

Generation-Z and travelling interest in Tebing Tinggi

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ABSTRACT

Purpose — *The aim of this research is to examine the interest of Generation-Z in travel by exploring the factors that influence their choice of tourism destination and reasons for traveling.*

Method — *To collect data for this research, a qualitative method was employed whereby an open-ended online questionnaire was distributed to 71 individuals belonging to the Z generation in Tebing Tinggi City. We utilized thematic analysis as the technique to examine and analyze the data collected.*

Result — *We found that Generation-Z has a psychological need for vacations to alleviate the stress caused by their numerous responsibilities. When traveling, they typically choose the closest and most renowned tourist destination in their area, without spending excessive amounts of money. Popular activities for them include searching for picturesque locations, experiencing local cuisine, and camping. To travel affordably and efficiently, Generation-Z often opts for private vehicles such as motorcycles or cars, which enable them to visit multiple places.*

Contribution — *This study contributes to the body of knowledge on Generation-Z travel behavior and has implications for the tourism industry in terms of catering to this demographic's unique preferences and needs.*

Keywords: *Generation-Z, tourism, travel interest, thematic analysis*



INTRODUCTION

Traveling has become a necessity in modern times, as people seek to find relaxation and refresh their minds due to the increasing demands of work and education systems associated with the fourth industrial revolution, which can cause high levels of stress (Pradhan & Tripathi, 2021). This is why vacations have become essential for people recently (Gusti et al., 2021).

Traveling is the act of moving from one place to another, usually over a significant distance, for a variety of purposes such as tourism, business, or personal reasons. Traveling involves visiting different locations, experiencing new cultures, and interacting with people from different backgrounds. It can be done by various modes of transportation such as air, land, or sea. Traveling can be a leisurely activity or a necessary part of one's work or lifestyle. It provides opportunities for personal growth, learning, and exploration of new environments (Arismayanti et al., 2022).

There are countless tourist destinations around the world, each with its own unique attractions and experiences to offer (Suhartapa & Sulisty, 2021). Some of the most sought-after tourist destinations include: a) Paris, France, renowned for its art, fashion, and cuisine, as well as its romantic ambiance, cultural heritage, and historical significance (Dupain & Novitskaya, 2015); b) New York City, United States, offering a plethora of opportunities for entertainment, food, and culture, thanks to its dynamic and diverse character (Zukin et al., 2018); c) Tokyo, Japan, a hub of innovation, technology, and culture, making it a must-visit destination for those interested in the future (Kakiuchi, 2014); d) Bali, Indonesia, famous for its natural beauty, exquisite beaches, and spiritual retreats, making it an ideal destination for relaxation and adventure (Arismayanti, 2017); e) Sydney, Australia, renowned for its iconic landmarks, stunning natural scenery, and thriving arts and culture scene, attracting tourists of all ages (Michael et al., 2018); f) Dubai, United Arab Emirates, a hub of luxury and indulgence, making it an appealing destination for those seeking an extravagant vacation (Gupta, 2015); and g) Cape Town, South Africa, known for its breathtaking landscapes, diverse culture, and exciting outdoor activities, making it a popular destination for adventure and exploration (Ezeuduji et al., 2016). These are just a few examples of the many incredible destinations available for travelers to explore even they have to sacrifice their expenditure (Yulianto & Mayasari, 2021).

People do not mind if they have to spend a lot of money to have vacation domestically or internationally (Andina & Aliyah, 2021). Of course they believe they get released after having travelling. There are various reasons why people go on vacation, such as: a) relaxation, which is a popular motive for individuals to escape daily stress by relaxing on a beach or indulging in a spa day, among

other things; b) adventure, as some people seek out trips that provide exciting experiences and opportunities for exploration, such as hiking or surfing; c) family time, which allows individuals to bond with their family members and create lifelong memories; d) cultural immersion, as some individuals travel to experience different cultures and learn about art and history; e) celebration, as vacations are frequently taken to commemorate special events such as birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays; f) personal growth, as some people travel to challenge themselves and push their boundaries, whether through physical activities or spiritual and personal growth experiences; and g) romance, as vacations may serve as a romantic escape for couples to reconnect and spend quality time together (C.-C. Chen & Petrick, 2013; Richards, 2017). Overall, vacations provide an opportunity to break from routine, experience new things, and create lasting memories for almost all adults.

Generation-Z, or Gen Z, refers to the demographic cohort born between the mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s. Members of this generation are often characterized as tech-savvy, diverse, and socially conscious (Paramitha, 2020). When it comes to travelling, Gen Z is generally interested in experiences that are unique, authentic, and socially responsible. They tend to prioritize meaningful experiences over material possessions, and are more likely to travel for personal growth, cultural immersion, and social impact. Gen Z travelers are also known for their reliance on technology, particularly when it comes to planning and booking trips. They are more likely to use social media, travel apps, and online reviews to research destinations, find the best deals, and connect with other travelers. Overall, Gen Z's interest in travel reflects their broader values of diversity, inclusion, and sustainability, as well as their desire for meaningful experiences and personal growth.

Like other generations, the reasons why Gen Z travels can vary, but there are some common factors that may motivate them to explore the world. Some of the reasons why Gen Z chooses to travel include: a) a desire for new experiences, as they prioritize experiences over material possessions and enjoy learning about different cultures, trying new foods, and exploring new places; b) the influence of social media, as they often feel inspired by the travel experiences of their peers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok; c) the opportunity for education and personal growth, as they see travel as a way to learn new things, immerse themselves in different cultures, learn languages, or engage in volunteer work; and d) the desire to connect with others, as they are a social generation and travel can provide a way to meet people from different parts of the world. They may seek out group travel experiences or communal accommodations. e) the need to escape stress, as they face various stressors in their daily lives such as

school, work, and social pressures. Travel can offer a way to disconnect from these stressors and recharge.

The choice of whom Gen Z travels with during vacations can vary depending on their individual preferences and circumstances. Gen Z, a social generation, may travel with various groups, including friends, family, significant others, solo, or group tours. Traveling with friends can be an enjoyable way to discover new places and create unforgettable memories. On the other hand, family trips can be more structured and planned around family-friendly activities. As Gen Z matures, they may travel with their significant other for romantic getaways to build relationships and shared experiences. Solo travel allows some Gen Z travelers to explore personal growth and self-discovery and tailor their itinerary to their interests and goals. Group tours can offer a structured and guided experience, allowing travelers to explore new destinations with like-minded individuals without the burden of planning and navigating independently, as long as they can meet the time constraints.

The time when people do traveling mostly can vary depending on the purpose of the trip and individual preferences. There are several common times for travel. One is summer, especially June, July, and August when people typically have time off from work or school and can enjoy outdoor activities or beach vacations. Another is during holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's when individuals may have time off from work and want to spend time with family or friends. Students often travel during their spring break, which usually falls in March or April and is popular for beach vacations and other leisure activities. Shoulder seasons, which fall between peak and off-peak travel times, are also popular for travel. For example, many people travel in the fall when the weather is still pleasant but the crowds have thinned out. The decision to travel often depends on factors such as personal preferences, work or school schedules, availability of time and money, and weather ([Liyushiana, 2019](#); [Koranti et al., 2017](#)).

Tebing Tinggi is a small city located in North Sumatera, approximately two hours away from the capital, Medan, and it does not have any tourist destinations. Typically, residents of Tebing Tinggi would travel to the closest and most popular tourist attractions, such as Danau Toba, which is about three hours away, or Berastagi, which is approximately four hours away and offers numerous options for tourists. The researchers focused on college students and college students with part-time jobs from the Generation Z population in Tebing Tinggi as their research subjects, as these two groups tend to enjoy travelling based on the researchers' observations.

[Ketut et al. \(2022\)](#) found that Gen Z prioritizes environmental and mental health, as well as sustainable accommodation. This research is different with that of [Ketut et al. \(2022\)](#)'s study since it was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, when people were free to go outside and were not as concerned with health factors and sustainable accommodations as they are now. Gen Z in this study did not prioritize health factors and sustainable accommodations and preferred to stay in a camp or return home on the same day. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the travel interests of Gen Z before the COVID-19.

METHOD

The study was conducted using a qualitative research approach and focused on Generation Z participants aged between 18 to 25 years old who were either college students with or without part-time jobs and resided in Tebing Tinggi. The research location was also in Tebing Tinggi. A total of 71 Gen Z individuals were selected as the research informants.

To collect data for this research, the researchers used an online questionnaire with open-ended questions. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved six phases. The first phase was getting familiar with the data, followed by generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally producing a report ([Nowell et al., 2017](#)).

During phase 1, we carefully read and comprehended all the responses provided by the informants. We made a note whenever an answer did not match the question and marked the satisfactory answers as usable data. In phase 2, we assigned initial codes to the data by identifying common themes from the responses given by the informants. It is possible that an informant's response was classified into multiple codes. In phase 3, we compared the identified codes with those from previous studies to determine possible themes for this study. In phase 4, we reviewed and refined the themes by comparing them to the collected data. In phase 5, we identified and named the appropriate themes from the data, which were classified into several themes. In phase 6, we sorted and reported the data that were classified and named.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the researchers described the data from the informants related to Gen Z travelling interest. First was to see Gen Z reasons of doing travelling. From the total informants, there were three from seventy one informants who dislike

travelling. The rest's answers were they like having vacation. The researchers classified the data from the informant as seen on table 1. The researchers classified the reasons of Gen Z travelling.

Table 1. Gen Z's reasons of doing traveling

Reason	Frequency
To release their stress because they enjoy their vacation much	55
Find something new and different	13
Traveling is my hobby	2
To see and enjoy the scenery	5
To develop social relations as a human being	1

Source: processed data (2023)

The responses of 55 informants revealed that they viewed traveling as a means to alleviate their stress and find enjoyment in their vacations. However, while stress relief is an important benefit of travel, there are also many other reasons why people choose to travel, such as experiencing new cultures, trying different foods, visiting historical or natural landmarks, reconnecting with loved ones, or engaging in adventure activities like hiking or scuba diving. It's important to note that travel can also be a source of stress, such as when planning and organizing a trip, dealing with transportation and accommodations, or navigating unfamiliar places. Overall, the reasons why people travel are diverse and multifaceted. Regardless of the reason, travel has the potential to be a transformative and enriching experience. This finding aligns with the research conducted by [C. Chen \(2016\)](#).

The second reason found was that 13 of the informants stated that they travel to discover new and different things. Exploring new places, trying out different foods, meeting new people, and immersing oneself in a different culture are all common reasons for travel. Such travel can expand one's horizons and challenge one's preconceptions. It can also provide an exciting sense of adventure and a chance to learn more about oneself and the world. By venturing beyond their comfort zones and experimenting with new things, people can gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses and develop new skills and perspectives that can enrich their lives in many ways. While everyone's motives for travel may differ, the desire to seek out new and different experiences is a potent driver for many travelers and can lead to some of the most memorable and life-changing experiences one can have ([Omuris & Aydin, 2020](#)).

It was also discovered that two informants stated that traveling is their hobby. Many individuals consider traveling as a leisure activity that they actively engage

in and enjoy. Similar to any other hobby, traveling can provide a sense of joy, contentment, and satisfaction to those who are passionate about it. People who take pleasure in traveling usually relish in the process of planning and organizing their trips, researching destinations, and discovering innovative and exciting ways to explore the world. For some people, traveling can also be a source of inspiration and creativity, especially for those who are interested in photography, writing, art, or other creative pursuits. Additionally, for some, traveling can even be a way of life, as they explore the world for extended periods, fully immersing themselves in different cultures and lifestyles. However, it is important to note that traveling as a hobby can also be expensive and time-consuming, and it may not be feasible or appealing to everyone (Mosonyi et al., 2016). Nonetheless, for those who have a passion for traveling, it can be a gratifying and enriching experience that creates a lifetime of memories and adventures (Hajin, 2022).

The following reason for traveling was reported by 5 respondents who stated that they travel to see and appreciate the scenery. Whether it is natural landscapes such as mountains, beaches, or forests, or cultural landmarks like historical buildings, museums, or art galleries, many people travel to enjoy the beauty of the scenery (Bagus & Utama, 2018). For some, the scenery is the primary reason for traveling, and they may select their destinations based on their natural or architectural wonders. They may choose to hike, camp, or take nature walks to experience the beauty of nature up close, or they may prefer guided tours of historical landmarks and cultural sites to learn more about the history and art of a particular place (Somogyi & Csapó, 2018). In addition to providing aesthetic pleasure, appreciating the scenery through travel can also help people connect with the natural world and develop a deeper appreciation for the environment. Many people find that being surrounded by beautiful scenery can have a calming and rejuvenating effect on the mind and body, making travel a valuable tool for self-care and well-being. Overall, enjoying the scenery is a popular reason for travel and one that can provide a multitude of experiences and opportunities for exploration and discovery.

It was discovered that one reason people travel is to develop social relationships with others. Cohen and Hibbert (2018) note that developing social relations is among the many motivations for travel. Through travel, people have the chance to meet individuals from different cultures and backgrounds, engage in social activities, and participate in experiences that can enhance their comprehension of themselves and the world. Traveling enables people to connect with others and develop meaningful relationships, whether through staying in hostels or homestays, joining group tours, or simply talking to locals or other travelers.

Meeting new people while traveling broadens one's perspective, cultivates empathy and comprehension of various lifestyles. By interacting with individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds, travelers can gain new insights, and learn about customs, traditions, and worldviews that differ from their own (Ryu & Shim, 2018).

Traveling with friends or family can also reinforce current relationships and create shared memories that can endure for a long time. By discovering new destinations and experiencing novel things as a group, travelers can deepen their connections and establish a sense of intimacy and attachment that may be difficult to attain in other circumstances. Overall, building social relations is a crucial component of travel for many individuals and can offer various advantages and possibilities for personal advancement and enrichment.

It is observed that Gen Z in Tebing Tinggi tends to travel between regions or intercity rather than between provinces. This is apparent from the data, which revealed that 63 respondents chose to travel between regions, while 8 respondents preferred traveling between provinces, and none traveled internationally. This may be due to the fact that they need to spend more money if they travel far from Tebing Tinggi, and their income needs to be higher to cover the expenses since many are still studying or working. Table 2 illustrates why Generation Z is drawn to that particular location.

Table 2. Reasons for choosing the tourist destination

Reasons	Frequency
easy to set the departure	4
time saving	22
low cost	31
prefer to travel far away from his/her location	3
visit their family	4
try different taste Indonesian culinary	1
business purposes	1
know more about tourism/culture in Indonesia	10
Get good photo spots	6

Source: processed data (2023)

As seen in table 2, there are several reasons why people travel to certain tourist destination:

1) Easy to set the departure or convenience

Traveling between cities can be a convenient option for transportation, particularly if the destination is not easily accessible by public transit. It can also be a quicker method than driving, taking a bus, or other forms of transportation, especially for long distances. For instance, taking a high-

speed train or airplane can significantly reduce travel time. The distance from Tebing Tinggi to nearby tourist spots is typically around 3-4 hours by car or motorcycle. Additionally, travelers can depart and arrive on the same day, or opt to stay overnight if it is a public holiday. The Gen Z often prefer using private vehicles like motorcycles or cars when traveling with friends because it is a more efficient way to reach their desired destinations. They enjoy their trips more because they can get closer to nature without worrying about transportation. [Deng & Henderson's \(2022\)](#) study suggests that personal vehicles are ideal for visiting remote locations.

2) Time-saving

Gen Z prefers to travel to nearby tourist destinations around Tebing Tinggi using private vehicles, as the journey usually takes around 3 to 4 hours. They enjoy spending half of their day on vacation and returning home in the afternoon. This is a more convenient option compared to taking public transportation like buses, trains, or planes, which would require adhering to a set schedule and may result in a loss of travel time. [Javid et al. \(2022\)](#) found that people who prioritize time savings and have a car-oriented mindset are more likely to choose shorter routes in order to save travel time, which aligns with the aforementioned preference of Gen Z to travel using private vehicles.

3) Low cost

Travelling between cities is a cost-effective option, particularly for the Gen Z who can use their own motorcycle or car, resulting in significant savings. They have the flexibility to visit multiple places without worrying about transportation fares. On the other hand, taking public transportation requires payment of fares. Data shows that Gen Z typically spend between IDR 100,000 to 500,000 for their trips. Additionally, 36 respondents prefer to travel with friends, 51 prefer to travel with family, and only 4 prefer to travel alone, allowing them to split the expenses among themselves. [Xiang et al. \(2019\)](#) found that many passengers prefer not to use air travel for short to medium distances due to high costs and waiting times for departures, which supports the aforementioned preference of the Gen Z to travel using their own vehicles.

4) Prefer to travel far away from their location to find enjoyable atmosphere

[Zou & Yu \(2022\)](#) suggest that people prioritize safety perceptions, safety climate, and the role of safety as a sub-dimension of destination image when deciding to travel. Venturing to distant locations allows individuals to discover new destinations, encounter unique cultures, and witness new

sights. Each province often boasts its own distinct attractions, such as national parks, historical landmarks, and cultural events. Some respondents were employed and had sufficient funds to spend during their longer days off.

5) Business purposes

Traveling between provinces is often a necessity for business-related purposes, such as attending conferences, meetings, or trade shows. This provides individuals with opportunities to network, establish relationships, and stay up to date with industry developments. This corresponds with [He & Findley's \(2017\)](#) findings that many individuals travel for work-related reasons, such as attending meetings, conferences, or other work-related events. Since some Gen Z in Tebing Tinggi are employed in reputable companies or institutions, the respondents reported traveling for job-related needs. In cases where their travel conflicts with their college classes, they may miss the lectures and have to request an absence.

6) Visiting family

Tebing Tinggi is located in North Sumatra and is home to several tribes with origins from different provinces, such as the Padang tribe. According to data from one informant, *"I am of Padang tribe, so I have family in Padang, the capital city of West Sumatra."* This is just one example of why Gen Z prefer to travel between provinces - to visit their families in other provinces. Many people travel between provinces to visit family and friends who reside in different parts of the country, especially during holidays and special occasions. As [Aslan & Dincer \(2018\)](#) noted, long working hours can leave individuals with less leisure time to spend with their families, and traveling can provide a means for visiting and connecting with them.

7) Try different taste Indonesian culinary

Indonesia has a wide range of cultures and ethnicities, each with its own unique cuisine. The country's diverse range of islands and cultures has contributed to the development of a variety of cuisines and flavors. However, not all dishes are available in every province, and some are only available in their place of origin. For example, *gudeg* is only found in Yogyakarta, and *Serabi Solo* is abundant in Solo. Thus, tourists can enjoy these unique dishes only in their place of origin. Consequently, when the informants travel outside of North Sumatra, they can taste various cuisines from different regions. [Wijaya \(2019\)](#) supported this finding by

stating that food can be used as a strategic tool to promote the country's tourism industry.

8) Know more about tourism or culture in Indonesia

Indonesia is a country with over a thousand tribes, each with its own unique culture that can be a tourism attraction in itself. For instance, the Nias tribe on Nias Island performs a traditional ceremony called *lompat batu*, which is a major draw for visitors. By traveling between provinces, tourists can directly experience the uniqueness of each local culture. This idea is supported by [Sari \(2019\)](#), who suggested that a positive interaction with local people can turn a tourist's disappointment into satisfaction and is a good characteristic of the locals in the places visited.

9) Get good photo spots

The act of taking photos to prove one's visit to a place is common among travelers. [Diehl et al. \(2016\)](#) found that photo-taking can direct greater visual attention to aspects of the experience that one may want to photograph. While many members of Gen Z enjoy traveling and taking photos, this is not a characteristic unique to them and has been a common trend among travelers of all ages in recent years. The popularity of social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok has made sharing photos a popular activity, and many individuals seek out aesthetically pleasing photo spots to share with their friends and followers ([Dimitriou & AbouElgheit, 2019](#)). However, it is important to keep in mind that the benefits of traveling go beyond taking photos, including experiencing new cultures, trying new foods, and meeting new people. Although taking photos can be a fun part of the travel experience, it should not be the sole focus or priority.

There are multiple reasons why people travel between provinces, such as for exploration, visiting loved ones, experiencing unique culinary offerings, conducting business, or gaining knowledge about Indonesian culture and tourism. Similarly, inter-city travel is preferred by some because it is convenient to set departure times, saves time, and is cost-effective. Additionally, taking photos and sharing them on social media is a common way for people to demonstrate that they have visited a particular place.

During their travels, their preferred activities included searching for unique photo spots, experiencing culinary delights, camping, exploring religious sites, engaging in healthy activities, and creating content for their social media accounts. They tended to take their vacations over a few specific time periods,

such as long weekends (Friday to Sunday), weekend getaways (Saturday to Sunday), or single-day trips on Sundays or public holidays.

CONCLUSION

Gen Z residing in Tebing Tinggi showed a preference for traveling between nearby regions rather than visiting popular tourist destinations. This allowed them to benefit from advantages such as cost-effectiveness, convenience in setting departure times, and time-saving. They typically traveled in groups by motorcycle, enabling them to visit various locations for photo-taking and sightseeing. Among their favorite activities were taking photos, camping, and trying out local cuisine. They also made sure to post updates of their travels on social media. The cost of their trips usually ranged from IDR 100.000 to IDR 500.000. Gen Z often traveled for both extrinsic and intrinsic reasons and would travel as much as possible as long as they had friends to accompany them.

The researchers provided some recommendations to Gen Z, the tourism industry, and stakeholders. It is advised that Gen Z should be mindful of their responsibilities as college students, including completing assignments that can have an impact on their studies if they continuously travel without taking their tasks into account. Furthermore, as Gen Z tends to use motorcycles when traveling, they should exercise caution and comply with regulations that apply to motorcycle riders.

The researchers made some recommendations for the tourism industry and stakeholders. We suggested that the industry should keep up with the latest trends and develop tourism spots accordingly. Additionally, stakeholders could provide more facilities such as rest stops and affordable restaurants for motorcycle riders who may become tired after long hours of riding.

It is recommended that future research should focus on exploring the impact of social media on Gen Z's decision to visit tourist destinations they come across on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This is because the data shows that they frequently share their travel activities on social media and some even aspire to become tourism influencers. Additionally, in today's globalized world, it is easy to access information about different places through social media influencers who post about their travels, including tourist spots, restaurants or food vendors, hotels or hostels, and more. Such content can motivate viewers to visit and verify what they have seen on social media.

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