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How does social media influence Gen Z's intentions to book green hotel and their actual action?

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ABSTRACT

Green tourism is gaining popularity in response to not only travelers' but businesses' desire to mitigate their environmental impact. One tool travelers use to find and act upon eco-conscious practices is social media; an emerging trend especially relevant to the new generation of travelers, Gen Z, engages with digital platforms easily, and is aware of impacting environmental degradation. The purpose of this research was to examine what role social media had on Gen Z's perception of green hotels, as well as their subsequent intentions or actions, when booking hotels. A mixed-methods approach utilized quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group interviews, revealing that Gen Z's experiences with social media influence their perceptions and choices for sustainable accommodation. Learners expressed a desire to prioritise or pay more for eco-friendly hotels, and that green content inspired them. However, though willingness was expressed, a gap in intention and action across Gen Z was noted, as the behaviours of booking hotels were not tracked. Limitations of the study included self-reported data, along with the non-representative sample. Nonetheless, findings provide key themes for consideration when using digital platforms to promote green travel.

I. INTRODUCTION

It can be seen that pro-environmental behavior is always a concern regarding tourism, traveling, and leisure activities, especially since the demand for traveling has experienced growth after the pandemic. In addition, Generation Z (or Gen Z) is a significant contributor to this increase since, according to Condor Ferries, Gen Z takes up to 29 days to travel each year and they are also the highest spenders (along with Millennials) who are likely to spend roughly \$3500 per trip and \$60 per day. More importantly, 90% of those born from 1997 to 2012 believe social media influences their international travel decisions. Therefore, we want to determine if the media has any impact on their choices of green accommodation.

Generation Z has become an important emerging force in the tourism sector in recent years, especially in sustainable nature-based travel. Research shows that Gen Z travelers are more aware of the environment than previous generations. They are likely to choose eco-friendly accommodations and engage in green tourism (Nguyen et al., 2024). Studies within frameworks, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Value-Attitude-Behavior (VAB), have analyzed the contributing factors to their choices, bringing to light issues of environmental awareness and social influences (Nguyen & Bui, 2023). Furthermore, various definitions are media-influenced, especially social media, doing a fair share of travel decision-making, with platforms like TikTok and Instagram shaping Gen Z preferences through influencer marketing, UGC, and brand campaigns (Liao, 2024). Nevertheless, little attention has been given to the influence of media on Gen Z's leisure choices at nature-based accommodations.

Despite increasing interest in sustainable tourism, several research gaps remain. First, the majority of studies focus mainly on why Gen Z chooses eco-friendly destinations and accommodations and not on how the media influences their activities upon arrival. Second, while previous studies acknowledge social media's power, they fail to study how different types of content-influencer recommendations, corporate marketing, or peer reviews influence Gen Z decisions. Besides, international tourists and their use of media and picking activities in the Vietnam eco-tourism context are not sufficiently analyzed, as the literature on green tourism is preoccupied with domestic travelers. Finally, the impact of COVID-19 on media consumption and travel behavior is still largely unexplored against the backdrop of accelerated digital engagement and shifts in how young travelers interface with tourism content due to the pandemic.

Understanding the role of media in shaping Generation Z's pro-environmental behavior during the selection of leisure activities in green accommodations is vital for tourism businesses, marketers, and policymakers. With the growing interest in sustainable travel, such insights

would provide businesses with targeted media strategies for encouraging eco-friendly behavior, marketers with effective planning of their digital campaign toward responsible tourism, and policymakers with media initiatives toward sustainable tourism efforts. The current study aims to fill in gaps in knowledge in integrated media and influence Generation Z's decision-making process in nature-based leisure activities and, also, the potential for using the media in engaging sustainable tourism in Vietnam.

This proposal seeks to answer the question: **How does social media influence Gen Z's intentions to book green hotel and their actual action?** Specifically, it aims to explore how various media platforms, particularly social media, affect Gen Z's attitudes and final decision in relation to green accommodations. Social media is indicated to have a profound impact on environmental attitudes and behavior, suggesting the need to know through which mechanisms media exposure shapes pro-environmental intention in this demographic.

Targeting Generation Z travelers between the ages of 18 and 25, this study uses a two-step online survey with a qualitative method. Before a full-scale data-gathering phase targeted at roughly 150 respondents, the survey must first be piloted to validate and improve the research tool. Using a 5-point Likert scale, the questionnaire will assess media elements, environmental attitudes, and the propensity to select eco-friendly lodging. Demographic information will also be gathered. The results will be supplemented by secondary data from previous research and media coverage, which will shed light on the themes and messaging affecting Gen Z's opinions on eco-friendly lodging. Throughout the research process, participant anonymity and informed consent will be guaranteed by ethical concerns.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Main Constructs

To further our study of the research question "What is the role of media in enabling Gen Z to pro-environmental behaviour about selecting green accommodation?", we have to examine several aspects of the process. These aspects are "Gen Z's attitudes toward sustainability", "Media influence on decisions", and "Perceived behavioral control".

1.1. Gen Z's attitudes toward sustainability

Generation Z is 'socially aware, digital natives' and 'guided by values' (Francis & Hoefel, 2018) and become involved in ethical consumption at a young age. While they do not yet have much purchasing power, Generation Z places a higher priority on experiences that mirror their values, including sustainability (Euromonitor, 2023). The interaction of ethical values and travel experiences relates to Generation Z's attitudes toward green lodging. The Theory of Planned Behavior states that attitudes are a contributor to behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). In this instance, if Generation Z travelers believe their choice of lodging has an environmental impact, they will have favorable attitudes about eco-friendly hotels. Han et al. (2018) found that favorable attitude towards hotels stem from an environmental benefit, as well as similarities between personal values and corporate social responsibility. Generation Z is more willing to consider eco-friendly lodging as a legitimate travel experience when they view it as responsible and genuine.

1.2. Media influence on booking decisions

Gen Z are digital natives and they use media platforms in particular social media extensively that can be powerful tools for influencing their environmental attitudes and behaviour towards travel (Gonzalez et al., 2021). Social media channels such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook do not only provide users with sustainable tourism information, but also allow them to exchange peer-to-peer opinions and recommendations that influence the consumer decision-making through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

The marketing industry now uses influencers and travel bloggers to develop sustainable accommodation content which Gen Z consumers find both authentic and engaging (Kapitan & Silvera, 2021). The study by Kang & Kim (2022) shows that media exposure to sustainability content leads to better consumer perceptions which in turn increases the selection of environmentally friendly options. The use of real-life narration as well as behind-the-scenes photos of green hotel operations and personal reviews instills confidence that results in a behavioral change. Authenticity of peer comments and influencer reviews supports sustainability messages because Gen Z consumers believe in genuine and honest content (Chen & Tung, 2014). The increased visibility of green hotels through eWOM and higher confidence translate into higher rates of bookings in a competitive marketplace.

1.3. Perceived behavioral control

Perceived behavioral control is the extent to which individuals believe that they can perform a specific behavior with available opportunities and resources (Ajzen, 1991). For Gen Z, perceived behavioral control is extremely important in determining whether sustainable travel behavior like booking a green hotel is feasible or a mere wish. Although Gen Z may say that they have a very strong interest in eco-travel, it also relies on whether these experiences can be affordable, accessible, and convenient (Nimri et al., 2020). If green accommodations are easily available, sustainably certified, and competitively priced, the likelihood of Gen Z following through with their intention increases. Cost transparency and specific affordability in the booking stage for example, are identified as drivers to sustainable consumption for young consumers (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2018). Secondly, giving an open booking system with green filters, easily visible sustainability scores, and price comparison gives some sense of agency and activate pro-environmental actions. If perceived behavioral control is high, it means the behavior will be more probable from the intention (Rahman & Reynolds, 2019).

2. Antecedent/Driver

The factors of pro-environmental behavior could be broadly categorized as internal and external factors, both of which significantly impact Gen Z consumers' decision regarding sustainable travel and green accommodation selection. These factors are important to understand for hospitality businesses that aim to locate their products in line with the green ethos of this emerging consumer group.

Internal factors refer to personal value and psychological drivers that influence Gen Z's engagement in pro-environmental activities. These significant factors include environmental awareness, values, experience, emotion, and perceived control of behavior. Firstly, there is environmental awareness. Generation Z has come of age in the context of increased climate discourse and was introduced to learning about sustainability at an early age, both in and out of school (OECD, 2021). Such has cultivated strong green values, which are considered to be critical antecedents to sustainable behavior and attitudes (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2018). These values are usually introduced through family, schools, and web content sites and form a moral compass that directs environmentally responsible decisions. Second, direct experience with sustainable service, such as overnight stays in green-certified hotels or going on eco-tourism trips, alters behavior through emotional satisfaction and familiarity. Satisfactory experience with the use of renewable energy, waste reduction, or biodiversity preservation at eco-lodges leads to repeat behavior and forms habitual sustainable preferences (Baker et al., 2014). Experience tends to be transmitted as peer-to-peer information by means of social media and reviews that further increase the visibility and attractiveness of green accommodation. Third, psychological motivators—moral obligation, guilt, and sympathy for nature—are also inducing Gen Z to adopt environmentally friendly choices. Gifford & Nilsson (2014) note that emotional concern for the environment and becoming environmentally responsible trigger stronger pro-environmental commitment. Besides, perceived control of behavior, defined as the belief to conduct a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991), is a vital internal factor. So long as Gen Z thinks green accommodation is within its budget, reachable, and easy to reserve, they will behave according to environmental intention (Nimri et al., 2020). Thus, sustainable-filtering booking sites, eco-labeling transparency, and accessible pricing information can promote perceived control and book intention for green stays. These are extrinsic social and contextual variables stimulating or deterring sustainable behavior. They include trust in certification, economic incentives, social norms, and media exposure. Social and online media are significant channels through which stories of sustainability unfold. Gen Z, as digital natives, engage well with media like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube upon which friends and influencers narrate experiences of travel and promote sustainable action (Kapitan & Silvera, 2021). User-generated content (UGC) and influencer endorsements add credibility and sharedness, significant features well received by Gen Z due to their desire for authentic values-based communication (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Rear-screen footage that records such sustainability projects, such as water-conserving technologies or local supply, brings such intangible environmental values into view and memory.

Social norms are also a significant influence on behavior. Gen Z has also been called the "climate generation" since it is said to possess higher environmental consciousness and peer-led engagement with sustainability (Naderi & Van Steenburg, 2018). Peer pressure and belonging to nature communities or travel boards impose common values and prosocial norm-expectations. If sustainable tourism is the standard to be expected of one's peers, then individuals will conform. Additionally, trust in green certification—i.e., LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), Green Key, and EarthCheck—is a tool of credibility. These certifications reduce greenwashing concerns and convey real environmental commitment, as per Chen & Tung (2014). If such labels are salient on booking sites or hotels' websites, they increase perceived trust and likelihood of being selected by environmentally

committed tourists. Economic factors, particularly price sensitivity and value perception, are just as critical. While Gen Z is willing to pay extra for sustainability, prices must match perceived value (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Premium pricing can be achieved by hotels when intangible benefits are conveyed properly, i.e., reduced carbon footprint, value to local inhabitants, and luxury eco-experience. Incentives such as loyalty points for green stays or partnership with environmental NGOs for experiential stay would also add depth to the value proposition. By acknowledging the active interplay between external and internal antecedents to sustainable behavior, hospitality businesses can utilize more accurate and impactful solutions. For instance, environmental intentions can be facilitated by marketing strategies like influencer storytelling, authentic customer testimonials, and clear sustainability labeling. Likewise, structural changes such as price parity for green options, easy booking facilities, and high ecologging visibility can eliminate the intention-action gap. These efforts will play a vital role in fulfilling Gen Z's values and promoting a greener future for the travel industry.

3. Consequences

Attitude, influence of media, and perceived behavior control all have substantial effects on the intention of Generation Z to select green accommodations. Favorable attitude toward green accommodations since such a decision is felt to be a reflection of personal values and does good to the environment has a larger effect on the intention to act. Generation Z, which has been termed socially conscious and values-driven, will evaluate travel alternatives not only in economic or availability metrics, but in ethical metrics. Provided that hotels operating green are perceived as genuine and responsible, they will be eagerly welcomed as viable travel experiences. The positive outlook becomes an in-or-out psychological driver that tilts the probabilities in favor of choosing sustainable accommodations when organizing travel.

Social media power, especially from platforms like Instagram and TikTok, is a reinforcement process where it shapes environmental attitudes and makes green substitutes apparent. Generation Z is exposed to peer comments, messages from influencers, and messages from users through eWOM and use them as genuine and credible. Media exposure in this mode increases perceived credibility and trust for green hotels, which improves reservation intention and typically generates actual behavior. What's more, provided perceived behavioral control is high—i.e., sustainable options are convenient, affordable, and easily bookable—Gen Z is able to do better what they mean to do. Green filter availability, transparent pricing, and the presence of visible sustainability ratings on booking sites is a component that can induce the sense of control, ultimately making it more probable for Gen Z to choose environmentally friendly accommodations.

4. Main moderators

Among the moderators that have appeared in the study of Gen Z's sustainable behavior in the context of green accommodation decision is media authenticity. While internal (e.g., environmental values, feelings, perceived control) and external (e.g., social norms, standards, economic conditions) determinants are essential to shape behavior, how much of media content is perceived to be authentic plays a pivotal role in shaping the degree to which these determinants translate to concrete sustainable behavior. The Gen Z generation seeks content that presents genuine realities and authentic messages which also connect to their current world. The online generation has made them highly sensitive to messages that feel overly scripted or promotional. Research indicates that authentic influencer stories and behind-the-scenes content and user-generated feedback help build trust and emotional connections (Kapitan & Silvera, 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The authenticity effect strengthens the persuasive power of sustainability communication for Gen Z behavioral responses when messages appear genuine but weakens this effect when they seem artificial or insincere. Media authenticity functions as a crucial factor which determines both the direction and magnitude of how media exposure influences green hotel selection choices.

5. Theoretical framework

Generation Z attitudes and behaviors toward green hotels can be easily explained with the help of available behavioral theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), and the Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC). TPB (Ajzen, 1991) explains that behavior is the result of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The socially responsible digital natives who are values-driven members of Generation Z develop positive attitudes toward green accommodations when they believe their lodging decisions significantly affect the environment (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Green hotels gain more support from Gen Z customers when their corporate social responsibility initiatives align with the values of these customers (Han et al., 2018). Social norms become significant factors when sustainable behavior receives strong endorsement on social media platforms because Gen Z believes such behavior should be both acceptable and expected within their social networks. Media influence as depicted in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) can help answer the ubiquity and normalization of attitudes and norms by social media. Central processing is when Gen Z is presented with information-content, i.e., in-depth reports

on sustainability or a history of eco-practices. Concurrently, peripheral cues such as influencer backing, pictorially appealing content and customer reviews also lead to decisions with little cognitive effort. Against this background, genuineness in these posts (e.g., through life experience or the offering of sincere opinions) can be especially impactful, as Gen Z values authentic content (Chen & Tung, 2014; Kapitan & Silvera, 2021). In the meantime, the second important determinant of TPB, PBC, has the crucial function that it will determine whether any behavioural intention is translated into actual behaviour. Even when Gen Z is motivated to eco-tourism, their choices are often influenced by whether they believe that green accommodation is affordable, accessible, and convenient (Nimri et al., 2020). The use of green filters, upfront sustainability ratings and explicit pricing in web-based booking platforms increase the belief in their control and feasibility and increase the likelihood that they follow through on their intentions to travel sustainably (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2018; Rahman & Reynolds, 2019). Collectively, these theoretical models demonstrate how Gen Z's moral values, media usage, and locus of control influence their choices in conjunction with one another, providing applied implications for the creation of more successful sustainability campaigns and booking systems.

III. THEORY/ MODEL DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Introduction

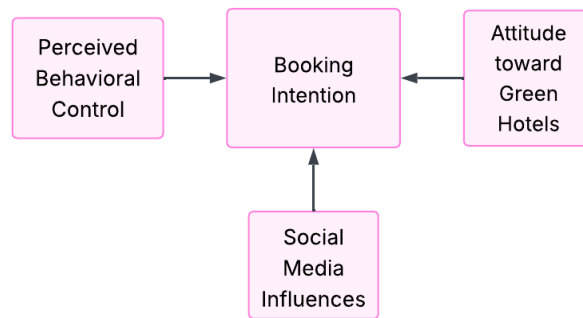
The purpose of this study is to investigate how social media influences Generation Z's green hotel booking behavior and intention. To build this theoretical model, we focus on theoretical frameworks in behavioral research: The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), three main factors include attitude toward the action, personal norms, and perceived behavioral control, such as influence intention, which is considered the most important driver of behavior. In this study, the behavior referred to is booking a green hotel, and attitude is an individual's positive or negative evaluation of this action.

- **Attitude** refers to the individual's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of booking green hotels.
- **Social media influences** serve as an extension of **subjective norms**, since online platforms shape perceived social expectations through peer reviews, influencer marketing, and content engagement.
- **Perceived behavioral control** refers to how easy or difficult Gen Z feels it is to book a green hotel, considering cost, accessibility, and platform usability.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) supports the hypothesis that people with positive attitudes toward green hotels will be more likely to intend to book such a hotel.

3.2. Conceptual Model

Based on the TPB, the study proposes a model in which the hypothesized relationships between three independent variables (Attitude, Social Media Influences, Perceived Behavioral Control) and the dependent variable (Intention to Book Green Hotels) are examined on whether people intend to book rooms at these types of properties.



3.2.1. Hypotheses Development

From the theoretical framework and the conceptual model above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **H1:** A positive attitude toward green hotels influences Gen Z's preference to book green hotels.
- **H2:** Social media influences have a positive effect on Gen Z's intention to book green hotels.
- **H3:** Perceived behavioral control positively affects Gen Z's intention to book green hotels.

3.2.2. Variable Description

Construct	Type	Example Measurement Item (5-point Likert Scale)
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Attitude toward Green Hotels	Independent Variable	“Staying in green hotels is a responsible travel choice”
Social Media Influences	Independent Variable	“Social media helps me better understand the benefits of green hotels.”
Perceived Behavioral Control	Independent Variable	“Booking a green hotel is easy and convenient for me.”
Booking intention	Dependent Variable	“I intend to book a green hotel on my next trip.”

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs a kind of mixed-method qualitative approach to analyzing the media's effect on Generation Z's pro-environmental behavior, particularly in the selection of green accommodations. The mixed-method design is in force because it can blend the statistical rigor and generalizability of quantitative data with the depth and richness of qualitative insights. These two methods combined allow the study to analyze and fully understand both how and why media influences Gen Z's sustainable travel decisions. This design also follows the constructivist research paradigm, where reality is something that individuals create through social interactions and media exposure. This research design is suitable because Gen-Z grew up in a digital environment where social media is one of the greatest influences on values and behavior.

The research is broken into two major phases. A focus group discussion with a limited number of participants is the first step in order to gather preliminary information about Gen-Z's awareness, motivations, and experiences with environmentally friendly travel and lodging. Gaining a detailed grasp of the target population's perceptions is the first goal of this qualitative phase, which also helps to inform and improve the design of the ensuing quantitative survey tool. A structured online survey is given to a larger sample in the second phase in order to gather information that can be statistically examined to find trends, connections, and possible causes between media exposure and decisions about eco-friendly lodging.

Secondary data from earlier scholarly research, industry reports, and media analyses pertaining to sustainable tourism and the impact of digital media were examined in order to further contextualize the study's findings. By placing primary data within the larger context of existing knowledge, this triangulation of data sources enhances the validity of the study.

4.1. Sampling Strategy and Participant Recruitment

The sampling plan was meticulously created to guarantee the accuracy and applicability of the information gathered. A purposive non-probability sampling technique was used because of the particular focus on young Vietnamese tourists, ages 18 to 25, who are active on social media. This method works well when the population of interest is well-defined and the goal is to collect cases with a wealth of information rather than making generalizations to a broader population. Participants had to be Vietnamese nationals within the designated age range, regularly interact with social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube, and have traveled within the previous two years in order to meet the inclusion criteria. In order to ensure that they were familiar with the types of media influence that were studied, respondents also had to have been exposed to online travel-related content.

Seven participants were present in a single focus group setting during the qualitative phase. These were found through outreach on social media, and their eligibility was determined according to the previously stated criteria. The interaction made it possible for the participants to reflect on their travel experiences, social media usage, and attitudes toward green accommodations as a group. In order to improve representativeness and enable reliable statistical analyses, a larger sample size of respondents was targeted by an online survey for the quantitative phase. In accordance with suggested sample sizes for exploratory quantitative research in the field of sustainable tourism, more than 210 responses were kept for analysis following data cleaning and screening for validity and completeness.

The survey's recruitment process made use of digital channels, taking advantage of Gen-Z's widespread usage of social media. The survey link was shared by the research team via university networks, professional online communities like LinkedIn, and travel-related Facebook groups. The goal of this multi-channel distribution strategy was to draw in respondents who fit the selection criteria and increase reach. The Google Forms-hosted online survey format was selected due to its user-friendliness, accessibility, and capacity to support effective data management and collection.

4.2. Data Collection Instruments

The main data collecting instrument was a structured questionnaire developed carefully upon the literature review and qualitative inputs obtained from the focus group. The questionnaire was categorized into seven sections, each focusing on a different construct applied in relation to the research problem of the study. All of the closed-ended items contained a five-point Likert-type scale: one represented "strongly disagree," and five represented "strongly agree." This basically gives a much-needed nuanced assessment of the respondents' sentiments, perceptions, and behaviors but also made statistical manipulation thereof easy.

The first section gathered demographic information and tracked social media usage trends. Here men and women, various age groups, education levels, and work statuses were distinguished among these variables which also take into account how often they use social media, their travel experiences in general, and their experience booking for eco-friendly lodging. Such data allow segmentation study to be carried out while letting its usefulness be tested with respect to sociodemographic variables.

Section two assessed how well respondents understood the concept of environmentally friendly lodging. The questions were intended to explore areas such as knowledge of green hotel characteristics, means of reducing environmental impact, community support, and benefits of sustainable tourism. Some sample statements were: "I can tell the difference between an eco-friendly hotel and a regular one based on their practices," and "I know that eco-friendly accommodations reduce their environmental impact." The purpose of this section was to determine the target population's baseline level of environmental literacy with regard to green lodging.

The third section concerned the influences of social media on social norms as well as the awareness of green accommodations. This is divided into subcategories such as direct exposure to green hotel content; the role of influencers and peer recommendations; and how this creates curiosity and willingness to act thereon. For example, participants answer statements such as "I am influenced by celebrities or influencers who review green hotels" and "I frequently see posts about green hotels on social media." This section assesses how effective several media outlets have been in shaping the public opinion on environmental issues.

Section four was primarily concerned with behavioral intentions versus actual booking behaviors. The questionnaire attempted to distinguish among respondents between their stated past booking behaviors and their stated intentions to book green hotels in the near future. There are statements such as "I have booked a green hotel after seeing information on social media" and "I plan to book a green hotel in the near future". This distinction becomes important in understanding the intent-to-behavior gap that often occurs in pro-environmental action.

The fifth section measured actual interaction with and engaging behaviors toward green accommodation content on social media: liking, sharing, commenting, and trusting online reviews. Recognizing the increasing importance of multimedia and advertising in digital persuasion, this section also evaluated the influence of sponsored and visual content on booking decisions.

Emotional reactions and social and personal values related to sustainability were examined in the sixth section. It assessed sentiments of inspiration, social responsibility, hope, and the significance of environmental preservation as a fundamental principle. Affective and identity-based motivations for sustainable travel choices were evaluated by statements such as "Choosing green hotels reflects my lifestyles and values" and "Content about green hotels gives me a sense of hope for the planet."

The last part saw the things backing and chancing green hotel bookings. The lack of information, the ones that seem to have a higher cost, and with claims being too difficult to verify were the challenges identified. These questions sought to understand the factors, both practical and psychological, that enable or inhibit pro-environmental travel decisions.

In a bid to maintain cultural and contextual clarity, the questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese and then back-translated into English. This step is designed to maintain semantic equivalence. Further, a pre-test with 210 participants was conducted alongside a qualitative survey prior to launching the full-scale survey. The pre-test improved clarity in the flow of ambiguous items along with the overall instrument reliability and validity.

4.3. Qualitative Data Collection: Focus Group Discussion

The research team conducted a focus group qualitative discussion before the quantitative survey with seven Vietnamese Gen-Z travelers to capture their experiences and understandings of green accommodations and social media influences. Though the agenda was set in advance, participants were free to give their opinions on some other range of topics. The participants in focus groups stated that their major sources of inspiration for travel are visual and video-based social media content, e.g., TikTok videos or Instagram Reels. They noted that they liked content that felt genuine and relatable and that they would trust recommendations from micro-influencers more than traditional ads. The participants further stated that they held a moderate understanding of the premise of green accommodations but admitted that they had difficulty verifying claims of being "eco-friendly" due to contradictory information and their concerns about greenwashing. Cost was said by the group to be a major barrier, with many thinking that green hotels are more expensive and hard to get to. Yet, on the other hand, given the chance, sustainable choices are passionately encouraged by emotional factors that include optimism for environmental conservation and a sense of responsibility as social beings. These disclosures provided crucial context for developing survey questions regarding obstacles, emotional motivators, and preferred content.

4.4. Data Analysis Methods and Procedures

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using statistical software SPSS. Descriptive statistics first aggregated main variables and demographic characteristics to provide an overview of sample breakdown and overall trend. Reliability analysis was done using Cronbach's alpha, and all constructs yielded a figure greater than the acceptable rate of 0.7 and hence evidence of good internal consistency in questionnaire scales.

A search-style exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was run to find the latent factor structure of the items contained in the survey and construct validity. Factor analysis results indicate consistent item grouping into factors, which could be interpreted as influences from the media, environmental attitudes/intended behavior, and barriers/motivators.

Then, correlation analyses looked at the relationship between media exposure, emotional involvement, and the intention to book green accommodations. Results suggest positive correlations between social media awareness and behavior intention and real booking behavior. Further, multiple regression analysis suggested that emotional values and social influences from friends and influencers strongly predicted booking intentions, explaining a large part of the variance.

Qualitative data from the focus groups were analyzed through thematic analysis. Transcripts were hand-coded to various repeatedly emerging themes, which were then re-coded into dimensions such as perceived credibility of social media content, emotional triggers, peer influence, barriers, and motivators. Direct quotes were used for illustration and presented an in-depth interpretation of the survey findings, with a more detailed texture and a more profound comprehension.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethics Quantitative survey data was analyzed using the statistical software SPSS. The primary variables and demographic characteristics were first combined using descriptive statistics to provide a summary of the sample breakdown and overall trend. Reliability analysis was done using Cronbach's alpha, and all constructs yielded a figure greater than the acceptable rate of 0.7 and hence evidence of good internal consistency in questionnaire scales.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the underlying factor structure of the items in the survey and to determine construct validity. The EFA results demonstrated consistent item groupings into interpretable factors that were representative of environmental attitudes, media influence, behavioral intentions, and motivators and barriers. The association between media exposure, emotional involvement, and intentions to reserve green accommodations was then investigated using correlation analyses. Results indicated positive correlations between social media awareness and behavior intention and real booking behavior. By not collecting personally identifiable information, anonymity was ensured, and all data were kept safe with only the research team members having limited access. Secondary data sources were adequately cited and scrutinized within scholarly standards of ethics, maintaining intellectual property rights.

This mixed-method study investigated the influence of the media on Gen Z's choice to remain in Vietnam's eco-friendly lodgings. A qualitative focus group informed a quantitative online survey of over 210 young, social media-savvy Vietnamese travelers. Using a Likert scale, the survey looked at demographics, social media use, awareness, influence, behavior, engagement, values, and barriers and motivators related to green hotels. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed, while for quantitative data, SPSS (descriptive statistics, reliability, EFA, correlations, and regression) was utilized. Purposeful sampling and ethical protocols were applied throughout.

V. RESEARCH FINDING

5.1. Description of survey respondents

5.1.1. Qualitative

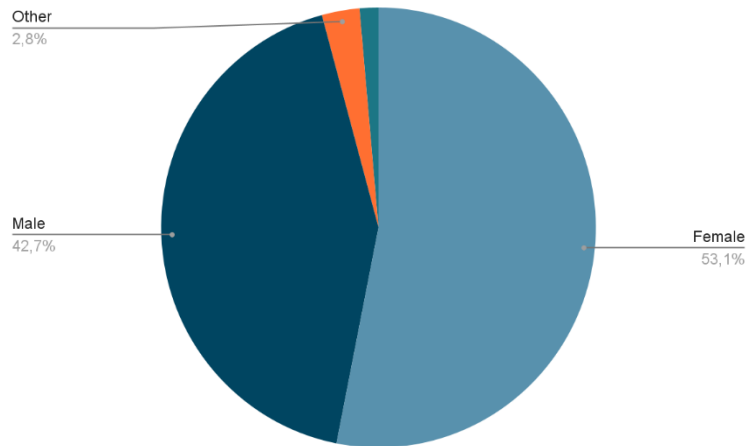
For the qualitative survey, we conducted a focus group of seven individuals using purposive sampling by face-to-face interview. The reason for our choice of this group is that they are Gen-Z travelers (aged 21 to 23) who usually use social media. Besides, they are also junior and senior students who major in fields related to Tourism and Hospitality, which is suitable to provide insights and experiences about their perception of green accommodations.

5.1.2. Quantitative

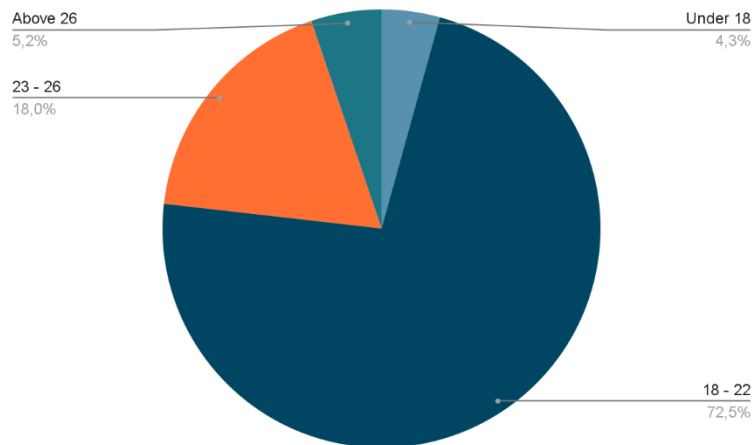
A total of 211 respondents participated in the quantitative survey, conducted via an online questionnaire using Google Forms. Convenience sampling was used to reach a wide range of participants.

A. DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

a. Gender

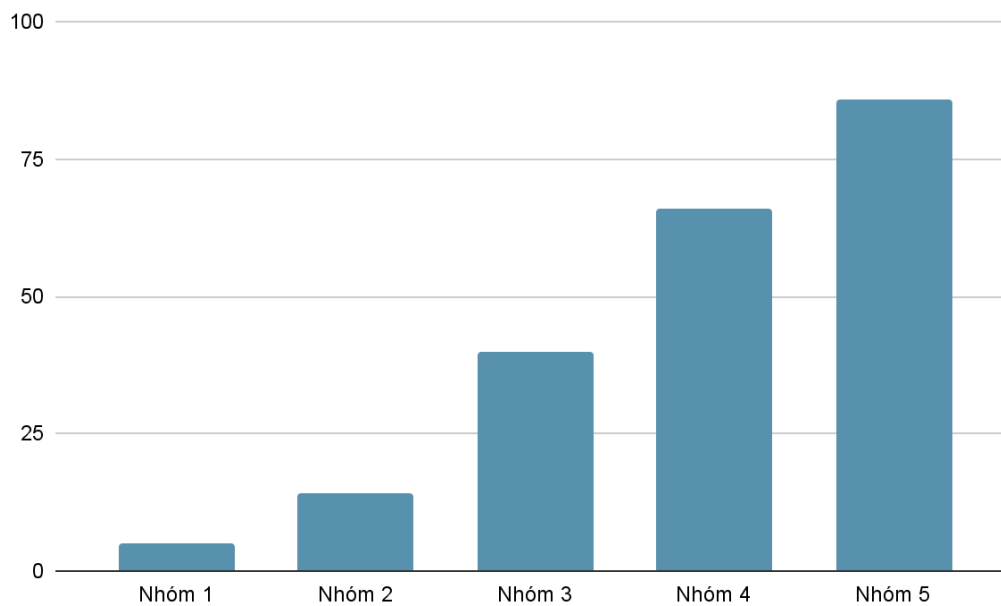


b. Age

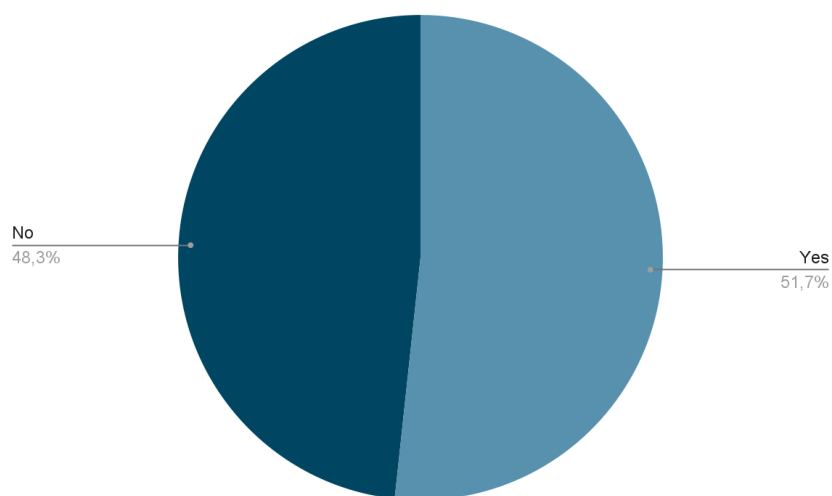


B. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND GREEN HOTEL BOOKING EXPERIENCE

c. Frequency of using social media



d. Having booked a green hotel



5.2. Using secondary data and information to discuss the results of the primary data analysis

This section presents an important discussion on the primary data collected from a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews, based on relevant secondary sources. The findings are

interpreted through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and are supported by contemporary literature on green hotel behavior and the influence of social media.

5.2.1. Awareness and understanding of the concept of green hotels

The survey results show a solid foundation of awareness among respondents from Generation Z. About 69.2% agree or strongly agree that they understand the concept of environmentally friendly accommodation, while 65.8% report the ability to distinguish between green hotels and regular hotels. This awareness foundation is very important because, as Chen and Tung (2014) suggest, environmental knowledge enhances perceived behavioral control—one of the core predictors of intention in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

However, deeper insights from the interview data show that this knowledge is often superficial. While many participants can name general characteristics (e.g., solar energy, reducing plastic), only a few demonstrate a significant evaluation of green claims. This nuance suggests an overestimation of environmental knowledge in self-reported surveys, highlighting the importance of cross-referencing quantitative findings with qualitative depth.

5.2.2. Social media as a normative and informational influence

Social media has emerged as a tool that facilitates awareness and shapes perceived norms. More than 60% of respondents indicated that visually appealing content, especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, has increased their interest in green hotels. Meanwhile, 54.2% reported being influenced by influencers and 65.5% associated green hotel content with social responsibility awareness.

These findings align with Kang and Kim (2022), who emphasize the role of social media as a socio-cultural agent, normalizing sustainable tourism through peer-to-peer sharing and storytelling. Furthermore, the interviews confirm that social media not only serves as a source of information but also as a tool for social validation. Participants mentioned that repeated exposure to online ecological niches makes such choices more accessible, more accepted, and even aspirational.

From a theoretical perspective, this reflects the subjective norm component of the TPB—where perceived social approval influences intention (Ajzen, 1991). Moreover, Chi-Hong Liao (2024) expands on this perspective through Social Impact Theory, suggesting that the credibility and proximity of online informants (e.g., micro-influencers) significantly influence behavioral conformity. This seems particularly prominent for Generation Z, who are both digital natives and seekers of social validation.

5.2.3. Intention–Behavior Gap: The persistent discord

Although there is a high level of intention (66.8% intend to book green hotels), only 53.8% of the respondents actually do so. This difference reinforces the intention-behavior gap clearly

documented in sustainable tourism (Han et al., 2018; Baker et al., 2014). In reality, good intentions are often hindered by cost, convenience, and skepticism.

Price remains the most consistent deterrent: 58% of those surveyed said that green hotels are too expensive. The interviewees agreed with this viewpoint, noting that although sustainability is valued, affordability often determines the final decision. Moreover, some participants expressed skepticism about "greenwashing," questioning whether influencers are promoting hotels for compensation rather than genuine environmental commitment.

These concerns align with Rahman and Reynolds (2019), who argue that favorable conditions—such as affordability, transparency, and trust—are important moderating factors between intention and behavior. TPB alone may not be sufficient unless supported by real-world facilitating factors.

5.2.4. Trust, Credibility, and Conditional Power Conditional Influence of Influencers

Although more than half of the respondents indicated that they were influenced by social media figures, their impact was not uniform. Only 50.5% said they trust online reviews of green hotels. Interview data provide additional context: participants responded more to content showcasing "behind-the-scenes" sustainable development efforts rather than the aesthetics of advertisements.

This finding highlights the dual role of influencers: they are both amplifiers of sustainability narratives and potential sources of skepticism. As Liao (2024) notes, the effectiveness of social media depends on the perceived authenticity of the messenger. Especially, Generation Z seems to distinguish between performative and substantive environmental messages.

This reflects a deeper theoretical perspective: subjective norms must be credible to be persuasive. The message of an influencer can only shape intentions if it is perceived as authentic, consistent, and aligned with the values of the audience.

5.2.5. Emotional engagement and identity signals

Another deep insight is the role of motivation driven by emotions and identity. About 65.5% of respondents reported feeling a higher sense of social responsibility after engaging with green content. Moreover, 63% expressed a desire to be seen as advocates of sustainability.

This closely aligns with the goal-framing theory of Lindenberg and Steg (2007), which posits that normative goals (e.g., doing the right thing morally) can guide behavior alongside hedonic and gain goals. However, as the interview data revealed, these normative goals are often denied

when green choices conflict with hedonic choices (comfort, price) or when credibility is in doubt.

This tension illustrates that identity signals (which are desired to be seen as sustainable) cannot always be translated into action unless supported by reinforcing conditions—such as affordability, availability, and peer support.

5.2.6. Summary and Theoretical Implications

When synthesizing these findings, it is clear that social media plays a crucial role in shaping Generation Z's attitudes and intentions towards green hotels, acting as a force of information and norms. However, the conversion of intention into behavior is conditional—mediated by trust, cost, and perceived authenticity.

Although the TPB provides a useful framework, its predictive power is enhanced when integrated with supplementary models such as Social Impact Theory (Liao, 2024) and Goal Framing Theory (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007). Together, these frameworks explain not only what Generation Z intends to do but also why they often do not follow through—and what needs to change to bridge that gap.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

1. Conclusion

Through a combination of survey and interview, the research found that Gen-Z have been deeply influenced by social media to intend to book eco-friendly accommodations when traveling. The survey shows that Gen-Z were able to distinguish a green accommodation from a regular one and understood about the characteristics of it such as energy saving, waste reduction or use of eco-products, it not only helps to reduce environmental pollution but also supports local communities and cultures. Importantly, most of this knowledge stemmed directly from social platforms where KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders), peer reviews and eco-content played a key role in shaping perceptions.

Therefore, in terms of behavior, many answers reported either having booked an eco-hotel after being influenced by social media or intending to do so in the near future. When presented with options, eco-friendliness emerged as an important decision-making factor, some are even willing to pay a premium for sustainability. Moreover, through their learned experience, Gen-

Z takes part in a cycle of influence by sharing their information to help normalize sustainable choices among their peers. Together with booking behavior, emotional responses evoked by green content were of prime importance. Respondents articulated that being exposed to sustainable travel content online made them feel hopeful, socially responsible, and inspired to engage in environmentally friendly practices, not only while traveling but also in daily life. Sustainability was not only construed as a preference in tourism but as part of an identity that they wished to project and live. Most wanted to turn eco-awareness into a way of life instead of a single decision.

Lastly, social media is an informative and inspirational influence—educating Gen-Z on sustainable travel while simultaneously inspiring them to take action that aligns with a profound aspiration to be responsible global citizens.

2. Recommendation and implications

From the findings, a number of theoretical and practical recommendations can be advanced. For marketer and operators of green hotels, gamification and incentivization of sustainable behaviors - such as rewarding or discounting patrons who take part in environmentally friendly practices such as plastic use reduction or water conservation - are essential. Additionally, encouraging user-generated content and social sharing could maximize impact, given that Gen-Z travelers are extremely responsive to peer recommendations and social testimonials. In order to build trust, accommodation must prioritize transparency by stating openly their green initiatives, avoiding greenwashing, and showing sincere, verifiable environmental actions. On the research front, future studies must consider cross-culture studies in examining the influence of social media on green travel behavior across countries or regions. Adopting mixed methods - eg., combining actual booking records with surveys - can help close the intention - action gap.

The findings of this research have significant practical and theoretical implications. Practically, they demonstrate that social media is a key channel for influencing Gen- Z's sustainable travel decisions. This information offers green hotel managers and marketers a strategic opportunity to craft engaging, platform-specific content that promotes their environmental practices. Influencer collaborations and user-generated content play a vital role in establishing trust and social proof for young consumers.

The research highlights the significance of online media in promoting eco-friendliness for sustainability policymakers and activists. Cooperative partnerships with social media sites and content providers could allow for widespread awareness-raising, while at the same time ensuring that claims about sustainability are kept transparent and trustworthy.

Academically, the results contribute to the field of sustainable tourism and media effects, confirming the applicability of behavioral intention models in digital settings and suggesting the need for additional longitudinal and cross-cultural studies.

3. Limitation

In spite of the key findings from this study, it is imperative to recognize several limitations that necessitate cautious interpretation of the findings. To begin with, the use of self-reported data with regard to intentions and behavior risks social desirability bias and recall distortion. Participants may have exaggerated their green intentions or recall past behavior more favorably to conform to perceived social norms regarding sustainability. This can generate exaggerated notions of pro-environmental behavior that are not supported in real decision-making.

Second, the composition of the sample can impose limitations on the generalizability of findings. The majority of participants were either students or urban-resident members of Generation Z and therefore might not best reflect the entirety of the generation's diversity, especially those who are from rural, working-class, or less digitally active backgrounds. This demographic tilt can affect attitudes regarding both social media usage and environmental issues.

Third, although the study was looking at intentions to book green hotels, it was not monitoring actual booking behavior using transactional or behavioral data. This leaves an intention–action gap, a very common phenomenon in behavioral research, and reduces the potential for ensuring that social media influence translates into measurable consumer behavior.

Fourth, the deployment of a mixed-methods strategy—though a strength on many levels—has its own trade-offs. The qualitative component, derived from a limited number of focus group participants, may not capture the diversity of perceptions within the wider Generation Z cohort, potentially excluding minority or dissenting opinions. In contrast, although providing greater access via the survey, the somewhat formalized nature of this process may have constrained the capacity to examine in-depth motivations, contextual influences, or affective drivers underlying sustainable travel behavior. These limitations together mean that although the findings reveal significant trends and conclusions, they must be read cautiously. Longitudinal designs, behavioral observation, and more demographically representative samples in future studies are suggested to replicate and expand these findings.

4. Future research opportunities

Looking ahead, this research opens several promising avenues for future exploration. A fruitful direction is to monitor actual booking behavior through partnerships with hotel chains or travel sites. Such data would provide a clearer snapshot of social media's influence on behavior, extending beyond self-reported intent. As artificial intelligence assumes a greater presence in

social media content, future research could also examine the influence of algorithmic personalization on Generation Z's exposure and engagement with sustainable travel messaging. Placing within the scope other eco-friendly travel behaviors—such as low-carbon transport modes or local tourism patronage—would allow for a more integrated picture of Generation Z's green travel behavior. Future research could also take a cue from cross-cultural findings to separate out that which is universal and global from that which is locally mediated in the media. Finally, longitudinal panels tracking Generation Z over time could inform us as to whether repeated exposure to social media translates into green booking behavior in the long term. Understanding how personalized feeds influence green attitudes and decisions can allow more efficient green marketing campaigns to be created. New technologies such as virtual reality and 360° content present exciting possibilities for social media shared immersive eco-hotel experiences. Investigating how they influence consumer perceptions of authenticity and sustainability could be revealing. In addition to examining booking behaviors, future research may also explore broader sustainable travel practices, including the selection of public transport, carbon offsetting, and the support of local businesses. Furthermore, comparative and cross-cultural studies could enhance understanding by identifying the variations in media influence across different global regions. Lastly, longitudinal research can perhaps provide insight into the long-term effects of social media on green behavior change—allowing for an assessment of whether exposure to eco-friendly content leads to sustained environmentally friendly habits among Gen Z tourists.

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