.40	Rather Reliable
>0.40-0.60	Quite Reliable
>0.60-0.80	Reliable
>0.80-1.00	Very Reliable

Table 2: Reliability Results

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Items
Attitude toward Wellness Tourism	0.951	5
Motivation for Wellness Tourism	0.896	5
Perceived Value of Wellness Tourism	0.943	5

Profile of Respondents

Table 3 shows that the majority of participants are female (67.6%) and primarily fall within the below 20 (48.6%), followed by the 21-25 age group (48.6%). Most respondents are pursuing a bachelor's degree (64.9%). Regarding participation in wellness tourism, there is (62%) of student haven't participate in wellness tourism before, and highlighting a strong financial budget to participate in wellness tourism which below RM500 (56.8%)

Table 3: Demographic

Characteristics	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
A1 Gender	Female	68	67.6
	Male	32	32.4

Characteristics	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
A2 Age	Below 20 years old	49	48.6
	21-25	48	47.6

Characteristics	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
A4 Monthly Allowance	Below RM500	57	56.8
	RM500-RM999	35	35.1

Characteristics	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
A3 Education level	Diploma	29	28.7
	Degree	65	64.9

Characteristics	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
A4 Previous Participants in Wellness Tourism	Below RM500	57	56.8
	RM500-RM999	35	35.1

A4 Travel Frequency per year	Once	57	56.8
	Twice	22	21.6
	Three times or more	22	21.6

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Table 4 reports the mean and standard deviations for each construct measured. Gen Z's intentions to participate in wellness tourism ($M=3.78$, $SD=0.947$) and strong positive attitude toward the sector ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.77$) shows there are many likely want to go but because of the individual circumstances like budget or time create more diverse responses. Then, social media influences ($M=4.194.24$, $SD=0.760$) indicates that respondents were consistent in this view. While perceived values showed strong agreement ($M=4.19$, $SD=0.701$), the slightly lower score compared to social media influence suggests that while youth find wellness tourism attractive, they are more critical of the cost-to-benefit ratio.

Table 4: Summary of Means

Variables	Means	Sd. Deviation
Youth intention to Participate in Wellness Tourism (DV)	3.78	0.947
Attitude towards Wellness Tourism (IV1)	3.89	0.77
Social Media Influences (IV2)	4.194	0.760
Perceived Values in Wellness Tourism (IV3)	4.19	0.701

Breakdown Mean (All Variables)

This section summarizes the average responses for the variables measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

Factors of Youth Intention to Participate in Wellness Tourism

Table 5: Mean Score and Std. Deviation Result of DV

Variables	Means	Sd. Deviation
Youth to Participate in Wellness Tourism		
B1	I intended to participate in wellness tourism within the next 12 months.	3.78 0.947
B2	I will make an effort to plan a wellness tourism trip in the future.	4.05 0.848
B3	I am likely to choose wellness tourism over other types of tourism.	3.84 1.041
B4	I strongly consider wellness tourism when planning a vacation.	4.00 0.782
B5	I would recommend wellness tourism to others.	4.14 0.787

Table 5 shows the mean score and standard deviation, Item B5 recorded the highest mean score (M=4.14, SD=0.787), indicating that respondents are most likely to recommend wellness tourism to their peers. In contrast, Item B1 yielded the lowest mean score (M=3.78, SD=0.947), suggesting that while interest is high, immediate participation within the next year is slightly less certain. Item B3 showed the highest level of variance or neutrality of (SD=1.041), implying that there is less consensus among youth when choosing wellness tourism over traditional travel options.

Attitude towards Wellness Tourism

Table 6: Mean Score and Std. Deviation Result of Attitude towards Wellness Tourism

Variables	Means	Sd. Deviation
Attitude toward Wellness Tourism		
C1	Participating in wellness tourism is a good idea	4.24 0.760
C2	Wellness tourism would be beneficial	4.14 0.751

	for me		
C3	I believe wellness tourism is enjoyable	4.19	0.701
C4	Participation in wellness tourism is meaningful to my lifestyle	4.03	0.763
C5	I have positive feelings toward wellness tourism	4.19	0.701
C6	Overall, I have a favorable attitude toward wellness tourism	4.19	0.701

Table 6 illustrates that Item C1 which participating in wellness tourism is a good idea that attained the highest mean score ($M=4.24$, $SD=0.760$), indicating that Gen Z respondents overwhelmingly perceive wellness travel as a positive concept. Conversely, Item C4 which participation is meaningful to my lifestyle recorded the lowest mean score ($M=4.03$, $SD=0.763$). While this score still represents a high level of agreement, it suggests that respondents find the general idea of wellness tourism (C1) slightly more appealing than its specific integration into their current lifestyle (C4).

Social Media Influences

	Variables	Means	Sd. Deviation
Motivation for Wellness Tourism			
D1	I participate in wellness tourism to reduce stress	4.19	0.701
D2	I am motivated to improve my mental well-being	4.19	0.660
D3	I join wellness tourism to improve my physical health.	4.08	0.924
D4	I seek relaxation and healing experiences	4.32	0.669
D5	I want to escape from my daily routine	4.24	0.796

Table 7: Mean Score and Std. Deviation Result of Motivation for Wellness Tourism

Analysis of **Table 7** reveals that Item D4 which I seek relaxation and healing experiences achieved the highest mean score ($M=4.32$, $SD=0.669$), identifying relaxation as the primary motivator for youth interest in wellness tourism. Conversely, Item D3 recorded the lowest mean score ($M=4.08$), alongside the highest standard deviation ($SD=0.924$). This suggest that while physical health is still a significant motivator, there is more variation in how much importance individual respondents place on the physical aspects compared to the mental and emotional aspects.

Perceived Values of Wellness Tourism

Table 8: Mean Score and Std. Deviation Result Perceived Value of Wellness Tourism

Variables		Means	Sd. Deviation
Perceived Value of Wellness Tourism			
E1	The experiences gained justify me spending	4.00	0.745
E2	Wellness tourism offers high-quality services	3.95	0.780
E3	Wellness tourism experiences are beneficial to my well-being	4.08	0.759
E4	I feel emotionally satisfied from wellness tourism experiences	3.86	0.751
E5	Overall, wellness tourism provides good value to me	4.14	0.751

Table 8 was observed in Item E5 (m=4.14), followed by the belief that these experiences are beneficial to personal well-being (Item E3, M=4.08). The lowest mean score was assigned to Item E4 (M=3.86). Interestingly, Item E1 which experiences justify my spending showed a solid mean of 4.00, and the lowest standard deviation (SD=0.745) was found here, indicating a consistent result among respondents that wellness tourism is a justifiable financial investment.

The primary drivers of intention such as attitude and social media influence show a high mean (M>3.75), suggesting a strong baseline interest among Gen Z. These variable measures the extent to which respondents feel they have the disposable income for wellness travel. A lower mean here often indicates a significant barrier to entry.

Pearson Correlation

This study determines the relationship between attitudes towards wellness tourism, social media influences, perceived value and youth intention to participate in wellness tourism. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between the measured variables in the table below. The following section describes the direct links between the independent variable (attitude towards wellness tourism, social media influences and perceived value) and the dependent variable (Youth intention to participate in Wellness Tourism), as determined by correlation analyses conducted using SPSS.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis Between Youth intention to participate in Wellness Tourism (DV) and Attitude towards Wellness Tourism (IV)

	Youth Intention to Participate in Wellness Tourism (DV)	Attitude towards Wellness Tourism (IV1)
Pearson	1	0.713
Sig (2-tailed)		<0.001
N	37	

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 illustrates the results of the Pearson Correlation analysis between Youth Intention to Participate in Wellness Tourism (DV) and Attitude towards Wellness Tourism (IV). The data reveals a strong positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.713$, $p < 0.001$)

This finding indicates that as the positive attitude of youth toward wellness tourism increases their intention to participate in such activities also increases significantly. Because the p- value is less than the standard alpha level of 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant, providing empirical support for the hypothesis that attitude is a primary driver of behavioral intention in the context of wellness tourism.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis Between Youth intention to participate in Wellness Tourism (DV) and Social Media Influences (IV2)

	Youth Intention to Participate in Wellness Tourism (DV)	Attitude towards Wellness Tourism (IV1)
Pearson	1	0.755
Sig (2-tailed)		<0.001
N	37	

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 presents the correlation analysis between Social Media Influences (IV2) and Youth Intention to Participate in Wellness Tourism (DV). The results show a strong and positive correlation ($r = 0.755$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates a significant relationship where increased exposure to or engagement with social media influences leads to a higher intention among youth to engage in wellness tourism.

The statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) provides robust evidence to reject the null hypothesis, confirming that social media is a critical factor in shaping the travel intentions of the youth demographic. Notably, the correlation coefficient of 0.755 suggests that Social Media Influence has a substantial impact on the decision-making process, potentially due to the visual and aspirational nature of wellness content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

Table 7: Correlation Analysis Between Youth intention to participate in Wellness Tourism (DV) and Perceived Value of Wellness Tourism (IV3)

	Youth Intention to Participate in Wellness Tourism (DV)	Attitude towards Wellness Tourism (IV1)
Pearson	1	0.801
Sig (2-tailed)		<0.001
N	37	

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 7 displays the correlation between Perceived Value of Wellness Tourism (IV3) and Youth Intention to Participate (DV). The analysis reveals a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.801$, $p < 0.001$).

This result suggests that Perceived Value is a critical determinant of participation intention among the youth demographic. Specifically, when young individuals perceive that wellness tourism offers high benefits (such as health restoration or relaxation) relative to the cost and effort involved, their intention to engage in these activities increases substantially. Given that this correlation coefficient (0.801) is the highest among all tested variables, it can be concluded that the perceived value of the experience is the most influential driver of behavioral intention in this study.

Conclusion

This study examines how Attitude, Social Media Influence, and Perceived Value influence the intention of youth to participate in wellness tourism. Among the factors studied, Perceived Value emerged as the strongest predictor of intention, reflecting Gen Z's priority on the tangible health benefits and the overall "worth" of the experience relative to its cost. This suggests that for the youth demographic, the decision to engage in wellness travel is a calculated investment in their personal well-being and mental health.

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GEN Z MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE IN MALAYSIAN HOMESTAY PROGRAMME

By Nur Atikah Safiah Binti Aizal

ABSTRACT

The Malaysian Homestay Programme is an important community-based tourism initiative that supports rural development and cultural preservation. As Generation Z (Gen Z) is becoming an important group in the tourism market, it is necessary to understand what motivates them to participate in homestay programmes. This study aims to examine the influence of cultural curiosity, perceived value for money, and homestay accommodation and hospitality quality on Gen Z motivation to participate in the Malaysian Homestay Programme. This study used a quantitative research design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed using IBM SPSS. A total of 33 Gen Z respondents participated in the study. Descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression were used to analyse the data. The results show that Gen Z has a high level of motivation to participate in homestay programmes. All independent variables have a positive relationship with Gen Z motivation. However, the regression results indicate that cultural curiosity is the only significant factor influencing Gen Z motivation, while perceived value for money and accommodation and hospitality quality are not significant predictors. In conclusion, Gen Z is mainly motivated by cultural experiences and the desire to learn about local lifestyles. These findings can help policymakers and homestay operators develop better strategies to attract Gen Z and ensure the sustainability of the Malaysian Homestay Programme.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism; Homestay Programme; Generation Z; Tourist Motivation; Cultural Curiosity; Perceived Monetary Value; Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a significant role in supporting economic growth, cultural exchange, and social development. In recent years, travel preferences have shifted from conventional sightseeing toward more meaningful and experiential forms of tourism. This shift has encouraged the growth of community-based tourism (CBT), including homestay programmes, which emphasize cultural immersion and community participation. As Generation Z (Gen Z) emerges as a dominant future tourism market, understanding the factors that motivate their participation in Malaysia's homestay programme has become increasingly important.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been widely recognized as a sustainable tourism model that empowers local communities by involving them directly in tourism activities. CBT emphasizes cultural preservation, social sustainability, and economic benefits for host communities, while offering tourists authentic and immersive experiences (He et al., 2022). As global travel trends evolve, younger travellers increasingly seek meaningful interactions, experiential learning, and socially responsible tourism, making CBT a relevant approach in contemporary tourism development.

In Malaysia, the CBT concept is mainly implemented through the Malaysian Homestay Programme under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC). The programme provides opportunities for tourists to stay with host families, participate in cultural activities, and experience rural lifestyles, while simultaneously supporting local livelihoods (Tourism Malaysia, n.d.). Recent tourism statistics show strong growth in domestic tourism, with increasing interest in rural and experiential tourism products (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). The government has also set ambitious targets to increase homestay participation and income generation for rural communities (Ibrahim et al., 2025).

Despite this growth, participation among Generation Z remains relatively unclear and limited. While Gen Z is known for valuing authentic experiences and cultural exploration, homestay programmes are often perceived as less appealing compared to other tourism options. Previous studies on homestay tourism mainly focus on service quality, tourist satisfaction, and community participation, with limited emphasis on Gen Z as a distinct market segment (Muin et al., 2024; Munira & Divinthan, 2023). This highlights the need to better understand the factors influencing Gen Z's motivation to participate in Malaysian homestay programmes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although the Malaysian Homestay Programme has been actively promoted as a key CBT initiative, participation among Generation Z remains relatively low compared to other forms of tourism (Ibrahim et al., 2025). National tourism data indicate that while domestic tourism continues to increase, Gen Z travellers are still underrepresented in homestay participation (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). This raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of the programme, given that Gen Z represents an emerging and influential tourism market.

Existing literature identifies cultural curiosity, perceived monetary value, and accommodation and hospitality quality as important factors influencing tourist participation in CBT (Md Said et al., 2025). However, most studies focus on general tourist populations or international contexts, with limited empirical evidence examining how these factors influence Gen Z specifically within Malaysia. The lack of focused research on Gen Z creates a gap in understanding their travel motivations, making it difficult for policymakers and homestay operators to design strategies that effectively attract this demographic.

RESEARCH AIM

The primary aim of this research is to explore the factors that influence Generation Z's motivation to participate in homestay programmes in Malaysia. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate how cultural curiosity, perceived monetary value, and homestay accommodation and hospitality collectively shape Gen Z's intention and willingness to take part in homestay tourism experiences. This aim addresses both an academic gap and a practical need. Academically, there is limited research that systematically examines Gen Z's motivational drivers in the homestay sector in Malaysia despite domestic tourism's strong performance in recent years. Practically, understanding these motivational factors will help homestay operators, tourism planners, and policymakers to design relevant strategies to attract and retain youth travellers. In doing so, they can enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of the homestay programme in the long term.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study as follows;

1. To describe the level of Gen Z motivation to participate in homestay programme in Malaysia.

2. To determine the relative influence of cultural curiosity, perceived monetary value and accommodation and hospitality quality on Gen Z motivation to participate in homestay programme
3. To examine the bivariate relationship between cultural curiosity, perceived monetary value and accommodation and hospitality quality on Gen Z motivation to participate in homestay programme.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following research question were formulated as below:

1. What is the level of motivation among Gen Z to participation in Malaysia Homestay Programme?
2. How are cultural curiosity, perceived monetary value and accommodation and hospitality quality related to Gen Z motivation to participate in Homestay Programme?
3. Which of these factors best predict Gen Z motivation to participate in Homestay Programme?

LITERATURE REVIEW

CULTURAL CURIOSITY

Cultural curiosity refers to an individual's intrinsic desire to explore, understand, and engage with cultures that differ from their own. In the context of community-based tourism and homestay programmes, cultural curiosity is a key factor that motivates tourists to participate in culturally immersive experiences. Tourists with higher levels of cultural curiosity are more likely to seek direct interaction with local communities, participate in traditional activities, and appreciate local lifestyles, which aligns with the core objectives of homestay programmes (Marlina et al., 2024).

Previous studies indicate that Generation Z shows a strong preference for authentic and meaningful travel experiences compared to conventional mass tourism (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Cultural curiosity encourages Gen Z travellers to explore destinations that offer learning opportunities, cultural exchange, and personal growth. In Malaysia, homestay programmes provide exposure to village life, traditional cuisine, and cultural practices, making them suitable platforms for fulfilling cultural curiosity (Ismail et al., 2025). However, empirical research examining cultural curiosity as a motivational factor among Malaysian Gen Z remains limited, highlighting the need for focused investigation.

PERCEIVED VALUE FOR MONEY

Perceived value for money refers to tourists' evaluation of whether the benefits gained from a tourism experience justify the cost incurred. For Generation Z, who are often characterised as budget-conscious and value-oriented travellers, perceived monetary value plays an important role in shaping travel decisions (Osman et al., 2023). In the homestay context, value perception includes not only pricing but also the quality of accommodation, cultural experiences, hospitality, and overall satisfaction relative to cost (Heyprakhon, 2024).

Empirical studies suggest that tourists are more likely to participate in homestay programmes when they perceive the experience as offering good value compared to alternative accommodation options (Azman, 2024). For Gen Z, affordable pricing combined with meaningful experiences can enhance motivation to participate. However, most existing studies focus on perceived value in relation to satisfaction and loyalty rather than participation motivation, particularly among younger travellers. Additionally, limited research has examined perceived value for money specifically within Malaysian homestay programmes, creating a gap that this study aims to address.

HOMESTAY ACCOMMODATION AND HOSPITALITY QUALITY

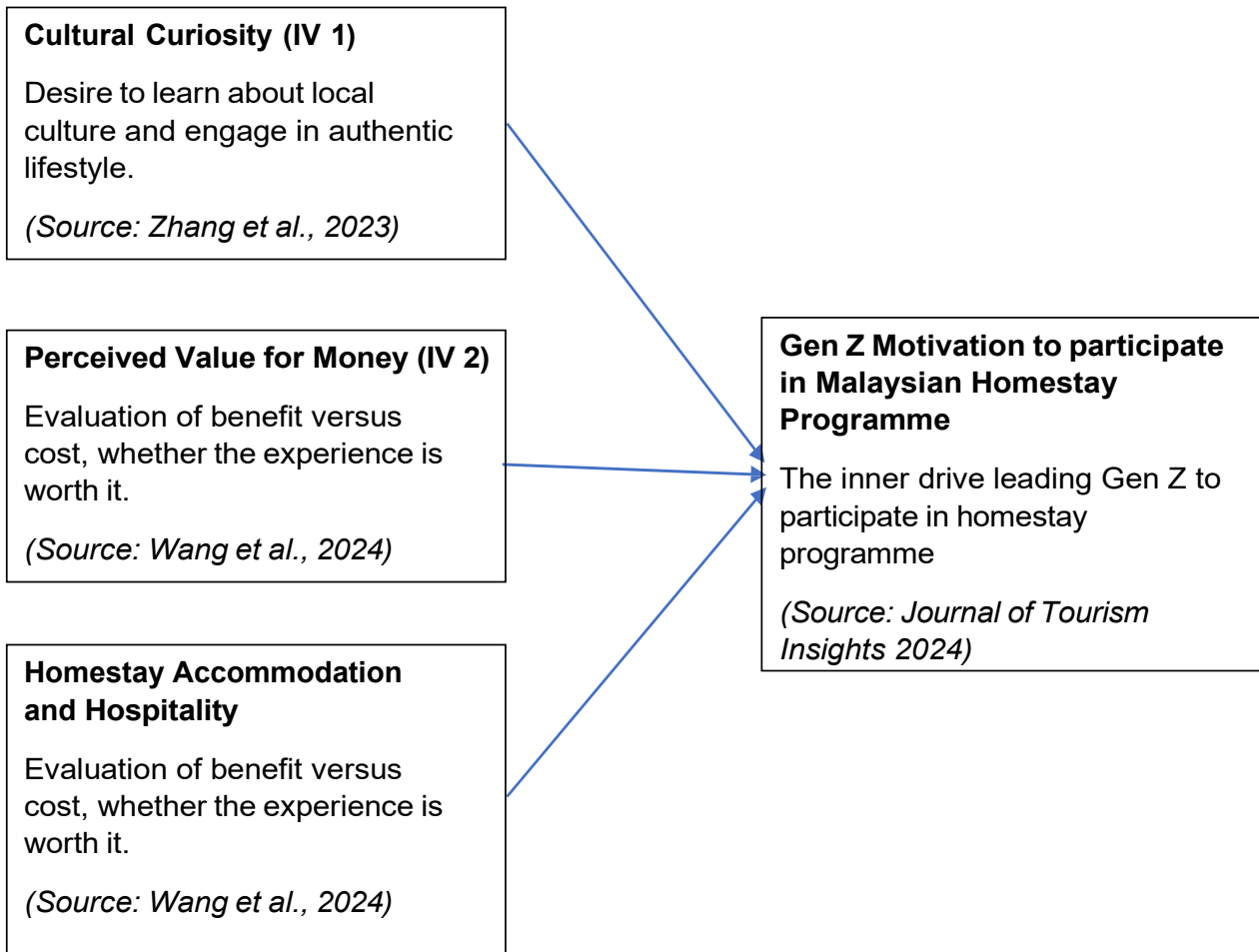
Homestay accommodation and hospitality quality refer to tourists' perceptions of physical facilities, cleanliness, comfort, safety, and the quality of service provided by hosts. In community-based tourism, service quality extends beyond tangible facilities to include host–guest interactions, friendliness, and responsiveness, which significantly influence tourists' overall experience (Muin et al., 2024).

Previous research highlights that accommodation quality and hospitality are crucial determinants of tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions in homestay tourism. Studies in the Malaysian context indicate that cleanliness, comfort, safety, and host hospitality strongly influence positive perceptions of homestay experiences (Munira & Divinthan, 2023). For Generation Z, who are highly influenced by online reviews and service expectations, accommodation and hospitality quality play an important role in shaping confidence and willingness to participate (Samad et al., 2024). However, limited empirical studies have examined how these quality dimensions directly influence Gen Z motivation within Malaysian homestays, indicating a clear research gap.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this research is based on the cultural curiosity, perceived value for money, and also homestay accommodation and hospitality. The framework is shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the factors influencing Generation Z's motivation to participate in the Malaysian Homestay Programme. A quantitative method is suitable as it allows for objective measurement of relationships between variables and provides statistically reliable findings (Williams, 2021). Guided by a deductive approach, this study draws upon existing literature on community-based tourism, homestay participation, and Generation Z travel behavior to test the influence of cultural curiosity, perceived value for money, and homestay accommodation and hospitality quality on motivation to participate in homestay tourism.

The target population of this study consists of Malaysian Generation Z individuals aged between 13 and 29 years. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed due to time constraints and ease of access to respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from previous validated studies and distributed online through social media platforms. A total of 33 responses were obtained, which is considered adequate for exploratory quantitative research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The questionnaire comprised sections measuring cultural curiosity, perceived value for money, homestay accommodation and hospitality quality, and Generation Z motivation to participate in the Malaysian Homestay Programme.

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency of the measurement items, with values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Descriptive analysis was used to examine respondents' demographic profiles and overall motivation levels. Pearson correlation analysis and multiple linear regression were subsequently employed to analyse the relationships between the independent variables and Generation Z motivation, as well as to identify the strongest predictor influencing participation in the Malaysian Homestay Programme.

Reliability Analysis Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
DV	Gen Z Motivation to Participate in Malaysian Homestay Programme	7	.896

IV 1	Cultural Curiosity	5	.912
IV 2	Perceived Value for Money	5	.827
IV 3	Homestay Accommodation and Hospitality Quality	5	.905

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	6	18.2
	Female	27	81.8
Age	13–17	1	3.0
	18–20	23	69.7
	21–25	8	24.2
	26–29	1	3.0
Occupation	Student	31	93.9
	Employed	2	6.1
Monthly Income	No income	24	72.7
	RM0–999	7	21.2
	RM1,000–1,999	2	6.1
Homestay Experience	Yes	7	21.2
	No	26	78.8

Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=33)

As in the table, most of the respondents are youth aged 18-20 years old with the percentage of 69.7%. with no fixed income. In addition, most of them are females with 81.8% and only 18.2% are male respondents. 78.8% of them have never participate in the Malaysian Homestay Programme, suggesting limited exposure among Generation Z. This support concerns raised by previous studies that younger travellers remain underrepresented in homestay participation despite being a key future market (Ibrahim et al., 2025).

Descriptive Statistic of Study Variables

Summary of All Variables

Variables	Mean
Gen Z Motivation to Participate	4.242
Cultural Curiosity	4.345
Perceived Value for Money	4.394
Homestay Accommodation & Hospitality Quality	4.745

Overall, the results show high mean values for all variables, indicating generally positive

perceptions towards the Malaysian Homestay Programme. Homestay accommodation and hospitality quality recorded the highest mean score, highlighting the importance of cleanliness, safety, halal facilities, and host friendliness in shaping favorable perceptions among Generation Z. These findings are consistent with Munira and Divinthan (2023), who emphasized the importance of service quality in homestay experiences.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4.3 Pearson Correlation between Independent Variables and Gen Z Motivation to Participate in Malaysian Homestay Programme (DV)

Independent Variables	p-value	Gen Z Motivation to Participate in Malaysian Homestay Programme
		r
Cultural Curiosity	0.001	0.838
Perceived Value for Money	0.001	0.706
Homestay Accommodation and Hospitality Quality	0.001	0.426

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Pearson correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationship between cultural curiosity, perceived value for money, and homestay accommodation and hospitality quality with Gen Z motivation to participate in Malaysian Homestay Programme, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The null hypothesis for each stated that there is no significant relationship between the respective independent variable and Gen Z motivation to participate in Malaysian Homestay Programme.

CONCLUSION

The discussion of the findings indicates that Generation Z demonstrates generally high motivation to participate in the Malaysian Homestay Programme, with cultural curiosity identified as the strongest driving factor. While accommodation quality and perceived value for money are considered important, they serve more as baseline expectations rather than primary motivators, confirming that intrinsic motivations such as cultural engagement and experiential learning are the main influences on participation

The study's limitations include the exclusive focus on Malaysian Gen Z, a relatively small sample size of 33 respondents, and the cross-sectional design, which prevents capturing changes in motivation over time or establishing causal relationships. Additionally, the self-administered online survey may introduce bias, as respondents already interested in homestays were more likely to participate, limiting generalizability to the broader Gen Z population.

Recommendations for future studies involve expanding the sample to include international Gen Z tourists or comparing generational differences, using mixed-methods or qualitative approaches such as interviews and focus groups for deeper insights, and exploring additional variables like digital marketing influence, social media reviews, perceived safety, or environmental awareness that may further shape motivation to participate in community-based tourism.

The implications of the study highlight practical guidance for policymakers, tourism authorities, and homestay operators. By understanding that cultural curiosity drives participation, promotional strategies and service designs can focus on authentic cultural experiences, engaging activities, and meaningful interaction with local communities. This targeted approach can increase youth participation, improve satisfaction, and contribute to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the Malaysian Homestay Programme.

In conclusion, Generation Z exhibits strong motivation to engage with Malaysian homestays, predominantly influenced by cultural curiosity. While perceived value and accommodation quality are important, intrinsic factors are the primary drivers of participation. This study fills a gap in the literature on youth engagement in community-based tourism and provides actionable insights for stakeholders to attract and retain the next generation of travellers, ensuring that homestay programmes remain relevant and sustainable.

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INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE IN WHITE-WATER RAFTING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN MALAYSIA

By Ahmad Firdaus Bin Razalee

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide several sections on the study's background that highlight the increase in participation in adventure tourism, especially white-water rafting, among young adults. Also, the next section in the problem statement explains the issues faced by the white-water rafting participants in Malaysia. Based on the issues, research objectives, research questions, and study framework have been created. Lastly, the researcher also provides the significance of this study, which is from the perspectives of academic and industrial.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Adventure tourism is one of the types of tourism that is rapidly growing in our world nowadays; it often takes place in a natural environment involving activities that require physical strength and risk for injuries. This type of tourism is becoming more and more popular among younger generations and appeals to people looking for exciting and unusual experiences. This sector not only attracts thrill-seekers but also serves as a platform for interdisciplinary research, exploring human motivations, risk perceptions, and the socio-economic impacts of tourism (Buckley, 2014; Ewert & Jamieson, 2003). The demand for adventure tourism is rising, with a notable increase in participants engaging in extreme sports and outdoor activities, reflecting a broader trend towards experiential travel (Sand & Gross, 2019).

In Malaysia, we have several sites that have the potential to become places for adventure tourism industries. In 2015, Perak saw 7.96 million domestic tourist arrivals, with Kampar emerging as a key destination for adventure tourism (Mohamed et al., 2018). Adventure tourism is booming, but it also has to deal with issues like environmental sustainability and the need for better infrastructure to accommodate an increasing number of tourists. For the sector, striking a balance between adventure and conservation is still crucial. White-water rafting in Malaysia is an emerging recreational activity, particularly in the state of Perak, which boasts several rivers ideal for such adventures. The Kampar River, Slim River, and Sungkai River are among the most popular, with the Kampar River being the preferred choice due to its favourable conditions and rapid classifications certified by the International Canoe Federation (et al., 2021).

The potential for white-water rafting extends beyond Perak, with locations like Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park also identified for their suitability for rafting activities (Rifanjani et al., 2024). However, participation among young adults is low compared to Thailand and Indonesia. Local community involvement in rafting tourism development is often minimal, with residents primarily participating in operational aspects rather than decision-making (Sari, 2023; Zuhairi et al., n.d.). This suggests that factors such as risk perception, motivation, and destination quality may affect participation decisions.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite Malaysia's potential for adventure tourism, young adult participation in white-water rafting remains low, as research has historically prioritized operational safety and environmental profiles over the psychological drivers of participation (Zakaria et al., 2017; Afandi et al., 2018). While locations like the Kampar River are recognized for their natural appeal, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding how internal motivations—such as thrill-seeking and social bonding—interact with perceived physical and psychological risks to shape a young adult's intention to engage in high-risk water activities. This lack of behavioral insight is compounded by recent safety concerns, which have heightened public sensitivity toward risk, making it difficult for operators to move beyond general profiling to address the specific barriers preventing this demographic from committing to the sport (Miskam, 2022; Viristar, 2024).

Furthermore, the influence of destination attributes, including infrastructure quality, accessibility, and service standards, remains under-examined as a "pull" factor for this specific group. Current studies suggest that while Malaysia offers high-quality natural scenery, challenges in logistics and the promotion of safety standards may be deterring potential participants who prioritize both adventure and reliable service delivery (Basal et al., 2025). Without a clear understanding of how these destination attributes and psychological predictors (motivation and risk) collectively influence intention formation, the adventure tourism sector lacks the empirical evidence needed to design effective marketing and operational strategies. Consequently, there is an urgent need to investigate these variables to bridge the gap between Malaysia's natural resources and the actual participation levels of young adults in white-water rafting.

RESEARCH AIM

This research aims to investigate the reason why young adults hesitant to join this particular adventure activity and to examine the factors that influence young adults' intention to participate in white-water rafting in Malaysia by analyzing the effect of adventure motivation, perceived risk, and destination attributes on their participation intention.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The two research questions for this research are as follows:

1. What are the demographic characteristics and participation patterns of young adults who engage in white-water rafting in Malaysia?
2. What relationships exist between adventure motivation, perceived risk, destination attributes and young adults' participation intention in white-water rafting?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study is intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. To describe the demographic characteristics and current participation patterns of young adults engaging in white-water rafting in Malaysia.
2. To examine the relationships between adventure motivation, perceived risk, and destination attributes and young adults' participation intention in white-water rafting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

VARIABLE OF STUDY

Adventure Motivation

Adventure motivation plays a vital role in shaping young adults' intention to participate in white-water rafting. According to recent studies, adventure tourists in Malaysia are most motivated by thrill, appreciation of the environment, and social interactions, especially in rafting locations like the Kampar River (UPSI Study, 2020). In similar lines, research on international adventure tourism shows that learning, challenge, and novelty have a major impact on participation decisions (Janowski et al., 2022). However, the majority of Malaysian research that is currently available looks at motivation in the context of adventure travel in general and seldom isolates the motivational factors that young adults use for high-risk water-based activities. This gap highlights the necessity for more thorough empirical research by limiting operators' capacity to customize offerings and marketing tactics to the motivations most pertinent to this demographic.

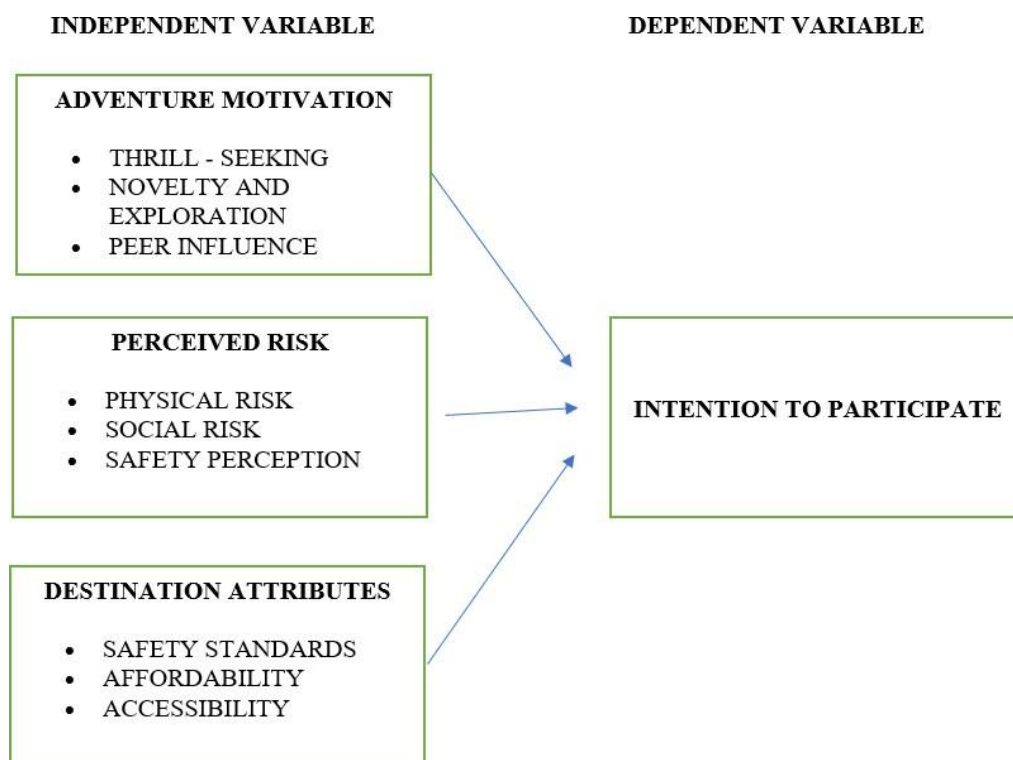
Perceived Risk

Perceived risk is a crucial determinant of behavior in adventure tourism because young adults must evaluate potential dangers like physical, psychological, or social risk before deciding to participate. According to research, intention is strongly influenced by perceived danger, particularly in nature-based or high-risk tourism activities (Kiatkawsin et al., 2021). Rather than being viewed as a psychological barrier affecting participation intention, white-water rafting risk has mostly been studied from an operational or injury-prevention viewpoint in Malaysia (Zakaria et al., 2017). Additionally, research shows that personal competency and risk awareness can lessen unfavorable opinions, which in turn affects participation confidence (UPSI Study, 2020). Perceived danger is now an even more significant predictor due to recent rafting-related safety issues in Malaysia, which have increased public sensitivity to risk (Viristar, 2024). Therefore, in order to understand how perceived risk influences young adults' inclination to participate, it must be scientifically investigated.

Destination Attributes

Destination attributes, including infrastructure quality, accessibility, safety systems, environmental appeal, and service delivery, also play a crucial role in shaping interest and intention in adventure tourism. Research indicates that destination qualities, such as natural scenery, safety assurance, and well-organized facilities, contribute significantly to adventure tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention (Basal et al., 2025). The rafting locations in Kampar and Gopeng in Malaysia are known for their natural resources; however, research indicates deficiencies in logistics, infrastructure development, and marketing tactics (Afandi et al., 2018). Operator readiness studies further show how safety standards and procedural clarity affect perceived and actual destination quality, emphasizing that attributes are service-based indications of reliability as well as physical characteristics (Miskam, 2022). There is a clear study absence since destination qualities, despite their significance, have not been thoroughly examined as predictors of young adults' intention to participate in rafting.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research approach because the aim is to measure the relationships between adventure motivation, perceived risk, destination attributes, and young adults' intention to participate in white-water rafting using numerical data. Quantitative approaches are suited for statistically testing theory-driven hypotheses and analyzing quantifiable variables using techniques like descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression. This method also improves impartiality, replicability, and generalizability, especially when investigating behavioral predictors in adventure tourism settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, quantitative survey approaches are suggested in tourist research because they allow for consistent assessment across larger samples, allowing researchers to evaluate behavioral variables in a systematic and reliable manner (Veal, 2017).

The population of this study comprises all adults aged 18 years and above residing in Malaysia. Malaysia's adult population exceeds 24 million individuals, making it a large and diverse population appropriate for quantitative survey research (Department of Statistics Malaysia [DOSM], latest year). The minimum required sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for large populations, which yielded 384 respondents at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. To ensure sufficient statistical power for multiple regression analysis, Green's (1991) rule of thumb was also considered; however, Cochran's calculation provides a more robust estimate for national-level behavioral studies. Therefore, the study targets 400–450 valid responses to account for incomplete or unusable questionnaires. The study employs a convenience sampling method, which is commonly used in tourism research where the population is large and widely dispersed and where respondents are accessed through online platforms and public locations. This method is suitable for exploratory behavioral studies and allows efficient data collection from adult Malaysians willing to participate in the survey.

This research used a structured questionnaire as the research instrument to obtain the data, where the distribution was through an online survey. The online survey will be distributed to a social chat

such as WhatsApp. The questions of the questionnaire were adopted and adapted from a thorough review of past research and past literature. Moreover, the opinion statements of the questionnaires were tested using five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Furthermore, the questionnaire of this research consisted of 5 parts, which are Section A: Demographic Information, Section B: Intention to Participate (DV), Section C: Adventure Motivation (IV1), Section D: Perceived Risk (IV2), and Section E (IV3).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RELIABILITY TEST

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire items were further established by generating the Cronbach's alpha value using the SPSS software. This algorithm is ideal for determining the effectiveness of a set of variables or measuring a single, one-dimensional latent construct using a set of variables or items. Based on Kline (2000), 41, the measurement of the Cronbach Alpha Value of research is as follows: Excellent ($\alpha > 0.9$) and good ($0.7 < \alpha < 0.9$) to maintain the reliability. The reliability test results are shown in Table 3.6. The table below shows that all the items are above 0.7. Thus, all the constructs in this study are considered consistent, acceptable, and reliable.

Table 4.1

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha Value
IV1 Adventure Motivation	7	0.896
IV2 Perceived Risk	7	0.918
IV3 Destination Attributes	7	0.851
DV Intention to Participate	7	0.891

PROFILE RESPONDENT

Data were obtained from 31 young adults. Most respondents were male (61.3%) and aged 18–23 (67.7%), with the majority holding a Diploma or Bachelor's qualification (96.8%). In the last 12 months, most engaged in adventure activities 1–2 times (58.1%). Almost half had rafted before (48.4%); among non-rafters, hiking (48.4%) was the preferred alternative. Overall, the sample reflects active youth who can meaningfully evaluate rafting intentions, though the small, youthful sample limits generalizability.

Characteristics	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	19	61.3
	Female	12	38.7
Age	18 - 23	21	67.7
	24 - 27	9	29.0
	28 - 30	1	3.2
Education	Secondary	1	3.2
	Diploma	12	38.7
	Bachelor's Degree	18	58.1
Participation frequency in adventure activity in last 12 months	Never	4	12.9
	1 - 2 times	18	58.1
	3 - 4 times	8	25.8
	5 or more times	1	3.2
Have you ever participated in white-water rafting?	Yes	15	48.4
	No	16	51.6
Preferred adventure activity (if not rafting)	Hiking	15	48.4
	Sky Diving	4	12.9
	Scuba Diving	2	6.5
	Climbing	2	6.5
	Kayaking	1	3.2
	Flying Fox	1	3.2
	Paragliding	1	3.2
	Camping	2	6.5
	Water Rafting	3	9.7

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Descriptive results revealed generally high mean scores for all variables: adventure motivation recorded the highest score, followed by intention to participate, destination attributes, and perceived risk. This indicates that respondents showed strong interest and positive attitudes toward white-

water rafting despite acknowledging certain risks.

Summary of All Variables

	Mean
Intention to Participate	4.433
Adventure Motivation	4.544
Perceived Risk	4.157
Destination Attributes	4.327

PEARSON PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATION

Relationship between Adventure Motivation and Intention to Participate in White-Water Rafting.

H01: There is NO significant relationship between adventure motivation and intention to participate in white-water rafting.

Correlations

		TotB	TotC
TotC	Pearson Correlation	0.853	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	
	N	31	31

Correlation at 0.001 (2-tailed)

$P < \alpha$

$0.01 < 0.05$

Decision: Reject H01

Conclusion: There is a significant relationship between adventure motivation and intention to participate in whitewater rafting.

Relationship between Perceived Risk and Intention to Participate in White-Water Rafting.

H02: There is NO significant relationship between perceived risk and intention to participate in white-water rafting.

	TotB	TotD

TotD	Pearson Correlation	0.536	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	
	N	31	31

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

$P < \alpha$

$0.02 < 0.05$

Decision: Reject H02

Conclusion: There is a significant relationship between perceived risk and intention to participate in white-water rafting.

Relationship between Destination Attributes and Intention to Participate in White-Water Rafting.

H03: There is NO significant relationship between destination attributes and intention to participate in white-water rafting.

Correlation

		TotB	TotE
TotE	Pearson Correlation	0.648	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	31	31

Correlation at 0.001(2-tailed)

$P < \alpha$

$0.01 < 0.05$

Decision: Reject H03

Conclusion: There is a significant relationship between destination attributes and intention to participate in white-water rafting.

CONCLUSION

The study successfully achieved its objectives by determining the factors influencing youth intention to participate in white-water rafting in Malaysia. All three variables, adventure motivation, perceived risk, and destination attributes, were significantly related to intention, with adventure motivation emerging as the strongest predictor. Overall, young adults demonstrate a strong willingness to try white-water rafting, motivated by excitement, social influence, and trust in safety standards. The findings contribute to academic literature and provide valuable insights for adventure tourism operators aiming to grow the rafting industry in Malaysia.

The findings of this study provide several important implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, the results reinforce the relevance of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in explaining intention within the context of adventure tourism, as adventure motivation, perceived risk, and destination attributes all significantly contributed to intention formation. Adventure motivation emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the dominant role of positive attitudes in shaping young adults' behavioral intentions. Together, these implications provide valuable direction for strengthening the white-water rafting industry in Malaysia.

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OVERTOURISM AND ITS IMPLICATION TOWARDS TOURISM PLANNING AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN GEORGETOWN, PENANG

By Nur Anis Najwa Binti Mohd Tazri

ABSTRACT

This study examines the growing issue of overtourism and its implications for tourism planning and heritage conservation in George Town, Penang. As one of Malaysia's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, George Town is renowned for its rich multicultural heritage and architectural authenticity, which have attracted rapid tourism growth in recent years. While tourism development has generated significant economic benefits for the city, it has also contributed to notable socio-cultural changes and physical transformations within the heritage area. These changes have raised concerns regarding the sustainability of tourism activities and the long-term preservation of cultural heritage. Therefore, this research aims to identify the underlying factors contributing to excessive tourist activity, analyses its impacts on the local community and built environment, and evaluate the effectiveness of existing tourism management strategies in addressing these challenges. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to more sustainable tourism planning approaches and support the conservation of heritage sites in George Town.

Keywords: Overtourism, Tourism Planning, Heritage Conservation, Georgetown Penang, Cultural Heritage, Socio-cultural Impacts, Sustainable Tourism

Introduction

Malaysia, a Southeast Asian country rich in cultural and natural heritage, is well known for its diverse historical architecture and cultural assets that reflect its multi-ethnic society, including Malays, Chinese, Indians, indigenous Bumiputera groups in Sabah and Sarawak, and Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia (Tourism Malaysia, 2024). Malays form the largest population group at over 54% and are legally Muslim, followed by Chinese at 23% who mainly practice Buddhism, traditional Chinese beliefs or Christianity, and Malaysian Indians at 7%, primarily of South Indian origin and Tamil-speaking, while indigenous Bumiputera communities such as the Iban, Bidayuh and Murut make up about 11% of East Malaysia's population, and Orang Asli account for 0.7% in Peninsular Malaysia. Among Malaysia's prominent heritage cities, this research focuses on George Town, Penang, an iconic UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008, recognized for its outstanding universal value shaped by a distinctive blend of Malay, Indian and predominantly Chinese heritage influences (Planning Malaysia, 2022). This study critically examines the growth of tourism activities and rapid urban transformation in George Town, which have raised significant sustainability concerns, particularly the implications of overtourism on heritage preservation and tourism planning within the site.

Research Background

This research focuses on the issue of overtourism and its implications for tourism planning and heritage conservation in George Town, Penang. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in

2008, George Town has become one of Malaysia's most visited destinations due to its rich cultural diversity, colonial-era architecture, and vibrant local traditions (Planning Malaysia, 2022). The city represents Malaysia's multicultural identity through the coexistence of Malay, Chinese, and Indian influences within a distinctive urban landscape shaped by centuries of trade and cultural exchange (Tourism Malaysia, 2024). However, rapid tourism growth over the past decade has generated significant social, cultural, and environmental pressures that increasingly threaten the long-term sustainability of its heritage.

The excessive influx of tourists has resulted in overcrowding within heritage zones, traffic congestion, and the growing commercialization of cultural spaces. These changes have contributed to the displacement of long-term residents due to rising property prices and rental costs, while traditional trades and community-based activities are gradually disappearing (Malay Mail, 2024). From a governance perspective, both governmental and non-governmental actors have attempted to address these challenges. Initiatives by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), the Penang State Government, and the establishment of George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) aim to promote heritage conservation and sustainable tourism management (Tourism Malaysia, 2024). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these efforts is often constrained by weak enforcement, limited coordination, and ongoing tensions between economic development and heritage preservation (Planning Malaysia, 2022).

Beyond physical and economic impacts, overtourism has profound social consequences. While tourism continues to generate income, employment, and business opportunities, it has also intensified social inequality, weakened community cohesion, and diluted cultural authenticity (Planning Malaysia, 2022). Many residents experience alienation as traditional neighborhoods are transformed into tourist-oriented spaces dominated by short-term rentals, cafés, and boutique hotels (Malay Mail, 2024). This imbalance highlights critical questions regarding how urban planning and policy frameworks can better manage tourism growth without compromising cultural identity and community wellbeing.

Problem Statement

George Town, Penang, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, has emerged as one of Malaysia's most significant cultural tourism destinations due to its rich multicultural heritage and distinctive architectural landscape. In recent years, however, the city has increasingly faced the issue of overtourism, where the rapid influx of visitors exceeds its capacity to maintain cultural, social, and environmental balance (Tourism Malaysia, 2024). This uncontrolled growth has generated wide-ranging socio-cultural, economic, and environmental challenges that threaten the long-term sustainability of George Town's heritage environment. One of the most critical impacts is gentrification, as traditional residential neighborhoods are transformed into commercial areas dominated by cafés, boutique hotels, and homestays, driving up property values and rental costs and forcing long-term residents to relocate (Malay Mail, 2024). This process weakens social cohesion and erodes the authenticity of George Town's living heritage, while increasing pressure on infrastructure through traffic congestion, waste accumulation, air pollution, and noise disturbances within heritage core zones (Planning Malaysia, 2022). In addition, the overuse and commercialization of heritage buildings place them at risk, as short-term economic gains often take precedence over long-term conservation, and the city's heavy reliance on tourism has exposed economic vulnerabilities, particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic (Planning Malaysia, 2022; Tourism Malaysia, 2024).

From a governance perspective, both governmental and non-governmental organizations have undertaken initiatives to address these challenges. Agencies such as George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) and the Penang State Government have implemented conservation guidelines and community engagement programmes, while non-governmental organizations such as the Penang

Heritage Trust (PHT) continue to advocate for community-based heritage management (Tourism Malaysia, 2024). However, limited coordination, weak policy enforcement, and conflicting priorities between economic development and cultural preservation have reduced the effectiveness of these efforts (Planning Malaysia, 2022).

Research Aim

This research aims to examine the causes and implications of overtourism in George Town, Penang, with particular emphasis on how affordable tourism prices, seasonal tourism fluctuations, and strategic destination distribution influence excessive tourist growth and its effects on heritage conservation and the local community. Specifically, the study aims to fulfil the following objectives:

RO1: To examine the relationship between overtourism and heritage conservation outcomes in George Town, Penang, considering the influence of affordable prices, seasonal tourism fluctuations, and strategic destination distribution.

RO2: To analyse the combined effects of affordable prices, seasonal tourism fluctuations, and strategic destination distribution on local community well-being through their contribution to overtourism in George Town, Penang.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Affordable Prices

Affordable prices in tourism destinations are commonly associated with increased accessibility and higher tourist arrivals, particularly in culturally attractive urban areas. Competitive accommodation rates, affordable transportation, and reasonably priced food and attractions reduce financial barriers for travellers and encourage frequent visitation. Othman and Hamzah (2021) argue that affordability plays a significant role in attracting mass tourism, especially among domestic and regional tourists who are more price sensitive. As a result, destinations with lower travel costs often experience a steady growth in visitor numbers, which can stimulate local economic activity and employment opportunities within the tourism sector.

In George Town, Penang, the proliferation of budget airlines, low-cost accommodations, and affordable food options has significantly increased tourist arrivals to the heritage core zone. Planning Malaysia (2022) notes that the concentration of budget hotels and homestays within the UNESCO-listed area has intensified visitor density, resulting in congestion, noise pollution, and increased wear on historic buildings. Moreover, the affordability of tourism-related services has encouraged short-term visits and high turnover rates, placing continuous pressure on cultural and heritage assets.

Seasonal Fluctuations

Seasonal tourism fluctuations refer to the variations in tourist arrivals between peak and off-peak periods throughout the year. Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model explains that mature tourism destinations often experience high concentrations of visitors during peak seasons, which can result in overcrowding, infrastructure overload, and environmental stress. These fluctuations are commonly driven by school holidays, public holidays, favourable weather conditions, and major cultural events, making heritage cities particularly vulnerable due to their limited spatial capacity and fragile built environment.

In the context of George Town, Penang, seasonal tourism fluctuations are closely linked to cultural festivals, school holidays, and national public holidays, which significantly increase visitor numbers

within the UNESCO World Heritage core zone. Tourism Malaysia (2024) reports that during peak periods, heritage streets experience severe congestion, public transportation systems become overstretched, and public spaces are heavily crowded. This uneven distribution of tourist arrivals not only accelerates wear and tear on historic buildings but also disrupts residents' daily activities.

Strategic Destinations Distribution

Strategic tourism destination distribution refers to the uneven concentration of tourism activities and attractions within specific areas of a destination, often resulting in excessive pressure on popular zones while other areas remain underutilized. According to Ashworth and Page (2011), poor spatial planning in tourism development leads to visitor congestion in iconic locations, particularly in heritage cities where attractions are clustered within compact urban cores. This imbalance limits the effective management of tourist flows and intensifies overtourism, especially when tourism planning prioritizes economic returns over spatial sustainability.

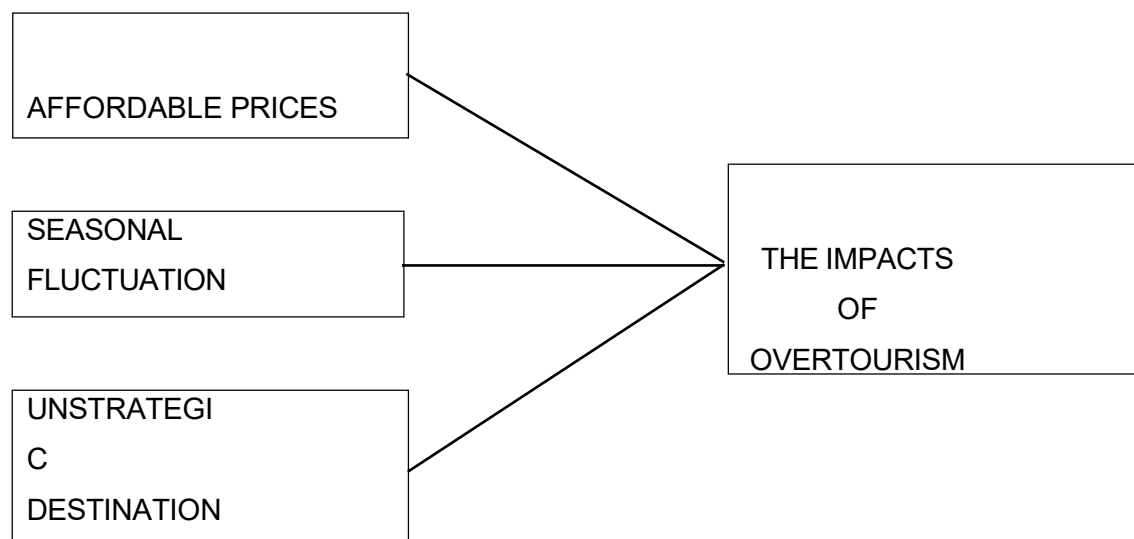
In George Town, Penang, tourism activities are heavily concentrated within the UNESCO World Heritage core zone, particularly along areas such as Armenian Street, Love Lane, and Lebuah Chulia. Planning Malaysia (2022) notes that inadequate spatial distribution of tourism products and limited promotion of peripheral areas have led to persistent congestion within the heritage core. The absence of effective visitor dispersal strategies has resulted in overcrowding, increased traffic congestion, and rising commercialization of heritage streets.

Overtourism Impacts

From a tourism planning perspective, overtourism complicates urban management by increasing pressure on infrastructure, transportation systems, and public services within the heritage core zone. Planning Malaysia (2022) highlights that overcrowding, traffic congestion, and inadequate public facilities are common consequences of excessive visitor concentration in George Town. These issues reduce the overall visitor experience while negatively affecting residents' daily lives. Inadequate planning controls, weak enforcement of zoning regulations, and the rapid conversion of heritage buildings into tourism-related facilities further exacerbate the imbalance between tourism demand and urban capacity. As a result, tourism planning frameworks struggle to accommodate visitor flows sustainably while maintaining the functional needs of the local community.

The physical deterioration of historic shophouses, temples, and public spaces is often accelerated by heavy tourist usage and insufficient maintenance (Chen & Wang, 2024). Additionally, the commercialization of cultural practices and displacement of long-term residents due to gentrification weaken the authenticity of George Town's living heritage (Malay Mail, 2024).

Conceptual Framework



Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted to ensure the research is conducted in a systematic, valid, and reliable manner. A quantitative research design was employed to examine the factors contributing to overtourism and their implications for tourism planning and heritage conservation in George Town, Penang. The study utilized a structured and standardized approach to collect numerical data, enabling objective measurement and statistical analysis of relationships between variables. A stratified sampling technique was applied to ensure adequate representation of public citizens and members of the IIUM Pagoh community who had previously visited George Town, thereby enhancing the generalizability and reliability of the findings. (Cochran, W. G. 1977).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, consisting of five sections covering respondents' demographic profiles, three independent variables which are affordable prices, seasonal tourism fluctuations, and strategic tourism destination distribution, and the dependent variable which is overtourism and its implications for tourism planning and heritage conservation. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale and adapted from established tourism studies to ensure conceptual accuracy. Instrument validity was established through expert review, while a pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to assess reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicated acceptable to high internal consistency across all variables, confirming the suitability of the instrument for full-scale data collection. (Creswell, J. W. 2018).

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS, beginning with data preparation and screening to ensure accuracy and quality. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and overall trends, while inferential analyses, including Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression, were conducted to examine the strength, direction, and significance of relationships between variables. Guideline tables were applied to support consistent interpretation of statistical results. Overall, the methodological approach provided a robust and evidence-based framework for analyzing overtourism and its impacts, forming a strong foundation for the discussion and findings presented in subsequent chapters.

Table 1.0 Cronbach Alpha Guideline

Cronbach's Alpha Value	Interpretation
≥ 0.90	Excellent
0.80 – 0.89	Good
0.70 – 0.79	Acceptable
0.60 – 0.69	Questionable
< 0.60	Poor

Cronbach Alpha's Result

	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
DV	Overtourism Impact	4	.840
IV1	Affordable Prices	4	.784
IV2	Seasonal Change	4	.710
IV3	Strategic Destination Distribution	4	.806

Profile of Respondents

A total of 46 respondents (N = 46) participated in the study, all of whom had previously visited George Town, Penang. This ensured that respondents possessed relevant exposure and experience to evaluate tourism conditions and overtourism impacts in the heritage area. The consistent respondent background contributed to reliable and focused perceptions regarding tourism-related issues in George Town. The findings show that most respondents were female (73.9%), and more than half were aged between 18 and 20 years old, indicating a predominantly young respondent group. In terms of residency, 54.6% of the respondents were residents of Penang, while the remaining respondents were from other locations. (Google Form,2025)

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Descriptive analysis showed high mean values across all study variables, indicating strong agreement among respondents. Affordable prices recorded a mean of 4.56 (Standard Deviation

= 0.47), suggesting that respondents strongly agreed that low-cost tourism contributes to overtourism. Seasonal tourism fluctuations showed the highest mean value at 4.61 (Standard Deviation = 0.41), highlighting peak seasons as the most influential factor. Unstrategic destination

distribution also recorded a high mean of 4.32 (Standard Deviation = 0.61), indicating agreement that uneven attraction distribution worsens visitor concentration. The dependent variable, overtourism impacts, recorded a mean of 4.46 (Standard Deviation = 0.58), confirming strong perceptions of congestion, commercialization, and heritage pressure. (IBMSPPS,2025)

Inferential Analysis

Inferential analysis using Pearson correlation revealed positive and statistically significant relationships between all independent variables and overtourism impacts. Multiple linear regression analysis further demonstrated that the independent variables collectively explained a substantial proportion of variance in overtourism. Among them, seasonal tourism fluctuations emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by strategic destination distribution and affordable prices, indicating that peak visitation periods and spatial concentration have greater influence on overtourism intensity.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) confirmed the adequacy and validity of the measurement model. All items demonstrated satisfactory factor loadings and loaded appropriately onto their respective constructs. This result indicates that the variables measuring affordable prices, seasonal tourism fluctuations, strategic destination distribution, and overtourism impacts were conceptually distinct and statistically reliable for further analysis.

Coefficient Analysis

Coefficient analysis showed positive beta (β) values for all independent variables, confirming their direct influence on overtourism impacts in George Town. Seasonal tourism fluctuations recorded the highest beta coefficient, indicating the strongest effect, followed by strategic destination distribution and affordable prices. These findings highlight the relative importance of each variable and provide empirical support for prioritizing seasonal management and spatial redistribution strategies in tourism planning.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that overtourism in George Town, Penang poses significant and increasingly complex challenges to sustainable tourism planning, heritage conservation, and community well-being. The findings reveal that affordable tourism prices, pronounced seasonal tourism fluctuations, and strategic destination distribution are key factors contributing to excessive visitor concentration in heritage areas. This imbalance has resulted in persistent overcrowding, intensified commercialization, increased pressure on infrastructure, and various forms of social disruption that directly affect the daily lives of residents.

While tourism continues to generate important economic benefits for the city, its largely uncontrolled growth has accelerated gentrification processes, weakened cultural authenticity, and threatened George Town's identity as a living heritage city rather than a purely touristic space. Traditional practices, local businesses, and long-term residents are increasingly displaced or marginalized in favor of tourism-oriented developments. Despite ongoing efforts by government bodies and non-

government organizations to address these issues, limitations in policy enforcement, stakeholder coordination, and community participation have reduced the overall effectiveness of current management strategies.

Overall, the study highlights the urgent need for more integrated, strategic, and community-inclusive tourism planning approaches that emphasize balanced visitor distribution, stronger regulatory frameworks, and active local involvement. Such measures are essential to reconcile economic development with heritage preservation and social sustainability, thereby ensuring the long-term resilience and sustainability of George Town for future generations.

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PERCEIVED BRAND QUALITY AMONG MALAYSIAN TRAVELERS

By Anisha Syahira Binti Adnan

Abstract

This study looks at how localization practices affect Malaysian travellers' perceptions of Agoda's brand quality, trust, and engagement with the platform. The study focuses on three main localization factors, which are language localization, cultural adaptation, and technical customization. Many international travel platforms are designed for global users, but they may not fully suit the needs of Malaysian users. Therefore, this study focuses on Generation Z travellers in Malaysia aged between 18 and 30, as they are active users of online booking platforms. A quantitative method was used in this study. Data were collected using a questionnaire distributed to around 30 respondents who have experience using Agoda or other online travel platforms. The data analysis examines the relationship between localization features and users' perceived brand quality, trust, and engagement. The findings of this study are expected to help better understand how Malaysian travellers view Agoda in terms of language use, cultural relevance, and technical usability. The results may also help online travel platforms improve their localization strategies to provide services that are more user-friendly, trustworthy, and suitable for Malaysian users.

INTRODUCTION

Online travel platforms have transformed travel planning and booking in the digital age. Convenience, an immense number of places to stay, and simple access to travel information are provided by apps such as Agoda. However, because of language, cultural, and user preference differences, these platforms often fail to adapt to the specific requirements of local users despite their widespread adoption.

Understanding Malaysian Gen Z travellers, who are between the ages of 18 and 30, is important because they use technology and online booking services a lot. Improving user experience and making sure the platforms stay relevant in the local market requires an understanding of how language, cultural, and technical localization techniques affect users' perceptions, trust, and engagement with international travel platforms.

By providing insights into the behaviors and desires of young Malaysian users, this study aims to plug the research gap and advance academic understanding of digital tourism and localization while also serving as a guide for platform developers and marketers.

Research Background

In today's digital era, digital travel platforms have changed the way people plan and book their trips. Travel applications such as Agoda make it easier for travellers to book accommodation because they offer convenience, easy access, and many accommodation options around the world. However, even though these platforms are popular globally, they often face difficulties in meeting local users' needs. This is mainly due to differences in language, culture, and user preferences.

Next, in Malaysia international travel platforms like Agoda are widely used by both local and international tourists. Despite their increasing usage, these platforms still struggle to fully meet the

expectations of Malaysian users and service providers. This issue is more noticeable when it comes to cultural adaptation and personalized user experience. Similarly, Booking.com, another well-known international platform, offers convenient online booking services but still faces challenges in gaining trust and maintaining local relevance among Malaysian users.

Therefore, these challenges show the importance of understanding how international travel platforms can better adapt to local markets. In a highly competitive digital environment, addressing these issues is important to improve user satisfaction, build stronger relationships with users, and support the growth of Malaysia's tourism industry.

Problem Statement

The success of digital travel platforms like Agoda in culturally different markets like Malaysia largely dependent on how effectively they localize their services, even if these platforms have transformed the way passengers plan and book their vacations worldwide. Many tourists still express difficulties using foreign booking platforms that mostly rely on global standards rather than localized designs in Malaysia, where consumers come from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, Agoda's interface and promotional content are mostly designed for consumers from other countries; they frequently fail to provide proper Bahasa Malaysia translations, local graphics, or offers that are culturally relevant and represent Malaysian travel preferences. Convenience and trust among domestic customers are also impacted by some technical aspects, such as the accessibility of local payment methods (such FPX and Touch 'n Go eWallet) and localized customer support.

Similar issues have been observed with other websites, such as Booking.com, which, although access worldwide, often fails to attract people looking for more customized or culturally relevant travel experiences. These problems show that even though Malaysian customers appreciate digital efficiency, they also demand services that fit with their cultural identity and local usability requirements. However, the impact of these localization dimensions language localization, cultural adaptation, and technical customization on Malaysian consumers' judgments of brand quality is rarely addressed in current academic research.

So, by looking at how Agoda's localization methods impact Malaysian travelers' perceptions of brand quality in the context of e-tourism, this study aims to close this gap.

Research Aim & Objectives

The purpose of this study is to look into how Malaysian tourists see Agoda's brand quality from the perspectives of language, culture, and technology. Additionally, it looks into how language localization affects users' understanding and perception of Agoda, how cultural adaptation affects brand image and trust, and how technical customization affects user satisfaction and engagement. In order to provide insights into how international digital travel platforms may better serve local customers, the study also aims to determine which of these features has the greatest impact on Malaysian travellers' experiences and loyalty toward Agoda.

1. How does language localization affect Malaysian travellers' view of Agoda's brand quality?
2. How does cultural adaptation influence Malaysian users' trust in Agoda?
3. How does technical customization affect Malaysian travellers' engagement and

brand quality perception of Agoda?

The main objective of this research is to find out how localization practices affect Malaysian tourists' opinions, level of trust, and engagement with the international online travel agency Agoda. Knowing how language, culture, and technology affect user experience has become essential as international travel apps spread into new areas. Three main goals are the subject of the present inquiry.

Firstly, it seeks to determine the relationship between language localization and Malaysian travellers' perceived brand quality of Agoda. Language is a fundamental aspect of communication, and the use of localized language interfaces, menus, and customer support can shape users' understanding, comfort, and overall perception of a brand. Secondly, the research aims to assess how cultural adaptation affects Malaysian users' trust and perception of Agoda. By incorporating culturally relevant content, design, and service approaches, global platforms may enhance user trust and foster a stronger connection with local customers. Lastly, the study intends to examine the impact of technical customization on Malaysian travellers' engagement and brand perception. Technical customization includes features such as local payment systems, user-friendly interfaces, and tailored functionalities that meet local expectations. Through this objective, the study will explore how adapting technical features to local preferences can improve engagement and strengthen brand quality perception.

Overall, these objectives are designed to provide insights into how Agoda can optimize its **localization strategies** to better serve Malaysian users. Understanding these factors will not only improve user satisfaction but also contribute to the competitiveness of global travel platforms in Malaysia's growing tourism industry.

Variables Related to the Study

The connections between various independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs) that affect Malaysian travelers' opinions of foreign online travel agents have been examined in this study. Language, cultural, and technological flexibility are the primary independent variables, while perceived brand quality, trust, and user engagement are the dependent variables.

Language Adaptation: In digital platforms, language is a vital part of communication. Travellers' understanding, satisfaction, and overall view of the platform's quality may all be directly affected by how much content an OTA gives in their native tongue. Aligning services and content with local rules, values, and expectations is referred to as cultural adaptation. Culturally suitable data,

design, and visuals enhance trust and engagement for Malaysian users, promoting positive reviews of the platform.

Technological Adaptation: The platform's usability and functionality, such as interface design, mobile compatibility, and ease of navigation, are referred to as technological adaptation. Increasing technological flexibility boosts the user experience and promotes regular usage and interaction with the OTA. **Perceived Brand Quality:** This dependent variable represents the travelers' overall opinion of the OTA's trustworthiness, reliability, and effectiveness in fulfilling their needs for travel. Increased customer engagement and trust is frequently connected with higher perceived brand quality.

Travelers' confidence in the OTA's transaction security, information accuracy, and dependability of services is represented by trust. One important element that impacts loyalty and ongoing use is trust. **User Engagement:** The amount of interaction, involvement, and emotional connection that travelers have with the OTA can be measured by engagement. Higher levels of participation have been linked with increased platform usage and brand advocacy.

Through the examination of this data, the study aims to find out how Malaysian travelers' perceptions of brand quality, trust, and engagement are impacted by language, cultural, and technological adjustments, providing insights to enhance foreign OTA platforms in the Malaysian market.

Language localization

Based on languages localization refers to how booking platforms like Agoda adjust their language, translation, and wording to suit local users especially in Malaysian. This includes using clear and easy-to-understand languages so that users do not feel confused during the searching and booking process. Moreover, previous studies show that languages affect users to comfort and understanding. Chu et al. (2022) found that translation and language used in travel platforms can influence the users emotions and how they interpret the information. Eze (2022) also stated that supporting local languages helps the users feel more confident when using digital tourism platforms. In addition, Sreenivas et al. (2022) and Li Zhang (2022) explained that platforms become more user-friendly when their languages and system features are localized.

As it, for Malaysian users need to be clear and suitable languages that can increase confidence and trust toward the platforming this study, languages localization refers to how well Agoda adapts its languages and translations for Malaysian travelers and how this influences their perceived brand quality.

Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation refers to how an online travel platform adjusts its content, design, and information to match the culture, values, and preferences of local users. This may include the types of destinations promoted, visuals used, communication style, and how tourism experiences are presented to users.

Additionally, past studies show that culture influences how travelers respond to tourism platforms. Pawlikowska-Piechotka (2022) explained that cultural elements in tourism content help users feel more connected and engaged. Ghaisani and Afifi (2022) also found that cultural storytelling in digital tourism promotion can increase user interest and acceptance. In addition, Floričić et al. (2023) highlighted that culturally relevant digital content makes tourism platforms more meaningful to users.

Finally, for Malaysian travelers, cultural relevance can make a platform feel closer, more relatable, and trustworthy. In this study, cultural adaptation refers to how well Agoda reflects local culture, travel preferences, and user values, and how this affects Malaysian travelers' perception of brand quality.

Technical Customization

Technical customization refers to how an online travel platform adjusts its technical features to suit the needs and preferences of its users. This includes things like payment options, loading speed, mobile compatibility, booking flow, and system functions that make the platform easier and more comfortable to use.

Furthermore, previous studies show that technical features can influence users' experience and willingness to use online booking platforms. Betchim (2024) found that usefulness and system functionality affect travelers' intention to adopt online booking platforms. Mior Shariffuddin et al. (2023) also explained that platform affordances and technology readiness have an impact on trust and e-loyalty. Meanwhile, Mohammad Shawal et al. (2023) highlighted that user satisfaction increases when system interaction is smooth and responsive.

Conceptual Framework

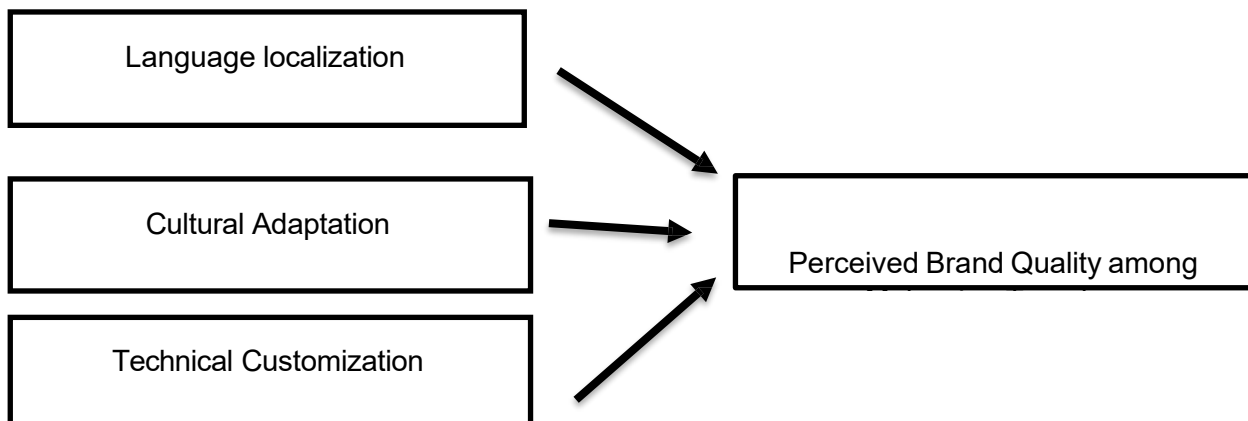
Based on previous studies, the conceptual framework of this study shows that language localization, cultural adaptation, and technical customization are expected to have a positive effect on perceived brand quality among Malaysian travelers. If an online travel platform like Agoda uses clear language, fits local culture, and provides easy-to-use technical features, users are more likely to see it as trustworthy, convenient, and high-quality (Chu et al., 2022; Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2022; Betchim, 2024).

However, this relationship may differ depending on how familiar or comfortable users are with digital travel platforms. For example, users who are not used to online booking or are worried about technology might not

see the platform as high-quality even if the language, culture, and technical features are good. This shows that users' experience and comfort level can influence how strongly these factors affect perceived brand quality (Mior Shariffuddin et al., 2023; Eze, 2022).

In short, this framework suggests that improving language, culture, and technical aspects of Agoda will likely increase Malaysian travelers' perception of brand quality, but individual differences in experience and comfort with online platforms may also play a role.

Conceptual Model:



This framework guides the study to examine how each factor contributes to Malaysian travelers' evaluation of Agoda as a reliable and user-friendly online travel platform.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between neophobia, social media influence, and perceived brand quality among Malaysian Gen Z travellers using Agoda and similar online travel platforms. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, collecting data at a single point in time through a structured questionnaire. This approach allows for statistical testing of measurable constructs such as language localization, cultural adaptation, technical customization, engagement, trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived brand quality, supporting a descriptive-correlational analysis to identify trends and interaction strengths among variables.

The target population consists of Malaysian Gen Z travellers aged 18–30 who actively engage with mobile-based tourism platforms. A total of 30 respondents were selected using purposive and convenience sampling due to time and resource constraints. Despite the small sample size, this method provides meaningful preliminary insights into user perceptions and behaviors. The questionnaire included two sections: demographic information and construct-based items measured using a Likert scale to ensure clarity and ease of response. A pilot test and expert review were conducted to ensure content validity, and Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.70 confirmed the instrument's internal consistency and reliability for further analysis.

Data collected will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard

deviation) to summarize demographic profiles and user perceptions of localization and brand quality. Correlation analysis will examine the relationships between independent variables—language localization, cultural adaptation, and technical customization—and the dependent variable, perceived brand quality. These analyses aim to identify the strongest predictors of trust, engagement, satisfaction, and overall user experience, providing insights into how digital travel platforms can improve localization strategies to enhance Malaysian Gen Z travellers’ perceptions and brand evaluation.

	Variables	Number of Items	Sources (Adapted/Adopted)	Measures
		PBQ1: The language used throughout Agoda’s website or app is clear, easy to read, and allows me to understand the information without confusion.		

	<p>Perceived Brand Quality among Malaysian Travelers</p>	<p>PBQ2: The translations, descriptions, and written content provided by Agoda are accurate, consistent, and free from noticeable language errors</p> <p>PBQ3: Agoda uses terms, expressions, and language styles that feel familiar and relatable to Malaysian users like me. PBQ4: Having the option to view Agoda in local languages makes me feel more Comfortable and Confident when navigating the platform</p> <p>PBQ5: The communication style used by Agoda—including tone, phrasing, and wording—feels natural, friendly, and relevant to the Malaysian audience.</p>	<p>Yoo, B., & Donthu, N. (2001). Developing And validating a Multidimensional consumer-based brand equity scale. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 52(1), 1–14.</p> <p>Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means–end model and synthesis of evidence. <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 52(3), 2–22.</p>	<p>Scale</p>
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IV 1	Cultural Adaptation	<p>LL1 The language used on Agoda's website/app is clear and easy to understand.</p> <p>LL2 Translations and descriptions on Agoda are accurate and free of errors.</p> <p>LL3 Agoda uses words and expressions familiar to Malaysian users.</p> <p>LL4 The availability of local languages improves my comfort in using Agoda.</p> <p>LL5 Agoda's communication style feels natural and locally relevant.</p>	<p>Yang, H., Liu, S., & Zhang, Y. (2021). The impact of translation quality and linguistic clarity on online consumer trust: Evidence from e-commerce platforms. <i>Journal International Consumer Marketing</i>, 33(5), 389–405</p> <p>Kim, S., & Lee, J. (2020). Cultural and linguistic adaptation in global e-commerce: Effects on user satisfaction and purchase intention. <i>International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction</i>, 36 (10), 942–955.</p>	Scale
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IV 2	Cultural Adaptation	<p>CA1 Agoda's visuals and imagery reflect Malaysian culture and values.</p> <p>CA2 Promotions and offers are relevant to Malaysian travelers' preferences.</p> <p>CA3 Agoda's content represents local destinations appropriately.</p> <p>CA4 Agoda's Recommendations and packages fit Malaysian travel habits.</p> <p>CA5 The overall design of Agoda feels culturally familiar to me.</p>	<p>Luna, D., Peracchio, L. A., & de Juan, M.</p> <p>D. (2020). Cross-cultural consumer behavior: A review and conceptual framework. <i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>, 30(1), 176–201.</p>	Scale
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IV 3	Technical Customization	<p>TC1 Agoda's website/app loads quickly and functions smoothly.</p> <p>TC2 The platform is easy to navigate and user-friendly.</p> <p>TC3 Agoda supports locally preferred payment options (e.g., FPX, e-wallets).</p> <p>TC4 The booking process feels efficient and straightforward.</p>	<p>Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 13(3), 319–340</p> <p>Aladwani, A. M., & Palvia, P. C. (2002). Developing and validating an instrument for measuring user-perceived web quality. <i>Information Systems Research</i>, 13(4), 467–476.</p>	Scale
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This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from 30 Malaysian Gen Z travelers, focusing on four main constructs: Language Localization, Cultural Adaptation, Technical Customization, and Perceived Brand Quality. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize respondents' demographic profiles and their evaluations of Agoda's platform. Most respondents were aged 21–30, with a higher proportion of females and predominantly holding a diploma or bachelor's degree. The majority used Agoda for leisure purposes, and their usage frequency ranged from occasional to frequent, highlighting their familiarity with online travel platforms.

The descriptive analysis revealed that respondents generally rated all variables positively. Language Localization and Cultural Adaptation received high mean scores (4.00 and 3.98 respectively), indicating that users found the platform's language clear, accurate, and culturally relevant. Technical Customization received a lower mean score of 3.01, suggesting that users felt there was room for improvement in interface features, payment options, and personalized tools. Tourist spending behavior showed that respondents prioritized food-related experiences, while overall travel experiences were rated positively, emphasizing the importance of service quality, accessibility, and satisfaction. Social media influence was also significant, with travelers relying on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for travel information.

Inferential analysis using Pearson correlation showed that all three independent variables had positive and significant relationships with Perceived Brand Quality. Cultural Adaptation had the strongest correlation ($r = 0.818$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Language Localization ($r = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$) and Technical Customization ($r = 0.571$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that travelers perceive higher brand quality when platforms reflect local culture, provide clear language, and offer technical flexibility. The correlations among the independent variables also suggest that well-localized platforms tend to integrate language, cultural, and technical adaptations together.

Multiple linear regression analysis further examined which variable best predicted Perceived Brand Quality. The model was statistically significant ($R = 0.816$, $R^2 = 0.665$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.627$, $F = 17.240$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a strong overall fit. However, when analyzed together, only Language Localization had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.674$, $p = 0.002$), while Cultural Adaptation and Technical Customization were not significant predictors. This suggests that, although all three factors are positively related to Perceived Brand Quality, Language Localization is the strongest predictor of how Malaysian Gen Z travelers evaluate the brand quality of Agoda.

This study examined how language localization, cultural adaptation, and technical customization influence Malaysian Gen Z travellers' perceptions of brand quality on Agoda and other international travel platforms. The findings indicate that all three factors are positively related to perceived brand quality, trust, and engagement, with language localization emerging as the most significant predictor. Using clear and familiar local language improves travelers' confidence, comfort, and emotional connection with the platform, making it a critical element in shaping positive brand perceptions.

Although cultural adaptation and technical customization were positively correlated with perceived brand quality, their effects were not significant when analyzed simultaneously with language localization. This suggests that while incorporating local cultural elements and providing user-friendly, technically adaptable features enhances the overall travel experience, effective language localization remains the key driver of brand perception among Malaysian Gen Z travellers. Nonetheless, cultural and technical factors continue to support user engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty.

The study acknowledges several limitations, including a small, homogeneous sample, reliance on self-reported data, focus on only three localization factors, and a cross-sectional design that prevents long-term observation of changing perceptions. These constraints may limit the generalizability of the results and indicate the need for caution when applying the findings to other populations or contexts. Future studies should consider larger and more diverse samples, include additional influencing variables, and adopt longitudinal designs to capture evolving user perceptions over time.

The practical implications highlight the importance of tailoring digital travel platforms to local users. Travel companies should prioritize language localization while continuing to integrate cultural and technical adaptations to enhance user experience, trust, and brand quality. From a research perspective, this study contributes to understanding localization, user experience, and perceived brand quality in Malaysian digital tourism, providing guidance for future research and strategies for international platforms to strengthen engagement with local travelers.

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PERCEPTION ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT, AND TECHNOLOGY ON ECOTOURISM SUSTAINABILITY IN ROYAL BELUM STATE PARK, PERAK

By Siti Nuraisyah Binti Shamsul Nizam

ABSTRACT

This study identifies about perception tourist especially Gen Z on how influence community participation, environmental management and technology in ecotourism sustainability at Royal Belum State Park, Perak. It is using survey for 30 respondents to analyze the data and statistic method in that main area. The highest results are the technology. It playing as a main role to sustain the ecotourism while following with community participation. Environmental management plays a smaller but it plays significant role. These findings suggest to use a technology as a new thing to easier get know the information or bookings and include the local community to participate in protect the environment better. The study provides useful information and insights for policymakers, businesses, and tourism planners to improve Royal Belum's or Malaysia ecotourism in the future. Future research could focus on different tourist groups and local communities in a way to achieve sustainable growth.

Keywords: Tourist, Gen Z, Royal Belum State Park, Perak, Community Participation, Environmental Management, Technology.

Introduction

The Royal Belum State Park located in Northern Peninsular Malaysia in Perak. According to Malaysia Tourism Website (2025), the Royal Belum State Park is one of the world's oldest rainforests, said to have been in existence for more than 130 million years old. Belum Forest is located in the Hulu Perak district, the East-West Highway to the south, and the state of Kelantan to the east. It also boarden with the Thailand to the north (Bang Lang National Park and Hala Bala Wildlife Sanctuary) which are protected areas as well (PlanMalaysia, 2023). Belum Forest was declared Royal Belum by the Sultan of Perak which is the late Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah in 2003.

Research Background

According to Ajuhari et al. (2023), ecotourism emphasizes protecting and preserving the environment as naturally as possible without disturbing or destroying habitats. Ecotourism has become one of Malaysia's fastest-growing tourism segments, with an increasing focus on sustainability, community involvement, and environmental protection.

Malaysia's National Ecotourism Plan 2020–2030 highlights the need for sustainable development through community empowerment, environmental stewardship, and smart technology integration. However, despite its status as a protected area and premier ecotourism destination, Royal Belum still experiences critical sustainability challenges. These include weak community involvement, limited environmental management enforcement, inadequate tourism infrastructure, and fragmented governance among agencies.

Recent literature indicates that sustainable ecotourism requires strong community participation, effective environmental management, and modern technology to support conservation and visitor experiences (Nguyen et al., 2024; Zhang & Fukami, 2024; Feng & Hua, 2025). This creates a gap in understanding how tourists evaluate sustainability efforts in protected areas such as Royal Belum. Thus, it can continuously learn from the behavior and feedback of tourists themselves, thereby

optimizing the results of tourism recommendations and providing tourists with higher satisfaction and more accurate tourism recommendation services, fully meeting their personalized needs.

Problem Statement

Royal Belum State Park is widely recognized for its high ecotourism potential but there are several issues threaten its long-term sustainability because of the challenges it is faced that include a lack of community participation with tourist-based sustainability assessments. These issues, if not addressed, may reduce destination quality, affect conservation efforts, and impact tourist satisfaction.

Current research has not fully examined how these sustainability issues are perceived by tourists, particularly Gen Z visitors, who represent a major segment of environmentally conscious travelers. There is insufficient understanding of how community participation, environmental management, and technology contribute to tourists' perceptions of sustainability in Royal Belum. This gap limits the ability to design ecotourism strategies that meet both conservation goals and visitor expectations.

Research Aim

This study's aim is to investigate how tourists perceive technology, environmental management, and community participation as related to ecotourism sustainability in Royal Belum State Park, Perak. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors influencing ecotourism sustainability in Royal Belum State Park, Perak. The study is conducted to fulfill the following objectives:

RO1: To examine tourists' perceptions of community participation, environmental management practices, technology, and ecotourism sustainability in Royal Belum State Park.

RO2: To analyze the relationships between community participation, environmental management practices, and technology with ecotourism sustainability in Royal Belum State Park.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Participation

Community participation refers to local community that involve in planning, managing, and benefiting from tourism activities. The systematic review reveals that strong community participation improves conservation outcomes, local empowerment, and cultural preservation (Subongkod et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2024). Piyali and Datta (2024) found that communities are willing to contribute time and labor to protect environmental assets, demonstrating high levels of environmental awareness.

However, weaknesses such as unequal benefit distribution, low capacity, and limited institutional support affect the effectiveness of community participation in protected areas. These issues are characteristic of ecotourism destinations with indigenous populations, including Royal Belum. Thus, community participation is identified as a key predictor of ecotourism sustainability.

Environmental Management

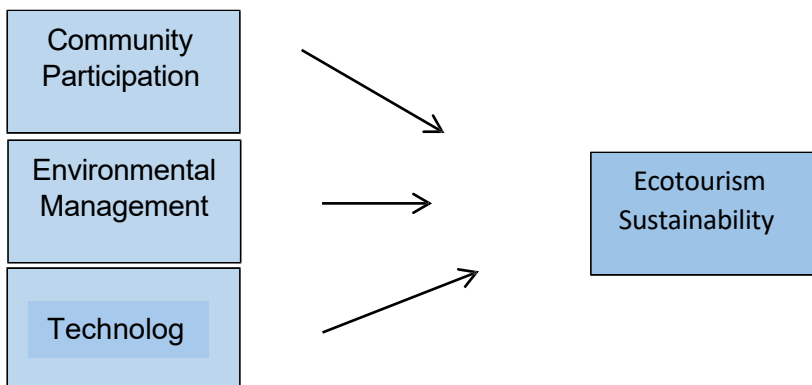
Environmental management practices ensure ecological protection through regulated visitor activities, waste control, conservation programs, and biodiversity monitoring. The systematic literature review indicates that environmental mismanagement, such as poor enforcement, pollution, and ecological degradation is a major barrier to sustainable ecotourism (Zhang & Fukami, 2024; Gazi Md Nurul Islam et al., 2024).

Wei Shen et al. (2025) found that many ecotourism sites face environmental obstacles, including poor carrying capacity control, degraded ecosystems, and resource overuse. These challenges are similar to those observed in Royal Belum, where overlapping governance and limited monitoring reduce environmental effectiveness. Hence, environmental management is important of ecotourism sustainability.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review and systematic findings, there are the study proposes which is Figure 1 about literature map. These relationships form the conceptual framework is guiding the study. The structure of framework suggested in this study shows the relation between both of the research's independent variables such as community participation, environmental management and technology, which may influence the dependent variable which is ecotourism sustainability in this research.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework



Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire to explore the relationships between community participation, environmental management, technology, and ecotourism sustainability in Royal Belum. This approach allows for measurable outcomes and statistical analysis, providing a systematic framework to address the research questions and achieve the study objectives.

The study population consists of Gen Z tourists who have visited Royal Belum, with purposive sampling applied to ensure respondents have relevant experience. A minimum of 35 participants were selected for both the pilot and main study. The questionnaire, adapted from previous studies, is divided into sections and measured using a five-point Likert scale. It was validated by an expert and pre-tested to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives.

Data were collected via Google Forms and analyzed using IBM SPSS. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, with values ranging from 0.872 to 0.889, indicating good internal consistency. Descriptive analysis summarized respondents' profiles and trends across the variables, while Pearson correlation examined the relationships between the independent variables and ecotourism sustainability. This methodology provides a robust and systematic approach to generate reliable and meaningful findings for the study.

	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
DV	Ecotourism Sustainability	6	0.889
IV 1	Community Participation	7	0.880
IV 2	Environmental Management	7	0.872
IV 3	Technology	6	0.883

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion based on data collected from 35 Generation Z tourists who visited Royal Belum State Park, Perak. The demographic profile shows variation in gender, age, education, occupation, purpose of visit, awareness of ecotourism concept, and sources of information.

Profile of Respondent

The majority of respondents were female (51.4%) aged 20–30, all Malaysian, with most holding a Bachelor's degree (65.7%) and employed (57.1%). Leisure was the main purpose of visit (40%), and the internet and blogs were the main sources of information (40%). These profiles provide insight into tourist awareness and their participation in ecotourism activities.

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Descriptive analysis of the four key variables—community participation, environmental management, technology, and ecotourism sustainability—showed that technology scored the highest (mean = 4.00), followed by community participation (3.935), ecotourism sustainability (3.848), and environmental management (3.845). Community participation was strongest in encouraging local people to share cultural knowledge (mean = 4.20), environmental management was recognized in sustainable practices (mean = 3.94), technology enhanced tourist satisfaction and environmental protection, and ecotourism sustainability highlighted cultural preservation (mean = 3.97).

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation showed positive relationships between all independent variables and ecotourism sustainability. Community participation had a moderate relationship (r

= 0.684), while environmental management ($r = 0.831$) and technology ($r = 0.852$) showed strong positive relationships, all significant at $p < 0.05$.

Conclusion

This study concludes that community participation and technology were the most influential factors in achieving the ecotourism sustainability in Royal Belum State Park, while environmental management serves as a supportive role. The results indicates that sustainable ecotourism in protected areas requires strong community involvement, effective environmental governance to preserve the protected areas and appropriate use of technology to get a deeper information about the places. These findings are consistent with the recent ecotourism research that highlights the need for integrated sustainability approaches. However, this study provides valuable insights into the factors to sustain the ecotourism places so it has some limitations. First, there is an only one ecotourism destination was used for the study whereas restricts how broadly the results can be applied. Second, the study was based on visitor views, which might not accurately reflect about the real management techniques or long-term sustainability results. Future research should broaden the reach beyond a single site in order to better investigate about ecotourism sustainability in light of the study's conclusions. Comparative research across several protected areas in Malaysia or other nations might improve the findings in the future and offer more comprehensive insights. In order to have a more thorough understanding of sustainable practices from many viewpoints, future research is also encouraged to include a variety of stakeholder groups, such as local communities, park officials, and tourism operators. Royal Belum State Park's park management officials and tourism planners can benefit greatly from the findings. This both of conservation results and visitor pleasure can be improved by increasing community involvement, especially through inclusive participation and benefit-sharing arrangements. Although technology was found to have a supportive function, when combined with social and environmental activities whereas the strategic application in tourist management, information dissemination, and environmental monitoring can further boost the development of sustainable ecotourism.

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GENERATION Z LOCAL TOURISTS' BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION TOWARD PWD-FRIENDLY TOURISM IN MALAYSIA: ROLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSURE, PERCEPTION, AND ACCESSIBILITY POLICY AWARENESS

By Nur Mirza Izzati Binti Mohd Budiman

ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors influencing Gen Z tourists' behavioral intention toward PWD-friendly tourism in Malaysia, focusing on social media exposure, perception of accessibility and inclusion, and awareness of accessibility policies. Data were collected through surveys from 30 respondents and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The results show that perception of accessibility and inclusion has the strongest impact on behavioral intention, followed by awareness of accessibility policies, while social media exposure has a minimal effect. These findings suggest that promoting inclusive and accessible tourism experiences, along with clear communication of policies, can encourage greater participation among young tourists. The study provides useful insights for policymakers, tourism operators, and planners to enhance PWD-friendly tourism in Malaysia. Future research could examine larger and more diverse samples and explore ways to involve local communities to support sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

Keywords: PWD-friendly Tourism, Gen Z Tourists, Social Media Exposure, Accessibility, Inclusion, Behavioral Intention

Introduction

Tourism is a key sector in Malaysia, contributing to economic growth, employment, and cultural exchange. In line with global efforts toward inclusive tourism, increasing attention has been given to accessibility for people with disabilities (PWD), although challenges remain due to limitations in infrastructure, policy implementation, and information availability. At the same time, social media plays an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions by providing travel-related information and shared experiences. In the context of PWD-friendly tourism, social media exposure, perceptions of accessibility and inclusion, and awareness of accessibility policies influence tourists' confidence and willingness to visit destinations. Despite ongoing initiatives, gaps in inclusive tourism practices persist, highlighting the need for further empirical research on tourist behavior toward PWD-friendly tourism in Malaysia.

Research Background

Tourism is a critical sector in Malaysia, contributing significantly to economic growth and cultural exchange. However, despite the global emphasis on inclusive tourism, accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities (PWD) remain areas of concern. Although initiatives such as university extension programs have promoted awareness and professional development in accessible tourism, practical challenges related to infrastructure, implementation, and service provision persist within the

Malaysian tourism context (Ferst & Lobato, 2025). These ongoing limitations highlight the gap between policy intentions and actual accessibility experienced by PWD in tourism destinations.

The proliferation of social media has reshaped how tourists seek information and make travel decisions. Previous studies indicate that social media exposure influences tourist behavior by shaping perceptions of destinations and providing peer-generated recommendations (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2024; Zhao et al., 2023). In the context of PWD-friendly tourism, social media serves as a vital platform for disseminating information about accessible facilities and inclusive tourism initiatives, thereby influencing tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions. Tourists' perceptions of accessibility and inclusion play a crucial role, as positive perceptions enhance willingness to visit destinations, while negative perceptions may deter visitation (Lopez & Hernandez, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2022).

In addition to perception, awareness of accessibility policies at both organizational and national levels significantly shapes tourist behavior. Knowledge of such policies increases tourists' confidence by informing them of measures implemented to accommodate PWD, thus encouraging engagement with PWD-friendly destinations (Tan & Lee, 2022; Martins & Oliveira, 2021). Despite progress, Malaysia continues to face challenges in achieving fully inclusive tourism, particularly in policy implementation, infrastructure readiness, and information dissemination (Ferst & Lobato, 2025; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2024; Zhao et al., 2023). These gaps underscore the need for empirical research to examine the combined effects of social media exposure, perceptions of accessibility, and awareness of accessibility policies on tourist behavior toward PWD-friendly tourism.

Problem Statement

Although Malaysia has established guidelines for accessible tourism, the practical implementation of these policies is inconsistent. Many tourism establishments lack clear communication about accessibility features, and tourists may be unaware of existing policies supporting PWD-friendly tourism (Tan & Lee, 2022; Martins & Oliveira, 2021). Consequently, tourists' behavioral intentions such as visiting or recommending PWD-friendly destinations are limited by both informational and perceptual barriers.

Social media, while a widely used source of information, has not been fully explored as a mechanism to promote awareness and positive perceptions of PWD-friendly tourism (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2024; Ahmed et al., 2022). Research that examines how social media exposure interacts with tourists' perceptions and policy awareness to influence behavior is limited, highlighting a critical research gap.

Research Aim

The objectives of this research are as follow:

RO1: To examine the level of social media exposure, perception of accessibility and inclusion, and awareness of accessibility policies among Generation Z local tourists in Malaysia.

RO2: To examine the relationship between social media exposure, perception of accessibility and inclusion, awareness of accessibility policies, and Generation Z tourists' behavioral intention toward PWD-friendly tourism in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media exposure has become a significant factor in shaping tourists' decision-making and travel intentions. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook provide real-time information, peer reviews, and influencer recommendations, which help tourists plan their trips and choose destinations (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2024; Zhao et al., 2023).

Several studies have highlighted the role of social media in promoting inclusive tourism. Ahmed et al. (2022) found that exposure to accessibility-related content increases tourists' awareness and encourages positive behavioral intentions toward PWD-friendly tourism. Similarly, Kim et al. (2023) demonstrated that targeted social media campaigns can boost tourist engagement and advocacy for accessible destinations. These findings indicate that social media is not only a source of information but also a platform that can influence attitudes and intentions toward inclusive travel.

Overall, social media exposure provides both informational and motivational support to tourists, making it a crucial independent variable in understanding travel behavior, especially among digital-native generations such as Generation Z.

Perception of Accessibility and Inclusion

Tourists' perceptions of accessibility and inclusion play a key role in determining their willingness to visit and recommend destinations. Positive perceptions of infrastructure and service accessibility can encourage participation in PWD-friendly tourism, while negative perceptions may discourage travel (Lopez & Hernandez, 2023).

Ferst et al. (2024) highlighted that tourists who perceive destinations as inclusive and accessible report higher satisfaction and are more likely to revisit. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2022) found that accessibility perception strongly influences behavioral intentions, indicating that perceptions affect both current and future engagement with tourism services.

In summary, tourists' perception of accessibility and inclusion is a critical determinant of travel behavior, as it shapes expectations, satisfaction, and recommendations, supporting its role as a key independent variable in this study.

Awareness of Accessibility Policies

Awareness of accessibility policies refers to tourists' understanding of organizational and national guidelines that support PWD-friendly tourism. Knowledge of such policies can increase confidence in choosing destinations and reduce uncertainty when planning trips (Tan & Lee, 2022).

Martins and Oliveira (2021) emphasized that policy awareness encourages tourists to engage with accessible destinations and promotes responsible travel behavior. Lopez et al. (2022) also noted that combining policy knowledge with positive perceptions of accessibility enhances tourists' likelihood to recommend destinations to others. Ferst and Lobato (2025) reported that educational programs and policy dissemination improve engagement and awareness, which further supports the importance of policy knowledge.

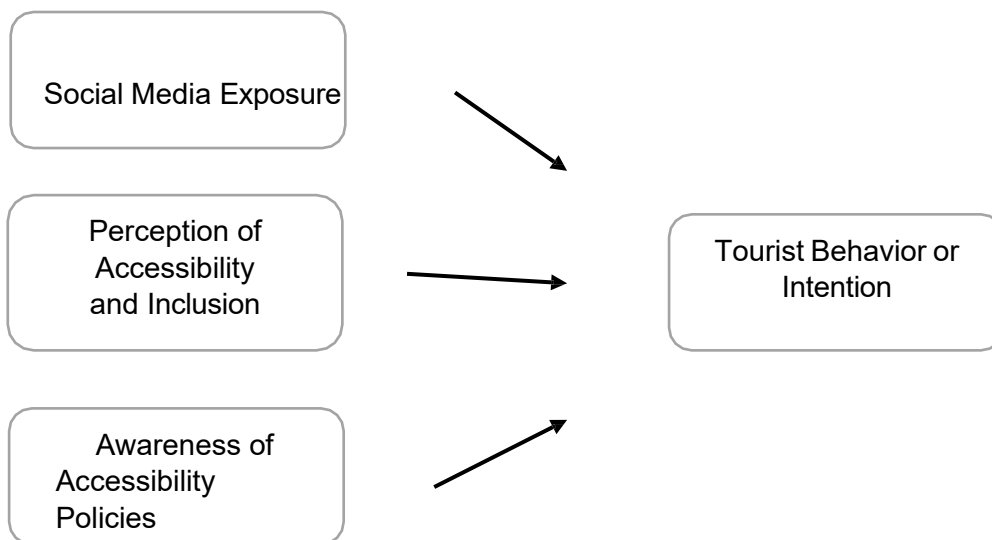
Thus, awareness of accessibility policies is an essential factor influencing tourists' behavior, as it provides guidance and assurance that destinations meet accessibility standards, making it a vital independent variable in examining travel behavior.

Tourist Behavior

Tourist behavior encompasses engagement, intention to visit, satisfaction, and advocacy for destinations. It is influenced by multiple factors, including social media exposure, perception of accessibility, and awareness of policies. Research shows that tourists who are informed and confident about accessibility are more likely to participate in inclusive tourism (Ahmed et al., 2022; Lopez & Hernandez, 2023).

Social media serves as both an informational and motivational tool, shaping intentions and encouraging tourists to visit and recommend PWD-friendly destinations (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2024; Zhao et al., 2023). Meanwhile, perception of accessibility and awareness of policies provide reassurance and guide decision-making, resulting in higher engagement and satisfaction.

Overall, understanding the drivers of tourist behavior is crucial, as it allows tourism stakeholders to implement strategies that promote PWD-friendly tourism and enhance participation among Generation Z travelers.



Conceptual Framework

This framework demonstrates that social media exposure and policy awareness can influence tourists' perceptions, which subsequently shape behavioral intentions toward inclusive tourism.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to investigate the behavioral intentions of Generation Z local tourists toward PWD-friendly tourism in Malaysia, with particular emphasis on the roles of social media exposure, perception of accessibility and inclusion, and awareness of accessibility policies. A quantitative approach is considered appropriate as it allows for systematic measurement of variables, hypothesis testing, and statistical analysis to identify relationships among the study constructs. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to Generation

Z local tourists who have experience or interest in domestic tourism activities. The research employed a cross-sectional design, whereby data were gathered at a single point in time, enabling the study to capture respondents' perceptions and behavioral intentions efficiently. Generation Z was selected as the target population due to their strong engagement with social media platforms and their growing influence within the Malaysian domestic tourism market. Their travel decisions are increasingly shaped by online information, perceptions of inclusivity, and awareness of social responsibility issues, including accessibility for persons with disabilities. By focusing on this demographic group, the study aims to provide meaningful insights into how inclusive tourism practices are perceived and how these perceptions translate into behavioral intentions. The findings from this research are expected to contribute to a better understanding of inclusive tourism development in Malaysia, particularly in relation to encouraging more PWD-friendly tourism initiatives through informed and socially aware travel behavior among younger generations.

The population of this study consists of Generation Z local tourists in Malaysia aged between 18 and 26 years, who have travelled domestically at least once within the past year and are active users of social media. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to local tourism and exposure to tourism-related information on social media platforms. A total of 30 respondents were selected, which is considered sufficient for a pilot and exploratory study aimed at identifying trends and relationships between variables. Although the sample size is relatively small, it aligns with methodological recommendations for preliminary research and allows for initial testing of the research framework. The research instrument comprised six sections covering respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, social media exposure, perception of accessibility and inclusion, awareness of accessibility policies, and tourist behavior or intention. All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," allowing respondents to express varying levels of agreement. The questionnaire items were adapted from established and validated studies to ensure content relevance and construct validity. This structured approach enhances the reliability of data collection and ensures that the variables are measured consistently, enabling meaningful analysis of Generation Z tourists' attitudes and intentions toward PWD-friendly tourism.

Instrument validation and reliability testing were conducted to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement scales used in this study. Content and face validity were assessed through expert review, while a pilot test involving all 30 respondents was carried out to identify ambiguous or unclear items.

Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate internal consistency across all constructs.

Table 1 showcased the Cronbach Alpha's result

	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
IV 1	Social media exposure	4	.788
IV 2	Perception of accessibility and inclusion	4	.830
IV 3	Awareness of accessibility policies	4	.880
DV	Tourist behavior or intention	5	.810

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the pilot study and statistical analyses conducted to examine Generation Z local tourists' perceptions of PWD-friendly tourism in Malaysia. The analysis focuses on respondents' demographic profiles, descriptive statistics of key variables, and inferential analyses using Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression to determine relationships and predictive strength among variables.

Profile of Respondents

A total of 30 Generation Z local tourists participated in the study, with females comprising 80% of respondents. Most were aged 18–23 years (86.7%), and all were Malaysian. About half of the respondents travelled domestically two to three times per year, and 80% reported previous experiences visiting PWD-friendly facilities. However, only 53.3% were aware of formal accessibility policies or PWD-friendly certifications, indicating a gap between experience and formal awareness among young travellers.

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Descriptive analysis indicated generally positive perceptions across all variables. Respondents strongly agreed that PWD-friendly facilities provided adequate accessibility features (e.g., ramps, elevators), maintained high cleanliness standards, and offered appropriate amenities for travellers with disabilities. Accessibility and hygiene emerged as the most important attributes. While respondents demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of inclusive tourism, awareness of official accessibility policies and promotion through digital media remained limited. Tourist satisfaction was consistently high, particularly regarding safety, comfort, and accessibility, though service quality showed slightly lower ratings. Perceived quality assurance received strong agreement overall, with respondents associating PWD-friendly facilities with safety, reliability, and inclusive service standards, reinforcing its role as a credible quality measure.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed positive and significant relationships between awareness of PWD policies, tourist satisfaction, and perceived quality assurance with Generation Z tourists' perceptions of PWD-friendly tourism. Perceived quality assurance showed the strongest relationship ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$), followed by tourist satisfaction ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$), while awareness of PWD policies showed a moderate but significant association ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.05$). These results suggest that trust and experience with accessible facilities influence perceptions more than policy awareness alone.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Generation Z tourists generally hold positive views of PWD-friendly tourism, particularly regarding accessibility, hygiene, and inclusive service standards. Although awareness of accessibility policies and tourist satisfaction are important, perceived quality assurance plays the most critical role in shaping positive perceptions. Weak promotion and limited awareness of formal accessibility standards suggest a need for more visible campaigns to educate young travellers on PWD-friendly facilities. Overall, trust-based quality assurance is central to promoting positive perceptions of PWD-friendly tourism in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study shows that Generation Z tourists in Malaysia generally have positive views of PWD-friendly tourism, especially appreciating facilities that are accessible, clean, safe, and provide inclusive services for everyone, including people with disabilities. Features like ramps, elevators, and clear signage were highlighted as very important because they make it easier for travellers with disabilities to move around and enjoy their visit, while hygiene and comfort were also seen as key factors in creating a pleasant experience. Although most respondents had visited PWD-friendly places before, only slightly more than half were aware of formal accessibility policies or certifications, suggesting that many young tourists rely on their personal experiences rather than official information when judging the quality of facilities. Tourist satisfaction was generally high, particularly regarding safety, comfort, and the overall experience, but perceived quality assurance, or trust in reliable, well-managed services, was found to be the most influential factor shaping positive perceptions. This means that young tourists care more about whether the facilities are actually dependable and accessible than simply knowing about the rules or policies. At the same time, the study shows that promotion and visibility of accessibility standards are still limited, highlighting the need for tourism providers and policymakers to improve awareness while maintaining high-quality services. By ensuring that PWD-friendly tourism is both trustworthy and inclusive, Malaysia can provide better travel experiences for young tourists, encourage more support for accessible tourism, and strengthen the country's reputation as a destination that welcomes everyone, including those with disabilities.

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