

VALUES, SUSTAINABILITY, AND EXPERIENCE- ORIENTED TOURISM AMONG YOUTH IN MALAYSIA



Editor
SITI YULIANDI AHMAD, PhD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Preface	
1	Exploring the Impact of Online Reviews and Digital Marketing in Shaping Generation Z's Awareness of Kundasang as a Tourist Destination	1
2	The Influence of Social Media on Youth Motivation to Travel to Pulau Langkawi	13
3	Generation Z's Experience of Using Artificial Intelligence as a Trip Planner in Malaysia	23
4	Travel Decision-Making of Generation Z in Malaysia	32
5	Determinants of Traveller Behaviour Among Generation Z in the Digital Tourism Era	43
6	Determinants of Generation Z Tourist Interest in Visiting Cultural Heritage Sites in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia	51

PREFACE

Tourism behaviour has entered a new era shaped by rapid digital transformation, changing consumer expectations, and the growing influence of Generation Z. As a generation raised in a highly connected environment, Generation Z approaches travel differently from previous cohorts. Their decisions are often influenced by social media content, peer recommendations, artificial intelligence tools, online reviews, and real time digital experiences. Travel is no longer determined solely by brochures, travel agencies, or traditional advertising. Instead, destinations are discovered, compared, evaluated, and selected through smartphones and digital platforms. This shift has created new opportunities and new challenges for the tourism industry in Malaysia.

*This edited volume, *Generation Z Travel Decision Making and Digital Influence in Malaysia*, brings together a collection of student based empirical studies that explore how digital environments shape the tourism choices of young travellers. The chapters examine diverse themes including destination awareness, social media motivation, artificial intelligence trip planning, financial considerations, traveller behaviour, and cultural heritage interest. Each chapter contributes practical insights into how Malaysian youth perceive tourism destinations and how digital tools affect their motivations and final decisions.*

The significance of this book lies in its local relevance. While global studies on Generation Z tourism continue to grow, context specific evidence from Malaysia remains limited. This volume responds to that gap by highlighting destinations such as Kundasang, Pulau Langkawi, and Negeri Sembilan while examining behavioural patterns among Malaysian youth. These findings are valuable for destination marketers, tourism agencies, policymakers, and researchers seeking to better understand future tourist markets.

It is hoped that this publication will inspire further research, strengthen digital tourism strategies, and encourage stakeholders to design experiences that resonate with Generation Z travellers in Malaysia and beyond.

Siti Yuliandi Ahmad, PhD
International Islamic University Malaysia

SYNOPSIS

Generation Z Travel Decision Making and Digital Influence in Malaysia explores how digital environments, social media platforms, and emerging technologies influence the travel behaviour of young Malaysians. As digital natives, Generation Z relies heavily on smartphones, online reviews, user generated content, and personalised digital experiences when selecting destinations, planning trips, and evaluating travel options. Their preferences are reshaping the tourism industry and creating new expectations for destination marketers and service providers.

This book compiles a series of empirical studies that examine key factors affecting Generation Z travel decisions within the Malaysian context. Several chapters investigate how online reviews, destination branding, and electronic word of mouth increase awareness of destinations such as Kundasang. These studies demonstrate the growing importance of digital credibility and peer influence in promoting tourism destinations to younger travellers. Other chapters focus on the motivational role of social media in encouraging visits to Pulau Langkawi. Findings highlight how attractive content, influencer recommendations, and platform preferences such as short video media can shape travel intention and destination interest among youth audiences.

The volume also examines the role of artificial intelligence in tourism planning. By analysing Generation Z experiences with AI trip planners, the studies reveal that ease of use, trust, and personalised recommendations contribute positively to travel planning satisfaction. Additional discussions cover financial affordability, traveller behaviour, and interest in cultural heritage tourism, showing that travel decisions are influenced by both emotional and practical considerations.

Overall, this publication offers valuable insights for researchers, students, tourism practitioners, and policymakers. It demonstrates that the future competitiveness of tourism destinations depends not only on attractions, but also on the ability to engage Generation Z through meaningful digital experiences.

©KSTCL Press 2026

Published by:
KSTCL Press
KM1, Jalan Panchor
Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia
Kulliyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages
84600 Pagoh, Muar, Johor

All rights reserved. Copying of further publication of the contents of this work is not permitted without permission from KSTCL Press, except for limited “fair use” for educational scholarly, and similar purposes as authorized by Malaysia Copyright Law, in which appropriate notice of the source of work should be given. No responsibility contained in the text, illustrations or advertisement. The opinions expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the editor of the publisher.

Exploring the Impact of Online Reviews and Digital Marketing in Shaping Generation Z's Awareness of Kundasang as a Tourist Destination

By Nur Fitriannie Selmie Binti Muhammad Faiz

PENGENALAN

Abstract

This study contains the awareness of tourism destination spots in Kundasang, Sabah among Generation Z (Gen Z). Kundasang, Sabah is a one of rural tourism spots in Malaysia; however, awareness among Generation Z tourists remains understudied. This study explores the influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), online reviews (Google Maps) and destination brand marketing influencing awareness of tourism destination spots in Kundasang. A quantitative approach was employed using online questionnaires for 43 Gen Z respondents. The findings were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. The findings show that significant level of awareness. The study highlights the importance of online reviews as the strongest platform in boosting rural tourism awareness among Generation Z.

Keyword: Generation Z, Destination Awareness, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), Online reviews, Destination Brand Marketing. Rural Tourism, Kundasang, Sabah.

Introduction

To begin with, the problem statement delivers succinct information clarifying the issue or challenge, thereby validating the need for research or further exploration. Concurrently, key elements of the research, including the research objective and question, express the researcher's aim and strategy in tackling the research goal. Moreover, the study's significance, referred to as the 'rationale,' is critical as it

represents the researcher's effort to persuade the reader of the research's worth and importance.

Research Background

People who travel are called tourists whether in international or domestic contexts (Lelper, 1979). These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure (UN Tourism, 2025)

One of the major contributors to Malaysia's tourist ecosystem is the state of Sabah, which is situated in the center of East Malaysia and combines natural beauty with culture and legacy (Abdullah & Ramamoorthy, 2019). Its numerous features from pristine beaches to lush rainforests with colorful cultural experiences entice millions of tourists each year (Yusof et al., 2023)

In Sabah, the arrival of tourists has been rapidly growing in January until September 2025, tourists' arrivals in the Sabah had recorded 2,826,390 tourist including domestic and international travellers compared to the year of 2024 had recorded 2,613,272 tourists including domestic and international tourists (Sabah Tourism Board, 2025).

Problem Statement

Rural destinations are frequently faced with less attention and public awareness compared to other urban or well-established tourism destinations despite their rich natural and cultural resources (Ali, Sulimat & Rahlin). Furthermore, existing tourism studies have focused on destination image and travel intention, while destination awareness has comparatively received less attention, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z) tourists (Ervin & Octaviany, 2022).

Moreover, Gen Z relies quite heavily on digital platforms when searching for travel related information (Pérez-Aranda et al., 2024). These digital communication channels such as Electronic-Word of Mouth (E-WOM), online reviews (Google reviews) and destination brand marketing have become important tools towards

shaping Gen Z awareness. However, discovering to which extent these channels could contribute to awareness in rural destinations remains unclear.

Research Objectives & Aim

This study aims to measure the awareness of tourism attraction spots in Kundasang, Sabah among Gen Z. It is also to find out the relationship between variables and point out the most influential factor towards rural tourism awareness.

RO1: To assess the current level of awareness of tourist attractions in Kundasang among Gen Z tourists.

RO2: To examine the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), Google Map reviews, and destination brand marketing with the level of recognition among Gen Z tourists

RO3: To determine the most significant digital factor influencing the level of awareness of Kundasang tourist attractions among Gen Z tourists.

Literature Review

E-WOM

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) refers to positive or negative statements made by consumers about tourism destinations through digital platforms such as social media, blog and online communities. For Generation Z that rely on digital platforms for searching travel related decisions, E-WOM has become one of the resources to find most of the information (Perez-Aranda et al., 2024).

By affecting perceptions and behavioral intentions, E-WOM also plays a mediating function in the decision-making process of tourists (Alaa Adel Alrefai et al., 2025). In a similar vein, Tissa A. Tissa Aulia Damayanti et al. (2025) note that E-WOM plays a significant role in brand identification. Social media engagement promotes tourism visibility and community well-being in Malaysia, claim Abd Hamid et al. (2025).

Online Reviews

Online reviews refer to evaluations, ratings and comments that are posted by digital platforms users. In this study, Google maps were chosen as reference of measurements. This provides information about destinations helping tourists to recognize and evaluate before visiting the place.

According to Al Beruni et al. (2025), Google Maps has the potential to enhance accessibility in the development of tourism. Star ratings, pictures, and written reviews are examples of features that could increase travellers' familiarity with the location while also raising awareness of the area. When making travel decisions, Gen Z is heavily influenced by online reviews (Perez-Aranda et al., 2024).

Destination Brand Marketing

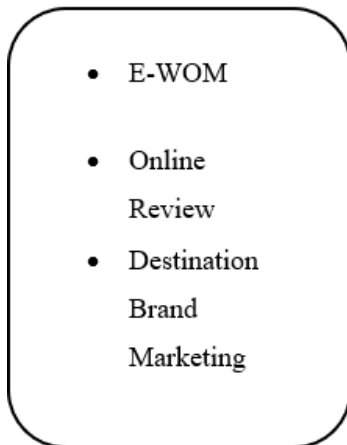
Destination brand marketing is the strategic use of branding, advertising, and digital marketing by tourist authorities or stakeholders to promote destinations. A distinctive character and increased awareness among prospective travelers could result from successful destination branding.

Product branding could influence destination loyalty among Gen Z travelers and shows that awareness and recognition are the impact of effective destination brand marketing (Chen Yuliang and Masri Abdul Lasi, 2025). Consistency of delivering message and content could attract tourists toward destination awareness (Erlyasari et al, 2025). For rural destinations, these steps could help to promote and essential to increase awareness among the younger generation.

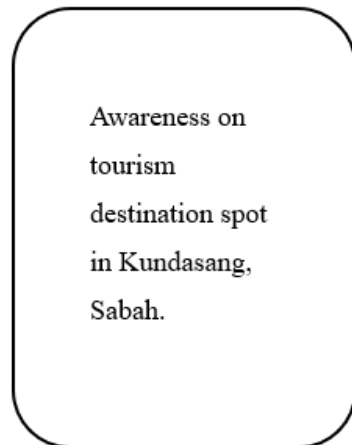
Conceptual Framework

The relationships on the parameters or between the variables of interest in this study are described in the research framework and hypotheses.

Independable Variable



Dependable Variable



Research Methodology

Chapter 3 of the report outlines the quantitative research methodology used to investigate Generation Z's awareness of Kundasang, Sabah, as a tourist destination. The study utilizes a descriptive research design with a cross-sectional quantitative approach, meaning data was gathered only once during a specific period specifically from November 29, 2025, to December 5, 2025. A structured online questionnaire, distributed via social media platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram, served as the primary instrument for data collection. The study's population consists of Generation Z individuals aged 15 to 28, including students from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), with 43 respondents selected through a cluster sampling technique.

The research instrument was a multi-section questionnaire adapted from previous studies and validated by an expert, Dr. Siti Yuliandi Binti Ahmad. It consists of five sections: Section A for demographic background; Section B for the dependent variable (tourist awareness); and Sections C, D, and E for the independent variables, which are Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), Online Reviews (Google Maps), and Destination Brand Marketing. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". To ensure accuracy, the layout and items were slightly adjusted for clarity before the final distribution.

To verify the reliability and consistency of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 43 respondents. The reliability of the variables was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with all variables scoring high: **Awareness (0.944)**, **E-WOM (0.905)**, **Online Reviews (0.897)**, and **Destination Brand Marketing (0.908)**. For the final data analysis, the researcher planned to use

SPSS version 31, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression to test the hypotheses and evaluate the research objectives. The chapter concludes by summarizing how these methods provide a structured framework for exploring the factors influencing Gen Z's awareness of rural tourism spots.

Table 1 Instrument

Particular	Item	References
Demographic	Adopt	(Rosamund Austin, 2022)
Awareness of tourism destination spot in Kundasang	Adapt	(Sriboonlue, 2023)
E-Wom	Adapt	(Tissa Aulia Damayanti et al., 2025)
Online Reviews	Adapt	(Al Beruni et al., 2025)
Destination Brand Marketing	Adapt	(Chen Yuliang & Masri Abdul Lasi, 2025)

Table 2 Cronbach Alpha

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
AWARENESS ON TOURISM DESTINATION SPOT	5	0.944
E-WOM	7	0.905
ONLINE REVIEWS	7	0.897
DESTINATION BRAND MARKETING	7	0.908

Results and Discussions

The survey findings reveal that the typical respondent is a female (72.1%) aged 21 to 24 (62.8%) holding a Bachelor's Degree (65.1%). Economically, the majority of these Gen Z participants report having no personal income (58.1%), followed by those earning between RM1,000 and RM3,000 (20.9%). While awareness of Kundasang is nearly universal at 97.7%, only 65.1% of respondents have actually visited the destination. Among those who have traveled there, the vast majority (51.2%) visit infrequently, averaging between one to three times per year, while a significant 37.2% of the total sample have never visited at all despite being aware of the location.

Variables	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	27.9
	Female	31	72.1
Age	15-17	2	4.7
	18-20	12	27.9
	21-24	27	62.8
	25-28	2	4.7
Education Level	High School	5	11.6
	Diploma	7	16.3
	Bachelor's Degree	28	65.1
	SKM	1	2.3
	STPM	1	2.3
	Certificate in Tourism Management		2.3
Income	More than RM5,000	2	4.7
	RM1000 - RM 3,000	9	20.9
	Less than RM 1000	7	16.3
	None	25	58.1
Have you heard of Kundasang before?	Yes	42	97.7
	No	1	2.3
Have you been to Kundasang?	Yes	28	65.1
	No	15	34.9
How many times do you travel to Kundasang in one year?	1-3	22	51.2
	4-6	2	4.7
	More than 6	3	7.0

Summaries of Variables

The descriptive analysis focuses on four main variables; awareness in tourism destination spot, E-WOM, online reviews and destination brand marketing. Table xx provides the mean summary of all variables which are stated below.

Table 3 Summary Of All Variable

	Mean
Awareness on tourism destination spots in Kundasang, Sabah.	4.214
Influence from E-WOM	4.173
Reliability Online Reviews	4.027
Destination Brand Marketing Effectiveness	4.123

Summary of Pearson Correlation

To investigate the relationships between E-WOM, online reviews and destination brand marketing influencing Gen Z awareness in tourist destination spots. Pearson correlation was conducted. **Table 4 Summary of Pearson Correlation between variables**

Table 4 Pearson Correlation

Independent Variables		Dependent Variable
	P	Awareness
E-WOM	.006	.416
Online Reviews	<.001	.590
Destination Brand Marketing	.008	.397

In Pearson Correlation analysis, E-WOM and destination brand marketing were found to be significantly correlated with awareness; however, their effects become

marginally insignificant when compared to online reviews in this model. In comparison to other digital communicant factors, this is a preview of how online reviews dominate the analysis of Gen Z tourist awareness.

Conclusion

To sum up, it's critical to acknowledge Gen Z's awareness of Kundasang as a tourist destination in order to raise the profile of rural tourism there. According to Mondok and Zámbo (2022), rural tourism must be experience-oriented and offered in a way that is appropriate for the younger generation. The high level of awareness that is frequently brought about by digital brand promotion, online reviews, and E-WOM. This study demonstrated a significant association between the independent variable and the dependable relationship. These findings highlight how important it is to cater to a variety of visitor interests in order to maximise destination awareness.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine Gen Z's awareness of Kundasang as a tourist destination. The findings from the preceding chapter show that there is a substantial correlation between the dependent variable (Gen Z's awareness of Kundasang as a tourist destination) and the independent variables (E-WOM, online reviews, and digital brand marketing). It has been demonstrated that positive reviews greatly increase visitor location awareness. These results demonstrate how crucial digital factors are to raising awareness in rural tourism. Overall, the result confirms that the theory Stimulus- Organism-Response (S-O-R) model may be used to describe how digital communication stimuli affect cognitive responses that result in destination awareness among Generation Z travelers.

Conclusion

To sum up, it's critical to acknowledge Gen Z's awareness of Kundasang as a tourist destination in order to raise the profile of rural tourism there. According to Mondok and Zámbo (2022), rural tourism must be experience-oriented and offered in a way that is appropriate for the younger generation. The high level of awareness that is

frequently brought about by digital brand promotion, online reviews, and E-WOM. This study demonstrated a significant association between the independent variable and the dependable relationship. These findings highlight how important it is to cater to a variety of visitor interests in order to maximize destination awareness.

Limitations

In relation to the current study, there are certain limitations that must be acknowledged. The tiny sample size for cluster sampling is the first drawback. Gen Z comprised the respondents. Social media platforms including Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp were used to gather respondents. This is due to limited time and resources. The variety of answers is influenced by this. Additionally, it only focuses on a specific age range.

Apart from that, little research has been done on awareness at Sabah tourist destinations. There are additional independent variables that require further investigation. The results and opinions of the respondents may be constrained by the quantitative approach. Because they are unable to express their opinions, survey participants are just able to supply answers.

Recommendations Of Future Studies

Future studies ought to consider to use qualitative method to gain more insight in this study. The qualitative method which including site visit, observation and interview. These could help the researchers to obtain more findings in the study. Other than that, study should aim for larger scope of study and more variety of respondent profile to understand other demographic groups better. Researchers also have to dive deeper into different independent variables that are yet to be found. Additionally, focusing on enhancing methods of digital platforms such as social media and digital brand marketing could boost the visibility of Kundasang attraction spot.

References

- Abd Hamid, Z., Kunasekaran, P., & Alam, M. (2025). The Role of Social Capital and Social Media in Tourism Development Towards the Wellbeing of the Mah Meri Community in Carey Island, Malaysia. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 33(S1). <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.33.s1.07>
- Al Beruni, M., Kobra, Mst. Khadijatul., Rolle, J.-A., Rahman, S., & Khalil, M. I. (2025). Exploring the Impact of Google Maps on Tourism Flourishment. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5156251>
- Alaa Adel Alrefai, Omar, S. I., & Kadir, I. A. (2025). The Mediating Role of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on Tourist Decisions Using (TAM) Model. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(3). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v15-i3/24696>
- Ali, S. H., Sulimat, K., & Rahlin, N. A. (2023). The Influence of Key Antecedents on Attitude and Revisit Intention: Evidence from Visitors of Homestay in Kundasang, Sabah, Malaysia. *Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems*, 733–742. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-26953-0_67
- Chen Yuliang, & Masri Abdul Lasi. (2025). Exploring the Impact of Digital Branding on Destination Loyalty: A Study on Gen Z Travelers in China. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(4), 1143–1155. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i4/25268>
- Erlyasari, N., Supriono, & Ikhsan, M. Y. M. (2025). Application of Digital Marketing in Building Brand Awareness in Tourism Destinations. *KnE Social Sciences*, 10(13), 33–48. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v10i13.18939>
- Ervina, E., & Octaviany, V. (2022). The Role of Tourist Attitude Toward Destination Awareness, Destination Personality And Future Visit Intention. *LE Asia-Pacific Management and Business Application*, 11(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.apmba.2022.011.01.1>
- Mondok, A., & Zábó, Z. (2022). Key challenges for rural destinations to meet the expectations of Generation Z travellers. *Acta Carolus Robertus*, 12(Különszám), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.33032/acr.3419>
- Perez-Aranda, J., Tolkach, D., & Panchal, J. H. (2024). Reputation and eWOM in accommodation decision-making: insights from Generation Z users. *Tourism Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/tr-03-2024-0185>
- SABAH TOURISM BOARD. (2021). *Sabah Tourism Board Corporate Website*. Tourism.sabah.gov.my. <https://tourism.sabah.gov.my/>
- Tissa Aulia Damayanti, Pusparini, M., & Barasa, R. T. (2025). How Social Media and e-WOM Build Perlang Tourist Village's Brand. *Jurnal Ilmu Manajemen Advantage*, 9(2), 181–194. <https://doi.org/10.30741/adv.v9i2.1713>

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH TRAVEL MOTIVATION IN MALAYSIA TO VISIT PULAU LANGKAWI

By Muhamad Aidil Reezki Bin Sahru Ramadan.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will tell several parts consisting of the background of the study which will focus on the research topic, namely the influence of social media in encouraging young tourists in Malaysia to travel to Langkawi Island. In this chapter, it will also talk about the problem statement that explains the issues faced by Pulau Langkawi. Based on the issue, study objectives, research questions, and research framework. Finally, the researcher will also give the importance of this study, namely in academic and industry perspectives.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Tourism is a global phenomenon that encompasses the activities of travel and temporary stay of a person outside their usual environment for recreational, business or other purposes not related to employment at the destination. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is defined as “the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes” (UNWTO, n.d.). In addition, Leiper (1979) emphasized that tourism is a system consisting of tourists, areas of origin, routes of transmission, destinations, and the tourism industry that is influenced by the social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors of a tourist destination. This definition shows that tourism is not only about human movement but also involves the entire network of services and experiences that make up the industry.

Globally, tourism remains one of the world's largest economic sectors and a major contributor to socio-economic development. Malaysia has also shown positive growth in tourism, especially in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, Malaysia recorded 20,141,846 international tourist arrivals with a total tourism receipt of RM 71.3 billion (Tourism Malaysia, 2023). In the domestic sector, there were 213.7 million domestic trips, generating revenue of RM 84.9 billion (Department of Statistics Malaysia [DOSM], 2023). These figures indicate that tourism continues to be a significant contributor to Malaysia's GDP and plays a key role in economic recovery.

Locally, Pulau Langkawi is one of the most iconic tourist destinations in Malaysia, attracting both domestic and international tourists. The Langkawi Development Authority (LADA, 2023) reported that the island received 2.81 million visitors in 2023, showing a consistent increase in tourist arrivals. In

addition, tourism revenue in Langkawi reached RM 7.03 billion, driven by promotional initiatives, improved accessibility, and diverse tourism offerings, including natural attractions, eco-tourism, and family recreational experiences (The Star, 2025). Langkawi's prominence as a top destination illustrates that communication and marketing efforts including social media play a significant role in strengthening tourist interest in the island.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Young adults' travel intentions are increasingly important to the tourism industry as they shape future travel trends and influence destination demand. Previous studies have shown that social media usage is strongly associated with young travellers' intentions to visit destinations (Ismail, 2025). Positive experiences and subjective norms shared online also influence them. For destination choices (Mohamad, 2022). In addition, Zhou (2023) highlighted that social media platforms such as TikTok influence destination choices among young traveler. However, existing research has focused mainly on foreign destinations or general travel behavior, and very few studies have addressed young adults' travel intentions to Langkawi specifically, despite the rapid growth of tourism on the island. This highlights a critical research gap on how social media contributes to young Malaysian adults' motivation to visit Langkawi.

The quality of content on social media such as accurate information, attractive visuals and clear descriptions play an important role in influencing travel decisions. Wang (2022) found that good quality information increases a person's interest in visiting a destination, while Joseph (2024) stated that attractive visuals and storytelling can make a destination seem more attractive to visit. Furthermore, influencer marketing and different platform dynamics—such as TikTok's speed and Instagram's engagement—show varying levels of trust and effectiveness (Asri, 2024; Rachmandani, 2023; Skagias, 2022; Litovka, 2025). However, these studies are often based on other countries such as China or Indonesia (Wengel, 2022; Afriansyah, 2025). This shows a gap in understanding which specific content characteristics and platforms are the most effective in attracting young Malaysians to Langkawi.

RESEARCH AIM

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between social media usage and the travel motivation of young Malaysian adults toward Pulau Langkawi. Specifically, the study seeks to determine how digital content and marketing strategies across various platforms drive domestic tourism among the youth demographic.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How does social media content quality influence youth travel motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi?
2. How does influencer marketing on social media affect youth travel motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi?
3. Which social media platform most strongly motivates youth to visit Pulau Langkawi?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the influence of social media content quality on youth travel motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi.
2. To investigate how influencer marketing on social media shapes youth travel motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi.
3. To identify which social media platform most strongly motivates youth to visit Pulau Langkawi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

VARIABLE OF STUDY

The variables selected for this study are categorized into independent and dependent variables, which are essential in understanding the dynamics of youth travel behaviour. The independent variables consist of content quality, influencer marketing, and social media platform types, each representing a distinct digital factor that shapes how information is consumed and perceived. Meanwhile, travel motivation serves as the dependent variable, representing the psychological outcome and the internal drive of young adults to visit Pulau Langkawi. By examining these variables, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how social media elements interact to influence the final decision-making process of the Malaysian youth market.

TRAVEL MOTIVATION

Travel motivation refers to a person's internal psychological drive that encourages individuals to travel, explore, and socialize in new areas that have never been explored (Dann, 1981). For youth tourists, their motivation is greatly influenced by social media where social media becomes an inspiration and excitement felt by them (Rahim & Zulkifli, 2022). Therefore, travel motivation is the dependent variable used in this study in identifying the influence of social media on the motivation of young tourists in Malaysia to travel to Pulau Langkawi.

CONTENT QUALITY

Content quality refers to the credibility, clarity, accuracy, aesthetics, and relevance of information shared on social media platforms (Chung & Koo, 2015). High-quality visual and informational content increases emotional engagement and builds positive attitudes towards a destination (Kim &

Fesenmaier, 2017). Young tourists in particular are highly responsive to visually appealing, authentic, and informative content, which increases their motivation to explore tourist destinations such as Langkawi Island.

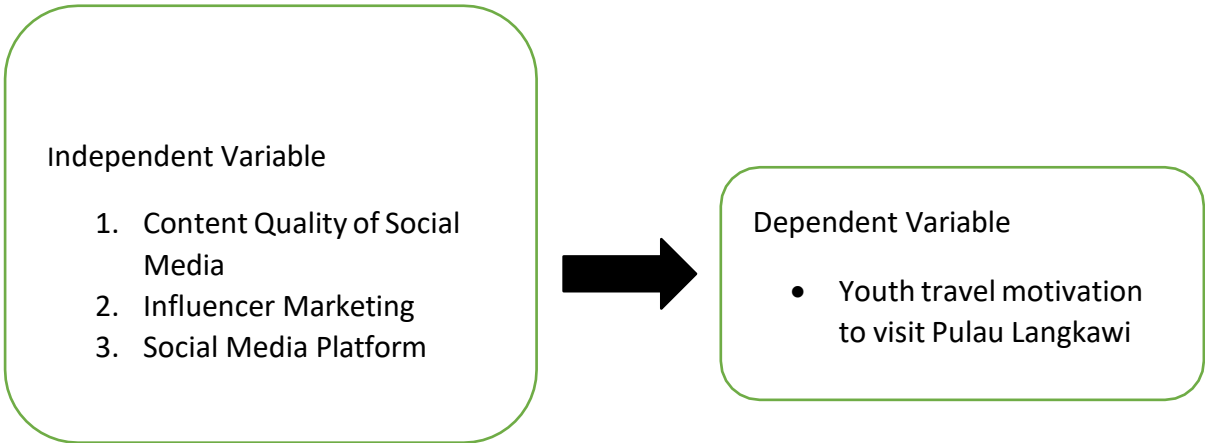
INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing involves the use of individuals with social influence on social media platforms to influence followers through sharing the influencer's own recommendations and experiences about their travels to a tourist destination. Influencer credibility, which consists of trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness, plays an important role in shaping subjective norms (Magno & Cassia, 2018). Therefore, youth often consider influential people as trustworthy figures who can increase the attractiveness of a tourist destination and thus increase the motivation of tourists to travel to the destination they are talking about.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM TYPE

Different social media platforms offer different formats and characteristics. TikTok provides short-form entertainment-oriented videos while Instagram emphasizes visual aesthetics, and YouTube provides longer and more detailed travel guides (Suki, 2020). The choice of platform influences the processing of information delivery to its users and the emotional involvement in using it. A platform that better suits the preference of youth is likely to increase their motivation to visit a tourist destination.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



This study is guided by a framework that examines how social media content quality, influencer marketing, and the specific social media platforms used act as key drivers for youth travel motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi. The framework posits that high-quality digital content and credible influencer endorsements, delivered through effective social media channels, directly shape the travel intentions and desires of the younger generation. By integrating these three independent variables, the

framework provides a structured approach to understanding the digital factors that successfully trigger the decision of youth travellers to choose Pulau Langkawi as their destination .

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach to examine the relationship between social media factors and young adults' travel motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi. A descriptive and causal research approach is employed to identify the influence of content quality, influencer marketing, and social media platforms as independent variables on youth travel motivation as the dependent variable. Quantitative research enables subjective perceptions to be transformed into numerical data, allowing objective statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents, which supports consistency, reliability, and generalizability of findings.

The population of this study consists of Malaysian young adults aged between 18 and 30 years who actively use social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This age group was selected because youth represent one of the most active social media user segments and are a key target market in tourism promotion. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure respondents met specific inclusion criteria, including age range and exposure to travel-related social media content. This non-probability sampling technique allows the researcher to focus on individuals most relevant to the research objectives, although it may limit generalizability. A total of 35 respondents participated in this study, which is considered acceptable for an exploratory undergraduate research given time and accessibility constraints.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from previous tourism and social media studies. The questionnaire comprised five sections: Section A covered demographic information; Section B measured youth travel motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi (dependent variable); Section C assessed content quality of social media (IV1); Section D examined influencer marketing (IV2); and Section E evaluated social media platforms used for promotion (IV3). Measurement items in Sections B to D employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), which is suitable for capturing respondents' attitudes and perceptions. This instrument enables systematic evaluation of social media influences on youth travel motivation toward Pulau Langkawi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RELIABILITY TEST

Based on the results of the pilot test conducted, the reliability analysis of the study instrument showed high Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables, namely Content Quality on Social Media Platform (IV1) of 0.892, Influencer Marketing in Social Media (IV2) of 0.919, Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms in Delivering Travel Content (IV3) of 0.861 and the dependent variable, namely Youth Travel Motivation and Intention to Pulau Langkawi (DV) of 0.824, with each variable measured using seven question items. This finding indicates that the questionnaire items have a good and stable level of internal consistency, thus reflecting the reliability of the instrument used in this study and its suitability for use in real studies.

Table

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha Value
Content quality of social media (IV1)	7	0.892
Influencer marketing (IV2)	7	0.919
social media platform (IV3)	7	0.861
Youth travel motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi (DV)	7	0.824

PROFILE RESPONDENT

Based on the data provided, this survey collected responses from 35 individuals, the majority of whom were female with a degree (62%) and aged between 21-24 years (65.7%). This group had a high academic level, with 71.4% having a degree and almost all (97.1%) being students. Although almost all respondents had been to Langkawi Island, their travel experiences varied, with the largest group (45.7%) having visited the island 2 to 3 times. Thus, this data shows that Langkawi Island is a common and popular destination among this educated young adult group.

Characteristic	Descriptions	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender	Male	13	37.1
	Female	22	62
Age	18 - 20	11	31.4
	21 – 24	23	65.7
	25 - 28	1	2.9
Educational Level	Foundation/Matric/STPM	6	17.1
	Diploma	4	11.4
	Degree	25	71.4
Employment Status	Student	34	97.1
	Unemployed	1	2.9
Have you ever heard of Pulau Langkawi	Yes	34	97.1
	No	1	2.9
Frequence of visit to Pulau Langkawi	None	6	17.1
	First time	7	20.0
	2 – 3 time	16	45.7
	More than 4 time	6	17.1

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

This section presents the descriptive statistics for the variables measured in the study, which include one dependent variable with is Youth Travel Motivation to Pulau Langkawi and three independent variables with is Content Quality, Influencer Marketing, and Social Media Platforms. The analysis focuses on the Mean and Standard Deviation for each item to identify the level of respondent agreement. In this study, a higher mean score indicates a higher level of agreement or a more positive perception of the factor being measured, providing a clear overview of the respondents' views on social media's role in promoting Pulau Langkawi.

	Mean
Youth travel motivation and intention to Pulau Langkawi (DV)	4.276
Content Quality of social media About Pulau Langkawi (IV1)	4.469
Influencer Marketing Related to Pulau Langkawi Social Media Platform (IV2)	4.041
Social Media Platform Used to Promote Pulau Langkawi (IV3)	4.261

Table Summary of All Variables

SUMMARY

In summary, Chapter 4 demonstrates that most respondents who are primarily female students aged 21 to 28 possess a high level of motivation to visit Pulau Langkawi driven by social media factors. Descriptive and correlation analyses confirm that Content Quality is the most dominant factor followed by Social Media Platforms and Influencer Marketing as all three show a significant positive relationship with youth travel intentions. Furthermore, the Multiple Linear Regression analysis confirms that the model explains 76 percent of the variance in travel motivation and identifies high quality visuals and short form video platforms like TikTok and Reels as the most effective primary drivers in influencing the travel decisions of the youth demographic.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study on the influence of social media on youth travel motivation is to learn more about the preferences and driving forces behind the decision to visit Pulau Langkawi. This study will help policymakers, marketers, and the travel sector better meet the requirements and digital

preferences of Malaysian youth. Significant correlations between the independent and dependent variables were established through the findings. While influencer marketing contributes to making a destination look appealing, the quality of content and the use of modern platforms like TikTok and Instagram significantly boost travel intentions. The study concludes that content quality is the most significant element in driving motivation followed closely by the choice of social media platform. These results emphasize how crucial it is to accommodate the digital habits of the younger generation to optimize tourism growth in Pulau Langkawi.

REFERENCES

- Afriansyah, A. (2025). *The effectiveness of TikTok in tourism information dissemination*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). (2023). *Domestic tourism survey*. <https://www.dosm.gov.my>
- Kapoor, K. K., et al. (2021). Advances in social media research. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 23, 531–558.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-020-10054-1>
- Langkawi Development Authority (LADA). (2023). *Langkawi tourism performance report*. <https://www.lada.gov.my>
- Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). (2025). *Internet users survey*.
<https://www.mcmc.gov.my>
- Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC). (2025). *Malaysia tourism statistics*.
<https://www.motac.gov.my>
- The Star. (2025). *Langkawi tourism revenue reaches RM7.03 billion*. <https://www.thestar.com.my>

GENERATION Z'S EXPERIENCE OF USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A TRIP PLANNER IN MALAYSIA

By Muhammad Adam Muqriz Bin Fauzi

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force across multiple service industries, including tourism and hospitality. In the tourism context, AI technologies are increasingly embedded in trip planning processes through chatbots, recommendation systems, itinerary generators, and predictive analytics tools that assist travellers in making informed decisions (Gretzel et al., 2023). These AI-based trip planners enable travellers to efficiently search for destinations, compare travel options, and personalise itineraries, thereby reshaping the pre-travel experience.

Generation Z (Gen Z), typically defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, represents a cohort that has grown up in a highly digitalised environment. Their familiarity with mobile applications, social media, and AI-driven platforms positions them as early adopters of emerging technologies, including AI-based travel tools (Priporas et al., 2022). In Malaysia, the rapid recovery of the tourism sector and the government's emphasis on digital tourism initiatives further amplify the relevance of AI in shaping tourist behaviour.

While AI trip planners promise efficiency, convenience, and personalisation, the quality of the experience derived from interacting with these tools remains a critical concern. Tourist experience, particularly during the planning stage, involves cognitive evaluations, emotional responses, and overall satisfaction with the decision-making process. Understanding how AI attributes shape this experience is essential for both academic inquiry and practical application.

Therefore, this study focuses on examining the experience of using AI as a trip planner among Gen Z travellers in Malaysia.

Research Background

The growing body of tourism technology literature highlights the increasing reliance on digital tools to support travel planning and decision-making. Early studies primarily examined online travel agencies, booking platforms, and destination websites, emphasizing usability and information quality. With recent advancements in AI, research attention has shifted toward intelligent systems capable of learning user preferences and providing real-time, adaptive recommendations.

Despite this shift, much of the existing literature remains centered on technology acceptance constructs such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and behavioral intention. In tourism research, AI studies frequently assess travelers' willingness to adopt chatbots, virtual assistants, or recommendation systems, often neglecting experiential dimensions beyond usage intention.

Furthermore, experiential outcomes—such as enjoyment, confidence, reduced stress, and satisfaction during trip planning—have received comparatively limited empirical attention. This gap is particularly evident in studies focusing on younger travellers in emerging tourism markets such as Malaysia. As Gen Z increasingly relies on AI to support travel decisions, it becomes crucial to examine not only whether they adopt AI tools, but how they experience and evaluate interactions with these systems.

Problem Statement

Artificial Intelligence-based trip planners are increasingly adopted in tourism planning due to their ability to automate information processing and personalise recommendations. However, existing tourism research has predominantly focused on system adoption, intention to use, and functional performance of AI tools. Such a focus overlooks the experiential outcomes associated with AI-assisted planning, particularly the cognitive and emotional responses of users.

Moreover, although AI tools are designed to enhance convenience and efficiency, it remains unclear whether attributes such as ease of use, personalisation, and trust in AI actually improve the perceived tourist experience during the planning stage. Concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic reliability, and system transparency may undermine users' confidence and negatively affect their experience.

In the Malaysian context, empirical research examining AI-based trip planning among Gen Z travellers is scarce. This lack of context-specific evidence limits the understanding of how young, digitally literate

travellers evaluate AI interactions in tourism. Consequently, there is a need for systematic investigation into how specific AI attributes influence the perceived tourist experience of Gen Z travellers in Malaysia.

Research Aim

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) trip planner attributes on the perceived tourist experience of Generation Z travellers in Malaysia.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the influence of ease of use on the perceived tourist experience of Gen Z travellers using AI trip planners.
2. To determine the influence of personalisation on the perceived tourist experience of Gen Z travellers using AI trip planners.
3. To analyse the influence of trust in AI on the perceived tourist experience of Gen Z travellers using AI trip planners.

Research Question

1. How does ease of use influence the perceived tourist experience of Gen Z travellers using AI trip planners?
2. How does personalisation influence the perceived tourist experience of Gen Z travellers using AI trip planners?
3. How does trust in AI influence the perceived tourist experience of Gen Z travellers using AI trip planners?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Tourist Experience (Dependent Variable)

Perceived tourist experience refers to the subjective evaluation of cognitive, emotional, and satisfaction-related responses formed through interactions with tourism products or services (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In the context of AI-based trip planning, the tourist experience occurs primarily during the pre-travel stage, where users interact with digital systems to make travel decisions.

Studies suggest that a positive planning experience can enhance anticipation, reduce uncertainty, and increase overall satisfaction with travel decisions (Prebensen et al., 2013). AI trip planners influence this experience by simplifying information search, reducing decision complexity, and offering tailored suggestions. Therefore, perceived tourist experience in this study encompasses enjoyment, confidence, reduced stress, and satisfaction derived from using AI trip planners.

Ease of Use (Independent Variable)

Ease of use is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using a system requires minimal effort (Davis, 1989). Within TAM, ease of use plays a critical role in shaping users' evaluations of technology. In tourism, user-friendly digital platforms enhance satisfaction and reduce frustration during travel planning (Kim & Lee, 2023).

AI trip planners that are intuitive and easy to navigate are more likely to generate positive emotional responses and cognitive comfort. For Gen Z travellers, who value speed and simplicity, ease of use is expected to significantly influence their planning experience.

Personalisation (Independent Variable)

Personalisation refers to the extent to which AI systems tailor information, recommendations, and itineraries to individual user preferences. AI-driven personalisation has been widely recognised as a key competitive advantage in tourism services (Ryu & Park, 2024).

Personalised recommendations reduce information overload and enhance perceived relevance, leading to higher satisfaction and engagement. In AI-based trip planning, personalisation allows travellers to feel understood and supported, which positively contributes to the overall planning experience.

Trust in AI (Independent Variable)

Trust in AI reflects users' confidence in the reliability, accuracy, and security of AI systems. In tourism, trust is particularly important as travellers rely on AI-generated information to make high-involvement decisions (Huang et al., 2023).

Concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and misinformation can undermine trust and negatively affect user experience. Conversely, higher trust levels encourage reliance on AI outputs and enhance experiential evaluations during trip planning.

Conceptual Framework

Grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model, this study proposes that ease of use, personalisation, and trust in AI directly influence perceived tourist experience. The framework extends TAM beyond adoption intention by focusing on experiential outcomes in AI-based tourism planning.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methodology used to investigate how **Ease of Use**, **Personalization**, and **Trust in AI** influence the **Tourist Experience** of Generation Z travelers in Malaysia. Adopting a **quantitative, cross-sectional survey design**, the study utilizes a structured questionnaire to collect numerical data at a single point in time. This approach allows for a standardized comparison of respondents' perceptions and the measurement of statistical relationships between the variables.

The research instrument consists of a two-part questionnaire adapted from established sources (Chen & Liu, 2025; Lim et al., 2024; Tejas & Manju, 2023; Sunkawar et al., 2025). It uses a **five-point Likert scale** to measure 28 items across the four main constructs. To ensure the study's integrity, the instrument underwent **content validation** by an expert and a **pilot test** with 34 respondents. The pilot results demonstrated high reliability, with **Cronbach's alpha** values ranging from **.798 to .961**, confirming that the scales are internally consistent and suitable for the main study.

The target population focuses on **Gen Z travelers (ages 18–26)** in Malaysia who have used AI trip planners, using a **non-probability convenience sampling** technique with a sample size of 34. The data analysis plan includes **descriptive statistics** for demographic profiling, **Pearson correlation** to examine the direction and strength of relationships, and **multiple linear regression** to test the research hypotheses. These techniques collectively determine how well the chosen predictors explain the variations in the overall tourist experience. Although the sample size is relatively small, it is considered adequate for exploratory analysis within an academic course context.

	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
DV	Tourist Experience on using AI as trip planner	7	.944
IV1	Ease of Use	7	.798
IV2	Personalisation	7	.961
IV3	Trust in AI	7	.948

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

CHARACTERISTICS	DESCRIPTIVES	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENTAGE (%)
GENDER	MALE	22	64.7
	FEMALE	12	35.3
AGE	18-20	17	50
	21-23	15	44.1
	24-26	2	5.9
EDUCATION	SPM / O-Level	1	2.9
	STPM/Foundation /Matriculation	2	8.8
	Diploma	2	5.9
	Bachelor's Degree	28	82.4
	Postgraduate	1	2.9
MONTHLY PERSONAL INCOME	No income	25	73.5
	Below RM1,000	9	26.5
	No income	25	73.5
	Below RM1,000	9	26.5
HAVE YOU EVER USED AI ASTRIP PLANNER	Yes	26	76.5
	No	8	23.5
FREQUENCY OF AI USAGE DURING PLANNING TRIP	First time	10	8.8
	Occasionally (1–2 times yearly)	21	26.5
	Regularly (3–5 times yearly)	3	20.6
AI TRIP PLANNER USED	ChatGPT	9	26.5
	TikTok AI recommendations	7	7
	Instagram AI recommendations	10	29.4
	Trip planner tools (e.g.,	7	20.6

	Trip.ai, Roam Around)		
	Other	1	2.9

The demographic analysis reveals a predominant participation from male respondents (**64.7%**), with the majority of the sample belonging to the younger end of the Generation Z spectrum (**50%**) are aged 18-20. Educationally, the sample is highly qualified, with **82.4%** holding or pursuing a Bachelor's Degree, though **73.5%** currently have no personal income, likely reflecting their status as full-time students.

Regarding technology usage, while **61.8%** initially reported not having used AI as a trip planner in the specific binary question, the usage frequency and tool breakdown suggest a burgeoning interest. Instagram AI (**29.4%**) and ChatGPT (**26.5%**) are the most popular tools among those who do use AI, with most users (**26.5%**) engaging with these tools occasionally (1–2 times yearly). This suggests that while Gen Z is tech-savvy, AI trip planning is still in an introductory phase for many.

Descriptive Analysis

VARIABLES	MEAN
Tourist experience on using AI as trip planner	3.878
Ease of Use	3.870
Personalisation	3.941
Trust in AI	3.861

Descriptive statistics were used to examine respondents' perceptions of the study variables, namely **Ease of Use, Personalisation, Trust in AI, and Perceived Tourist Experience**. Mean and standard deviation values were calculated to summarise the overall tendency and variability of responses on a five-point Likert scale.

The descriptive results indicate that Personalisation recorded the highest mean score (**M = 3.94**), suggesting that Generation Z travellers particularly value AI systems that can tailor travel recommendations according to their preferences. This finding highlights the importance of customised content in enhancing the travel planning experience. Perceived Tourist Experience (**M = 3.88**) and **Ease of Use (M = 3.87)** also recorded relatively high mean values, reflecting generally positive perceptions of AI trip planners among respondents. These results indicate that AI tools are viewed as helpful and enjoyable in supporting travel planning activities. Trust in AI recorded the lowest mean score (**M = 3.86**),

although it remains above the midpoint of the scale. This suggests that while respondents generally trust AI systems, some concerns may still exist regarding data privacy, accuracy, or system reliability.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully investigated the factors influencing the AI-driven tourist experience among Generation Z travelers in Malaysia. The research highlights a strong adoption of AI tools like **ChatGPT** and **Instagram AI**, indicating that this demographic is increasingly shifting toward digital-first trip planning. The statistical evidence was robust, with the research model explaining **85.8% of the variance** in the tourist experience, confirming that **Ease of Use**, **Personalisation**, and **Trust** are indeed the fundamental pillars of AI integration in the tourism sector.

A key takeaway from the analysis is the dominant role of **Ease of Use**. While personalization and trust were highly valued by respondents, the regression analysis proved that the simplicity and intuitiveness of the platform are the most significant predictors of overall satisfaction. For Gen Z travelers, the ability to navigate a tool with minimal effort is the primary "make or break" factor. This suggests that while advanced AI capabilities are impressive, they lose their value if the user interface is complex or requires significant technical support.

In conclusion, for AI-based trip planners to gain widespread loyalty among Malaysian Gen Zers, developers and travel marketers must prioritize seamless user experiences. Reducing technical friction is more critical than complex feature sets. By focusing on intuitive design alongside personalized recommendations, the tourism industry can better capture the interest of this emerging market, turning AI from a novelty tool into an essential travel companion. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its relatively small sample size and focus on Generation Z travellers in Malaysia, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings to other demographic groups or contexts.

REFERENCES

- Huang, M. H., & Rust, R. T. (2022). A strategic framework for artificial intelligence in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 50(1), 30–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00749-9>
- Kizildag, M., Zhang, T., & Ko, J. (2024). Trust and transparency in AI-enabled hospitality services: Implications for customer experience. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 118, 103684. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103684>
- Lim, W. M., Rasul, T., Kumar, S., & Ala, M. (2024). Trust, transparency, and ethics in artificial intelligence-enabled tourism services. *Journal of Business Research*, 164, 114001. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114001>
- Sunkawar, R., Patil, P., & Kulkarni, V. (2025). Smart trip planners based on real-time data and machine learning. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 11(2), 310–326. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-09-2024-0187>
- Tejas, M. P., & Manju, G. (2023). Recommendation systems for intelligent travel planning: A user experience perspective. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 14(4), 654–670. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-01-2023-0029>
- Veluru, R. (2023). Artificial intelligence applications in travel planning and tourism decision-making. *Tourism Review*, 78(4), 987–1001. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-02-2023-0085>
- Venkatesh, V., Thong, J. Y. L., & Xu, X. (2022). Consumer acceptance and use of information technology: Extending the Technology Acceptance Model. *MIS Quarterly*, 46(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2022/16350>
- Wang, D., Xiang, Z., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2023). Smartphone use in everyday life and travel. *Journal of Travel Research*, 62(4), 823–839. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875221098241>
- Zhang, T., Lu, C., & Kizildag, M. (2024). Examining user trust and experiential outcomes in AI-based hospitality services. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 118, 103684. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103684>

TRAVEL DECISION MAKING OF GENERATION Z IN MALAYSIA

By Nur Qistina Balqis binti Azli

ABSTRACT

The tourism industry is experiencing a notable shift, largely due to the growing impact of Generation Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012. This research explores the key elements that shape travel choices among Generation Z in Malaysia, concentrating on three main factors: Social Media Influencers, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and Perceived Financial Affordability. The study delves into these factors within the framework of a highly digital and interconnected environment, where the boundaries between social media, marketing, and consumer behavior are increasingly blurred.

Generation Z is recognized for its high level of digital fluency and strong dependence on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for travel inspiration and information. In contrast to previous generations, whose travel choices were influenced by conventional advertising, Generation Z is more affected by user-generated content, online reviews, and recommendations from social media influencers.

This study adds to the expanding body of research on Generation Z's travel behavior, with a specific focus on Malaysia. It underscores the significance of understanding the unique digital behaviors and social dynamics of this demographic when crafting marketing strategies. In conclusion, this study provides important insights for academics, tourism marketers, and industry professionals seeking to comprehend the evolving trends in travel decision-making in the digital era, particularly as shaped by the Generation Z demographic.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is seen as a major contributor to economic development and social progress around the world. It has greatly promoted the smooth communication and increased profit of the business (Haini et al., 2024). In Malaysia, tourism has emerged as a growth industry for the national economy and forms a large part of increased national revenue. Tourism has also generated new employment opportunities and international visibility. Social media now plays a vital role in tourism, and it can be said that there is a rational relationship in between use of social media, as well as the operational activities of tourism. The landscape of tourism has evolved in a number of ways, most apparent among the youngest demographic, Generation Z, who now significantly impact such an industry (Daniel, 2022).

Heavily digitalized is exactly how those who are of Generation Z, who were born between 1997 and 2012, have spent most of their time growing up. They are also getting overwhelmed by technology and social media platforms as this generation has easy access to mobile phones. Multiple platforms with hundreds of millions of users, such as YouTube, X, Instagram and TikTok, have been shaping the purchasing habits of people. These channels have become major influencing factors in consumer choices, providing an environment for product discovery and interaction with a brand. Because of this, travel behavior

among Gen Z is not just influenced by the conventional travel determinants such as price and cost of travel but also by online content and engagement (Khater et al., 2025).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the main problems that affects the tourism marketers is the growing influence of social media influencers. Even though influencer marketing has become a dormant promotional strategy, not all influencer campaigns successfully convert engagement into actual travel decisions. Without proper empirical evidence, the use of marketers may lead to ineffective use of resources. Fear of missing out (FOMO) has become a prominent factor influencing the travel decisions of Generation Z, shaping their behavior and increasing their desire to engage in experiences and destinations they perceive as popular or trending (Mohamad, 2022).

Despite the growing relevance, there is limited research that focuses on the role of fear of missing out in travel decision making among Generation Z in Malaysia. Another critical concern is the financial affordability that has greatly affected the decision to travel. There are insufficient studies that focus on how financial perceptions interact with the psychological and social influences in the Malaysian context. There is a notable lack of empirical research that explores the combined effects of factors such as social media influencers, fear of missing out (FOMO), and perceived financial affordability on travel decision-making. While many studies examine individual factors, they often focus on Western contexts, which may not fully capture the cultural, social, and economic realities of Malaysian youth (Ilham et al., 2024). This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the key factors that influence travel decision-making among tourists in Malaysia, specifically looking at the roles of social media influencers, FOMO, and financial affordability. The insights gained from this research will be valuable to stakeholders, industry practitioners, and future researchers who wish to further explore this area.

RESEARCH AIM

The purpose of this research is to investigate the factors that influence travel decision-making, with a particular focus on the role of social media influencers, fear of missing out (FOMO), and perceived financial affordability. Generation Z in Malaysia in terms of making a decision on travelling, keeping in mind the effects of social media influence, FOMO, and perceived financial affordability. This research specifically aims to investigate how social and financial factors cumulatively impact travel decisions and intentions in a digitally shaped environment. The aim of this research should result in generating more empirical results for academics, particularly in terms of tourism and consumer behavior studies, and more specifically with regard to youth travel behaviour in Malaysia, which is experiencing a revolutionary transformation with each passing day.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To assess the influence of social media influencers, fear of missing out, and perceived financial affordability on travel decision-making among Generation Z in Malaysia.
2. To examine the relationships between social media influencers, fear of missing out, perceived financial affordability, and travel decision-making among Generation Z in Malaysia.
3. To determine the most significant factor influencing travel decision-making among Generation Z in Malaysia.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How do social media influencers, FOMO and perceived financial affordability influence travel decision-making among Generation Z in Malaysia?
2. Impact of the social media influencer, fear of missing out, and perceived financial affordability towards travel decision- making among Generation Z in Malaysia.
3. Which factor most strongly influences travel decision-making among Generation Z in Malaysia?

LITERATURE REVIEW

TRAVEL DECISION-MAKING

Travel decision-making is the process by which individuals assess and choose travel options based on their personal motivations and preferences. This process involves several stages, including the identification of travel needs, gathering of information, evaluation of different alternatives, making the final decision, and assessing the experience afterward.

Among Gen Z consumers, travel decision-making has been enhanced by the digital environments and social interactions that are triggered by the online content (Mihai et al., 2023). According to Ilham et al. (2024), travel decision-making is affected by factors like marketing communications, social influences, and technological exposure. Digital platforms significantly influence how Gen Z and younger travelers perceive destinations. The availability of travel-related content on social media and online reviews has made it easier for individuals to assess potential destinations, helping to lower uncertainty in their decision-making process.

Most of the travelers use platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Unlike traditional advertising, most people often perceive user-generated content and influencer recommendations to be more authentic and trustworthy. The trust leads to an effect on the process of decision-making among the young individuals who often rely on peer opinions and relatable experiences when making travel decisions. Continuous exposure to travel-related content often leads to emotional pressure to engage in similar experiences and make socially driven decisions (Ahmad & Idris, 2024).

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND TRAVEL DECISION-MAKING

Social media influencers have become so influential in enabling effective decision-making when making decisions to travel, especially in the tourism sector. Influencers are those people who have established credibility and have a huge following on social media platforms through creating and engaging in relatable content (Ismail et al., 2025). The influencers often change the perception of the travelers as they share personal travel experiences and destination insights. Among Gen Z travelers, influencers are trusted and inspire them when planning travel activities. Social media influencers greatly affect travel decision-making because of their perceived authenticity. Influencer content mostly appears to be personal and visually appealing narratives, hence increasing the likelihood that followers will consider visiting the destinations that are promoted. Influencer recommendations are therefore of great influence in shaping the destination preferences and even the timing for travel decisions. Through the use of travel vlogs and detailed posts, the influencers give important insights regarding the recommendation options, travel costs, and activities. This information is essential for potential travelers as they gain confidence in their decisions, especially when exploring an unfamiliar destination (Asri et al., 2024).

FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) AND TRAVEL DECISION-MAKING

In recent years, the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has become increasingly prominent, largely driven by the growing use of social media platforms. These platforms often expose users to curated content that features travel and social events. FOMO is essentially a psychological condition characterized by a constant feeling of anxiety that others are enjoying rewarding experiences without one's involvement (Aina & Ezeuduji, 2021).

The concept has emerged as a significant force behind the decision-making of the travelers, especially the Gen Z's. Constant exposure to influencers' travel experiences leads to a social comparison process that is able to motivate people to pursue similar experiences to maintain social relevance and avoid feeling excluded. Fear of missing out often leads to a feeling of excitement and anticipation that encourages spontaneous travel choices. Fear of missing out has a significant influence on the decision-making and intention of the travelers to reach a given destination. The desire to replicate the experiences of the influencers can lead to increased travel planning and shape the overall travel intentions (Harahap et al., 2024).

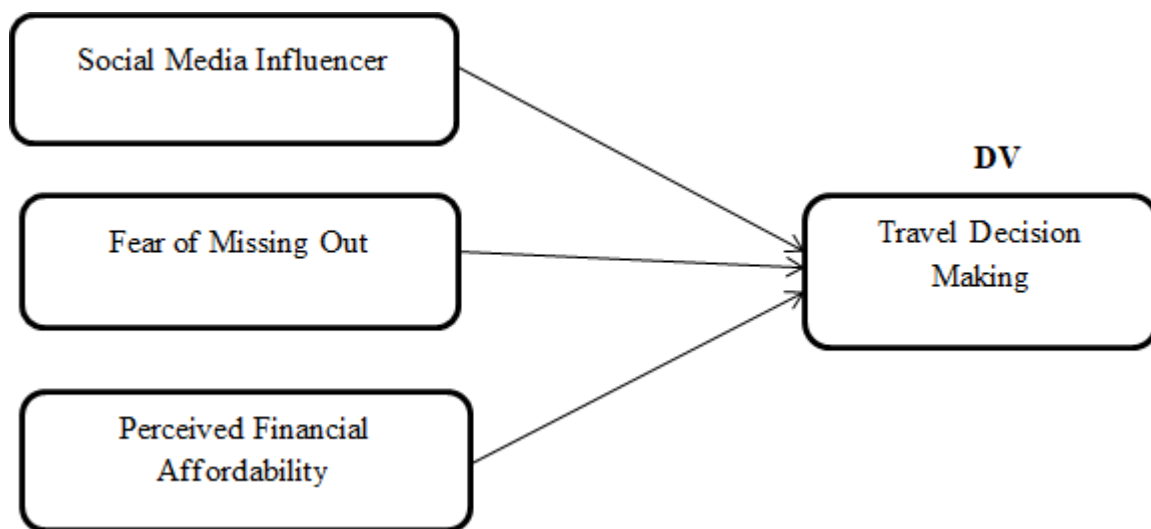
PERCEIVED FINANCIAL AFFORDABILITY AND TRAVEL DECISION-MAKING

Perceived financial affordability is mainly a person's subjective assessment of their ability to cover the costs that are associated with travelling, like accommodation, food, and transportation. It mainly focuses on how people perceive and evaluate their financial capacity in relation to their travel intentions (Daskin & Tumati, 2024). For most of the Gen Z who are early-career professionals and students, perceived affordability is essential in shaping travel decisions since it affects both the feasibility and desirability of pursuing travel experiences (Ahmad & Jalaluddin, 2024). When travelers think that the travel cost is

manageable, then they are most likely to engage in an extensive information search and commit to travel plans. On the other hand, when the perceived cost is more than the financial comfort zone, then the intentions to travel can be delayed. This perception-based approach shows that the decision to travel is not only dependent on the actual financial capacity but also on the personal evaluations and cost-benefit trade-offs. Mostly, Gen Z tends to compare the costs against the perceived benefits, looking for options that provide optimal experiences within the budget constraints (Sojib et al., 2023).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The figure shows the conceptual framework of the study. Social media influencer, fear of missing out, and perceived financial affordability are the independent variables, while travel decision-making among Gen Z in Malaysia is the dependent variable.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

This study adopts a quantitative research design and cross-sectional survey method to have an in-depth analysis of travel decision-making process among Generation Z in Malaysia. The selected design is appropriate for the research because it provides a technique to systematically collect and analyze numbers, revealing patterns or correlations between various variables. A cross-sectional survey design is specifically utilized, as it allows for data collection of a sample of Gen Z respondents measured at one point in time, hence representing attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors on travel decision-making presently rather than longitudinally. Open-ended questions were avoided in order to facilitate structured data collection. These questionnaires were distributed online using Google Forms to facilitate the collection of responses from the chosen sample. An opportunity sampling method was used to sample

respondents of all races hierarchy in Malaysia-distinct and play an active role in using social media when make choice for an itinerary to travel.

The population is selected since Gen Z represents the growing segment of local travelers whose travel decisions are greatly influenced by digital engagement, financial perceptions, and social trends. The study employed a convenience sampling method due to constraints related to accessibility and time. This approach was crucial as it enabled the researcher to connect with respondents through various social media platforms, ensuring that those selected were within the target age range and actively interacted with travel-related content. A total of 30 respondents were chosen to participate in the survey by directly completing the questionnaires.

The questionnaire consists of different sections, with the demographic data being presented in the first section. The variables associated with the independent variables are covered in the second part, and the variables associated with the dependent variable are covered in the third part. After giving the chosen participants 30 to 45 minutes to finish the questionnaires, the information was gathered, processed, and examined for useful interpretation and debate. Throughout the data gathering process, ethical issues were taken into account to safeguard the participants and respect their rights. The study was conducted in compliance with recognized academic standards. Throughout the entire data collection process, strict ethical guidelines were followed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

The gender distribution of the respondents was 76.7% for females and 23.3% for males. It can be seen that more females are represented in this sample than males. This is a very important aspect, considering the presence of gender variation, and differences related to gender may also affect attitudes and behavior that relate to travel. The ages ranged from 18 to 26 years. The dominant number of respondents was 22 years old, representing 22.3%, while the other dominant number was 25 years old, composing 20.0%. The rest of the respondents belong to different ranges of Generation Z ages. This shows that the participants are the target population to whom this research study is focused. Regarding employment, the distribution is such that 50.0% are students, while the rest are employed. The balanced nature of the distribution is inherently indicative that the group represents the views of those receiving different levels of financial support in light of studying the perception of financial affordability to travel.

The table below shows that among social media platforms, most considered for travel ideas were, in ranking order, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, respectively accounting for 80.0%, 10.0%, 6.7%, and 3.3% of the total. These results confirm the prevalence of short-form video-sharing platforms among Generation Z consumers and provide an important background insight into the role of online

content influence on attitudes and behavior related to travel choice. 4.2.5 With respect to traveling within the country, it was found that the highest percentage of respondents had traveled between one and two times in a year (50.0%) and had only traveled recently (26.7%). A smaller percentage of respondents had traveled between three and four times in a year (10.0%) and more than four times in a year (13.3%). This clearly shows that the highest percentage of the population travels occasionally, and this could impact the role played by cost considerations as far as final decisions are made. 4.2.6 Daily usage of social media It has also been found in this study that most of the respondents spend quite a lot of time on social networking sites, as 60.0% of respondents spend more than four hours a day accessing the social networking sites. The rest spend relatively short hours. It could be possible that this immense usage of social media could have also increased awareness among these respondents about the trends and destinations present in traveling, and thus they could have influenced their final decisions.

Table Profile of respondents

Variables	Items	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	7	23.3
	Female	23	76.7
Age	18	1	3.3
	19	1	3.33
	20	3	10.0
	21	3	10.0
	22	7	22.3
	23	3	10.0
	24	2	6.7
	25	6	20.0
	26	4	13.3
Employment Status	Student	15	50.0
	Employed	15	50.0
Main Social Media platform used for travel inspiration	Tiktok	24	80.0
	Instagram	3	10.0
	Youtube	1	3.3
	Facebook	2	6.7
Frequency of travel (Domestic) per year	Rarely	8	26.7
	1-2 times	15	50.0
	3-4 times	3	10.0
	More than 4 times	4	13.3
	Frequently used social media daily	1 to 2 hours	1
	2 to 3 hours	7	23.3
	3 to 4 hours	4	13.3
	More than 4 hours	18	60.0

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLES

The mean scores for all items that are measured on each of these variables are shown in the table. To know the level of agreement on the interpretation of these respondents, a scale of five points on a likert scale measurement was used. Based on these results, it can be observed from these descriptive findings that most of these items received mean scores that are higher than 3.00. This implies that most respondents were in agreement with these items on these questionnaires in relation to having a positive attitude on understanding these variables on travel-related decision making of Generation Z in Malaysia.

Summary of the means of items based on the variable (N=30)

		Mean	SD
Social Media Influencer (IV1)			
B3	Influencers help me identify hidden or underrated destination	4.30	0.794
B4	Influencer inspire me to consider new travel destination	4.10	0.845
B5	Influencers introduce me to travel trends I'm not aware of	4.13	0.860
B8	I often choose destinations promoted by influencers	3.57	0.971
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) (IV2)			
C1	I feel pressured to travel after seeing other's post	3.47	1.167
C6	I get anxious when friends go on trips without me	3.47	1.167
C7	I feel unsatisfied when I cannot visit a place that everyone talks about	3.10	1.155
C8	I feel left out when others visit trendy destination	3.47	1.224
Perceived Financial Affordability (IV3)			
D2	I compare prices across different platforms before booking	4.17	0.747
D3	I am willing to save money over several months for a trip	4.00	0.983
D4	I choose travel packages that offer good value for money	4.27	0.868
D6	I am willing to pay more if the travel experience is worth it	4.10	0.803
D7	I see travel as a form of self-reward rather than a financial sacrifice	4.10	0.995
Travel Decision Making of Generation Z in Malaysia (DV)			
E1	I travel in Malaysia because of the food and culinary experiences	4.43	1.305
E2	I travel in Malaysia because of the cultural and heritage attractions (museums, temples, historical sites)	3.87	1.167
E3	I travel in Malaysia for nature and eco-tourism (beaches, forests, mountains)	4.20	1.270
E4	I travel in Malaysia for adventure or outdoor activities (hiking, water sports, theme parks)	4.20	1.297
E5	I travel in Malaysia for shopping and entertainment (malls, night markets event)	3.93	1.363
E6	I travel in Malaysia to spend quality time with family or friends	4.73	0.640
E7	I travel in Malaysia because of the affordable travel and accommodation compared to international destinations	4.03	1.586
E8	I travel in Malaysia because of special events and festivals (cultural, religious, music)	4.33	1.213

Table shows the calculated mean scores for all the items. It is observed that the mean scores for the majority of the items are above the scale midpoint, indicating a tendency for the respondents' perceptions to lean positively on the statements measured.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Influencer	16.1000	3.00975
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	13.5000	3.85737
Perceived Financial Affordability	20.6333	3.49860
Travel Decision-Making of Generation Z in Malaysia	33.7333	7.51978

The results indicate relatively high mean values for all the variables, disclosing overall positive perception among the respondents. The highest mean was recorded in the variable Perceived Financial Affordability, followed by Social Media Influencer and FOMO. The mean value of Travel Decision Making was also very high, suggesting the dominant practice of Gen Z to make travel decisions within countries.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

The proposed hypotheses for the research were evaluated using multiple regression analysis to identify the effect of Social Media Influencer, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and Perceived Financial Affordability on Travel Decision Making for Generation Z in Malaysia. The decision rule for the test, in general, stands on the significance levels set at $p < 0.05$. To determine whether to reject or not reject the hypothesis, the hypothesis would have been accepted if the significance demonstrated actual significance on the particular variable otherwise, it would have been rejected.

Hypotheses	Statistical Evidence	Decision
H1 : Social Media Influencer significantly influences the Travel Decision Making of Generation Z in Malaysia.	Based on regression analysis, it is observed that with the control of FOMO and Perceived Financial Affordability, Social Media Influencer does not have a statistically significant effect on Travel Decision Making. This result was also reflected in the earlier correlation analysis when the association between the variables was found to be very low and insignificant.	Rejected

H2: FOMO significantly influences the Travel Decision Making of Malaysian Generation Z. Regression analysis indicated that the variable FOMO significantly and positively influences the Travel Decision Making. The implication is that with an increase in the level of FOMO, the chances of Generation Z making travel decisions go higher, especially because of social comparison and perceived trends. The result, on the other hand, justifies the significant correlation earlier. Accepted

H3: Perceived Financial Affordability significantly influences the Travel Decision Making of Generation Z in Malaysia. The regression results reveal that when subjected to Social Media Influencer and FOMO, Perceived Financial Affordability does not reach significance in predicting Travel Decision Making. While there is a general belief among respondents that travel is affordable, financial reasons are found not to drive travel decisions strongly among the surveyed Generation Z. Rejected

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the factors that influence the travel decision-making process of Generation Z in Malaysia. Specifically, focused on the roles of social media influencers, the fear of missing out (FOMO), and perceived financial affordability. Upon analyzing the data, it was revealed that FOMO had a significant relationship with travel decision-making, while social media influencers and financial affordability did not show significant effects. These findings provide valuable insights into the unique motivations that drive travel intentions among Generation Z, a demographic that is highly engaged in social media and digital spaces.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study offers important insights into the factors that influence travel decisions among Generation Z in Malaysia. The findings reveal that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has a major impact on travel choices, while Perceived Financial Affordability and the influence of Social Media Influencers play a more secondary role. The findings suggest that tourism marketers should prioritize digital engagement through social media and create content that taps into the FOMO-driven motivations of young travelers. Although financial constraints are still a factor, they are less influential compared to the psychological and social factors explored in this study.

REFERENCE

- Ahmad, S. Y., & Jalaluddin, N. F. (2024). Analysis on social media, the level of financial literacy, and the tourist behavior of Generation Z in Malaysia. *Jurnal Pengguna Malaysia*, 40(1), 85-104. <https://jpmjurnal.com/jpm/article/download/278/239>
- Ahmad, S. Y., & Idris, N. Q. A. P. (2024). Tourist preferences, the use of social media, and travel behaviours among youth in Malaysia. *Journal of Advanced Research in Business and Management Studies*, 35(1), 44-54. <https://www.akademiabaru.com/submit/index.php/arbms/article/view/5240>
- Ahmad, S. Y., Ismail, S., Saad, M., & Hama, S. (2025). Role of social media and behavioral finance on Gen Z travel behaviour. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 10(32), 21-28. <https://ebpj.e-iph.co.uk/index.php/EBProceedings/article/view/6785>
- Aina, A. O., & Ezeuduji, I. O. (2021). The influence of socio-demographic factors on perceptions of domestic tourism: The case of Generation Z. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 10(4), 1503-1515. https://www.ajhtl.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article_24_10_4_1503-1515.pdf
- Asri, M. A. Z. M., Ahmad, S. Y., Sawari, S. S. M., & Zakaria, N. F. (2024). Social media influencers and the effect on travel motivation among youth. *Management*, 9(36), 01-17. <http://irep.iium.edu.my/112817/1/SOCIAL%2BMEDIA%2BINFLUENCERS%2BAND%2BTHE%2BEFFECT%2B%2BON%2BTRAVEL%2BMOTIVATION%2BAMONG%2BYOUTH.pdf>
- Azizah, A. N., Susilaningsih, S., & Noviani, L. (2024). The influence of financial knowledge, parental financial socialization, and FoMO on the financial behavior of Gen Z students in Indonesia: Examining the moderating role of gender. *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran*. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v10i4.13561>
- Daniel, O. N. I. (2022). Tourism innovation in the US thrives through government-backed hospitality programs emphasizing cultural preservation, economic growth, and inclusivity. *International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management (IJETRM)*, 6(12), 132-145. https://www.academia.edu/download/124696418/Sep_2022_21_1758455824_DEC202212.pdf
- Daskin, M., & Tumati, R. (2024). Factors influencing Omani Gen Z tourists' destination choices. *Yaşar Üniversitesi E-Dergisi*, 19(73), 62-81. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jyasar/article/1253696>
- Haini, H., Wei Loon, P., Yong, S. K., & Hussein, S. (2024). Does social globalization affect the relationship between international tourism and economic growth? *Journal of Travel Research*, 63(1), 252-269. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00472875221146779>
- Harahap, D. E., Arief, M., Furinto, A., & Anggraeni, A. (2024). The influence of fear-of-missing-out on travel intention: A conceptual framework grounded in the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of System and Management Sciences*, 14(5), 14-30. <http://www.aasmr.org/sms/Vol14/No.5/Vol.14.No.5.02.pdf>
- Ilham, A. M., Ismail, N., & Al-Ayubi, S. (2024). Gen-Z's decision-making: Impact of attitudes, knowledge, and social media on halal tourism choices. *Journal of Digital Marketing and Halal Industry*, 6(1), 83-100. <https://journal.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/JDMHI/article/view/20195>
- Ismail, F., Padlee, S. F., Napatah, N. N., Ramlan, M., & Zaki, N. A. M. (2025). Influencing factors of social media usage and trust as mediators on the intention to travel among the young generation. *Asian People Journal (APJ)*, 8(1), 114-132. <http://journal.unisza.edu.my/apj/index.php/apj/article/view/718>
- Khater, M., Ibrahim, O., Sayed, M. N. E., & Faik, M. (2025). Legal frameworks for sustainable tourism: Balancing environmental conservation and economic development. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 28(22), 3693-3714.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13683500.2024.2404181>

Li, X., Abbas, J., Dongling, W., Baig, N. U. A., & Zhang, R. (2022). From cultural tourism to social entrepreneurship: Role of social value creation for environmental sustainability. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 925768.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.925768/full>

Mihai, V. C., Dumitras, D. E., Oroian, C., Chiciudean, G. O., Arion, F. H., & Mureşan, I. C. (2023). Exploring the factors involved in tourists' decision-making and the determinants of length of stay. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(10), 215. <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3387/13/10/215>

Mohamad, N. (2022). Post COVID-19 pandemic: The new technology and tourism revolution for tourism fairs, festivals and events. In *Technology application in tourism fairs, festivals and events in Asia* (pp. 363-387). Springer Singapore.

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-16-8070-0_22

Prasad, K. (2024). The role of local community in enhancing sustainable community-based tourism.

J. Electrical Systems, 20(7s), 558-571. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Krishna-Sapkota-16/publication/380466492_The_Role_of_Local_Community_in_Enhancing_Sustainable_Community_Based_Tourism/links/663dee4d06ea3d0b7447cb78/The-Role-of-Local-Community-in-Enhancing-Sustainable-Community-Based-Tourism.pdf

Rozenkowska, K. (2023). Theory of planned behavior in consumer behavior research: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 47(6), 2670-2700. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ijcs.12970>

Shariffuddin, N. S. M., Azinuddin, M., Yahya, N. E., & Hanafiah, M. H. (2023). Navigating the tourism digital landscape: The interrelationship of online travel sites' affordances, technology readiness, online purchase intentions, trust, and E-loyalty. *Heliyon*, 9(8).

[https://www.cell.com/heliyon/fulltext/S2405-8440\(23\)06343-0](https://www.cell.com/heliyon/fulltext/S2405-8440(23)06343-0)

Sojib, M. T. H., Avi, M. A. R., Shompa, H. Y. B., & Chitra, S. S. (2023). Factors affecting travel decision: A study on urban Generation Z in Bangladesh.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Md-Avi/publication/383181739_Factors_affecting_travel_decision_A_study_on_urban_Generation_Z_in_Bangladesh/links/66c0317a145f4d3553600869/Factors-affecting-travel-decision-A-study-on-urban-Generation-Z-in-Bangladesh.pdf

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Md-Avi/publication/383181739_Factors_affecting_travel_decision_A_study_on_urban_Generation_Z_in_Bangladesh/links/66c0317a145f4d3553600869/Factors-affecting-travel-decision-A-study-on-urban-Generation-Z-in-Bangladesh.pdf

Francis, R. (2024). Narrative review on the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) in shaping travel decisions among Gen Z. *Forum Komunikasi*. https://doi.org/10.24191/fk.v19i1.2024_04

Haque, M. M., Hasan, R., & Kumar, A. (2025). Consumers' decision-making and role of social media influencers in the UK hotel industry. *Indian Journal of Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2025/v55/i10/175614>

Maukar, T. T., & Sudyasjayanti, C. (2025). The moderating impact of FOMO on adoption intention toward investment behavior among Gen Z. *Syntax Literate; Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia*. <https://doi.org/10.36418/syntax-literate.v10i4.57923>

Rancati, E., & d'Agata, A. (2025). How do travel bloggers influence Generation Z's travel decisions? An exploratory study through five Italian famous travel bloggers. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2025.v21n4p17>

Sari Irvinta, I., Yuniningsih, Y., & Pertiwi, T. K. (2025). An analysis of factors influencing investment decisions among Generation Z in the capital market: A case study of Surabaya. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management (IJSRM)*.

<https://doi.org/10.18535/ijorm/v13i06.em11>

Sofiana, E., & Hayu, R. S. (2025). FoMo and discounts: Why Generation Z can't resist online shopping? *Management Analysis Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.15294/maj.v14i2.26979>

Yilmazdogan, O. C., Özhasar, Y., & Kılıç, Ö. (2021). Examining the effect of FOMO on conspicuous consumption and assimilation: A study on Generation Z. *Journal of Gastronomy Hospitality and Travel (JOGHAT)*

THE DETERMINANTS OF TRAVELLER BEHAVIOUR AMONG GENERATION Z IN THE DIGITAL TOURISM ERA

By: Nor Aleesya Balqis Binti Norazlan

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed the tourism industry, particularly in the way Generation Z plans and experiences travel. Digital platforms such as social media, mobile travel applications, and online systems play an important role in shaping travel decisions, destination choices, and booking behavior. This study aims to examine the technological determinants of traveler behavior among Generation Z in the digital tourism era, focusing on social media influence, mobile travel application usage, and digital trust. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 53 Generation Z respondents. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The findings reveal that all three digital factors have positive relationships with traveler behavior. Social media influence shows a strong positive relationship, mobile travel application usage shows a moderate positive relationship, and digital trust shows a weaker but significant relationship. Among these factors, mobile travel application usage is identified as the most influential determinant of traveler behavior. Overall, the results highlight the significant role of digital technology in shaping Generation Z travel behavior and provide useful insights for tourism stakeholders in developing effective digital strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z has grown in a highly digitalized environment where technology plays a central role in daily life, including how travel is planned and experienced. Digital platforms such as social media, mobile travel applications, and online booking systems have transformed traditional tourism behavior by changing how travelers search for information, choosing destinations, and making travel decisions. In the digital tourism era, these platforms are no longer optional tools but essential components of travel experience for young travelers.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Digitalization has significantly transformed the tourism industry by enabling travelers to access information, compare destinations and services, and make bookings through digital platforms. Social media platforms have become major sources of travel inspiration, while mobile travel applications offer convenience, accessibility, and efficiency in travel planning. As a result, technology now plays a critical role in shaping travel behavior.

Generation Z is one of the most digitally connected generations, making them highly dependent on digital tools in their decision-making processes. They actively engage with social media content, rely on mobile applications for travel arrangements, and use online platforms for reviews,

recommendations, and payments. This generation is not only consumers of digital content but also creators, contributing to tourism promotion through online sharing and digital engagement.

The increasing digital involvement of Generation Z presents new opportunities for the tourism industry. Understanding how digital platforms influence their behavior allows tourism stakeholders to design more effective marketing strategies, improve digital services, and enhance user experience. Therefore, studying the technological determinants of Generation Z traveler behavior is essential for sustainable tourism development.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the growing reliance on digital platforms in tourism, there is still limited research that clearly identifies which digital factors most strongly influence traveler behavior among Generation Z. Although social media, mobile travel applications and digital trust are widely used, their relative impact on travel behavior remains unclear.

Without a clear understanding of these determinants, tourism businesses may struggle to design effective digital strategies that match the needs and preferences of Generation Z travelers. This research gap highlights the need for empirical investigation to identify key technological factors that influence traveler behavior in the digital tourism era.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Research Aim: To examine the technological determinants of traveler behavior among Generation Z in the digital tourism era.

Objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between social media influence and traveler behavior among Generation Z.
2. To examine the relationship between mobile travel application usage and traveler behavior among Generation Z.
3. To examine the relationship between digital trust and traveler behavior among Generation Z.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Influence

Social media platforms play a significant role in shaping travel behavior by influencing destination choices, travel motivations, and perceptions. Visual content such as photos, videos, and user-generated content creates strong emotional engagement, which encourages travel interest and intention. Social media also enables travellers to compare destinations and services more easily.

For Generation Z, social media is not only a source of information but also a space for identity expression and social validation. Influencers and peer-generated content strongly affect their travel preferences, making social media a powerful marketing and decision-making tool in tourism.

Mobile Travel Application Usage

Mobile travel applications provide convenience in searching for information, booking services, and managing travel activities. Features such as price comparison, booking systems, navigation and itinerary planning improve efficiency and user experience.

Generation Z prefers mobile-based platforms due to their accessibility and ease of use. Mobile applications support independent travel planning and real-time decision-making, making them a critical determinant of modern travel behavior.

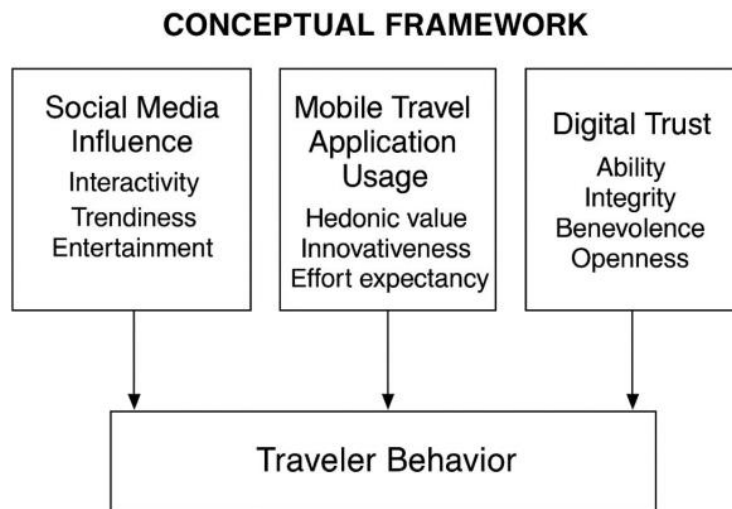
Digital Trust

Digital trust refers to users' confidence in online platforms, digital payments, reviews, and data security. Trust is essential in online transactions, especially in tourism where personal information and financial data are frequently shared.

For Generation Z, digital trust influences their willingness to use travel platforms and engage in online bookings. Higher trust levels increase platform usage, while low trust can reduce digital adoption and participation in online tourism services.

Conceptual Framework

This study adopts a conceptual framework based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The framework proposes three technological factors such as Social Media Influence, Mobile Travel Application Usage, and Digital Trust act as independent variables that directly influence Traveler Behavior among Generation Z as the dependent variable. These relationships explain how digital platforms and trust in technology shape travel decision-making, planning behavior, booking methods, and overall travel experience in the digital tourism era.



METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the technological determinants of traveler behavior among Generation Z. A structured questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument, and respondents were selected using a survey-based approach.

The sample consisted of 53 Generation Z respondents who have experience using digital platforms for travel purposes. Data collection focused on social media influence, mobile travel application usage, digital trust, and traveler behavior.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis, including Pearson correlation and regression analysis. These methods were used to examine relationships between variables and determine the influence of digital factors on traveler behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of Respondents

Characteristic	Description	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	16	30.2
	Female	37	69.8
Age	Below 20	34	64.2
	21-30	17	32.1
	31-40	1	1.9
	41 and above	1	1.9
Highest level of education	High school /SPM	22	41.5
	Diploma/ STPM/ Pre-university	16	30.2
	Bachelor's Degree	14	26.4
	Master's Degree	1	1.9
Frequency of travel per year	Never	35	66.0
	1-2 times	14	26.4
	3-5 times	2	3.8
	Always	28	52.8

Use of Digital Platforms for travel planning	Sometimes	20	37.7
	Never	5	9.4
Purpose of Travel- Leisure	No	9	17.0
	Yes	44	83.0
Purpose of Travel- Business	No	44	83.0
	Yes	9	17.0
Purpose of Travel- Visitting family	No	27	49.1
	Yes	27	50.9

Descriptive Results

The results show a high level of digital engagement among Generation Z. All variables recorded high mean scores, indicating strong reliance on digital platforms in travel planning and decision-making.

Social Media Influence recorded a high mean score (**4.059**), showing that respondents actively use social media to search for travel information, gain inspiration, and compare destinations. Social media plays an important role in shaping travel interests and motivation.

Mobile Travel Application Usage recorded the highest mean score (**4.253**), indicating that mobile apps are the most dominant digital tool used by respondents. Generation Z strongly relies on mobile applications for booking, price comparison, travel planning, and managing travel activities.

Digital Trust recorded a mean score of **3.792**, showing a moderate to high level of trust in digital platforms. Respondents generally feel confident using online platforms, but trust remains a concern for some users, especially in online payments and data security.

Traveler Behavior recorded a high mean score (**4.20**), indicating that Generation Z frequently uses digital platforms throughout the travel process, from planning to experience sharing.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis shows that all independent variables have positive and significant relationships with traveler behavior.

Social Media Influence shows a strong positive relationship with traveler behavior ($r = 0.610$), indicating that higher exposure to social media content leads to stronger travel motivation and engagement.

Mobile Travel Application Usage shows a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.492$), indicating that frequent app usage supports active travel planning and booking behavior.

Digital Trust shows a weaker but significant positive relationship ($r = 0.331$), indicating that trust supports digital platform usage but is not the main driver of travel behavior.

Discussion

The findings show that digital factors play an important role in shaping Generation Z traveler behavior. Among all variables, **mobile travel application usage** is the most influential factor. This is because mobile apps provide direct benefits such as convenience, speed, and accessibility.

Social media influence plays a strong role in shaping travel interest and destination choice, especially during the early stages of travel planning.

Digital trust supports digital engagement by increasing confidence in online platforms, but it has a weaker influence compared to other digital factors.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital technology significantly influences traveler behavior among Generation Z. social media, mobile travel applications and digital trust all play important roles in shaping travel decisions, planning behavior and destination choices. Among these factors, mobile travel application usage is identified as the strongest determinant. The findings emphasize the importance of digital platforms in the future development of tourism strategies.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, F.B. and William, P., 1998. Rheological properties of sago starch. *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry*, 46 (1), pp. 4060 – 4065.
- Bakshi, A., Patnaik, P.R. and Gupta, J.K., 1992a. Pullulanase and α -amylase production by a *Bacillus cereus* isolate. *Letters in Applied Microbiology*, 14, pp. 210 – 25
- Ashar, L. C., JD. (2026, January 15). *Social media impact: How social media sites affect society*. American Public University. <https://www.apu.apus.edu/area-of-study/business-and-management/resources/how-social-media-sites-affect-society/>
- Gammoudi, F., Sendi, M., & Omri, M. N. (2022). A survey on social media influence environment and Influencers identification. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 12(1), 145. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-022-00972-y>
- TravelLikeAnna, & TravelLikeAnna. (2026, January 12). *17 Essential Travel Apps to Download Before your Next Trip (2025 Guide)*. Travel Like Anna. <https://www.travellikeanna.com/my-top-16-travel-apps/>
- Parks, K. (2022, July 17). *Best Travel Apps - Active Travel Adventures*. Active Travel Adventures. <https://activetraveladventures.com/best-travel-apps-for-2022/>
- Medeiros, M., Ozturk, A., Hancer, M., Weinland, J., & Okumus, B. (2022). Understanding travel tracking mobile application usage: An integration of self determination theory and
- Jr, F., Mae, M. S., & Gado, A. R. (2026, January 12). *Fear of Missing Out (FoMO): Determinant Of Travel Behavior Among Gen Z Tourists*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18210689>

DETERMINANTS OF GENERATION Z TOURIST IN VISITING CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES IN NEGERI SEMBILAN, MALAYSIA

By Nurul Shuhada Addiana binti Rosli

Abstract

This study investigates the determinants of Generation Z tourist's interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. This research focusing how digital engagement, perceived relevance and experiential value influence Gen Z's interest in heritage visitation. A quantitative method was employed using an online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms. This online survey targeting Malaysia Gen Z respondents aged 13-28. A total approximately 30 valid responses were collected using simple random sampling. The results show that Digital Engagement is the strongest predictor of visitation interest, highlighting that young travelers rely heavily on digital content to validate their travel decisions. Perceived Relevance also plays a significant role, driven largely by a sense of national pride. Conversely, while Experiential Value was highly rated by respondents, it did not significantly predict visitation interest in the regression model. The study concludes that heritage tourism stakeholders should prioritize digital marketing and content creation to effectively capture the interest of the younger generation.

Keywords: Heritage Tourism, Gen Z , Cultural Heritage, Negeri Sembilan, Digital Engagement, Perceived Relevance, Youth Interest

INTRODUCTION

To begin with, the Research Background provides a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of cultural heritage tourism in Malaysia, specifically highlighting the unique

traditions of Negeri Sembilan. Following this, the Problem Statement clarifies the pressing challenge of declining engagement among Generation Z tourists, thereby validating the need for further exploration into their travel behaviors. Concurrently, key elements of the research, including the Research Questions and Research Objectives, express the researcher's aim to investigating the influence of digital engagement, perceived relevance, and experiential value on visitation interest. Moreover, the study's rationale is critical as it represents the researcher's effort to provide empirical insights that support effective heritage promotion and ensure the long-term sustainability of the state's cultural tourism sector.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Tourism remains one of Malaysia's key economic sectors, contributing significantly to national GDP, employment, and socio-cultural development. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry has shown steady recovery through sustainable practices, digital marketing, and experiential tourism approaches aimed at attracting diverse traveler segments. The continued importance of cultural heritage tourism is evident, with tourism receipts reaching approximately RM18 billion, underscoring its contribution to Malaysia's tourism landscape (Department of Statistics Malaysia [DOSM], 2023).

Cultural heritage tourism plays a vital role in preserving cultural identity, encouraging community participation, and supporting sustainable tourism development. It encompasses both tangible heritages, such as monuments, traditional architecture, and historical sites, and intangible heritage, including customs and rituals. To remain appealing to younger generations, heritage destinations must innovate through improved interpretation and visitor engagement strategies (UNESCO, 2023). Recent Malaysian studies further emphasize the need for stronger storytelling, interactive features, and digital presentations to enhance relevance within today's experience-driven tourism environment (Katahenggam et al., 2024).

Negeri Sembilan possesses a distinctive cultural identity shaped by Minangkabau architecture, Adat Perpatih traditions, and notable heritage sites such as Istana Seri Menanti, the Royal Museum, and the Seremban Cultural Complex. Cultural tourism has been identified as a strategic priority in the Negeri Sembilan Tourism Master Plan (2023); however, engagement among younger visitors, particularly Generation Z, remains relatively low, with preferences leaning towards nature-based, urban, and lifestyle attractions (Ismail & Nofiardi et al., 2024). As a digitally oriented and experience-seeking generation, Gen Z's travel behaviors is strongly influenced by digital engagement, perceived relevance, and experiential value (UNWTO, 2024). Despite this, empirical research examining these factors in relation to Gen Z's interest in cultural heritage tourism in Malaysia, especially in Negeri Sembilan, remains limited.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although heritage tourism is a key contributor to Malaysia's cultural and economic sustainability, recent studies indicate a declining level of interest among younger generations, particularly Generation Z. Heritage is often perceived by youth as "boring," "lame," or irrelevant, resulting in weak personal connection and engagement (Fakin Bajec, 2022). This issue is especially concerning for destinations such as Negeri Sembilan, where Minangkabau heritage and Adat Perpatih traditions form the foundation of cultural tourism but have yet to resonate strongly with the emerging youth visitor segment. Existing literature further shows that Gen Z's engagement with heritage is increasingly shaped by digital exposure and interactivity, with traditional interpretation methods proving ineffective for digitally oriented audiences who prefer interactive, visually engaging, and technology-driven experiences (Mantzou et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). However, heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan have not fully adopted these approaches, contributing to low digital visibility and limited appeal among Gen Z travellers (Ismail et al., 2024).

Furthermore, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, perceived cultural relevance, and experiential value have been found to significantly influence Gen Z's early interest in heritage tourism (Jiang et al., 2024). Nevertheless, much of the existing research has been conducted outside Malaysia or focuses on general heritage behaviour rather than specifically examining interest in visiting, which represents the initial stage of the tourist decision-making process. This highlights a clear empirical gap, as limited studies have explored how digital engagement, perceived relevance, and experiential value collectively shape Gen Z's interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan. Without addressing this gap, it remains uncertain whether current digital promotion strategies, cultural positioning, and experiential offerings align with Gen Z's expectations,

potentially leading to continued disengagement and threatening the long-term sustainability of the state's cultural heritage tourism sector.

RESEARCH AIM

This study aims to examine the influence of digital engagement, perceived relevance, and experiential value on Generation Z tourists' interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. By focusing on the state's unique Minangkabau traditions and historical landmarks, the research assesses whether existing heritage tourism strategies align with Gen Z's digital behaviours, preferences, and expectations. The findings are intended to provide empirical insights that support more effective heritage promotion, strengthen youth engagement, and enhance the long-term sustainability of cultural heritage tourism in Negeri Sembilan.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The three research questions for this research are as follows:

1. What are the levels of digital engagement, perceived relevance, experiential value, and interest in visiting cultural heritage sites among Gen Z tourists in Negeri Sembilan?
2. Is there a significant relationship between digital engagement, perceived relevance, experiential value, and Gen Z tourists' interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan?
3. Which factor of digital engagement, perceived relevance, or experiential value most strongly predicts Gen Z tourists' interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study is intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the digital engagement, perceived relevance and experiential value towards Gen Z tourist's interest in visiting Negeri Sembilan cultural heritage sites.
2. To measure the relationship between digital engagement, perceived relevance, and experiential value with Gen Z tourists' interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan.
3. To investigate the strongest factors between digital engagement, perceived relevance, and experiential value that explain the variance on Gen Z tourist interest in visiting Negeri Sembilan cultural heritage sites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Engagement

Digital engagement has become a cornerstone of modern heritage tourism, fundamentally changing how visitors interact with cultural sites. Mantzou et al. (2023) emphasize that Digital Cultural Heritage technologies provide new ways to manage and present heritage assets, allowing for more dynamic and accessible experiences that appeal to broader audiences. Building on this, Wang, Liu, and Wei (2024) discovered that the quality of Digital Interactive Interpretation (DII) in museums directly influences tourists' "flow experience" and overall satisfaction, suggesting that high-quality, immersive digital content is essential for capturing visitor attention.

Perceived Relevance

Perceived relevance refers to how meaningful and applicable a heritage site is to a tourist's personal interests and social identity. Tham et al. (2023) demonstrate that social media plays a pivotal role in establishing this relevance, as it shapes the "perceived image" of a destination and significantly influences travel behavior. When heritage sites are presented through relatable digital narratives, they become more relevant to the modern traveler's lifestyle, bridging the gap between historical significance and contemporary interest.

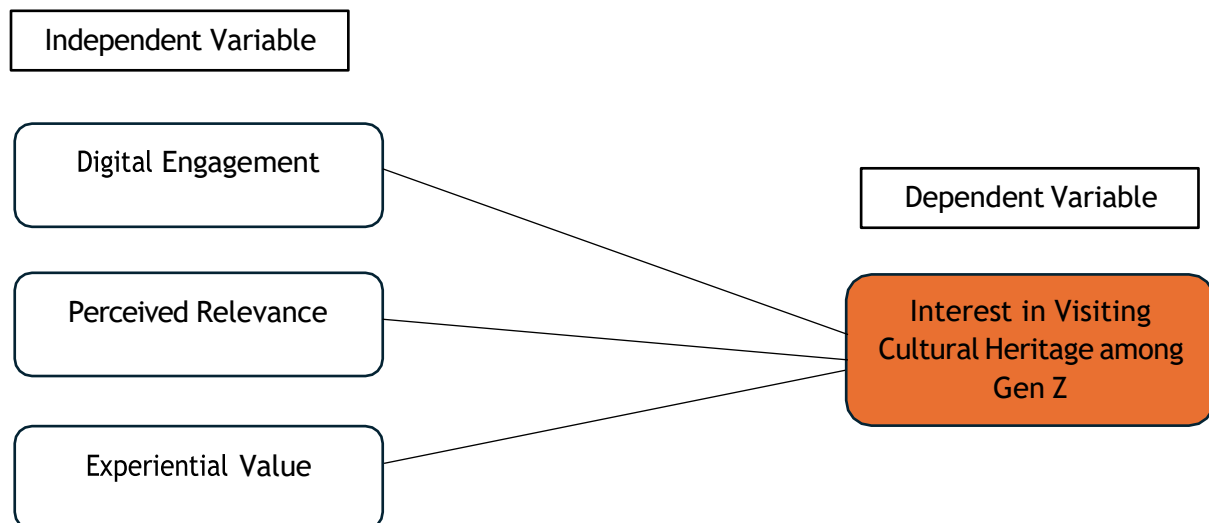
However, maintaining this relevance is challenging in the face of modernization. Ismail and Nofiardi (2024) note that traditional cultural values, such as those of the Minangkabau tribe, are facing shifts due to modern influences, which can diminish their perceived relevance among younger generations. Similarly, Alonso and Martins (2023) argue that for heritage tourism to be sustainable, it must involve local communities and align with their values, ensuring that the heritage remains "living" and relevant rather than just a static relic of the past.

Experiential Value

Experiential value is a critical determinant of tourist interest, focusing on the immersive and emotional benefits of a visit. Yi et al. (2023) utilized the Stimulus - Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework to show that environmental stimuli, such as tourism live streaming, significantly affect perceived experiential value, which in turn drives the intention to visit. This suggests that Gen Z tourists assess the potential value of a trip based on the "preview" experiences they encounter online, looking for promises of authentic and engaging interactions.

Deepening this understanding, Dar and Ahmed (2023) identify that experiential value is multidimensional, encompassing aesthetics, service excellence, and playfulness (escapism). Their research confirms that positive emotional and memorable experiences are strong predictors of tourist satisfaction and loyalty. For heritage sites, this means that providing educational facts is no longer sufficient; they must offer an experience that is visually appealing, emotionally resonant, and enjoyable to secure Gen Z's interest.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



METHODOLOGY

This chapter of the report outlines the quantitative research methodology used to investigate Generation Z's interest in visiting cultural heritage site in Negeri Sembilan. The study utilizes a descriptive research design with a cross-sectional quantitative approach. A structured online questionnaire, distributed via social media platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram, served as the primary instrument for data collection. This study targets Malaysian Generation Z tourists aged 18 to 27 including students from the IIUM, with 44 respondents selected for their significant digital influence on the tourism sector despite their comparatively low engagement with cultural attractions.

The research instrument is a structured, self-administered online questionnaire adapted from validated measurement scales identified through a systematic literature review (SLR). The instrument consists of five sections: Part A gathers demographic and travel profiles to ensure the respondents meet Generation Z criteria, Part B assesses the dependent variable (interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan), and Parts C, D, and E measure the independent variables digital engagement, perceived relevance, and experiential value. All constructs in Parts B through E are evaluated using a Likert-scale format, providing a consistent framework for statistically analyzing the relationships between these factors and Gen Z tourists' travel interest.

To verify the reliability and consistency of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 44 respondents. The reliability of the variables was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with all variables scoring high: **Interest (0.922), Digital Engagement (0.913), Perceived Relevance (0.921) and Experiential Value (0.960)**. For the final data analysis, the researcher planned to use SPSS version 31, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression to test the hypotheses and evaluate the research objectives. The chapter concludes by summarizing how these methods provide a structured framework for exploring the factors influencing Gen Z's interest in cultural heritage.

Table 1 Instrument

Section	Adopted/Adapted
A	Self-developed
B	(Ismail & Nofiardi 2024., Nam, K., Baker, J., & Dutt, C.S. (2024))
C	(Sweeney & Wilson (2023); Tham et al. (2023), Alonso & Martins (2024))
D	(Dar & Ahmed (2023); Yi et al. (2023))

Table Reliability Analysis Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

	VARIABLES	NUMBER OF ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA VALUE
DV	Gen Z tourists' interest in visiting cultural heritage	5	0.922
IV 1	Digital Engagement	5	0.913
IV 2	Perceived Relevance	5	0.921
IV 3	Experiential Value	5	0.960

RESULTS

Characteristic	Description	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Age	13-17	1	2.3
	18-22	41	93.2
	23-28	2	4.5
Gender	Male	12	27.3
	Female	32	72.7
Educational Level	High school student	2	4.5
	Diploma	8	18.2
	Bachelor's Degree	33	75.0
	Others	1	2.3
How often do you travel in a year	Never	3	6.8
	Once a year	9	20.5
	Twice a year	14	31.8
	3-4 times a year	13	29.5
	5 times or more a year	5	11.4
What is your main purpose of travel?	No	6	13.6
	Yes	38	86.4
Leisure/vacation			

What is your main purpose of travel?- Visiting family/friends	No	18	40.9
	Yes	26	59.1
What is your main purpose of travel?- Cultural heritage visits	No	32	72.7
	Yes	12	27.3
What is your main purpose of travel?- Educational trip/study trip	No	30	68.2
	Yes	14	31.8
What is your main purpose of travel?- Nature/Outdoor activities	No	25	56.8
	Yes	19	43.2
What is your main purpose of travel?-Food hunting	No	25	56.8
	Yes	19	43.2
Has you ever visited a cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan?	Yes	21	47.7
	No	23	52.3

The survey data from 44 Gen Z respondents reveals a predominantly female sample (72.7%) aged 18–22 (93.2%), with the majority holding or pursuing a bachelor’s degree (75.0%). While this group is travel-active most commonly traveling two to four times annually, their primary motivations are leisure (86.4%) and visiting family (59.1%) rather than cultural heritage (27.3%). This lower engagement is further evidenced by the fact that 52.3% of respondents have never visited a cultural heritage site in Negeri Sembilan.

SUMMARIES OF VARIABLES

The descriptive analysis focuses on four main variables: interest in visiting cultural heritage, digital engagement, perceived relevance and experiential value. Table 4 provides the mean summary of all variables, which are stated below.

Table Summary of All Variable

Variables	Mean
Interest in Visiting Cultural Heritage	0.719
Digital Engagement	0.684
Perceived relevance	0.71
Experiential Value	0.828

SUMMARY OF PEARSON CORRELATION

To investigate the relationship between the independent variables, digital engagement, perceived relevance and experiential value with dependent variables, Gen Z tourists' interest in visiting cultural heritage in Negeri Sembilan. Pearson correlation was conducted.

Table of Summary of Pearson Correlation between variables

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables Interest in visiting Cultural Heritage (DV)	
	P	
Digital Engagement	0.001	0.847
Perceived Relevance	0.001	0.818
Experiential Value	0.001	0.805

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has successfully identified the key determinants influencing Generation Z tourist's interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan. The research reveals that Digital Engagement is the most important motivator, proving that in the younger generation, a strong and engaging digital presence is the key "trigger" for travel. Perceived Relevance is also a significant motivator, in the sense that Gen Z holidaymakers are more spurred to visit destinations linked to a sense of national identity and patriotism. Though Experiential Value is not a significant motivator in the regression analysis, it is still a strongly 'desired' expectation in this generation. Overall, the implication of this research is thus: in order to have a sustainable heritage tourism phenomenon in the state of Negeri Sembilan, one has to move away from its conventional methods and aims to have its unique culture made visible and attractive through the power of digital engagement.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the preceding chapter demonstrate that Digital Engagement exerts the strongest influence on Generation Z tourists' interest, as this demographic relies heavily on interactive digital content and social media validation to preview a destination prior to visitation. Perceived Relevance exhibits a moderate but significant influence, indicating that tourists are motivated by a personal or national connection to the heritage site, often viewing it as a source of patriotic pride. Conversely, Experiential Value recorded the weakest influence in the regression model despite high preference ratings; this suggests that while a memorable experience is a baseline expectation, it does not drive decision-making without an initial digital trigger. Overall, these results highlight the critical importance of modernizing heritage promotion through digital channels to ensure the culture remains visible and attractive to the next generation.

LIMITATIONS

Although this research provided valuable insights into the factors that influence Gen Z tourists' interest in visiting cultural heritage sites in Negeri Sembilan, it still has some limitations. One of the primary limitations is the small size of the respondents, which may affect the diversity and generalizability of the data to the wider Gen Z population in Malaysia. Due to time and resource constraints, the study was unable to capture a larger demographic spread.

Moreover, the study focused exclusively on negeri Sembilan and its unique Minangkabau heritage. Consequently, the findings regarding perceived relevance might be specific to this culture and may not apply to other heritage sites with different cultural attributes. Additionally, the research relied solely on quantitative survey data which limits the ability to explore deeper on this research.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF FUTURE STUDIES

Based on the findings, heritage stakeholders in Negeri Sembilan need to emphasize experiential value which is identified as the strongest attribute that triggers Gen Z tourists' interest. Cultural heritage locations need to provide more experiential experiences like hands-on cultural experiences, digital narratives and technology-enabled interpretations. On the other hand, enhanced digital engagement strategies including social media, video and interactive digital experiences will be required to create greater visibility and pull Gen Z to travel at the initial level.

In future research, researchers are encouraged to use a larger and more diverse sample across different states in Malaysia to improve generalisability. The current research could also benefit from future research using qualitative or combinations of research methods such as interviews to provide more in-depth explorations into Gen Z attitudes and emotional attachment to cultural heritage. Other factors could further illustrate the interests of Gen Z in cultural heritage tourism such as authenticity, social networking sites and cultural identity.

REFERENCES

- Vishwanath, G. (2023). *Enhancing Engagement through Digital Cultural Heritage: A Case Study about Senior Citizens using a Virtual Reality Museum*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3573381.3596154>
- Kasemsarn, K., & Nickpour, F. (2025). Digital Storytelling in Cultural and Heritage Tourism: A Review of Social Media Integration and Youth Engagement Frameworks. *Heritage*, 8(6), 200. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage8060200>
- Zhang, Y., Kaya, D. I., & van Wesemael, P. (2024). An assessment framework for digital participatory practices engaging youth in cultural heritage management. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 70, 408–421. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2024.10.014>
- Baharuddin, M. N., Nawawi, A. H., Harun, S. N., Hussin, A. H., Bahardin, N. F., & Ilyia Husa, N. A. (2024). A case for change for digital transformation in heritage building conservation process: Assessing the issues by Malaysian stakeholders experience. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, 7(5), 2025221. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2025221>
- Lian, Y., & Xie, J. (2024). The Evolution of Digital Cultural Heritage Research: Identifying Key Trends, Hotspots, and Challenges through Bibliometric Analysis. *Sustainability*, 16(16), 7125–7125. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16167125>
- Mantzou, P., Bitsikas, X., & Floros, A. (2023). Enriching Cultural Heritage through the Integration of Art and Digital Technologies. *Social Sciences*, 12(11), 594. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12110594>
- Ahmed, N. (2023). RESIDENTS SUPPORT TOWARDS CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM: THE RELEVANCE OF HERITAGE PROXIMITY AND TOURISM PERCEIVED IMPACTS. *Revista de Turism - Studii Şi Cercetări În Turism*, 35. <https://doi.org/10.4316/rdt.35.104>
- Afendi Bin Abdul Ghani, M. S., Bin Kiffli, S., Kuan, T. H., Wan Shamsuddin, S. N. B., & Rahim, N. B. (2025). Cultural Heritage in The Digital Age: Evaluating User Experience in Virtual Reality Cultural Heritage Learning Application. 2025 27th International Conference on Advanced Communications Technology (ICACT), 343–350. <https://doi.org/10.23919/icact63878.2025.10936756>

VALUES, SUSTAINABILITY, AND EXPERIENCE- ORIENTED TOURISM AMONG YOUTH IN MALAYSIA

Values, Sustainability, and Experience-Oriented Tourism Among Youth in Malaysia

eISBN 978-967-2771-49-4



(online)