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TIKTOK AS A SEARCH ENGINE

A Study on How Gen Z Uses TikTok as a Search Engine to Help Them
Decide on Their Travel Destination Choice

Joanne Louise de la Cruz Senia

Master Thesis

presented as partial requirement for obtaining a Master's Degree in Data-Driven Marketing

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Driven Marketing, with a specialization in Digital Marketing and Analytics

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STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism, any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Rules of Conduct and Code of Honor from the NOVA Information Management School.

Lisbon, Portugal, 07 July 2025

Joanne Louise de la Cruz Senia

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ABSTRACT

The process of travel decision-making has evolved over time due to the emergence of digital technology such as social media. Therefore, this study aims to enhance the understanding of how TikTok is being used by Generation Z or Gen Z in the Awareness and Consideration phases to decide on their travel destination choice. To examine how TikTok is utilized as a search engine, the study adapts the concepts of Performance Expectancy, Perceived Trust, and Social Influence from the UTAUT and the expanded UTAUT2 models. A quantitative research was also implemented and data analysis was performed using PLS-SEM. The results indicate that Gen Z view TikTok as a capable search engine because of how it provides user-experience driven and visual information. They are also likely to anticipate the platform to assist them in choosing their preferred travel destinations. Its findings highlight how short-form video platforms can act as trusted search engines and provide businesses with more knowledge of how Gen Z uses and navigates social media in making a travel destination choice.

KEYWORDS

Generation Z; Gen Z; TikTok; Travel Destination Choice; Performance Expectancy; Perceived Trust; Social Influence; Social Media; Search Engine

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

FYP	For You Page
UGC	User Generated Content
UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

1. INTRODUCTION

Through the years, travel decision-making has undergone changes especially with the evolution of digital platforms, digitalization of processes, and smart devices (Pencarelli, 2020). Potential tourists now have the advantage of connecting with destinations, engaging with content, and sharing experiences in real time through the emergence of this digital landscape. Aside from this, they can now count on the experiences and feedback of other tourists which shows that they value authentic testimonials more than traditional marketing messages. Case in point, this can be observed in the visual appeal of social media where eye-catching photography and videos give destinations the opportunity to promote their cultures, attractions, and activities that potential visitors can resonate with (Agarwal, 2024).

At present, it is very common to see that social media platforms such as TikTok have become prominent tools for disseminating and acquiring tourism-related information, especially for Generation Z (Gen Z), who grew up in the digital age. Existing literature demonstrates that this generation uses TikTok as a source of information, effectively positioning it as a functional search engine (Genoveva, 2022; Rahim, 2023; Setiawati & Krisnawati, 2023). Rahim (2023) further emphasizes that Gen Z makes the most out of the platform to provide and seek insights, highlighting TikTok's influence in their consumer behavior and purchase decisions, including travel destination choice. This aligns with conclusions on how TikTok organically promotes destinations through user-generated content (UGC) without intentional marketing, thereby shaping travel preferences (Dramićanin et al., 2023). With these in mind, it can be assumed that TikTok as a search engine can influence the awareness and consideration stages in the consumer journey, where information search, gathering, and evaluation occur.

TikTok's effectiveness as a discovery and decision-making tool can be attributed to its algorithm. What makes this especially powerful is how the platform curates content on user's feeds to tailor it to their interests, as seen in their For You Page (FYP). Content on TikTok includes paid or sponsored content which is usually produced by influencers and businesses, and organic content that is not created professionally (Naab & Sehl, 2017).

Building on this, the way TikTok delivers tailored content through algorithmic design aligns with theoretical models that provide an understanding of how users adopt and interact with digital technologies. To further explore Gen Z's behavior in using TikTok as a search engine, this study employs the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology or also commonly known as UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003) and the extended UTAUT2 (Zhou et al., 2023) models as theoretical bases for the theoretical framework. Constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value, habit, and perceived trust (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Zhou et al., 2023) are included in the theories to assess users' acceptance and behavior when it comes to the adoption of technological systems and platforms, which aligns with TikTok being a digital platform.

From UTAUT, the concepts of performance expectancy and social influence will be used. Meanwhile from the extended UTAUT2, the concept of perceived trust will be applied. Performance expectancy shows how consumers expect the platform to help them achieve their goals. Social influence investigates how people encountered by consumers offline and online affect them when using TikTok (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Perceived trust pertains to how a consumer feels safe and secure in using the information found on social media. (Zhou et al., 2023)

Nevertheless, existing scholarly research conducted on Gen Z remain limited, while studies on Millennials' consumption are more available (Torrejón-Ramos et al., 2023). There are also not a lot of research that discuss users' behavior on TikTok when it comes to deciding on a travel destination choice as majority of them delve into the effects of UGC on the platform. It is likewise evident that most of the studies on TikTok only explore the influence of short-form video content on destinations and tourists (Wang et al., 2022). Therefore it is a significant contribution to study how Gen Z tourists use TikTok when it comes to their destination selection and the other aspects that influence it (Zhou et al., 2023).

To provide structure for this study, the Consumer Journey serves as a valuable tool for understanding how consumers move through stages of discovering, evaluating, and ultimately deciding on a product or service. Since this research focuses on travel destination choice, only the pre-purchase phases of Awareness and Consideration are examined. During these phases, consumers are usually researching, and gathering as much information and non-commercial biased opinions about a product or service before finally deciding on their choice (Ng & Hill, 2009; Gupta & Harris, 2010). Similarly, it is necessary to understand which phase of the consumer journey the consumer is at, in order to create specific campaigns, engage with them at the appropriate touch points, and enhance customer relationship management systems (Edelman, 2010). Besides this, the study will briefly investigate the general usage and preference of using TikTok over traditional search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo) to support the research.

To fill the research gap, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: What is the relationship between Gen Z's usage of TikTok as a search engine, performance expectancy in travel decision making, perceived trust, and social influence?

RQ2: What is the impact of using TikTok as a search engine on Gen Z's travel destination choice during the Awareness and Consideration phases?

The findings from this paper would be helpful to Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in maximizing the use of social media platforms to promote a product, service, or destination, as it has been discovered that DMOs view social media platforms to be similar. This leads them

to have a one-size-fits-all strategy (Sotiriadis, 2017; Sotiriadis & van Zyl, 2013). Moreover, it will aid marketers to understand Gen Z's travel decision making process on social media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 TIKTOK AS A SEARCH ENGINE VS TRADITIONAL SEARCH ENGINES

TikTok is a popular platform for short-form videos founded by Chinese company ByteDance in 2018 (Schneider, 2015). TikTok is relatively younger than other famous social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat. Worldwide, Gen Z, make up most of the users with an estimated 40% (Hughes, 2024).

Aside from being a video creation and sharing application, it also functions as an image and video search engine, allowing tourists to form a travel plan, choose a destination, and see cities or places in more detail as if they were already there (Dramićanin et al., 2023). Likewise, TikTok's impressive algorithm is helpful as users' feeds are customized to their interests. Its reliability and content quality (Almoqbl et al., 2024) allows Gen Z to use TikTok to gather information by appreciating its fast interactions and various content sources (Fitria et al., 2024). Furthermore, TikTok has had great influence in shaping travel through viral trends (e.g. "TikTok made me go here"), safety tips, and travel hacks.

Certain studies have compared and explained the differences between traditional search engines (e.g. Google and Yahoo) and social media as information search tools. These studies observe how online social platforms are used to retrieve information (Amendola et al., 2023; Mislove et al., 2006), compare search engines and social networks (Morris et al., 2010), and explore the distinctions between search and discovery systems (Thakkar, 2024).

Traditional search engines are primarily intent-driven, relying on algorithms, indexed web content, and keyword ranking for information retrieval. They also appear to have more structured and controlled results. In contrast, social media functions more as a discovery system, encouraging exploration through chance encounters with content and accommodating diverse, evolving information needs. Their personalized search experience can be attributed to user interactions, social connections, and engagement data, providing insights that feel more relatable and timely compared to the static results that are typical of traditional search engines (Amendola et al., 2023; Mislove et al., 2006; Morris et al., 2010, Thakkar, 2024).

2.1.1 UNIFIED THEORY OF ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY (UTAUT)

To further understand the use of TikTok, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model by Venkatesh et al. (2003), and the extended UTAUT2 model by Zhou et al. (2023), would be used as theoretical bases. These models have been used in studies pertaining to technology adoption, including social media. In the context of tourism, the UTAUT and the extended UTAUT2 models have been applied in studies about mobile tourism applications (Buditama & Rahyuda, 2019; Palos-Sanchez et al., 2021), UGC in the form of

online travel reviews (Assaker et al., 2020), mobile payment systems in the travel sector (Hameed et al., 2024), and social media marketing in Ethiopian tourism and hospitality organizations (Berhanu & Raj, 2024). These studies have common insights where it reveals that usefulness, trust, application quality, and user experience are key factors that affect tourists' intentions and behaviors in technology acceptance and use. Meanwhile, the study of Buditama & Rahyuda, 2019 uncovered that social influence indeed has a positive impact on behavioral intention to use travel applications.

Four key constructs are defined in the UTAUT model that influence behavioral intention to use a technology. These are performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The UTAUT model was then revised as the UTAUT2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012) model with three additional constructs, precisely called hedonic motivation, price value, and habit. Later on, Zhou et al. (2023) expanded the UTAUT2 model by adding one new construct called perceived trust. The mentioned constructs of performance expectancy, social influence, and perceived trust will be thoroughly discussed in the next sections of the methodology as they will serve as analytical lenses throughout the study. Performance expectancy will explore perceived usefulness; perceived trust will unpack how credibility perceptions affect platform adoption; and social influence will assess peer and creator impact (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Zhou et al., 2023). This multifaceted method makes it possible to fully comprehend how TikTok influences Gen Z's travel habits.

2.2 PERFORMANCE EXPECTANCY

Performance expectancy indicates consumers' views of the benefits of maximizing the use of the platform for a particular activity. In this case, it is the degree to which Gen Z tourists view TikTok as a helpful tool in finding useful information in making optimal destination choices (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Their digital native behavior, preference for personalization (Schneider, 2015), and inclination towards visual communication such as photos and videos (Peredy et al., 2024), reinforce TikTok's perceived usefulness in travel decision-making. Tourists who deem social media to provide beneficial information are more likely to make the most out of it, allowing them to increase their engagement with possible travel options (Sharma et al., 2023). The informativeness of digital content positively influences performance expectancy when social media posts or advertisements are viewed as educational, making users more likely to anticipate enhanced outcomes from the recommended products or destinations (Zubair et al., 2024). This is connected to the findings that tourists' behavioral intentions are influenced by the utility they perceive in digital information sources (García-Milon et al., 2021), particularly during the awareness and consideration phases of travel planning.

Moreover, in the pre-purchase stage, tourists actively seek information that can guide their decisions. During this stage, tourists prefer to use generic and mainstream social media platforms rather than traditional travel focused sites (Mariani et al., 2019). This reflects the increasing reliability in social content as a source of inspiration and practical insight. It is also important to remember that because of digital technology, tourists now have the agency to

access a wealth of information at their fingertips, allowing them to be more informed and empowered (Vila et al., 2024).

Grounded in these observations on the perceived efficacy of digital platforms for travel planning, the aspect of performance would focus on TikTok's ability to find useful information when it comes to deciding on a destination choice. From these insights, the first hypothesis is generated:

H1: The adoption of TikTok for travel destination choice is higher when Gen Z tourists perceive TikTok as useful in selecting travel destinations.

2.3 PERCEIVED TRUST

Trust is the belief that a person is prepared to take chances and is willing to believe the corresponding qualities of other people or objects (Mayer et al., 1995). Seeing it from an online perspective, perceived trust fosters a sense of support online by aligning search results with users' specific needs, wants, and tasks through personalized information retrieval (Johnson, 2019). Trust is also the degree to which one feels safe and secure using the information found on social media (Chauhan & Hughes, 2020), and is usually measured as the degree of confidence a user has in a platform's dependability, honesty, and proficiency (Gefen et al., 2003). Nonetheless, willingness is frequently viewed as an outcome or behavioral intention that is impacted by perceived trust, and not a direct measure of trust itself, as seen in studies on application use (Ødeskaug et al., 2023, Suryawan & Santikasari, 2024, Tang et al., 2019). Based on these, the concepts of trust in this study will revolve around confidence in perceived usefulness and willingness as an outcome.

Correspondingly, with trust comes credibility in the sense that it is the measure to which customers believe an online information source to be objective, reliable and fact based (Koo, 2016). If consumers perceive that the information is not credible, they will be hesitant to accept it and trust it, despite being encouraged to do so (Lee & Koo, 2012). This does not only affect perceived trust but also their performance expectancy on the platform to help them.

As TikTok provides travel information in a virtual environment, there is a higher degree of uncertainty and security risk present compared to traditional environments where the environment is more controlled and the source is easier to determine. This goes to show that the higher the trust of users on a specific platform, the higher their willingness is to accept the travel information provided by it (Chen et al., 2020), leading to a more favorable social media performance perception (Gerlich, 2024; Hendrajaya et al., 2024). Given these findings on the presence of perceived trust when it comes to using TikTok to gather travel information, the second hypothesis is derived:

H2: Perceived Trust mediates the relationship between using TikTok as a search engine and Gen Z's performance expectancy of the platform when making a travel destination choice.

2.4 SOCIAL INFLUENCE

In a non-online setting, social influence occurs when people that consumers look up to (e.g. celebrities, famous personalities) and personally know have a strong influence on their decision to purchase a product or avail a service. Examples of social influence in a non-online setting include billboards, print advertisements, and word of mouth from peers. In an online setting, digital communities and platforms give users the agency to convey their personal preferences and to share their feedback through rating of others' reviews and knowing who to trust (Kim & Srivastava, 2007).

Social media platforms like TikTok offer various kinds of content such as text, images, videos, and other forms of media (Wang, 2024). These content share information on products, brands, personalities, and experiences (Kumar, 2024) that is useful for Gen Z tourists in making informed decisions and discovering new opportunities .

On TikTok, content is produced by celebrities, social media influencers, businesses, and everyday users such as family, friends, and colleagues encountered in daily life. This diverse range of creators bring out the role of social influence in forming the platform's content (Zhou et al., 2023). In addition to this, sharing of experiences can create an electronic word-of-mouth effect that can influence traveler's decisions since their travel preferences are influenced a lot by the content they consume online (Barbu et al., 2024).

Social influence can also affect the performance expectancy on a mobile application. In a study that investigates how social influence is a main determinant of performance expectancy when using electronic banking (Gavurová et al., 2021), the results showed that social influence had a positive and significant impact on the use of the application, as the opinions of people close to the application user has a great effect on how users expect the application to perform.

Moreover, social influence can be especially helpful when a consumer is experiencing time constraints, has limited information about a product or service, believes the action carries a great risk, or is not interested in making the choice on their own (Lee et al., 2011). This is applicable to the travel industry in the sense that fully experiencing a destination and opinions are only processed once the visit or travel is over.

Taking these findings on social influence's impact on Gen Z's perceived usefulness of TikTok, the third hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Social influence acts as a mediator in linking Gen Z's use of TikTok as a search engine to their expectations of the platform's effectiveness in selecting a travel destination.

2.5 AWARENESS AND CONSIDERATION IN THE CONSUMER JOURNEY

The Consumer Journey consists of five phases namely – Awareness, Consideration, Purchase, Retention, and Advocacy. Awareness and Consideration belong to the pre-purchase phase, Purchase belongs to the purchase phase, while Retention and Advocacy belong to the post-purchase phase (Vázquez et al., 2014).

The awareness phase occurs during the very first contact of the customer with the product or service and does not necessarily need to have the desire to purchase it. At this stage, consumers become familiar with the offering and may begin forming impressions based on advertising cues, such as references, claims, or messaging. On the other hand, the consideration phase is when the consumer is already familiar with the product or service and compares or examines it alongside other similar products or brands. During this stage, it is common for consumers to actively research by asking others for their opinions, formulating questions, and reading reviews in relation to the product or service and its competitors. They can also already express their preference towards a specific product or service at this point (Vázquez et al., 2014), making them a step closer to formulating a decision on which one to avail. For both stages, tourists make the most out of search engines, social media, and other types of digital platforms in order for them to thoroughly understand, gather feedback, and obtain valuable information about destinations and services (Ferreira et al., 2019).

Currently, the touchpoints with a brand or product happen online, and it is through these sources of digital information that has a considerable effect on the decision-making outcome. Brands aim to maintain a strong digital presence during the decision-making process in order to encourage the consumer to choose and purchase the product (Bajak & Spindel, 2022; Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2017). Besides this, because of the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and social media, a shift in the tourism sector can be observed as these two influence consumer preferences through UGC and online feedback. AI technologies also enhance efficiency and customization in travel experiences through tailored suggestions and automated services (Kaur et al., 2024).

To gather information, reviews, and comparisons on products, Gen Z primarily uses search engines, which emphasizes their reliance on digital resources for purchasing wisely (Grigoreva et al., 2021). Search engines are vital tools that assist users to obtain information online in a quick and efficient manner, allowing them to access relevant content easier (Inthiyaz et al., 2022). Some examples of search engines include Google and Yahoo. In line with this, it has been demonstrated that when tourists believe that using information sources online, such as social media applications and search engines, is beneficial and helpful, tourists are more

inclined to use them at their destinations since it improves their performance by enabling them to make better judgements (García-Milon et al., 2021).

The fourth and fifth hypotheses are drawn below based on the terms that this paper focuses on Gen Z’s information gathering phase when deciding on their travel destination choice using TikTok versus traditional search engines, driven by their performance expectancy that these tools will help them. It is also applicable that in the awareness and consideration phases, research on product choice is performed through references, statements, and feedback gathered.

H4: Gen Z prefers TikTok over traditional search engines during the awareness phase due to its expected usefulness in choosing their destination.

H5: Gen Z prefers TikTok over traditional search engines during the consideration phase due to its expected usefulness in choosing their destination.

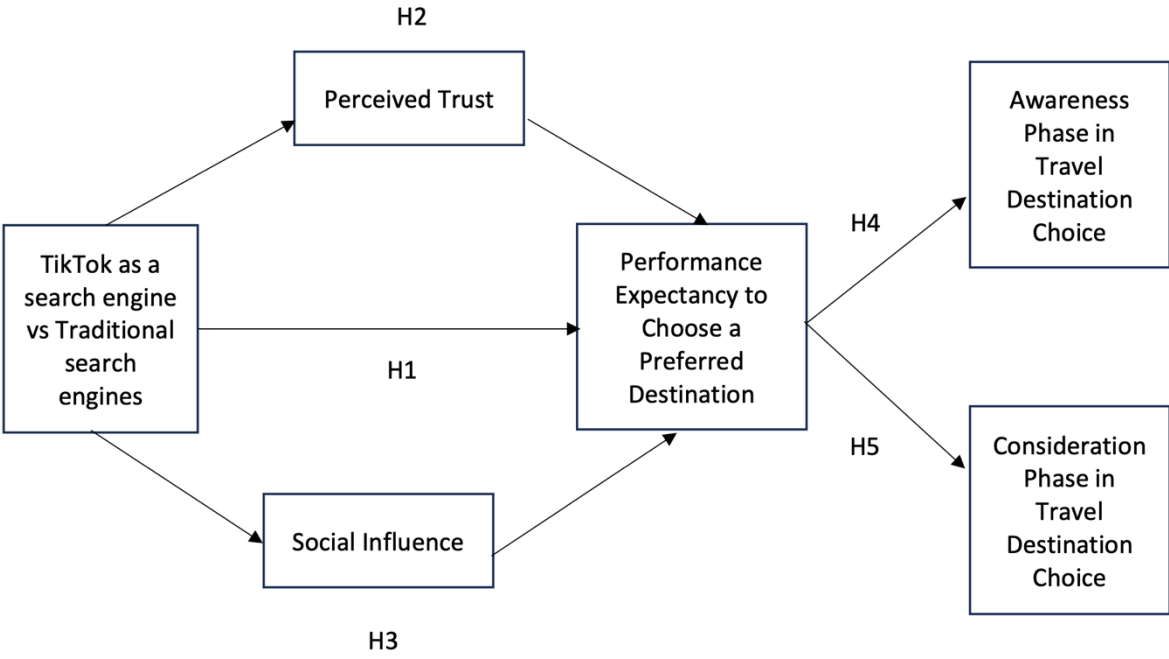


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study analyzes Gen Z's use of TikTok as a search engine in the Awareness and Consideration phases to help them make a travel destination choice. Although different sources do not exactly have the similar year ranges involved, this research focuses on those who were born from 1995 to 2007, and are also known as Digital Natives and the Me Generation (Feiertag & Berge, 2008). Gen Z are known to be more connected to electronics and the digital world, and have a short attention span, which is what sets them apart from the older generation (Singh & Dangmei, 2016).

A quantitative research has been implemented to focus on measurable variables and quantifiable data to analyze social phenomena. It is also geared towards hypotheses testing and minimizing biases (Lim, 2024). With regard to this, a survey has been conducted to have a deeper grasp of how certain factors affect the hypotheses.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling was applied to the target population. It was made certain to include individuals from diverse backgrounds and focus on those who are from ages 18-30 years old as they are the ones who are more likely to be employed and thus afford to travel.

A survey in English was developed, and was based on the conceptual framework and research hypotheses on how participants use TikTok as a search engine to aid them in making a travel destination choice. Moreover, the participants had to provide basic information such as gender, age, occupation, and nationality. To test out the constructs, statements were provided and measured using a Likert scale that ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The survey was published in Qualtrics, and distributed online on surveyswap.com, and social media sites such as Whatsapp, Meta/Facebook, and Instagram. The questions about demographics and general TikTok usage are provided in Table 3-1, while survey statements about the hypotheses are specified in Table 3-2.

Table 3-1. Demographics and General Usage Questions

Question	Answers	Source
Were you born from 1995 to 2007 and use TikTok?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No <p>If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate what year you were born. If No, end survey.</p>	Syam & Meldawati (2022)
What is your gender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Female b. Male c. Non-binary / third gender d. Prefer not to say 	
What is your occupation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Student b. Working student c. Employed d. Unemployed 	
What is your nationality?	Participant should indicate nationality	
How often do you travel for leisure?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 0-1 times a year b. 2-4 times a year c. 5 times a year or more 	
How often do you open / use TikTok?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. At least once a day b. At least once a week c. At least once a month 	
What is your purpose for using TikTok? Please rank according to importance, with 1 being the highest, by dragging the statements in order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Get knowledge / information b. Entertainment c. Share content d. Connect / interact with people 	

Table 3-2. Survey Statements

Construct	Measurement Scale	Source
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines	(TSE1) In general, I prefer to use TikTok over traditional search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo) when searching for information. (TSE2) When searching for travel destinations, I find TikTok more useful than traditional search engines. (TSE3) Before traveling, I rely more on reviews and recommendations from other travelers found on TikTok than on traditional search engines.	Jalilvand et al. (2013)
Perceived Trust on TikTok	(PT1) In general, I use TikTok because I trust it and I am willing to accept information from it. (PT2) I believe that the travel information (e.g. videos, reviews) on TikTok can be trusted. (PT3) Based on the travel information provided by TikTok, I think it is credible enough to decide on a travel destination choice.	Zhou et al. (2023)
Social Influence on TikTok	(SI1) I use TikTok to help me decide in my destination choice because I know that the people (family, friends, colleagues) around me use it for the same purpose. (SI2) If someone influential (business, celebrity, influencer) that I respect or love posts a travel video on TikTok, I will be interested in using the platform. (SI3) My desire to use TikTok to gather information on a destination is affected by the usefulness of the travel recommendations of people around me.	Zhou et al. (2023)
Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination	(PE1) TikTok is helpful when searching for travel related information. (PE2) I am updated with the latest happenings about my travel destination by using TikTok. (PE3) TikTok is useful for me in choosing and deciding on the destination faster.	Zhou et al. (2023) Venkatesh et al. (2012)

Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	(A1) TikTok does not increase my curiosity about new travel destinations. (A2) TikTok is not a good platform to learn about potential destinations. (A3) Travel content on TikTok fails to motivate me to visit new places.	Gretzel & Yoo (2008)
Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	(C1) Before I actually make my destination choice, I do not use TikTok to help me evaluate a destination and its alternatives (other destinations). (C2) TikTok content is not helpful at all in reducing the risk / uncertainty that I might face in my travel choices. (C3) TikTok content does not help me vividly imagine how I can experience a destination.	Gretzel & Yoo (2008)

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEEDINGS

A pretest was distributed to five people to check the average survey answering time and to get feedback on statements that were not easily understandable. Based on the feedback from the pretest, the survey statements were improved and officially distributed to the target age group or those who were born from 1995 to 2007. The survey ran for 3 weeks and 320 responses were gathered. However, 247 (77%) of the original responses only remained since the other respondents failed the attention check section which made their responses invalid. From 247 responses, majority of them were born from 1995 to 1997, followed by those who were born from 2000 to 2001. Only a small percentage came from 2007. It is noticeable in Table 3-3 that a huge portion of the respondents are currently employed.

SPSS was used to look at the basic demographic distribution such as year of birth, gender, and occupation. The same software was also used to reverse the answers for reverse coded statements. Afterwards, the survey results were completely analyzed through Smart PLS 4.0, given the goal of the study, data characteristics, and analysis requirements.

Table 3-3. Sample Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Year of Birth</i>		
1995	33	13.4%
1996	31	12.6%
1997	31	12.6%
1998	26	7.7%
1999	26	7.3%
2000	20	10.5%
2001	19	10.5%
2002	18	6.9%
2003	17	8.1%
2004	8	3.2%
2005	8	3.2%
2006	8	3.2%
2007	2	0.8%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	192	77.7%
Male	49	19.8%
Non-binary / third gender	4	1.6%
Prefer not to say	2	0.8%
<i>Occupation</i>		
Employed	139	56.3%
Student	67	27.1%
Working student	35	14.2%
Unemployed	6	2.4%

4. RESULTS

Partial least squares structural equation modeling or PLS-SEM analysis was employed for results reporting as this type of analysis allows to explore theoretical extensions of established theories better (Hair et al., 2019).

4.1 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY TESTS

Reliability examines the consistency of scale tools. Ideally, internal consistency reliability should be between 0.70 to 0.90 to be considered satisfactory to good. Values of 0.95 and higher are problematic as they reveal that certain items are redundant. The metrics used for internal consistency are latent variable composition reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (Hair et al., 2019; Huang, 2021).

On the other hand, validity examines the correctness of the scale tool, and are measured through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity detects the average variance extraction (AVE) and has a recommended value of greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019; Huang, 2021). In reference to Table 4-1, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE, have met the expectations of the ideal values, showing strong reliability and validity.

Table 4-1. Construct Reliability and Average Variance Extraction

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.850	0.856	0.909	0.770
Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.843	0.844	0.906	0.762
Perceived Trust	0.816	0.823	0.891	0.731
Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination	0.845	0.847	0.906	0.763
Social Influence	0.760	0.777	0.861	0.674
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines	0.775	0.808	0.870	0.692

Discriminant validity looks into the Hetero-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with the ideal value being less than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2019; Huang, 2021). As seen in the HTMT ratio values, all HTMT values are within acceptable limits, except for TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines in correlation to Perceived Trust at 0.860, and TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines in correlation to Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination

at 0.852. The mentioned constructs are at the borderline but are still generally accepted. This suggests that while most of the constructs are distinct, these two may share conceptual overlap, indicating that TikTok as a platform portrays a strong role in shaping Gen Z’s trust and performance perception as a search engine.

Table 4-2. Hetero-Monotrait Ratio

Construct	Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	Perceived Trust	Performance Expectancy To Choose A Preferred Destination	Social Influence	TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines
Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice						
Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.806					
Perceived Trust	0.390	0.521				
Performance Expectancy To Choose A Preferred Destination	0.536	0.648	0.702			
Social Influence	0.303	0.469	0.761	0.737		
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines	0.528	0.667	0.860	0.852	0.826	

After performing the steps above, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was observed which evaluates collinearity of the formative indicators. VIF values should be close to 3 and lower for a better and more trustworthy model (Hair et al., 2019). Looking at the variables on Table 4-3, it shows that there is some correlation but it’s not problematic. The VIF values also show that multicollinearity is not a concern for the model as the values are acceptable.

For model fit, the SRMR and NFI values were checked (Huang, 2021). SRMR needs to be less than 0.08 to be deemed a good fit. The results show that even if SRMR = 0.074 is close to 0.08, it is still considered acceptable as it is less than the said value. The range of the NFI value

should be between 0 and 1, with the larger NFI value showing better performance. In this case, even if NFI = 0.775 is slightly below 1, it is still acceptable.

Additionally, the chi-square value is deemed to be relevant when checking a good model fit (Kline, 2016). Considering that the number of valid respondents is 247, and the chi-square value = 608.021, it can be said that the chi-square value is statistically significant as is expected from larger samples. The chi-square, along with the SRMR and NFI, shows that the model fits the data adequately.

Table 4-3. Variance Inflation Factor and Fit Summary

Construct	VIF	Fit Summary
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination	2.244	SRMR = 0.074 Chi-square = 608.021 NFI = 0.775
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Perceived Trust	1.000	
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Social Influence	1.000	
Perceived Trust -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination	2.048	
Social Influence -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination	1.880	
Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination -> Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	1.000	
Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination -> Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	1.000	

4.2 STRUCTURAL MODEL EVALUATION

The structural model evaluation observes the relationships among the constructs through Bootstrapping, allowing to derive path coefficients, R-square or coefficient of determination, and specific indirect effects (Hair et al., 2019; Huang, 2021).

R-square measures the variance (Shmueli et al., 2019), and is also referred to as in-sample predictive power (Rigdon, 2012). As a general guideline, a value of 0.75 can be considered substantial, a value of 0.50 can be considered moderate, and a value of 0.25 can be considered weak. Based on Table 4-4, the behavioral constructs of performance expectancy, perceived trust, and social influence have a good explanatory power, which means that these constructs have a notable impact on respondents' perception of TikTok as a search engine. Moreover, it can be observed that the Awareness and Consideration phases have low explanatory power suggesting that additional factors outside the model may influence these phases.

Table 4-4. R-square Values

Construct	R-square
Performance Expectancy To Choose A Better Destination	0.541
Perceived Trust	0.467
Social Influence	0.420
Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.208
Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.299

P-values < 0.05 or the 95% confidence interval is required to determine if the constructs have significant paths (Hair et al., 2019). The results in Table 4-5 show that TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines in relation to Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination (H1), Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination in relation to Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice (H4), and Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination in relation to Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice (H5) all have p-values of 0.000. This means that they fit the criteria and that the independent constructs have a strong influence on the dependent constructs in the model.

Table 4-5. Path Coefficients Results for Independent and Dependent Constructs

Hypothesis	Path Analysis	Path coefficient	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
H1	TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a	0.466	0.465	0.069	6.764	0.000

	Preferred Destination					
H4	Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination -> Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.456	0.462	0.068	6.666	0.000
H5	Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination -> Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.547	0.549	0.063	8.678	0.000

On Table 4-6, the two mediating constructs of Perceived Trust and Social Influence, along with their relationships with the other constructs are seen. It is observed that TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines in relation to Perceived Trust (H2), and TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines in relation to Social Influence (H3), both have their p-values at 0.000. Meanwhile, Social Influence in relation to Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination has a p-value of 0.001 (H3). These three correlations fit the criteria with a high confidence interval.

On the contrary, Perceived Trust in relation to Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination (H2) has a p-value of 0.048 which comes close to 0.05 but it still fits the criteria so the value is still relevant.

Table 4-6. Path Coefficients for Mediator Constructs

Hypothesis	Path Analysis	Path coefficient	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
H2	TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Perceived Trust	0.684	0.684	0.035	19.401	0.000
H2	Perceived Trust -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination	0.137	0.137	0.069	1.981	0.048
H3	TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Social Influence	0.648	0.648	0.041	15.900	0.000
H3	Social Influence -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Preferred Destination	0.220	0.222	0.069	3.202	0.001

The mediator constructs of social influence and perceived trust were examined regarding their specific indirect effects with the other constructs on Table 4-7. Looking at the path analyses, most p-values fit the criteria of < 0.05. However, with the path analyses that includes the construct of perceived trust, it is noticeable that it does not fit the criteria because its values exceed 0.05 a bit more. It can be inferred that perceived trust is not statistically significant, and that there is not enough evidence to know its indirect effect as a mediator between TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines and performance expectancy. On the contrary, it indicates that the mediator construct of social influence has a significant path that shows the evidence of an indirect effect in relation to performance expectancy in using TikTok to help Gen Z to choose their preferred destination.

Table 4-7. Specific Indirect Effects

Path Analysis	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.213	0.216	0.050	4.235	0.000
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.255	0.256	0.050	5.081	0.000
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Perceived Trust -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination	0.094	0.094	0.049	1.932	0.053
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Perceived Trust -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.043	0.043	0.023	1.870	0.062

TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Perceived Trust -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.051	0.052	0.028	1.852	0.064
Perceived Trust -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.063	0.063	0.033	1.916	0.055
Perceived Trust -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.075	0.075	0.039	1.904	0.057
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Social Influence -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination	0.142	0.145	0.047	3.043	0.002
TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Social Influence -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.065	0.067	0.024	2.674	0.008

TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines -> Social Influence -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.078	0.080	0.029	2.685	0.007
Social Influence -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.100	0.103	0.036	2.795	0.005
Social Influence -> Performance Expectancy to Choose a Better Destination -> Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice	0.120	0.123	0.043	2.810	0.005

Examining Figure 2, the standardized path coefficients can be clearly seen which indicate the strength and direction of relationships between constructs (Lleras, 2005). The higher the value of the standardized path coefficients, the higher their strength and relationships are with each other. The p-values are also indicated in parentheses.

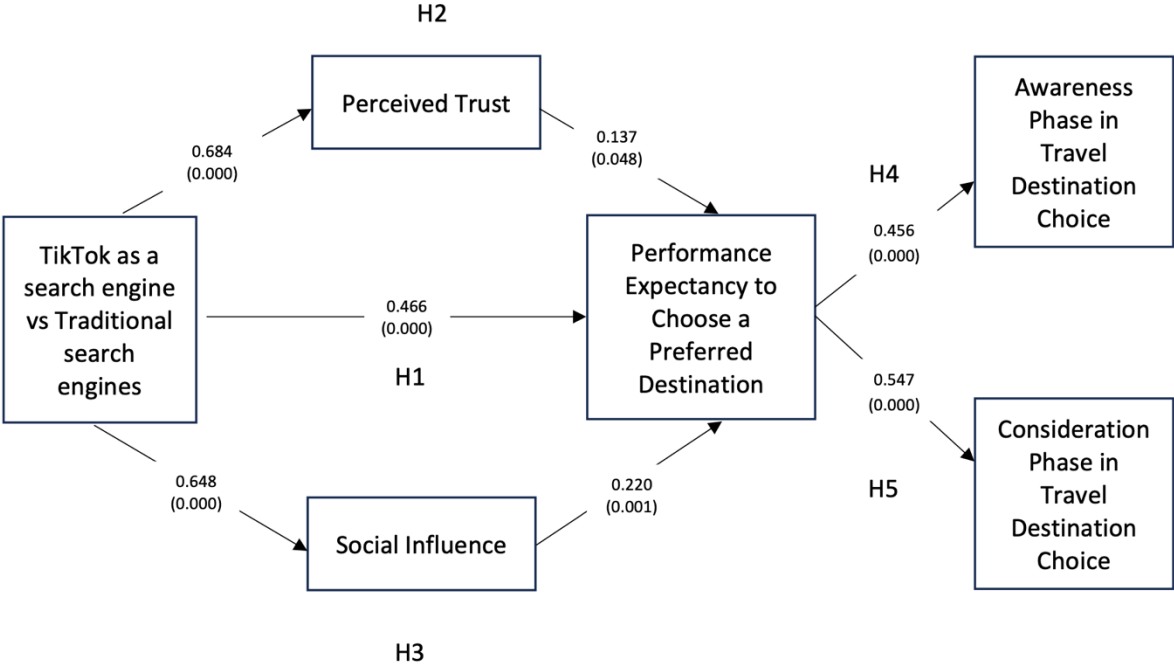


Figure 2. Standardized Path Coefficients and P-values

5. DISCUSSIONS

After observing the data and analyzing the results, it has been determined that all the hypotheses are supported except for H2 or the hypothesis about perceived trust as it is only partially supported.

Table 5-1. Hypotheses and Results

Hypotheses		Results
H1	The adoption of TikTok for travel destination choice is higher when Gen Z tourists perceive TikTok as useful in selecting travel destinations.	Supported
H2	Perceived Trust mediates the relationship between using TikTok as a search engine and Gen Z's performance expectancy of the platform when making a travel destination choice.	Partially Supported
H3	Social influence acts as a mediator in linking Gen Z's use of TikTok as a search engine to their expectations of the platform's effectiveness in selecting a travel destination.	Supported
H4	Gen Z prefers TikTok over traditional search engines during the awareness phase due to its expected usefulness in choosing their destination.	Supported
H5	Gen Z prefers TikTok over traditional search engines during the consideration phase due to its expected usefulness in choosing their destination.	Supported

The strong support for H1 showcases how Gen Z adopts TikTok as a search engine, confirming that perceived utility of a platform affects travel planning. H2 is partially supported because the results indicate that there is not enough evidence to know its indirect effect as a mediator construct. However, it does not make H2 unimportant since a part of the results still align with the findings that Gen Z trusts TikTok because of its content reliability. Nonetheless, H3 is supported, signifying that social influence offline and online, plays an important role when it comes to the perception and adoption of TikTok as a platform. H4 and H5 are also supported, which further implies that the platform is indeed a helpful tool during the awareness and consideration phases because of how it presents and makes its information available to users.

5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on digital search behaviors, social media use, and the consumer journey, specifically in the Awareness and Consideration phases. This has been perceived by demonstrating that TikTok as a search engine influences travel destination choice because of factors such as performance expectancy, perceived trust, and social influence. The data reveal that for Gen Z, trust in TikTok is strongly interrelated with how it provides information, reflecting the experiential and peer-driven based nature of social media-based travel planning. This supports the idea that immersive, visual, and peer-driven content fosters both trust and utility, reflecting how Gen Z navigates platforms for trip planning. It also brings to light how Gen Z perceive TikTok as a capable search engine, making them likely to expect it to help them in choosing their preferred travel destinations. Besides this, it is evident that as TikTok is perceived more as a search engine, social influence also increases. This explains that influence coming from social connections, such as peers and influencers, have a strong role in affecting users' perceptions and behaviors. These insights are also consistent with the UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003) and the expanded UTAUT2 (Zhou et al., 2023) models where it indicates that the said factors influence behavioral intention to utilize technology.

Finally, this study leads to the expansion of the theoretical understanding of social media's role in travel decision-making as it highlights how short-form video platforms such as TikTok can serve as legitimate search tools, challenging established and traditional search engines. This could also suggest an overall preference shift toward algorithm-driven, peer-informed decision making. Therefore, by integrating TikTok's search function into discussions of technology adoption and consumer empowerment, the research not only validates UTAUT and the expanded UTAUT2 models in social media contexts but also adds a fresh perspective to it. The findings also support previous studies (Assaker et al., 2020; Berhanu & Raj, 2024; Buditama & Rahyuda, 2019; Hameed et al., 2024; Palos-Sanchez et al., 2021) where the UTAUT and the UTAUT2 models were applied, proving that performance expectancy, perceived trust, and social influence truly have an impact on users' perceptions and use of the platform.

5.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study are beneficial to Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in optimizing the use of social media platforms to allow tourists to discover and consider their destinations and services. This would be through finding out which social media platform would be the right fit for each stage of the consumer journey, and to specifically know what type of content to use. It would also be good to have a deep understanding of how the algorithm of each social media platform works to help them in reaching the right audiences and in improving customer relationship management systems.

In addition, businesses can have more knowledge of how Gen Z generally use and navigate social media when it comes to information search, not just when it comes to travel destination choice, but in terms of choosing a service or product. By doing this, increase in brand awareness, engagement, website traffic, and even direct bookings are highly likely to happen.

Moreover, businesses can leverage in providing real-time travel information and destination updates through engaging, visually appealing, and easy-to-consume TikTok content. They can collaborate with influencers to do this and encourage UGC to push for authentic narratives that Gen Z can relate to. This approach is not only advantageous for Gen Z tourists in making decisions, but it also provides a good avenue for destinations to strengthen their online presence.

6. CONCLUSIONS

It is reasonable to conclude from the study that TikTok as a search engine is truly a helpful platform for Gen Z. This can be attributed to their performance expectancy of TikTok, and how it would provide valuable information in making a travel destination choice. The mediating factors of perceived trust and social influence have also contributed to how Gen Z views the platform in terms of travel information search. Perceived trust emphasizes that Gen Z believes TikTok to be credible, while social influence highlights how offline and online social interactions motivate Gen Z to use the platform.

Furthermore, using TikTok in the Awareness and Consideration phases allow Gen Z to be equipped with knowledge about a destination through real-time updates, tourists' feedback, and tourists' overall experiences. This eliminates doubts that usually occur before reaching a destination and allow them to make smart decisions when it comes to their preferred travel destination.

Despite the findings, there are certain restrictions on this study. The first limitation is that this study is focused on using TikTok as a search engine and only briefly explores how it differs from traditional search engines. Second, it solely focuses on Gen Z's behaviors towards the platform. Third, the UTAUT model by Venkatesh et al. (2003), and the expanded UTAUT2 model by Zhou et al. (2023), were used as theoretical bases for the study's theoretical framework which serves as a limitation due to the fact that there are other theoretical frameworks that can be applied to aid in the comprehension of Generation Z's intention and behavior towards social media usage.

For future research, other social media platforms that uses short-form videos (e.g. Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts) can be compared along with TikTok as search engines versus traditional search engines. In doing so, it can be observed whether TikTok's peer-driven content and personalized algorithm are uniquely influential or if similar patterns are also visible in other platforms.

The research can also be broadened to not only include Gen Z, but other age groups or generations such as Millennials to see the discrepancies in their intentions and behaviors. This could reveal whether the preference for social media as a search tool is evident among other age groups or is only present in Gen Z.

Lastly, aside from using the UTAUT and the expanded UTAUT2 models as theoretical bases, other widely accepted theories such as the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) can be applied to have richer insights on social media platform adoption and usage.

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APPENDIX A

Online Survey

Q1.

Hello! My name is Joanne, and I am currently a master's student in Data-Driven Marketing at Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Information Management School (NOVA IMS).

The purpose of this survey is to understand how **Generation Z (Gen Z) uses TikTok as a search engine to help them gather information and decide in their destination choice**. Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may exit the questionnaire at any time without any penalty.

The survey takes approximately **5-10 minutes to complete**. Please be assured that all responses will be kept anonymous and will be used for academic purposes only.

Q2. By proceeding, you are confirming to the following conditions:

- a. Born from 1995 to 2007
 - b. Use TikTok
 - c. Consent to participate
- I agree to participate
 - I do not agree to participate

Q3. Were you born from 1995 to 2007 and use TikTok? (End of Survey if No is selected.)

- Yes
- No

Q4. If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate what year you were born.
e.g. 2000

Q5. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

Q6. What is your occupation?

- Student
- Working student
- Employed

- Unemployed

Q7. What is your nationality? Please do not use shortcuts. *For example, indicate that you are "Portuguese" instead of putting "PT".*

Q8. How often do you travel for leisure?

- 0-1 times a year
- 2-4 times a year
- 5 times a year or more

Q9. How often do you open / use TikTok?

- At least once a day
- At least once a week
- At least once a month

Q10. What is your purpose for using TikTok? *Please rank according to importance, with 1 being the highest, by dragging the statements in order.*

1. Get knowledge / information
2. Entertainment
3. Share content
4. Connect / interact with people

Q11.

For the next section, you will be presented with statements about the use of TikTok, and how helpful it is for you in searching for travel information. Select the number in the measurement scale that best corresponds to you.

- 1 - Strongly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly agree

Q12. TikTok as a Search Engine vs Traditional Search Engines

**Remember:*

TikTok is a platform / app that uses a lot of videos for their content
Traditional Search Engines refer to Google, Yahoo, etc.

In general, I prefer to use TikTok over traditional search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo) when searching for information.

1. Strongly disagree

2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

When searching for travel destinations, I find TikTok more useful than traditional search engines.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Before traveling, I rely more on reviews and recommendations from other travelers found on TikTok than on traditional search engines.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q13. Perceived Trust on TikTok

In general, I use TikTok because I trust it and I am willing to accept information from it.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

I believe that the travel information (e.g. videos, reviews) on TikTok can be trusted.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Based on the travel information provided by TikTok, I think it is credible enough to decide on a travel destination choice.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree

3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q14. Social Influence on TikTok

I use TikTok to help me decide in my destination choice because I know that the people (family, friends, colleagues) around me use it for the same purpose.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

If someone influential (business, celebrity, influencer) that I respect or love posts a travel video on TikTok, I will be interested in using the platform.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

My desire to use TikTok to gather information on a destination is affected by the usefulness of the travel recommendations of people around me.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q15. *** To check your attention, SELECT 1 from the scale below. ***

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q16. Performance Expectancy on TikTok to Choose a Preferred Destination

TikTok is helpful when searching for travel related information.

1. Strongly disagree

2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

I am updated with the latest happenings about my travel destination by using TikTok.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

TikTok is useful for me in choosing and deciding on the destination faster.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q17. Awareness Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice

TikTok does not increase my curiosity about new travel destinations.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

TikTok is not a good platform to learn about potential destinations.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Travel content on TikTok fails to motivate me to visit new places.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q18. Consideration Phase in Making a Travel Destination Choice

Before I actually make my destination choice, I do not use TikTok to help me evaluate a destination and its alternatives (other destinations).

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

TikTok content is not helpful at all in reducing the risk / uncertainty that I might face in my travel choices.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

TikTok content does not help me vividly imagine how I can experience a destination.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Q19. What is your level of knowledge regarding the following? Select the number in the measurement scale that best corresponds to you.

- 1 - No knowledge at all
- 2 - A bit of knowledge
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Knowledgeable
- 5 - Very knowledgeable

The theme of this study

1. No knowledge at all
2. A bit of knowledge
3. Neutral
4. Knowledgeable
5. Very knowledgeable

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1. No knowledge at all
2. A bit of knowledge
3. Neutral
4. Knowledgeable
5. Very knowledgeable

Q20.

Your response has been recorded.

Thank you for your time spent answering this survey, and for helping me to graduate.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please reach me at 20230213@novaims.unl.pt.

Have a great day ahead!

The following code gives you Karma that can be used to get free research participants at SurveySwap.io. <https://surveyswap.io/sr/B2VG-YHL4-I5PQ>

APPENDIX B

Ethics Committee Approval



This is to certify that

Project No.: **DDMKT2025-2-167850**

Project Title: **TikTok as the New Google: A study on how Gen Z use TikTok as a search engine to help them in making a travel destination choice**

Principal Researcher: **Joanne Senia**

according to the regulations of the Ethics Committee of NOVA IMS and MagIC Research Center this project was considered to meet the requirements of the NOVA IMS Internal Review Board, being considered **APPROVED** on 2/16/2025.

It is the Principal Researcher's responsibility to ensure that all researchers and stakeholders associated with this project are aware of the conditions of approval and which documents have been approved.

The Principal Researcher is required to notify the Ethics Committee, via amendment or progress report, of

- Any significant change to the project and the reason for that change;
- Any unforeseen events or unexpected developments that merit notification;
- The inability of the Principal Researcher to continue in that role or any other change in research personnel involved in the project.

Lisbon, 2/16/2025

NOVA IMS Ethics Committee
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