

Role of Social Media and Behavioral Finance on Gen Z Travel Behaviour

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Abstract

Travel decisions among Gen Z are largely shaped by social media engagement, financial literacy, and economic stability, yet the extent to which these factors contribute to travel behaviour remains underexplored. While social media provides real-time travel recommendations and personalized experiences, it also promotes aspirational lifestyles that may lead to impulsive spending. This study aims to identify the key predictors of Gen Z travel behaviour by examining the role of social media use, social media influence, financial literacy, and financial security. The findings provide important insights for tourism stakeholders, policymakers, and educators in designing travel-related initiatives targeted at Gen Z.

Keywords: financial literacy, financial security, Gen Z, social media influence, travel behaviour

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1.0 Introduction

The rise of digital platforms and evolving financial priorities have significantly shaped Generation Z's travel behaviour. This generation heavily relies on social media for travel decisions, influenced by real-time exposure, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content (Damanik et al., 2023). Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube promote aspirational tourism, encouraging visually driven travel choices over financial prudence (Saini et al., 2024). Flexible financing options, such as Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL), have fueled impulsive spending, raising concerns about long-term financial stability (World Economic Forum, 2025). This study examines the role of social media, financial literacy, and security in shaping Gen Z's travel behaviours.

1.1 Research Background

The digitisation of tourism and evolving financial awareness among Generation Z have significantly shaped travel behaviours. While social media provides extensive travel recommendations, financial constraints and literacy gaps influence whether these plans materialise (Ahmad et al., 2022). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube personalize travel content, increasing exposure to high-cost destinations and encouraging discretionary travel spending (Xiao et al., 2025). Studies show that 91.6% of Gen Z travellers rely on social media for travel planning, yet financial pressures often push them toward impulsive spending to align with aspirational tourism trends (Damanik et al., 2023; Saini et al., 2024).

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Financial literacy and security are essential for sustainable travel. However, only 43% of Gen Z individuals feel confident in financial management, and 60% live paycheck to paycheck (World Economic Forum, 2025). Peer influence, risk perception, and psychological biases significantly impact financial decisions (Ahmad et al., 2022). Many young travellers prioritise immediate gratification over long-term financial planning, relying on BNPL schemes and travel credit facilities.

This study aims to examine the predictors of Gen Z travel behaviour, while specific research objectives are 1) to determine the level of social media use, social media influence, financial literacy, financial security and travel behaviour and 2) to investigate the strongest predictor that explains the variance in travel behaviour. The findings will provide insights for policymakers, financial institutions, and tourism stakeholders to promote financially responsible and sustainable travel habits.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Life Cycle Theory and Travel Behaviors

The Life Cycle Theory (LCT) by Modigliani and Brumberg (1954) explains financial decision-making across different life stages, transitioning from discretionary spending in early adulthood to financial stability and wealth preservation (Hong et al., 2020). This framework is relevant to Generation Z's (Gen Z) travel behaviors, influenced by social media exposure, financial literacy, and financial security (Suryaningsih et al., 2023). Gen Z travellers prioritize aspirational experiences over financial constraints, driven by social media engagement (Mahajan et al., 2024). However, as financial maturity increases, travel preferences shift toward budget-conscious and sustainable planning (Acharjee et al., 2023).

2.2 Social Media Influence on Travel Decisions

LCT suggests that individuals in early financial stages prioritize experiences over savings, leading to impulsive travel spending (Navrátilová et al., 2020). Social media amplifies this behavior by promoting aspirational travel content, encouraging spontaneous bookings (Saini et al., 2024). Studies show that 70% of Gen Z travelers in Indonesia book trips based on online recommendations (Bejaoui et al., 2024), while international students favor destinations endorsed by influencers (Wibisono & Lale, 2024). However, reliance on social media-driven travel often leads to financial overextension, increasing dependence on credit-based financing (Mahajan et al., 2024).

2.3 Financial Literacy and Travel Sustainability

Financial literacy enhances structured travel planning and reduces reliance on high-interest financing (Andriyani et al., 2022). Research shows that financial education mitigates impulsive travel spending (Yaar-Waisel, 2023). In Malaysia, higher financial literacy correlates with budget-conscious travel choices (Paranita & Wulandari, 2022). Digital financial literacy further improves budget management and reduces credit-financed tourism (Suryaningsih et al., 2023).

2.4 Financial Security and Travel Patterns

Financial security is a key determinant of travel sustainability (Navrátilová et al., 2020). Stable travelers engage in repeat tourism without financial strain (Barokah et al., 2023). Financially secure individuals prefer pre-planned, experience-driven travel (Paranita & Wulandari, 2022), ensuring long-term financial well-being (Fadila & Purnamawati, 2023).

2.5 Relation between research gap and research aim

Although previous studies have extensively examined the influence of social media on travel decision-making among Generation Z (e.g., Bejaoui et al., 2024; Mahajan et al., 2024), there remains a significant gap in understanding how financial literacy and financial security interact with this influence, particularly in the context of emerging economies like Malaysia. While some research has addressed financial behaviours in tourism (Andriyani et al., 2022; Paranita & Wulandari, 2022), these studies often treat social media and financial factors as separate domains. Moreover, few have integrated theoretical frameworks such as the Life Cycle Theory (LCT) to explain how financial maturity influences travel behaviours over time. This gap presents an opportunity to explore a more comprehensive model that accounts for both digital and financial influences on Gen Z's travel choices. Thus, this study is motivated by the need to bridge digital behaviour with behavioral finance to better understand the predictors of travel behaviour and inform strategies that promote sustainable and financially responsible tourism among Gen Z.

2.6 Conceptual Framework Based on Life Cycle Theory

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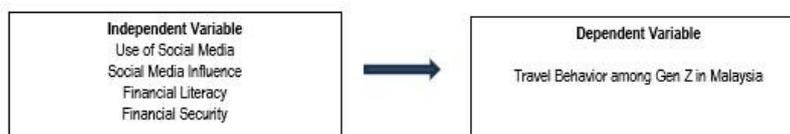


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework adapted from life cycle hypothesis (Siti Yulianti et al, 2025:)

Drawing on empirical findings, the following framework examines the interplay between use of social media, social media influence, financial literacy, and financial security in shaping Gen Z's travel behaviours.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to assess the impact of social media use, social media influence, financial literacy, and financial security on travel behaviours among Generation Z (Gen Z) travelers. A structured survey approach was employed, utilizing cluster sampling to ensure a representative distribution of respondents. The research methodology encompasses instrument validation, pilot testing, reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha, and multiple linear regression for inferential statistical analysis.

3.2 Sampling Technique

A cluster sampling method was adopted, wherein respondents were selected from 266 Gen Z populations and young professionals across different geographic regions. Cluster sampling enables the researcher to select intact groups such as students from specific universities or programs, which naturally represent the broader Gen Z demographic. This approach not only enhances data collection efficiency but also allows for a more diverse yet manageable sample. Additionally, cluster sampling has been widely adopted in similar behavioural and tourism studies involving young populations (e.g., Pham et al., 2022; Yusof et al., 2021), further supporting its appropriateness for examining travel behaviour and financial awareness across distinct social and educational settings. This approach ensures diverse representation across socio-economic backgrounds, providing a balanced perspective on financial literacy and travel behaviours.

3.3 Survey Instrument

The questionnaire consists of six parts: part A, B, C, D and E. The first part, part A, was based on sociodemographics such as age, gender, social media platform frequently used, average spending on social media, and others. Next, part B focuses on the independent variable, which is the social media use. Part C is social media influences, while part D is financial literacy, Part E is financial security. Meanwhile, part F focuses on the dependent variable, travel behaviour. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the use of social media, social media influences, financial literacy, financial security, and travel behaviour among youths in Malaysia. The scale was from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 indicating 'Strong Agree'.

Table 1. Instrument

Variables	Items	Adapted/Adopted
Use of Social Media	10	Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008).
Social Media Influence	5	Choi, Y., & Choi, Y. (2019).
Financial Literacy	10	Siti Yuliandi, 2019
Financial Security	15	Gartner, W. C., & Shen, J. (2018).
Travel Behaviours	10	

(Siti Yuliandi et, al, 2025:)

3.4. Pilot Test and Reliability Analysis

A pilot test was conducted to assess internal consistency and reliability. The instrument was administered to 30 respondents, and feedback was used to refine ambiguous statements. Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of questionnaire items, yielding the following reliability scores.

Table 2. Cronbach Alpha

Variables	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Use of Social Media	10	0.842
Social Media Influence	5	0.874
Financial Literacy	10	0.801
Financial Security	15	0.832
Travel Behaviourss	10	0.869

(Siti Yuliandi et, al, 2025:)

All constructs demonstrated acceptable reliability scores ($\alpha > 0.80$), indicating strong internal consistency.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Version 29 to determine the mean scores and standard deviations of social media use, social media influence, financial literacy, financial security, and travel behaviours. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to identify the strongest predictor of travel behaviours variance. The regression model examined the influence the use of social media, social media influence, financial literacy, and financial security on Gen Z travel behaviours.

4.0 Results

The demographic profile and social media usage patterns of the respondents provide key insights into the travel behaviours of Generation Z. The sample consists predominantly of female respondents (70.7%), while male respondents account for 29.3%. In terms of age distribution, the largest proportion falls within the 21–22 age group (42.1%), followed by those aged 20 and below (35.3%), and a smaller percentage aged 23 and above (22.6%). These findings suggest that the majority of respondents are young adults, reflecting the digital-native characteristics of Gen Z.

4.1 Profile of Respondents

Table 3. Profile of respondents and social media use

Variables	Item	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Male	78	29.3
	Female	188	70.7
Gender	<=20	94	35.3
	21-22	112	42.1
	23+	60	22.6
Social Media Platforms Frequently Used	Facebook	7	2.6
	Instagram	76	28.6
	Twitter	29	10.9
	LinkedIn	1	0.4
	TikTok	140	52.6
	Other (Pinterest)	13	4.9
Hours spent per day on social media	Less than 1 hour	6	2.3
	1 to 2 hours	30	11.3
	2 to 3 hours	63	23.7
	3 to 4 hours	67	25.2
	More than 4 hours	100	37.6
What do you use social media most often for	Staying in touch	43	16.2
	Travel destinations	3	1.1
	Entertainment	177	66.5
	News and current event	34	12.8
	Professional Networking	1	0.4
	Others (live games)	8	3.0

(Siti Yuliandi et al, 2025:)

The social media platform preferences, TikTok emerges as the most frequently used platform (52.6%), followed by Instagram (28.6%) and Twitter (10.9%). Other platforms such as Facebook (2.6%), Pinterest (4.9%), and LinkedIn (0.4%) have relatively lower usage. This indicates that visual and video-based content platforms dominate Gen Z’s online engagement, highlighting the role of short-form content in shaping travel-related decisions. In terms of daily social media consumption, 37.6% of respondents spend more than four hours per day on social media, while 25.2% spend between three to four hours. A significant proportion (23.7%) uses social media for two to three hours daily, whereas only 2.3% spend less than an hour. This high level of engagement underscores the deep integration of social media in Gen Z’s daily lives, which directly influences their exposure to travel-related content. When asked about their primary purpose for using social media, the majority of respondents (66.5%) cited entertainment, reflecting the dominance of recreational content consumption. Staying in touch with others (16.2%) and news and current events (12.8%) were also notable uses. However, only 1.1% use social media specifically for finding travel destinations, indicating that while social media influences travel behaviours, it is not always the primary driver for travel-related searches. Interestingly, live gaming and professional networking had minimal engagement (3.0% and 0.4%, respectively), further supporting the entertainment-centric nature of Gen Z’s social media habits.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

Table 4. Mean’s level of all variables.

Variables	Means	Variance
Use of Social Media	3.991	1.267
Social Media Influence	4.199	0.706
Financial Literacy	3.640	1.144
Financial Security	3.930	0.943
Travel Behaviours	4.191	0.905

(Siti Yuliandi et al, 2025)

Table 4 summarises the mean level of all variables. Social media use had a mean score of (M = 3.991, variance = 1.267), indicating that respondents actively engage with digital platforms, though usage levels vary. This aligns with findings by Bejaoui et al. (2024), who noted that social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram, dominate Gen Z’s travel planning. Similarly, Wibisono and Lale (2024) found that international students rely on influencer-driven recommendations for travel decisions. Social media influence was even

higher (M = 4.199, variance = 0.706), reinforcing its role in shaping travel preferences, as highlighted by Huang et al. (2024), who reported that digital platforms significantly affect trip planning and destination selection.

Financial literacy scored (M = 3.640, variance = 1.144), reflecting moderate financial knowledge but with notable variations. This supports the findings by Andriyani et al. (2022), who emphasized that financial literacy plays a crucial role in structured budgeting for travel. However, Mahajan et al. (2024) highlighted that many young travellers overestimate their financial capability, leading to impulsive spending. Financial security was (M = 3.930, variance = 0.943), indicating that while most respondents feel financially stable, some experience economic uncertainty, affecting their ability to sustain travel. This is consistent with Barokah et al. (2023), who found that financial security is a key factor in repeat travel and sustainable tourism engagement.

Travel behaviours had a mean score of (M = 4.191, variance = 0.905), demonstrating a strong interest in travel, though spending habits varied. This aligns with Acharjee et al. (2023), who noted that Gen Z travellers frequently prioritize aspirational tourism fueled by social media. However, Paranita and Wulandari (2022) emphasized that financially literate travellers tend to make more cost-conscious travel choices. The findings suggest that while social media drives travel aspirations, financial literacy and stability determine whether individuals can sustain travel habits. Strengthening financial education may help Gen Z balance social media-driven travel desires with responsible financial planning (Suryaningsih et al., 2023).

4.4 Inferential Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is used to explain variance in a dependent variable. It is to examine a single or more than one independent variable. The table shows the model summary which indicates R.

Table 5 Multiple Regression Analysis on Variables Study

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of Estimate
1	.681^a	.464	.456	3.98

a) Predictors (Constant): use of social media, social media influence, financial literacy, financial security

b) Dependent Variable: Travel Behaviour

Multiple regression analysis is used to explain variance in a dependent variable. It is to examine a single or more than one independent variable. Table 14 shows the results of the value of R is 0.681, meaning 68% of the relationship exists between independent variables (use of social media, social media influence, financial literacy, financial security) and dependent variables (travel behaviour). In addition, it measures a proportion of the variation in the dependent variable (travel behaviour) explained by the variations in the independent variables (use of social media, social media influence, financial literacy, financial security). The table shows the model summary indicating R where the correlation between independent and dependent variables is 0.6881.

Table 6 Coefficient

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardised B	Coefficients St. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	8.781	1.996		4.398	<.001
Social media use	.110	.048	.125	2.306	.022
Social media influence	.549	.097	.328	5.637	<.001
Financial literacy	-.082	.050	-.107	-.1642	.102
Financial security	.266	.042	.444	6.382	<.001

a) Dependent variable: Travel Behaviour

(Source: Siti Yuliandi et al, 2025)

The regression analysis examined the relationship between use of social media, social media influence, financial literacy, and financial security in predicting travel behaviours among Generation Z. The coefficient analysis provides insights into the contribution of each predictor variable. Financial security emerged as the strongest predictor of travel behaviours ($\beta = .444, p < 0.001$), indicating that individuals with greater financial stability are more likely to engage in travel. This finding aligns with research by Barokah et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of financial security in sustaining travel habits. Similarly, Awwaliyah et al. (2023) found that digital financial literacy enhances responsible travel budgeting.

Social media influence was also a strong predictor ($\beta = .328, p < 0.001$), reinforcing the role of digital platforms in shaping Gen Z's travel decisions. This is consistent with findings by Bejaoui et al. (2024) and Mahajan et al. (2024), who highlighted the dominance of influencer-driven content in travel planning. Social media use had a smaller but significant impact ($\beta = .125, p = 0.022$), suggesting that

while frequent engagement with social media plays a role in shaping travel behaviours, the extent of its influence depends on the type of content consumed.

An unexpected outcome in this study is the non-significant relationship between financial literacy and travel behaviour among Generation Z respondents. Financial literacy, however, did not have a significant effect on travel behaviours ($\beta = -0.107$, $p = 0.102$), indicating that while financial knowledge is important, it does not directly predict travel engagement. This finding contrasts with Paranita and Wulandari (2022), who reported that financially literate travellers tend to make cost-conscious travel decisions. The non-significant result may suggest that despite having financial knowledge, Gen Z travellers prioritise aspirational travel over financial prudence, as noted by Mahajan et al. (2024). While prior research has consistently shown that higher financial literacy leads to more responsible spending and budget-conscious travel decisions (Paranita & Wulandari, 2022; Andriyani et al., 2022), the present findings reveal a contrasting pattern. Despite moderate levels of financial knowledge, many Gen Z individuals appear to prioritize aspirational experiences driven by social media over financial prudence. This suggests a disconnect between what they know and how they behave, pointing to the possibility that emotional and social influences may override rational financial decision-making. This contrast underscores the need to explore the psychological and behavioural dimensions of financial literacy, beyond theoretical understanding, to better equip young travellers in making financially sustainable decisions.

Overall, the results indicate that financial security and social media influence are the primary drivers of travel behaviours among Gen Z. These findings suggest that tourism stakeholders should focus on social media engagement strategies while promoting financial security measures to encourage sustainable travel behaviours (Suryaningsih et al., 2023).

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Social Media Use and Travel Behaviors in the Context of Life Cycle Theory

The dominance of TikTok (52.6%) and Instagram (28.6%) among Gen Z travelers highlights the role of visual and short-form content in shaping travel preferences. This aligns with Life Cycle Theory (LCT), which suggests that individuals in early financial stages are more susceptible to external stimuli, particularly aspirational content, rather than rational planning (Bejaoui et al., 2024; Mahajan et al., 2024). Despite high daily engagement (37.6% spend over four hours), only 1.1% actively use social media for travel research, reinforcing the notion that exposure-driven decision-making, rather than planned consumption, influences travel behaviors (Saini et al., 2024). This highlights a behavioral-expectation gap, where Gen Z's reliance on social validation outweighs conscious financial considerations.

5.2 Financial Literacy, Financial Security, and Travel Decision-Making

Moderate financial literacy levels ($M = 3.640$, variance = 1.144) indicate varying degrees of financial awareness. While financial literacy is traditionally linked to better budgeting and reduced impulsive spending (Andriyani et al., 2022), the findings suggest that Gen Z travellers overestimate their financial capacity, leading to reliance on alternative financing options such as Buy Now, Pay Later (Mahajan et al., 2024). Financial security ($M = 3.930$, variance = 0.943) emerged as a stronger factor, reinforcing that stable economic conditions support sustained travel participation (Barokah et al., 2023). However, financial stability is not evenly distributed, as some respondents face economic constraints that limit travel sustainability. These findings highlight the importance of financial education that goes beyond theoretical knowledge, focusing on applied financial management strategies to bridge the gap between financial awareness and responsible financial actions (Suryaningsih et al., 2023).

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into fostering long-term behavioral changes in both financial management and travel decision-making among Generation Z. By identifying financial security and social media influence as the strongest predictors of travel behaviour, the research underscores the importance of building financial stability early in life to support sustainable lifestyle choices. These insights contribute to the development of targeted interventions that combine financial education with digital literacy, encouraging Gen Z to critically assess social media content and align travel aspirations with their financial capacity. Over time, integrating financial planning tools within social media platforms or educational curriculums can help normalize responsible spending habits and reduce dependence on impulsive, image-driven consumption. This approach has the potential to reshape financial behaviours and travel patterns, promoting a more balanced and mindful approach to both financial wellbeing and experiential pursuits in the long run.

5.3 Regression Analysis and Implications Beyond the Study

The multiple regression model ($R = .681$, $R^2 = .464$) confirms that use of social media, social media influence, financial literacy, and financial security collectively explain 68% of the variance in Gen Z's travel behaviours. Financial security ($\beta = .444$, $p < 0.001$) is the strongest predictor, supporting LCT's premise that consumption sustainability is contingent upon economic stability (Awwaliyah et al., 2023). Social media influence ($\beta = .328$, $p < 0.001$) significantly shapes travel decisions, highlighting the power of influencer-driven tourism (Bejaoui et al., 2024; Mahajan et al., 2024). While social media use ($\beta = .125$, $p = 0.022$) has a weaker effect, content engagement remains a key driver of travel choices. Financial literacy ($\beta = -0.107$, $p = 0.102$) does not significantly predict travel behaviours, contrasting with research linking financial knowledge to cost-conscious decision-making (Paranita & Wulandari, 2022). This suggests that Gen Z prioritizes aspirational experiences over financial prudence, further emphasizing LCT's notion that early financial life cycle stages are marked by impulsive consumption and social influence (Mahajan et al., 2024).

The findings of this study are grounded in the Life Cycle Theory (LCT), which suggests that individuals in early stages of financial maturity tend to prioritize immediate consumption over long-term planning. This theory provides a meaningful lens to interpret the strong influence of social media and the relatively weak role of financial literacy in shaping Gen Z's travel behaviour. The results reveal that

while financial knowledge exists at a moderate level among respondents, it does not significantly guide travel decisions, which are instead driven by social media influence and perceived financial security. This underscores a behavioural-expectation gap where aspirations shaped by influencer culture and digital content override rational financial judgment. The research was conceived in response to increasing concerns about Gen Z's rising debt, impulsive travel choices, and reliance on credit-based financing like Buy Now, Pay Later schemes. In Malaysia's context, where social media penetration is high and youth financial literacy remains inconsistent, these findings signal an urgent need to align digital tourism marketing, financial education, and youth empowerment policies. Thus, the study not only extends the application of LCT to modern digital consumption but also contributes to addressing socio-economic challenges tied to youth financial behaviours and sustainable tourism development.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

This study examines the impact of financial security and social media on Generation Z's travel behavior. Financial stability emerged as the strongest predictor, while social media significantly influenced travel decisions through curated content rather than usage frequency. Financial literacy had minimal impact, indicating that Gen Z prioritizes aspirational experiences shaped by social validation over financial planning.

6.1 Limitations and Recommendations

While this study provides important insights into the travel behaviour of Generation Z in relation to social media use and behavioural finance, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality between variables. The relationships observed in this study reflect associations at a single point in time and may not capture behavioural shifts or evolving financial habits over time. Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias, where participants may underreport or overstate their financial behaviour and social media influence due to social desirability or recall bias. Thirdly, the use of cluster sampling, while efficient, may not entirely eliminate sampling bias if the selected clusters are not entirely representative of the broader Gen Z population in Malaysia. Furthermore, cultural and regional differences within the sample may influence travel preferences and financial decisions, which could limit the generalizability of the findings beyond the Malaysian context. These limitations suggest the need for longitudinal and mixed-method approaches in future research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how financial awareness and digital engagement shape long-term travel behaviour. The study's cross-sectional design limits insights into behavioral changes over time. Future research should adopt longitudinal methods and integrate real-time spending data to improve accuracy. To enhance financial responsibility, digital financial literacy tools should be embedded in social media and fintech platforms. Financial institutions should educate users on the risks of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) schemes while promoting sustainable financing. Travel marketers should highlight budget-conscious travel strategies to align aspirations with financial stability.

6.1.1 Recommendations

To promote long-term behavioural change in financial and travel decisions among Generation Z, policymakers and educators should implement targeted interventions that combine financial education with digital engagement. Financial literacy should be integrated into school and university curricula with a focus on real-life applications, such as budgeting for travel, evaluating credit options, and understanding the risks of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) schemes. Policymakers are encouraged to collaborate with influencers to disseminate financial awareness campaigns on popular platforms like TikTok and Instagram, using relatable content to shift attitudes toward responsible spending. Additionally, the development of mobile apps and fintech tools tailored to young people can support financial planning and travel goal-setting. Peer-led mentorship programs within educational institutions can foster practical financial guidance, while tourism boards and government agencies should introduce incentive schemes—such as travel discounts or grants—to encourage cost-conscious and sustainable travel. These steps can help bridge the gap between financial knowledge and behavioural action, supporting Gen Z in making informed and balanced life choices.

6.2 Future Research Directions

Further studies should investigate platform-specific influences on financial decision-making and the relative importance of peer validation versus expert financial guidance. Addressing these gaps will advance the understanding of financially sustainable travel habits and effective digital engagement strategies.

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This study examines how social media engagement, financial security, and financial literacy influence Generation Z's travel behaviour using Life Cycle Theory (LCT). Findings show that Gen Z travellers prioritise short-term gratification over financial security, heavily influenced by social media. Financial security, rather than financial literacy, is the strongest predictor of sustained travel behaviour. Despite moderate financial knowledge, travel decisions are driven by social validation and algorithm-based content. TikTok and

Instagram shape consumption habits, emphasizing the need for digital financial literacy programs. This study informs policies, tourism marketing, and financial education to promote responsible spending and sustainable travel behaviour.

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