From Tiktok to Travel: The Influence of User Experience in Information System (IS) Service Quality and Digital Engagement Shape Gen Z's Food Tourism Intentions in Malaysia

Nor Afidah Azmi[1*], Roslizawati Ahmad[2], Sitti Aminah Baharuddin [3], Sitti Aminah Baharuddin Fatin Alia Shahar[4]

[1]School of Business, INTI International College Penang,

[2]Jabatan Pengurusan dan Peniagaan, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang

[3]Jabatan Pengurusan dan Peniagaan, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang

[4]School of Business, INTI International College Penang

ABSTRACT

Food and social media have risen in popularity with posting and sharing amongst younger generations. Modern youth represent a level of expertise or comfort with technology. This paper aims to analyse and compare food-tourism sharing behavior in TikTok across. Adopting a quantitative research approach a response from the sample of 315 respondents will be collected among the online consumer which is primary data obtained through questionnaires. The sampling technique was a purposive sampling technique. The data collection method used in this research is allocating an opinion poll online using Google Forms. The findings of this research will be beneficial to tourism marketers in Malaysia by delivering insights into Gen Z's food travel behavior on TikTok, which empower them to grow in strategies in the direction of entice young travelers indirectly boost the branding of food tourism destinations.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary globalized environment, swift digitalization is fundamentally altering various sectors. Hence, in recent years popularity on food tourism has gained great traction (Jujong-il et al., 2025). One of the unique attractions in shaping a differentiated destination image is local food (Li et al., 2020). Due to that, food and social media have risen in popularity with posting and sharing amongst younger generations such as Millennials and Generation Z (Poyoi et al., 2024). Millennials are entire population born between 1982 and 1999 (Twenge, 2010). As stated in Szymkowiak et al., (2021), modern youth represent a level of expertise or comfort with technology because they have never experienced life before the Internet era and at such a young age technology is readily available. He added, multiple sources of information used by young people today in the right way and incredibly fast. Generally, more than 90% of internet users In Malaysian society social networking have become a part of life as they will consume time visit the sites daily (Rehman & Zeb 2022). Studies on a new social media platform, TikTok, have only started to emerge (Tham et al., 2023). TikTok serves not only as an entertainment medium for Gen Z and millennials but is crucial to understand TikTok usage especially across different generational cohorts as TikTok acts as a powerful tool for travel decision-making due to its engaging content format (Zhou et al., 2024). Supported by Mohd & Norsimaa Mustaffa (2023), today Facebook and Tiktok consider effective forms of social networks remarkably influencers. This model considers variables like information quality, system quality and service quality of food content digital engagement which impact consumers' intentions to visit food destinations.

Problem Statement

The digital revolution is radically changing the world we live in. TikTok, Wechat or Kuaishou are the example of new modes of applications (apps), as the vital means of source and brand communication for users and have given innovative kinds of mobile Internet with over 750 million daily active users and act as a representative short-form video platform (Liu et al., 2024). He added, TikTok, also known as Douyin in China and let users share experiences, tastes and preferences of traveling to a massive number of Internet-connected users at the same time continually hooked them by short videos or films on traveling. According to Du et al., (2020) the role of **short-form video platforms**, especially TikTok, **has been paid little attention** especially emphasized by Yao (2024) few studies conducted towards the impact of **food-related short videos** on social media platforms. Tham et al., (2023) added that **studies on the use of TikTok in tourism remain premature** whereas there is a mushrooming body of literature related to social media in tourism. The rapid growth of TikTok as a short-video platform has significantly reshaped how Generation Z discovers food experiences and selects travel destinations. This study is set within the context of Generation Z, who are the most digitally engaged cohort in Malaysia. Supported by Poyoi et al., (2024) there are significant differences in seeking digital information of internet users between cross-generational cohorts. The driving force behind social media are young demographics, which have indicated a strong significance in the growing trend of short video platforms, particularly TikTok (Liu et al., 2024). The researchers emphasize that; there was little research studying on the impact of e-service quality on customer engagement on TikTok platforms among Generation Z in Malaysia. As supported by Liu et al., (2024), there is limited research explored especially among younger users on the connection between short video platforms and travel preferences. The study aims to provide valuable insights for service providers and vendors in the food industry, contributing to marketing tactics and academic resources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intention to visit

According to Polat, (2023) tourists are seen as co-creators of the overall experience because the vitality of experiences is progressively important. Top tourist consumption intentions stimulate by food appearance as a more favorable destination and destination food experience counted as a fundamental tourist attraction (Hashemi et al., 2021). He added that destination's food image is a significant element, resulting from several research in tourists' loyalty to the destination by the investigation about the effects of destination food image on behavioral intentions. Abdou et al., (2022) mentioned, favorable and unfavorable is a classification of behavioral intentions where positive WoM, spending more money on the company's products and services, paying a premium price, and staying loyal to the company's brand demonstrated as favorable behavioral intention while unfavorable behavioral intention comprises of spending less money, leaving the company, spreading negative WoM, and filing lawsuits. As to raise and survive in the highly competitive marketplace, companies should maintain and retain their loyal customers (Abdou et al., 2022). Additionally stated by Thomson et al. (2005), a consumer's attitude involving a brand often refers to one's judgment concerning the brand's quality of the design. Consumers who are not satisfied with a service will inform their experiences to more than three friends that indicated in the studies (Chimpele Kelvin Tsamwa et al., 2019).

Digital engagement (Gen Z)

Today, digital technology has altered the landscape, and the world is experiencing quick growth in all sectors. The word "engagement" highly related to behavior the most common definitions within psychiatry (Lipschitz et al., 2023). The number of "likes", "comments", "shares", and "saves" include in engagement metrics (Zeng et al., 2025). Apart from that, the driving force behind the altered digital landscape, such as social media, are young demographics, which have indicated a strong significance in the growing trend of digital technology on short video platforms, particularly TikTok (Liu et al., 2024). He added that there is limited research explored especially among younger users on the connection between short video platforms and travel preferences. It is relevant due to as cited in (DOSM, 2021; Tjiptono et al., 2020) the highest age group as defined previously goes to generation Z in Malaysia with 29% of the total estimated 32.73 million population in 2020 and cited in (Tjiptono, Khan, Yeong & Kunchamboo, 2020) monthly disposable income with US$327 million (Wei et al., 2023). Apart from that, cited in Wei et al., (2023), the main driver of change in the online landscape leading to the Generation Z

members are known as innovative and creative individuals in digital natives with high technological experience and knowledge. In addition, this generation is very different compared to previous generations who grew up in the internet and mobile technology era shaping consumption behavior patterns (Aenussyifa et al., 2025). He added, their dependence on mobile technology represents in Survey data from Alvara Research Center, 2022 counted as 20.9% of Generation Z spends 7-10 hours per day on online activities which indicates the market potential of digital innovation is very responsive. As a linkage to the attitudes of Generation Z are likely to be influenced by influencer recommendations online reviews and peer trust in social media compared to traditional advertising (Tamara et al., 2023).

Service Quality (Service Quality)

Service quality is long commitment and not just a slogan, it's a lengthy assurance to meet designate growing needs and wishes of the customers continuously (Al Nady et al., 2018).

Cited in (Al-Hawary, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2015; Al-Hawary and Aldaihani, 2016; Al-Hawary et al., 2011; Al-Hawary and Al-Zeaud, 2011; Al-Hawary et al., 2013a; Al-Hawary and Nusair, 2017; Al-Hawary and Batayneh, 2010; Al-Hawary and Alajmi, 2017; Heizer and Render, 1999). "Those economic activities that typically produce an intangible product such as education, entertainment, food and lodging, transportation, insurance, trade, government, financial, real estate, medical repair and maintenance" was the definition of services (Al Nady et al., 2018). The abbreviation used for Service Quality is SERVQUAL (Wang et al., 2015). SERVQUAL quality dimensions consist of ability, courtesy, cleanliness, comfort, and looking friendly, hence the overall service quality of companies is the first study which investigates the strengths and weaknesses (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Some factors lead to customer satisfaction and which, in turn, may lead to behavioral intentions to purchase are the responsibilities for customers' perceptions of quality. These conclusions are encountered from service quality in physics as referring to various studies (Udo et al., 2010). He added, fundamentally, that customers are more likely to stay with a company for long periods due to the satisfaction and contribute to the company profitability with the behavioral intentions that may predict behavior indicating that customer service quality constructions are relevant to behavioral intentions. To remain competitive in business and hence grow, crucial for the companies to understand service quality.

Moreover, Çelik (2021) stated that, **E-S-QUAL** developed by Parasuraman et al. (2005) due to the unavoidability for better evaluation in the emergence of e-service quality. The electronic service quality study then finalized by Parasuraman et al. (2005) updated their traditional SERVQUAL studies to measure e-service quality. Furthermore, information quality, system quality, and service quality exhibit significant correlations in digital engagement with perceived benefits and satisfaction among generation cohort.

Service Quality (Information quality)

Bhagat et al., (2024) study on in the influence of credibility and information quality (IQ) of online food vloggers on consumer attitude and purchase intention towards street food consumption. Report requires information quality which comprises of accuracy, precision, currency, reliability, completeness, conciseness, relevance, understandability, meaningfulness, timeliness, comparability, and format are the desired characteristic to measure IS performance also known as quality of information produced primarily by the system (Alik Alpian & RA Nurlinda, 2023). Information quality direction from food vloggers as consumers is crucial to rely on the information's accuracy and reliability on food-related topics recommendations. The quality of information relies heavily on the credibility of food vloggers granted (Bhagat et al., 2024). Additionally, more authentic information would be necessary for the consumers to believe and to disseminate the product information (Singh & Sharma, 2022).

Service Quality (System Quality)

As cited in DeLone and McLean (2003), it proposed that information and system quality are determinants of behavioral intention (Al-Azawei & Alowayr, 2025). According to Alik Alpian & RA Nurlinda, (2023), system quality determined from the interactions between users and systems result. The first factors to consider is the indicators of information and system quality (Manaf Al-Okaily et al., 2023). Moreover, system quality refers to

the desired features of information processing system metrics comprises of simplicity of access, system flexibility, system integration, response time, user expectations realization, reliability, ease of use and ease of learning (Faisal et al., 2024). Supported by Alik Alpian & RA Nurlinda, (2023), system quality will impact user satisfaction if the user's experience is easy to use and less effort needed to access the system. As stated in research conducted by Manaf Al-Okaily et al., (2023), the duplications of multiple windows that lead to inaccurate results and outputs are among the complaints of the lethargic system and even worsen when the maintenance team are not appropriately addressed user complaints and reports concerning to the system issues. The system quality of time-saving aspect and convenience provide e-commerce shopping rose of the trends for Gen Z and wider space to grow rapidly (Wei et al., 2023). As mentioned in *Mutesix*, (2024) website, content producers effortlessly record, edit, and share quickly as the main fascination through the built-in editing and recording options in TikTok platform. Moreover, customers' visual and sensory stimulate with powerful effects from short-form video content and vital for business ads (Mohd & Norsimaa Mustaffa, 2023).

Underpinning Theory

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The TPB (Ajzen, 1991) remains a central pillar in understanding behavioral intentions. It posits three key determinants: attitude towards behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Recent advancements expand upon this framework. For instance, Ahmad et al., (2024) propose the "extended TPB" incorporating moral obligation as a crucial factor, particularly in health-related contexts. Similarly, De Vries et al. (2022) suggest integrating habit strength for behaviors performed repetitively and automatically.

 Numerous additional factors influence behavioral intentions, including:

- Motivation: Intrinsic motivations, driven by personal goals, and extrinsic motivations, fueled by rewards or recognition, can both drive individuals towards specific behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

- Emotions: Positive emotions associated with a behavior can increase the intention to perform it, while negative emotions can act as deterrents (Osman, 2023).

- Knowledge and information: Understanding the consequences and complexities of a behavior can significantly impact intention (Webb & Sheeran, 2006).

- Context and situational factors: Environmental cues, social influences, and resource availability can dynamically influence how intentions translate into actual behavior Ahmad et al., (2024)
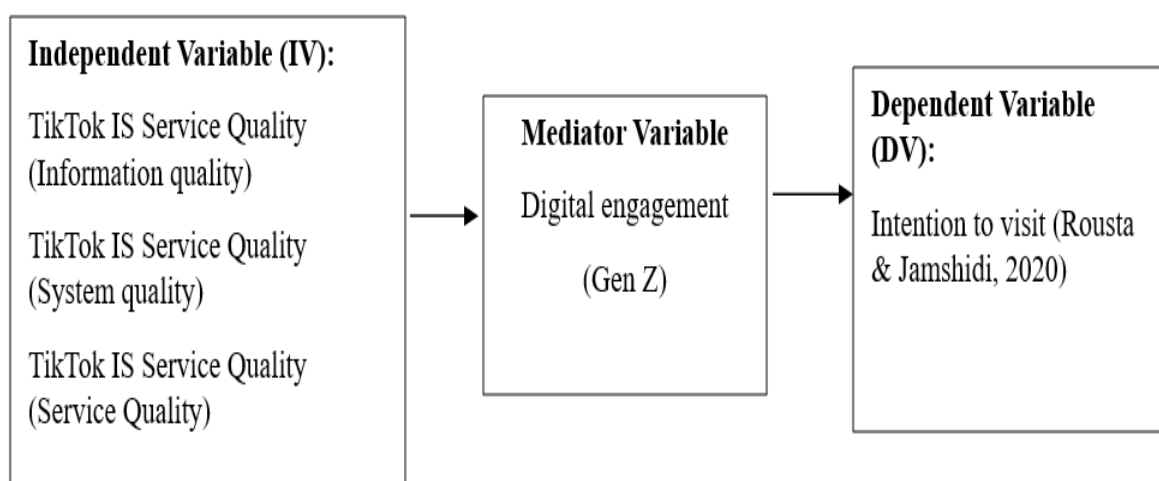
Theoretical Framework

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design Research

This research focuses on TikTok adoption as a means of social media technology based on the perspectives of users in Malaysia and actively use TikTok. Al-Azawei & Alowayr, (2025) recommends choosing an appropriate research design in information system research. Hence, a quantitative research approach is adopted here because data was collected only once. The target respondents for this research are 315 respondents. The type and source of data in this study is quantitative data, which is primary data obtained through questionnaires. The sampling technique will be the purposive sampling technique. The data aggregation method for this research will be by sharing questionnaires online using Google Forms.

Analysis Technique

In this study, data analysis will use the Partial Least Square (PLS) approach. PLS is a constituent or version-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). PLS-SEM was established to appraise the study framework through two steps. First, the external model (measurement) is tried for reliability and validity, including the appraisal of indicator reliability, inside consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, the inner (structural) design is appraised, and the hypothesis tested (Hair et al., 2017). Path analysis is conducted by comparing theoretical and empirical models. The compatibility of them will result in the acceptance of the theoretical model as an alternative policy that can revise the empirical model. PLS is used to describe the relation between dimensions (Parmawati et al., 2018)

PLS-SEM was chosen for various arguments;

(a) Precise, the conceptual structure is complex in terms of the arrangement of the constructs studied and the pathways constructed among them (direct correlation)

(b) PLS-SEM is also a commonly used SEM technique for estimating behavior concepts, and

(c) Fitness method that is not hindered by the total and allocation of construct indicators belonging to the studies model (Henseler et al., 2016)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the benefits of using TikTok for content providers were increasing opportunities to bring new buying experiences to enhance in the community customer-to-customer (C2C) or business-to-customer (B2C) interaction with the TikTok platform. Moreover, this research is to discover the impact of e-service quality towards digital engagement among Generation Z in Malaysia guide intention visits and focus on food destination TikTok platform. This trend allows businesses and content creators to promote their products to consumers in a more reliable way. In recent years, popularity on food tourism has gained great power. The findings demonstrate a paradigm shift in service quality displaying Generation Z users foster a new dimension in shaping user experience, via usability outweigh traditional interpersonal service and interface aesthetics

Besides the contributions of the study, some limitations are pointed out for improvement in future studies. Firstly, the scope of the study was only carried out in Malaysia this will be improved if future studies are carried out in other country and on a larger scale. Second, the Generation cohorts should be wider and compare into different categories between Millennials and Gen Z are also likely to affect the behavior of TikTok users. Finally, to explain more of the independent variable of the study, future research models should increase the dimension proposed.

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