

Factors on Gen Z Travelers' Destination Choice Behavior

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Abstract

Generation Z, raised in a digitally connected world, increasingly relies on social media when making travel decisions. However, the tourism industry still lacks a comprehensive understanding of how specific social media-related factors influence Gen Z's destination choice behaviour. This study investigates the key factors that influence tourism destination choice behaviour among Generation Z concerning the use of social media platforms. Addressing this issue, the study investigates the influence of seven factors, developed based on UTAUT2 framework, which are perceived trust, hedonic motivation, habit, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions on Gen Z's tourism decisions. A survey was carried out among 384 Gen Z respondents in Sri Lanka. The survey was distributed online and specifically targeted individuals who had used social media for travel-related purposes. This ensured that all participants were relevant to the study's focus on social media-driven tourism decisions. Habit showed the strongest correlation with Gen Z tourism destination choice behaviour, followed by hedonic motivation, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, perceived trust, social influence, and finally facilitating conditions, which had the weakest correlation. The study contributes to bridging the knowledge gap in understanding technology-driven tourism choices among the emerging generation of travellers. In practice, the findings suggest that tourism authorities and policymakers can invest in digital infrastructure and leverage social media for destination promotion, while tourism businesses can enhance engagement by encouraging user-generated content, influencer marketing, and data-driven campaigns. These practical insights help develop more effective strategies to attract and retain Gen Z travellers in an increasingly digital tourism landscape.

Keywords: destination choice, Gen Z, perceived trust, social media