
THE POWER OF TRAVEL VLOGS: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER IMPACT ON GEN Z TRAVEL DECISIONS AND BEHAVIOR

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Abstract: *Despite the widespread use of social media influencers (SMIs) in tourism marketing, the mechanisms of their influence—particularly on Generation Z—remain underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining how travel vloggers shape destination choice and travel behavior among Gen Z. The research pursues three objectives: identifying Gen Z’s social media usage characteristics, analyzing their perception and use of travel vlogger content, and evaluating vloggers’ impact on travel decisions. Data were collected via a self-administered online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms, yielding 139 responses analyzed using SPSS. Findings reveal that Gen Z followers value vloggers perceived as genuine, honest, trustworthy, captivating, and expert-like. Content attributes such as accuracy, usefulness, quality, and practical technical advice are highly endorsed, suggesting that beyond inspiration, Gen Z seeks actionable planning information. Respondents report being inspired by and reliant on vloggers for destination choices and practical travel information. However, ambivalence toward personally visiting promoted destinations and responding to paid disclosures indicates boundaries to this influence. Additionally, perceptions of vlogger qualities and impact vary by socio-demographic and behavioral characteristics. The study concludes with strategic considerations for tourism marketers and destination management organizations.*

Keywords: *Travel vloggers, social media influencer, Gen Z, travel decision-making, tourism marketing.*

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INTRODUCTION

As a form of computer-mediated communication, vlogs feature speakers talking directly to the camera using spoken interaction elements (Gholamhosseinzadeh, 2023). Vlogs began in 2010 when Adam Kontras shared a video blog of his trip to Los Angeles and have since transformed media consumption, gained broad appeal, and become a major tool for content marketing, shaping public conversation and documenting daily life (Chen et al., 2024).

Vloggers create and share videos across platforms like YouTube, often attracting thousands or even millions of followers. This environment has given rise to social media influencers (SMIs)—recognized opinion leaders who curate and disseminate information to a wide audience (Pop et al., 2022). Unlike traditional celebrities, SMIs are "regular people" who become "online celebrities" by posting content (Razak & Mansor, 2022).

Travel vlogs create virtual communities where users build visual images while receiving feedback and emotional support from viewers (Chen et al., 2020). They shape tourist experiences by creating a self-other divide, mediating the self's experience, and moderating the experiences of others (He et al., 2022). Following Gholamhosseinzadeh (2023), this study uses *vlogger* to refer specifically to influencers who post travel vlogs.

Social media has fundamentally reshaped how tourist information is accessed and used (Egresi & Lungu, 2025; Egresi & Prakash, 2019; Egresi et al., 2020; Xiang et al., 2015). With information searching now primarily occurring via these channels (Guerreiro et al., 2019), platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube serve as the mainstay of tourism-related content, providing affordable and authentic destination information globally (Hussain et al., 2024).

Research outside tourism confirms that digital influencers shape follower attitudes and behavior by acting as mediators in this information flow (Guerreiro et al., 2019). Given this potential, scholars have increasingly explored how they could also influence decision-making in hospitality and tourism (Chen et al., 2020). As an emerging video format, travel vlogs have been systematically studied in tourism management, showing that their marketing significantly shapes viewers' travel and shopping intentions (Chen et al., 2024). In fact, it was determined that SMIs, destination image, and brand image each have a significant positive effect on tourism purchase intention (Jaya & Prianthara, 2024).

Social media-induced tourism occurs when travelers visit a destination after exposure to specific content. A SMI serves as the initial motivator, crafting persuasive messages and generally being seen as a credible source (Razak & Mansor, 2022). Perceived as less susceptible to corporate agendas, these independent creators are considered among the most authentic sources of travel information (Huertas et al., 2017). They actively create credible, persuasive content about destinations, playing a significant role in promoting tourism and influencing followers' travel decisions (Barbe & Neuburger, 2021) and consumers increasingly rely on these creators when making travel-related decisions (Pop et al., 2022).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, influencer marketing had emerged as one of the most effective strategies for destinations and businesses (Femenia-Serra et al., 2022). The rise of influencer marketing is a direct consequence of social media's transformation of the tourism landscape, empowering tourists to gather unbiased information and authentic peer experiences while offering the industry novel approaches to communication (Hussain et al., 2024).

YouTube is a leading platform for content creation and consumption, hosting millions of videos and serving as a popular global source for tourism-related content. It offers significant opportunities for independent travel vloggers—content creators who travel and provide reviews for other tourists.

Despite the growing use of influencer marketing in tourism and the emergence of travel-specific SMIs, research in this area remains scarce (Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020). Although travel influencers are commonly employed as a marketing tool, the mechanisms through which they exert influence remain underexplored (Seçilmiş et al., 2022). For example, despite the popularity of travel vlogs, how audiences engage with them remains unclear. Given their utility for tourism promotion and their popularity as a form of tourist engagement, the vlog phenomenon merits closer examination (Xu et al., 2021).

This influence is particularly relevant for potential tourists belonging to Generation Z (Gen Zers)—individuals born from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2024). Each generation is shaped by the social, economic, political, technological, and environmental conditions of its formative years (Chung et al., 2018). Gen Z, in particular, has been especially influenced by new technologies and social media (Genç, 2021). Accustomed to advanced technology and constant multimedia information, they cannot imagine life without the internet (Genç, 2021; Popşa, 2024). They increasingly see social media apps as an essential part of daily life, frequently interacting with these virtual platforms (Nguyen et al., 2021). Gen Z also uses social media for knowledge-seeking, which drives their visit intent (Nguyen et al., 2021). They are more likely to choose a destination when ample information about it is available online (Daskin & Tumati, 2024).

As Haddouche and Salomone (2018) noted, young Gen Z tourists are cultivated, hard to retain, and have high expectations for travel. They possess a strong understanding of and deep commitment to sustainable tourism (Minozzi & Grechi, 2025; Pulido-Fernández et al., 2024) and seek more genuine, immersive travel experiences (Daskin & Tumati, 2024).

Gen Z is the world's largest consumer market. The growth and behavior of this economically significant group will have major implications for the future development of the tourism industry, destinations, and their long-term sustainability (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2024; Seyfi et al., 2025).

Starting from the hypothesis that in the 21st century, Generation Z tends to be largely influenced by what they see on social media, this paper aims to thoroughly analyze this phenomenon. The research focuses on three main objectives: identifying the main demographic and behavioral characteristics of Generation Z in the context of social media use; analyzing how the content created by travel vloggers is perceived and used by young people from Generation Z; and evaluating the impact that travel vloggers have on decisions regarding the choice of tourist destinations and on the travel behavior of Generation Z. Understanding this influence is important for the tourism industry, as well as for those who wish to better understand how Generation Z relates to travel and their experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Emergence of the "Tourist 2.0" and the Travel Vlogger as Information Source

The advent of social media has fundamentally reconfigured the landscape of tourism marketing, shifting focus from traditional advertising towards peer-to-peer influence and user-generated content. Within this new paradigm, SMIs and travel vloggers have emerged as critical actors capable of



shaping destination perceptions and tourist behavior. Martínez-Sala et al. (2019) provided early confirmation of this shift, establishing the strategic importance of what they term the "tourist 2.0" influencer within tourism communication strategies. Their work not only highlights the growing relevance of these digital actors but also contributes a practical, replicable model for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to systematically select appropriate influencers for their campaigns, moving the practice from ad-hoc collaborations to a more structured strategic framework.

Focusing specifically on the medium of video, Sizan et al. (2022) offered a foundational conceptualization of the travel vlogger as a distinct information source that gained prominence around 2016. Their research moves beyond simply acknowledging the existence of vloggers to analyze the specific attributes that contribute to their persuasive power. Central to their findings is the concept of vlogger uniqueness; they argue that a vlogger's distinct personality, style, and perspective are not merely aesthetic choices but active components that positively shape how viewers perceive and form attachments to the destinations featured in their content. This positions the vlogger not as a neutral conduit of information but as an integral part of the destination image itself.

Constructing Destination Image Through Vlogs and Visual Storytelling

A substantial and growing body of literature investigates the specific mechanisms by which vlogs and influencer content construct and mediate destination images. Peralta (2019) made a significant contribution by demonstrating that travel vloggers play a fundamental role in constructing online destination images. This construction is achieved primarily through the use of vivid storytelling techniques and the presentation of what is perceived by audiences as authentic, first-hand experiences. Unlike polished and often impersonal promotional materials, vlogs offer a narrative, experience-near perspective that resonates with viewers seeking genuine insights.

This power of visual storytelling extends across different social media platforms, each offering unique affordances. Palazzo et al. (2021) extended the analysis to Instagram, revealing a more complex interaction between influencer type and destination attributes. Their study found that different categories of influencers generate varying levels of audience engagement, and this effect is moderated by the specific characteristics of the destination being promoted. This was particularly evident in the context of sustainable tourism content, where the alignment between the influencer's persona and the destination's values proved crucial for effective communication.

The effectiveness of video content, particularly on platforms like YouTube, in generating tangible destination knowledge and favorable images has been robustly supported. Huertas et al. (2017) found that engagement with YouTube content actively creates knowledge about a destination and cultivates favorable images that directly inspire the intention to visit. Adding a layer of practical insight, Briciu & Briciu (2020) analyzed vlogs focused on a specific cultural heritage site, Dracula Castle in Romania. Their analysis led to a key recommendation for content creators: to forge deeper, more intimate connections with their followers, vloggers should move beyond mere documentation and actively incorporate their personal interpretations, reflections, and emotional responses into their depictions of the destination.

From Content Consumption to Tangible Tourist Behavior

The influence of travel vloggers and influencers is not confined to the abstract realm of image and perception; a growing number of studies have established direct, quantifiable links to actual tourist behavior and economic outcomes. Peng (2024) provided compelling evidence of this impact, revealing that travel vloggers significantly influence provincial tourist arrivals. In a striking finding that underscores the power of this new medium, the study demonstrated that the effect of vloggers on visitor numbers was larger than that of conventional tourism drivers, such as the number of scenic areas, travel agencies, and transportation infrastructure.

This macro-level finding is corroborated by more targeted empirical research. Hussain et al. (2024) offered robust evidence by establishing a direct correlation between the consumption of tourism-related YouTube content and actual tourist arrivals. In their study of six destinations in the Arabian Gulf, they documented a powerful relationship where approximately 158 million video views corresponded with 47 million visitors, suggesting a strong aggregate-level link between online engagement and physical visitation.

Zhumadilova (2016) provided a valuable comparative perspective by examining both traditional travel television shows and contemporary video blogs in the context of Kazakhstan. This study uncovered nuanced demographic patterns that enrich our understanding of influencer impact. While male respondents expressed greater general interest in travel content, it was female respondents who were more likely to translate that viewing into action, demonstrating a higher propensity to be influenced in their actual travel decisions. This highlights the importance of moving beyond simple view counts to analyze the differential impact of content across audience segments.

Influencers and the Travel Decision-Making Journey

To understand how influencers exert their influence, scholars have applied established consumer behavior models to map their role across the entire travel decision-making process. Pop et al. (2022) made a significant contribution by applying customer journey theory. Their research demonstrated that consumer trust in SMIs has a pervasive positive effect, influencing each distinct phase of the travel journey: from the initial spark of desire and subsequent information search, through the evaluation of alternatives and the final purchase decision, to post-travel satisfaction and the sharing of experiences. Critically, they identified spillover effects, meaning that a positive interaction with influencer content at one stage can have reinforcing effects on subsequent stages.

Other studies have focused on specific segments of this journey. Guerreiro et al. (2019) found that while influencers may not sway the general social media population, their dedicated followers form a highly engaged community. These followers not only value and trust the content but are also likely to visit the sites recommended and, importantly, share their own experiences, primarily through Instagram, thus perpetuating the cycle of influence. Seçilmiş et al. (2022) employed stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory to dissect the psychological process. They found that an influencer's perceived expertise and attractiveness (the stimulus) affect a viewer's visit intention (the response) by first shaping their cognitive response and building trust (the organism). In a timely addition, they also found that fear related to COVID-19 moderated the relationship between trust and visit intention, adding a layer of real-world contextual complexity.

Psychological Mechanisms: Parasocial Bonds, Engagement, and Credibility

Delving deeper into the "organism" component of the SOR model, a rich vein of research explores the specific psychological mechanisms that make influencer content so effective. Cheng et al. (2020) suggested that travel vlogs function as a powerful form of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). They identified several key factors—source credibility, the sense of inspiration they provide, the opportunity for escapism, and the feeling of self-congruence (i.e., alignment between the viewer's self-concept and the vlogger's image)—that positively impact travel intention.

The nature of the relationship between viewer and vlogger has been a particular focus. Roy and Attri (2026) explored the concepts of parasocial bonding (the one-sided sense of intimacy a viewer feels with a media persona) and wishful identification (the desire to be like the persona). Their research revealed that these two types of relationships differentially affect the ways viewers engage with content—affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally—which in turn shapes their visit intentions and propensity to generate their own e-WOM. Silaban et al. (2022) added that the motivations driving viewers to engage with vlogs, specifically the desire for information and entertainment, are key antecedents that fuel emotional engagement and a sense of perceived presence, ultimately leading to travel intention.

Newer research has sought to conceptualize the state of engagement itself. Zhu and Cheng (2025) defined in-consumption engagement as an episodic psychological state characterized by heightened attention, emotion, and motivation. They identified three distinct types of engagement during vlog viewing: aesthetic absorption (being captivated by the visual beauty), social interaction (feeling of social connection), and spatial-temporal positioning (a vicarious sense of "being there"). Complementing this, Xu et al. (2021) used a novel data source—bullet comments on the Chinese platform Bilibili—to develop a five-category typology of video content and a six-dimensional model of audience involvement, providing an innovative, real-time window into viewer responses.

Generational, Cultural, and Contextual Dimensions

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is not uniform but is deeply mediated by generational and cultural contexts. Slusariuc (2025) concluded unequivocally that tourism vlogging is a "game changer" for Generation Z, serving as a primary vehicle for cultural connection and travel inspiration through its captivating and relatable content. This resonates with the findings of Abbasi et al. (2023), who applied Ducoffe's advertising value model to Pakistan's Generation Z. Their study confirmed that the perceived informativeness, entertainment value, and credibility of influencer content, alongside the absence of irritation, are critical determinants of its advertising value and subsequent user engagement behaviors.

Cross-cultural and comparative studies further enrich this picture. Caraka et al. (2022) examined the differential impact of mega-influencers on Generations Y and Z in Indonesia, highlighting the nuances within and between demographic cohorts in a non-Western context. Zhou et al. (2024) conducted a direct comparative analysis of travel vlogs versus official DMO promotional videos using the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) framework. Their findings suggest that vlogs are superior at capturing attention and inspiring desire, and that the perceived competitiveness of a destination affects viewers' willingness to pay. Rauf and Pasha (2024) explored a specific content niche, gastronomic vlogs, and found that food-focused content has the potential to ameliorate

entrenched perceptions of the Global North-South divide, fostering cross-cultural understanding and connection through a shared, fundamental human experience.

Methodological Advancements and the Influencer's Perspective

As the field has matured, so too have the methodological tools used to study it. Asan (2022) developed the “Travel Influencers' Impacts Scale”, a significant step towards standardized measurement. This scale identifies four distinct categories of impact: informative effects (providing knowledge), motivating effects (inspiring action), effects as a role model (shaping aspirations), and communal effects (fostering a sense of community), specifically validated in the context of bicycle tourism.

Finally, a crucial but sometimes overlooked perspective is that of the influencers themselves. Yılmaz et al. (2020) examined the lived experiences of travel influencers, revealing that the role entails significant responsibility and requires a specific set of competencies. Their findings highlight the challenges inherent in this profession, including a heavy workload, a constant need for external approval, and the pressures of continuous impression management. Crucially, from a marketing perspective, they found that successful brand collaborations are contingent upon a strong and authentic consistency between the brand's image and the carefully curated impression the influencer projects to their audience. This shows that influencer marketing, at its most effective, is a partnership built on genuine alignment rather than a simple transactional exchange.

METHODOLOGY

The primary data collection instrument for this study was a self-administered questionnaire, which was created using Google Forms to facilitate rapid online distribution. The questionnaire was disseminated via several social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat.

The questionnaire was structured into five distinct sections. The first section gathered data on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and travel behavior, including frequency of travel, means of transport, travel party composition, and typical destination. The second section inquired about the time participants spent on different social media platforms. The third section comprised eleven statements measuring participants' assessments of the qualities of the travel vloggers they followed. The fourth section included eight statements gauging the perceived importance of various vlog content attributes. The fifth and final section contained nine statements related to the impact of vloggers on the travel intentions of the survey participants. All statements were measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

In the end, 139 questionnaires were collected and analyzed using SPSS version 26. The analysis began with descriptive statistics—including frequencies, percentages, medians, and interquartile ranges (IQR)—to delineate the socio-demographic composition and travel behavior characteristics of the sample, as well as to evaluate initial responses to the perception statements.

Subsequently, inferential statistics (Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test) were employed to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between groups based on socio-demographic and travel behavior characteristics.



FINDINGS

Socio-Demographic, Travel Behavior and Social Media Behavior Characteristics

As shown in Table 1, two-thirds of our respondents were female. The majority held (or were pursuing) an undergraduate degree, reported average incomes, and came from urban areas (83%). Over 80% of the sample were students, and of these, 28% were also working concurrently. Mean age of respondents was 21.9 years (median 21 years).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Socio-demographic characteristic	Frequency	% of the total	Socio-demographic characteristic	Frequency	% of the total
<i>Sex</i> (n=139)			<i>Living environment</i> (n= 139)		
Male	44	32	Urban	115	83
Female	94	68	Rural	24	17
<i>Level of education</i> (n= 139)			<i>Occupation</i> (n= 139)		
HS or less	32	23	Unemployed	3	2
Undergraduate	91	66	I study	73	53
Graduate	16	11	I study and work at the same time	39	28
			I work	24	17
<i>Income</i> (n= 139)			<i>Age</i> (n= 139)		
Below average	22	16	Mean	21.91 yr.	
Around average	91	66	Median	21 yr.	
Above average	25	18	Std. Dev.	2.068	

An analysis of the participants' travel behavior, as detailed in Table 2, reveals distinct patterns in frequency, company, destination, and mode of transport. The majority of respondents (58.3%) reported traveling 1-2 times per year, with a further 22.3% traveling 2-4 times annually. Regarding travel companionship, over half (51.1%) prefer to travel with a friend or partner, while 31.7% favor group travel. A significant preference for international destinations was observed, with 65.5% of respondents indicating they prefer to travel abroad. Finally, in terms of transportation, air travel was the most common mode (46.4%), closely followed by car travel (40.6%).

Table 2. Travel behavior characteristics of respondents

Travel behavior	Frequency	% of the total	Travel behavior	Frequency	% of the total
<i>I typically travel ...</i> (n=139)			<i>I prefer to travel ...</i> (n=139)		
Once every few years	12	8.6	Domestically	48	34.5
1-2 times/yr.	81	58.3	Abroad	91	65.5
2-4 times/yr.	31	22.3	<i>I typically travel ...</i> (n=138)		
5+ times/yr.	15	10.8	By car	56	40.6
<i>I like to travel ...</i> (n= 139)			By plane	64	46.4
Alone	7	5	By other means of transportation	18	13
With friend/partner ^a	71	51.1			

With a group	44	31.7			
With family	17	12.2			

The majority of respondents (44.6%) reported spending less than three hours on social media, although only 3.6% of the total sample spent less than one hour. In contrast, 18% of respondents spent more than five hours on social media.

As shown in Table 3, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok (all three with median score of 5) and Facebook (median score of 4) were the most used social media platforms. In contrast, the fewest respondents had accounts on Twitter and LinkedIn, each with a median score of 1.

Table 3. Use of social media platforms by respondents

I use the following social media sites the most	(Almost) never	"Very rarely (a few times a year)	Rarely (1-3 times a year)	Often (about once a week)	Very often/ (almost) daily	Mean	Median	IQR
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)			
Facebook (N=138)	25 (18)	8 (6)	12 (7)	34 (25)	56 (40)	3.65	4.00	2
Instagram (N=138)	3 (2)	2 (1)	5 (4)	13 (9)	115 (83)	4.70	5.00	0
Twitter (N=138)	110 (79)	8 (6)	10 (7)	5 (4)	5 (4)	1.46	1.00	0
Pinterest (N=138)	50 (36)	14 (10)	24 (17)	37 (27)	13 (9)	2.63	3.00	3
Snapchat (N=139)	55 (40)	5 (4)	12 (9)	11 (8)	56 (40)	3.06	3.00	4
LinkedIn (N=138)	90 (65)	15 (11)	12 (9)	14 (10)	7 (5)	1.79	1.00	1
Youtube (N=136)	1 (1)	2 (1)	8 (6)	32 (23)	93 (67)	4.57	5.00	1
Tik-Tok (N=136)	31 (22)	2 (1)	4 (3)	16 (12)	83 (58)	3.87	5.00	2
Other (N=136)	89 (64)	5 (4)	10 (7)	11 (8)	21 (15)	2.04	1.00	2

Qualities of Travel Vloggers

Our study found that respondents primarily follow travel vloggers because they perceive them as genuine, honest, trustworthy, captivating, and inspiring. Their status as experienced travelers and experts in the field was also highly valued (median score of 4). However, as shown in Table 4, respondents were ambivalent about other qualities (median score of 3), such as the vloggers' reliability and qualifications for giving advice. They were also neutral regarding these influencers' ability to inspire confidence and courage.

Table 4. Qualities of travel vloggers as perceived by the respondents

The qualities of the travel vloggers I follow → I follow these vloggers because ...	Totally disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	I am not sure (3)	Agree (4)	Totally agree (5)	Mean	Median	IQR
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)			
... they are genuine . (N= 138)	13 (9)	4 (3)	30 (21)	48 (35)	43 (31)	3.75	4.00	2
... they are honest . (N= 139)	11 (8)	11 (8)	30 (22)	57 (41)	30 (21)	3.60	4.00	1
... they are trustworthy . (N= 137)	11 (8)	9 (7)	31 (22)	58 (42)	28 (20)	3.61	4.00	1
... I know I can rely on them. (N= 136)	12 (9)	17 (12)	52 (37)	38 (27)	17 (12)	3.23	3.00	1
... they are captivating . (N= 137)	7 (5)	1 (1)	15 (11)	60 (44)	53 (39)	4.24	4.00	1
... they are inspiring . (N= 135)	11 (8)	12 (9)	20 (15)	54 (40)	38 (28)	3.71	4.00	2
... they give me confidence in myself. (N= 136)	20 (15)	25 (18)	43 (32)	27 (19)	21 (15)	3.03	3.00	2
... they give me courage . (N= 138)	19 (14)	26 (19)	38 (28)	32 (23)	23 (16)	3.10	3.00	2
... they are experienced travelers. (N= 139)	8 (6)	6 (4)	18 (15)	56 (40)	51 (37)	3.98	4.00	1
... they are experts in the field of travel. (N= 138)	9 (6)	19 (14)	33 (24)	48 (35)	29 (21)	3.50	4.00	1
... they are qualified to give advice. (N= 137)	15 (11)	22 (16)	47 (34)	38 (28)	15 (11)	3.12	3.00	2

Females rated vloggers as more inspiring (Mean Rank=73.01 vs. 55.44, $U=2438$, $z=2.550$, $p=.011$) and courage-giving (64.78 vs. 58.91, $U=2490$, $z=2.096$, $p=.036$) than males, indicating greater perceived motivational influence (Table 5).

Table 5. Differences in the perception of travel vlogger qualities based on gender

The qualities of the travel vloggers I follow	Gender	N	Mean Ranks	Test statistic	p value
... they are inspiring	M	42	55.44	$U = 2438$ $z = 2.550$	.011
	F	92	73.01		
... they give me courage	M	44	58.91	$U = 2490$ $z = 2.096$	.036
	F	93	73.77		

Vlogger trustworthiness differed across income groups, $H(2)=6.075$, $p=.048$. Below-average income respondents gave highest ratings (Mean Rank=85.36), followed by around-average (67.29) and above-average (58.70). Post-hoc tests showed below-average income differed significantly from around-average ($p=.044$) and above-average ($p=.006$) groups (Table 6).

Table 6. Differences in the perception of travel vlogger qualities based on income



Qualities of vloggers	Mean ranks for income groups			Test statistic (DoF = 2)	P value	Pairwise comp**
	Below average	Around average	Above average			
Trustworthy	85.36	67.29	58.70	6.075	.048	Above/below (p= .016) Avg./below (p= .046)

Perceptions of vlogger qualifications differed by education level, $H(2)=7.212$, $p=.027$. Postgraduate respondents rated highest (Mean Rank=86.41), followed by college (70.58) and high school (56.88). Significant difference emerged between high school and postgraduate groups ($p=.009$) (Table 7). These findings suggest that more educated viewers perceive travel vloggers as significantly more qualified.

Table 7. Differences in the perception of travel vlogger qualities based on education

Qualities of vloggers	Mean ranks for education groups			Test statistic (DoF = 2)	P value	Pairwise comp**
	High School or Less	Some college or college degree	More than college degree (Postgrad)			
Qualified	56.88	70.58	86.41	7.212	.027	HS/Postgrad (p= .009)

Perceptions of vlogger qualities also varied by travel group. Thus, reliability was rated highest by partner/friend (74.30) and group travelers (72.59), and lowest by alone (38.64) and family travelers (48.81). Inspiration was rated higher by partner/friend (72.53) and group travelers (71.71) than by alone (42.14) or family travelers (51.59). Confidence was rated highest by group travelers (75.77), followed by partner/friend travelers (70.75), with alone (49.21) and family travelers (47.25) rating it lowest. These findings indicate that individuals who travel with partners/friends or in groups perceive vloggers more positively across multiple qualities, while those traveling alone or with family tend to rate them lower (table 8).

Table 8. Differences in the perception of travel vlogger qualities based on travel companionship

Qualities of vloggers	Mean ranks for travel companionship				Test statistic (DoF = 3)	P value	Pairwise comp**
	Alone	With partner/friend	Family	Group			
Reliable	38.64	74.30	48.81	72.59	12.072	.007	Alone/group (p= .027) Alone/part (p= .017) Fam/group (p= .018) Fam/part (p= .007)
Inspiring	42.14	72.53	51.59	71.71	8.293	.040	Alone/part

							(p= .040) Fam/part (p= .034)
Give me confidence	49.21	70.75	47.25	75.77	8.499	.037	Fam/part (p= .027) Fam/group (p= .011)

No statistically significant differences were observed based on living environment, occupation, preferred means of transportation, or time spent on social media.

Vlog Content Attributes

Respondents also agreed with all measured attributes of the content posted by travel vloggers (median score of 4). They believe the vlogs they follow are accurate, very interesting, and useful. Furthermore, they feel that this content is of high quality, contains a great deal of new information—particularly technical travel advice—and is posted frequently. Respondents also value that these vlogs offer practical solutions to problems commonly encountered by travelers (Table 9).

Table 9. Vlog content attributes as perceived by the respondents

The attributes of the content posted by travel vloggers → I follow these vloggers because ...	Totally disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	I am not sure (3)	Agree (4)	Totally agree (5)	Mean	Median	IQR
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)			
... the information they post is accurate . (N= 137)	9 (7)	6 (4)	32 (23)	62 (45)	28 (20)	3.69	4.00	1
... they post high-quality content . (N= 139)	4 (3)	5 (4)	16 (11)	63 (45)	51 (37)	4.09	4.00	1
... their posts are very interesting . (N= 139)	5 (3)	6 (4)	12 (9)	62 (45)	54 (39)	4.11	4.00	1
... their posts contain a lot of new information . (N= 138)	5 (4)	8 (6)	10 (7)	59 (43)	56 (40)	4.11	4.00	1
... their posts are useful . (N= 138)	7 (5)	5 (4)	16 (12)	60 (43)	50 (36)	4.02	4.00	1
... they post frequently about new destinations. (N= 139)	6 (4)	8 (6)	21 (15)	54 (39)	50 (36)	3.96	4.00	2
... they offer practical solutions to problems encountered by travelers. (N= 138)	5 (4)	10 (7)	20 (14)	62 (45)	41 (30)	3.90	4.00	2
... they provide a lot of technical information regarding travel. (N= 137)	5 (4)	14 (10)	19 (14)	56 (41)	43 (31)	3.86	4.00	2

Females valued technical information more than males (Mean Rank=73.55 vs. 58.97, U=2409.5, z=2.028, p=.043) (table 10).

Table 10. Differences in the perception of vlog content attributes based on gender

The attributes of the content posted	Gender	N	Mean	Test	p value
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by travel vloggers			Ranks	statistic	
... they provide a lot of technical information regarding travel	M	43	58.97	U = 2409.5	.043
	F	93	72.91	z = 2.028	

Appreciation of technical information also differed across groups based on income, $H(2) = 7.759$, $p = .021$. Above-average income rated highest (81.46), followed by around-average (68.12) and below-average (51.25). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons showed significant differences between the below-average group and both the around-average ($p = .044$) and above-average groups ($p = .006$) (table 11).

Table 11. Differences in the perception of vlog content attributes based on income

Qualities of content posted	Mean ranks for income groups			Test statistic (DoF = 2)	P value	Pairwise comp**
	Below average	Around average	Above average			
Lot of technical information	51,25	68.12	81.46	7.759	.021	Below/avg. ($p = .044$); Below/above ($p = .006$)

Our study results also revealed significant differences in perceptions of technical information provided by travel vloggers across travel frequency groups, $H(3) = 10.938$, $p = .012$. Respondents who travel more frequently assigned progressively higher mean ranks, while those traveling once every few years reported the lowest mean rank (37.54). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons showed significant differences between the least frequent travelers and all other groups (table 12).

Table 12. Differences in the perception of vlog content attributes based on travel frequency

Qualities of content posted	Mean ranks for travel freq.				Test statistic (DoF = 3)	P value	Pairwise comp**
	Once in few years	1-2 times/yr.	3-4 times/yr.	5+ times/yr.			
Lot of technical information	37.54	73.36	75.11	79.68	10.938	.012	1 few yr./2-4 ($p = .031$) 1 few yr./1-2 ($p = .002$) 1 few yr./5+ ($p = .004$)

Furthermore, our results revealed significant differences in perceptions of vlogger content qualities based on travel companionship preferences. For accuracy of information, respondents traveling with partners or friends reported the highest mean rank (74.64), while those traveling with family the lowest mean ranks (43.94). Regarding content quality, those traveling with partners or friends assigned the highest mean rank (77.67), while family travelers (50.72) and those traveling alone (50.71) rated content quality lowest. Further, respondents traveling with partners or friends reported the highest mean rank (78.18) for posting frequency, followed by groups (67.34), family (57.26), and those traveling alone (34.71). Regarding practical solutions, our study found that those traveling with

partners or friends assigned the highest mean rank (80.41), followed by groups (62.65), family (52.32), and those traveling alone (41.36). For technical information, significant differences emerged, $H(3) = 16.919$, $p = .001$. Respondents traveling with partners or friends again reported the highest mean rank (80.40), while those traveling with family the lowest (41.84). These findings consistently indicate that individuals who travel with partners or friends perceive vloggers' content most positively across all measured qualities, while those traveling with family or alone tend to rate content attributes lowest (table 13).

Table 13. Differences in the perception of vlog content attributes based on travel companionship

Qualities of content posted	Mean ranks for travel companionship				Test statistic (DoF = 3)	P value	Pairwise comp**
	Alone	With partner/friend	Family	Group			
Accurate information	73.86	74.64	43.94	68.94	9.362	.025	Fam/group ($p = .019$) Fam/part ($p = .002$)
High-quality	50.71	77.67	50.72	68.38	9.809	.020	Fam/part ($p = .006$)
Post frequently	34.71	78.18	57.26	67.34	11.438	.010	Alone/group ($p = .035$) Alone/part ($p = .004$) Fam/part ($p = .042$)
Offer practical solutions	41.36	80.41	52.32	62.65	14.866	.002	Alone/part ($p = .009$) Fam/part ($p = .006$) Group/part ($p = .015$)
Offers technical information	55.50	80.40	41.84	63.73	16.919	.001	Fam/group ($p = .042$) Fam/part ($p = .000$) Group/part ($p = .022$)

No statistically significant differences were found based on living environment, occupation, preferred means of transportation, or time spent on social media.

Impact on Travel Intentions

Regarding the impact of vloggers on travel intentions, respondents largely agreed (median score of 4) that they are inspired by and rely on vloggers' content when choosing a travel destination. They also reported depending on vloggers for practical information and technical advice on how to reach a destination, as well as for tips and ideas when deciding which tourist attractions to visit. Furthermore, respondents indicated that vloggers' content gives them the courage to consider destinations they might otherwise avoid.

However, respondents were less inclined (median score of 3) to personally visit or recommend destinations promoted by the vloggers they follow. They were also ambivalent about how they would react upon discovering that a vlogger had been paid to promote a destination, expressing uncertainty about whether they would continue to trust that vlogger (Table 14).

Table 14. Impact of vloggers on travel intentions

The Impact of Vloggers on Travel Intentions	Totally disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	I am not sure (3)	Agree (4)	Totally agree (5)	Mean	Median	IQR
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)			
I am inspired by vloggers when choosing a travel destination. (N= 136)	13 (10)	24 (18)	23 (17)	59 (43)	17 (12)	3.32	4.00	2
I rely on the content posted by vloggers to gather information related to the travel destination. (N= 137)	10 (7)	19 (14)	34 (25)	57 (42)	17 (12)	3.38	4.00	1
I rely on vloggers for practical information related to visiting the chosen destination. (N= 139)	11 (8)	19 (14)	26 (19)	61 (44)	22 (16)	3.46	4.00	1
I rely on vloggers for technical advice on how to reach the chosen destination. (N= 139)	13 (10)	18 (13)	33 (24)	50 (37)	23 (17)	3.38	4.00	1
I consult the materials posted by vloggers for tips and ideas related to tourist attractions I could visit at the chosen destination. (N= 138)	8 (6)	10 (7)	23 (17)	64 (46)	33 (24)	3.75	4.00	1
The materials posted by vloggers give me the courage to visit destinations I wouldn't have otherwise considered (visiting). (N= 137)	11 (8)	15 (11)	32 (23)	53 (39)	26 (19)	3.50	4.00	1
I usually visit destinations promoted by vloggers. (N= 138)	16 (12)	24 (17)	39 (28)	43 (31)	16 (12)	3.14	3.00	2
I recommend to others destinations promoted by vloggers. (N= 138)	18 (13)	21 (15)	34 (25)	49 (36)	16 (11)	3.17	3.00	2
If I found out that a vlogger I follow received money or other benefits to promote a specific travel destination, tourist attraction, hotel, etc., this would not change my trust in them at all. (N= 138)	22 (16)	18 (13)	40 (29)	42 (30)	16 (12)	3.09	3.00	2

As summarized in Table 15, gender significantly influenced the impact of travel vloggers on travel intentions. Female participants consistently reported higher mean ranks than males across four measures: reliance on vloggers for general destination information ($p = .013$), practical destination information ($p = .013$), tips on tourist attractions ($p = .034$), and the courage to consider new destinations ($p = .010$).

Table 15. Differences in the impact of vloggers on travel intentions based on gender

The Impact of Vloggers on Travel Intentions	Gender	N	Mean Ranks	Test statistic	p value
I rely on the content posted by vloggers to gather information related to the travel destination.	M	42	56.58	U = 2474.5 z = 2.475	.013
	F	94	73.82		
I rely on vloggers for practical information related to visiting the chosen destination.	M	44	57.77	U = 2534 z = 2.484	.013
	F	94	74.99		
I consult the materials posted by vloggers for tips and ideas related to tourist attractions I could visit at the chosen destination.	M	43	59.03	U = 2449.5 z = 2.119	.034
	F	94	73.56		
The materials posted by vloggers give me the courage to visit destinations I wouldn't have otherwise considered (visiting).	M	43	56.17	U = 2529.5 z = 2.586	.010
	F	93	74.20		

The results also revealed significant differences in the likelihood of recommending to others destinations promoted by vloggers based on travel companionship preferences, $H(3) = 10.029$, $p = .018$. Respondents who typically travel with a partner or friend reported the highest mean rank (77.95), followed by those traveling in groups (66.52), with family (51.79), and alone (45.07) (table 16).

Table 16. Differences in the impact of vloggers on travel intentions based on travel companionship

Impact	Mean ranks for travel companionship				Test statistic (DoF = 3)	P value	Pairwise comp**
	Alone	With partner/friend	Family	Group			
Recommend	45.07	77.95	51.79	66.52	10.029	.018	Alone/Part (p= .032) Fam/part (p= .012)

Furthermore, the statistical tests revealed significant differences in the impact of vloggers on travel intentions based on destination preference. Respondents who prefer foreign travel reported being significantly more inspired by vloggers when choosing a destination (Mean Rank = 73.10) compared to those who prefer domestic travel (Mean Rank = 59.80), $U = 2500.5$, $z = 1.967$, $p = .049$.

Additionally, foreign travel preference respondents indicated that disclosure of paid promotions would not change their trust in vloggers (Mean Rank = 74.33) to a significantly greater extent than domestic preference respondents (Mean Rank = 60.44), $U = 2595$, $z = 2.006$, $p = .045$ (table 17).

Table 17. Differences in the impact of vloggers on travel intentions based on type of destination

The Impact of Vloggers on Travel Intentions	Destin.	N	Mean Ranks	Test statistic	p value
I am inspired by vloggers when choosing a travel destination.	Domestic	47	59.80	U= 2500.5 Z= 1.967	.049
	Foreign	89	73.10		
If I found out that a vlogger I follow received money or other benefits to promote a specific travel destination, tourist attraction, hotel, etc., this would not change my trust in them at all.	Domestic	48	60.44	U= 2595 Z= 2.006	.045
	Foreign	90	74.33		

No statistically significant differences were found based on living environment, level of education, occupation, or income. Also, our results show no statistically significant differences based on preferred means of transportation or time spent on social media.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of travel vloggers on Generation Z's travel decisions, addressing the extent to which young people watch travel vlogs and how these videos influence their destination choices. The findings provide nuanced insights into the relationship between travel vlog consumption and tourist behavior, revealing important patterns moderated by demographic characteristics and travel preferences.

The study found that respondents follow vloggers perceived as genuine, honest, trustworthy, captivating, and inspiring (median 4), reinforcing theoretical emphasis on authenticity (Peralta, 2019; Cheng et al., 2020). Perception of vloggers as experienced travelers and experts (median 4) supports Seçilmiş et al.'s (2022) finding that perceived expertise affects visit intention through trust building.

However, ambivalence regarding vloggers' reliability and qualifications for giving advice (median 3) reveals critical distance in how Generation Z evaluates influencer authority. This partially qualifies literature emphasizing unconditional trust, suggesting the relationship between perceived expertise and influence is more complex.

Respondents strongly endorsed vlog content attributes (median 4 across all measures), valuing accuracy, interest, usefulness, quality, new information, technical advice, and practical solutions. The emphasis on technical advice suggests beyond inspiration, Generation Z seeks actionable information facilitating actual travel planning.

Respondents agreed they are inspired by and rely on vloggers when choosing destinations, depend on vloggers for practical information, and gain courage to consider avoided destinations (median 4). These findings confirm travel vloggers exert meaningful influence on Generation Z's decision-making, supporting extensive literature documenting such influence (Magno & Cassia, 2018; Peng, 2024; Hussain et al., 2024).

However, ambivalence regarding personal visitation or recommendation of promoted destinations, and regarding responses to disclosed paid promotions (median 3), reveals boundaries on this

influence. Uncertainty about continuing trust upon discovering paid promotion highlights the fragile balance between monetization and authenticity identified by Yılmaz et al. (2020).

The study also found that perceptions of travel vlogger qualities, content attributes, and impact on travel intentions vary by socio-demographic and travel behavior characteristics.

Gender: Female viewers may be more susceptible to motivational influence. Females rated vloggers as more inspiring and courage-giving than males, supporting Zhumadilova's (2016) finding that women are more likely to convert viewing into action. Females also valued technical information more and relied on vloggers for destination details, tips, and courage to consider new destinations. This may reflect lower risk tolerance, with vloggers serving as a risk-reduction tool.

Income: Below-average income respondents rated trustworthiness highest, while above-average rated it lowest—possibly due to greater access to alternative information sources. However, higher-income viewers appreciated technical information more, perhaps because they have greater capacity to act on it or engage with more destinations.

Education: Postgraduate respondents rated vloggers as more qualified than high school-educated respondents, possibly reflecting greater sophistication in evaluating expertise or appreciation for specialized travel knowledge.

Travel frequency: More frequent travelers valued technical information more, while infrequent travelers focused on inspirational content, suggesting a shift in preferences along the travel experience continuum.

Destination preference: Foreign travel-preferring respondents were more inspired by vloggers and indicated that paid promotion disclosure would not reduce their trust as much. This suggests greater vlogger credibility for international destinations due to fewer alternative information sources.

Companionship: Respondents traveling with partners/friends or in groups rated vloggers more positively across reliability, inspiration, and confidence. They were also most likely to recommend vlogger-promoted destinations, suggesting peer travelers use vlogger content for collaborative decision-making and may perpetuate the cycle of influence identified by Guerreiro et al. (2019)

Practical Implications

For tourism marketers and destination management organizations, these findings offer several strategic considerations. First, the active travel patterns of Generation Z and their demonstrated receptivity to vlogger influence confirm that investment in influencer marketing targeting this demographic is warranted. The finding that most respondents travel at least annually indicates that this segment represents an accessible and responsive audience for destination marketing efforts.

Second, the strong preference for international destinations among respondents suggests that travel vloggers may be particularly effective for promoting cross-border tourism. Their ability to reduce uncertainty about unfamiliar destinations through authentic, first-hand experiences addresses a key barrier to international travel. Marketers targeting international tourists should prioritize collaboration with vloggers who can provide the detailed, credible information that Generation Z travelers value.

Third, differences among groups based on socio-demographic characteristics and travel behavior observed throughout this study suggest that targeted approaches may enhance campaign effectiveness. However, marketers should avoid stereotyping and instead use these insights to inform nuanced content strategies.

Fourth, the ambivalence regarding paid promotions highlights the importance of transparency and authentic alignment in influencer partnerships. The finding that viewers are uncertain how they would respond to disclosed paid promotions suggests that trust is fragile and easily threatened. Marketers should prioritize partnerships where authentic alignment between influencer persona and destination brand is genuine rather than constructed, as Yılmaz et al. (2020) recommend.

Finally, the finding that more frequent and higher-income travelers particularly appreciate technical information suggests that vlogger content should balance inspirational elements with practical, actionable advice. Content that provides detailed information about transportation, accommodation, costs, and logistics may be valued alongside the visual storytelling that captures attention and inspires desire.

Limitations and future research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The sample, while capturing the core demographic of Generation Z, was predominantly composed of students and may not fully represent non-student members of this generation. The cross-sectional design captures perceptions and intentions at a single point in time, limiting the ability to trace causal relationships between influencer exposure and travel decisions. The study relied on self-reported measures, which may be subject to recall bias and social desirability effects. Additionally, the study did not directly measure exposure to specific vloggers or content, relying instead on general perceptions and reported influence.

Future research should address these limitations through longitudinal designs that track both influencer consumption and travel decisions over time, enabling stronger causal inferences. Experimental studies could systematically vary content attributes to identify which features of travel vlogs most strongly influence destination preferences and intentions. Research examining the perspective of travel vloggers themselves, as initiated by Yılmaz et al. (2020), could provide complementary insights into how content is intentionally crafted to engage and influence audiences. Cross-cultural comparative research would also be valuable, examining whether the influence patterns observed here hold across different national and cultural contexts. Finally, the role of emerging platforms and formats—such as short-form video on TikTok or immersive content using virtual reality—deserves investigation as the digital landscape continues to evolve.

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