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Development and Pilot Validation of an Instrument Measuring Generation Z's Behavioral Intention Towards Festival Events

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Abstract: Generation Z has become an important consumer segment in the festival industry; therefore, there is a need to develop a reliable instrument to measure the factors influencing their behavioral intention towards festival events. The study aimed to design and conduct a preliminary validation of a measurement instrument comprising four constructs: media influence, social interaction, festival image, and behavioral intention. A quantitative pilot study was conducted with 36 Generation Z respondents, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Cronbach's Alpha. The results revealed satisfactory internal consistency for all constructs (α = 0.864-0.933), indicating that the proposed instrument is reliable and suitable for future large-scale empirical investigations. The validated instrument provides a methodological base for future research on Generation Z festival behavior.

Keywords: *Festivals, Gen Z, Behavioral Intention, Media Influence, Festival Image, Instrument Development, Pilot Study, Measurement Validation*

1. Introduction and Background

The growth of the experiential economy has turned festivals from entertainment-based activities into important platforms for cultural engagement, social interaction, and identity development. Festivals have become increasingly prominent within contemporary tourism and leisure, generating economic, tourism and sociocultural benefits for destinations and communities (Collins & Potoglou, 2019). This growing relevance is particularly evident among Generation Z, for whom festivals have become an important leisure and tourism activity (Iványi, 2021). Generation Z, as digital natives, actively utilises social media to seek information, share experiences, and express their identities during festivals, making digital engagement an integral part of the overall festival experience (Hyun et al., 2025; Stanković et al., 2025). The decisions to participate are influenced by multiple variables, including media influence, social interaction, and festival image (Dunne et al., 2023; Iványi, 2021; Stanković et al., 2025).

Recent studies have indicated that Generation Z prefers festivals that offer authentic, engaging, and technology-enhanced experiences while encouraging meaningful social interaction and digital participation (Das et al., 2026; Wang & Iahad, 2025). Social media, influencer marketing and digital platforms are important for influencing festival image, evaluating event quality and influencing behavioural intentions among younger consumers (Alexandra & Choirisa, 2024; Arıcı & Eker, 2026; Na & Zakaria, 2024; Seyfi et al., 2024; Söderlund-Strand & Robertson, 2020; Swandewi et al., 2025).

The relationships between media influence, social interaction, festival image and behavioral intention have been studied in the setting of tourism and event research, but these constructs have primarily been examined in specific contexts such as residents' perceptions, destination image, revisit intention or social media marketing, rather than an integrated measurement framework for festival attendees (Li et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021; Fong et al., 2025). However, the development and validation of an integrated measurement instrument to assess Generation Z's behavioral intention towards festivals has received little attention (Fong et al., 2025).

Existing measurement instruments have largely been adapted from tourism, hospitality and consumer behavior research with relatively limited attention paid to developing and validating measurement scales

specifically for festival experiences and Generation Z. There are a few studies that have developed and validated measurement instruments in tourism and festival contexts. Nevertheless, the instruments were developed for different settings and populations, indicating that validation in the specific context is needed before being applied to Generation Z festival attendees in Malaysia (Olivier et al., 2023; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2024).

Considering the increasing relevance of Generation Z as an important segment of festival consumers, a valid and context-specific measurement instrument is necessary before conducting large-scale empirical research. Hence, the objective of this research is to develop and preliminarily validate a scale of Generation Z's behavioural intention towards festivals and special events in a pilot study. The validated instrument will be a reliable tool for researchers and practitioners to use in future empirical investigations in the festival and event context. This study contributes to the literature by providing a reliable and contextually validated measurement instrument that can be used to facilitate future research on Generation Z behavioural intention towards festival events, particularly within the Malaysian context.

Research Objectives:

- To examine the internal consistency and reliability of the proposed measurement instrument through a pilot study involving Generation Z respondents.
- To provide a validated instrument for future empirical investigations on festival participation among Generation Z.

2. Literature Review

Festival Events

According to Chen and Yu (2024), a festival is defined as community-based, periodic events that celebrate themes such as cultural, religious, artistic, or recreational activities while offering immersive experiences for participants. Festivals as an important component of the experience economy, create meaningful social, cultural and emotional experiences that enhance visitor satisfaction and encourage behavioural intentions (Ambalika et al., 2025). The quality of the programme, onsite facilities, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) are identified as important factors affecting attendance, satisfaction, and revisit intention, especially among the younger generations (Ho et al., 2022; Sriwanna & Meeprom, 2026; Tan et al., 2023).

Modern festivals have evolved from one-off events into the use of interactive and digital platforms to enhance visitor engagement before, during and after the event (Stoleriu et al., 2023; Fernandes & Krolikowska, 2022). Moreover, memorable experiences, visitor satisfaction and long-term loyalty are achieved through festival experiences including entertainment, social interactions and personal enjoyment, along with tangible and intangible attributes of the event (Darvishmotevali et al., 2022; Erhan & Bangun, 2024; Gómez et al., 2021).

In Malaysia, festivals play a significant role in promoting tourism through the dissemination of cultural heritage and the attraction of local and foreign tourists (Tan et al., 2020). The sustainability of festivals and their contribution to tourism, community development, and the national economy have been further strengthened by government support, strategic marketing, and effective event management (Ghazali et al., 2025; Abhirami & Vineeth, 2025; Abu Talib et al., 2024). While major commercial gatherings such as the Good Vibes Music Festival demonstrate how modern events attract younger demographics while supporting local economic development (Abu Talib et al., 2024; Goh & Teh, 2022), there is an increasing prominence of uniquely Malaysian Gen Z–driven, grassroots cultural phenomena. A prime example is *Keretapi Sarong*, a viral public transport flash mob that evolved into a national Malaysia Day tradition where thousands of youth dress in traditional sarongs, batik, and kain pelikat to board urban transit trains together (Rosli et al., 2022). This event serves as a real-world reflection of how traditional cultural preservation, digital media influence, and active youth social interaction converge in the contemporary Malaysian landscape, fostering community identity, intergenerational heritage transmission, and youth-led domestic tourism engagement.

Generation Z as Festival Consumers

Generation Z refers to those born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s and is recognised as the first generation of true digital natives (Abdullah et al., 2024; Hoo et al., 2024). They have grown up in an era with almost universal internet access and fast-paced technology, and they are highly dependent on digital platforms

and social networks for communication, information search, and self-expression (Fauzi et al., 2022; Hassan et al., 2025). Content created by peers, online reviews, and social media activities strongly shape their perceptions of festivals and special events (Yoo & Lee, 2025).

As festival-goers, Generation Z looks for authentic, meaningful and immersive experiences that foster social interaction and personal expression (Subramaniam & Thuraiselvam, 2025). They are active content creators on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, making social media an important part of their overall festival experience (Prasanna & Priyanka, 2024; Tseng et al., 2024). Research also shows that authenticity, emotional engagement, and opportunities for content creation significantly influence their event preferences and participation decisions (Blaži, 2025; Nareswari & Ratnawati, 2025; Pentescu, 2023).

Moreover, Generation Z desires experiences that facilitate personal development, sustainability and technology-enabled participation such as smart tourism applications (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022). Their need for online platforms to meet emotional needs and satisfy peer validation is an indication of the increasing importance of the experience economy where the value of the event is influenced by online influence and personal experiences (Luo, 2025; Stanković et al., 2025). Therefore, event organizers should design authentic, technology-driven festival experiences that integrate both physical and digital engagement to meet the expectations of Generation Z (Iványi & Bíró-Szigeti, 2020; Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023).

Behavioral Intention

Behavioral intention refers to an individual's willingness or intention to engage in a particular behavior and is widely recognized as an important predictor of subsequent behavior. In the festival context, behavioral intention may include the intention to attend, revisit, recommend or engage with a festival (Darvishmotevali et al., 2022; Gorgadze et al., 2021). Previous studies have shown that behavioral intention is associated with future attendance, revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth, reflecting participants' potential future engagement with festivals (Gorgadze et al., 2021; Hinek & Papp-Váry, 2024; Lamari & Bouslama, 2025). For Generation Z, behavioral intention may also extend to digital participation, sharing festival experiences and promoting events through social media (Zhu et al., 2024).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a relevant theoretical foundation for understanding behavioral intention. TPB proposes that intention is determined by attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control, which reflect individuals' behavioral, normative and control beliefs regarding a particular behavior (Ajzen, 2020; Hagger & Hamilton, 2025). The theory can also be extended by incorporating additional context-specific factors when these provide theoretically relevant explanations of behavioral intention.

Media Influence

Media influence is the ability of communication channels to shape individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours by delivering information and persuasive content (Singh et al., 2023). In the case of festivals, perceptions of event quality, image, and value of potential attendees before attending are affected by both traditional and digital media (Hu & Abdullah, 2026; Li et al., 2018; Setiawan et al., 2022). Digital channels are particularly relevant for Generation Z, who rely heavily on Instagram, TikTok and other social media channels for festival information and are strongly influenced in their decisions to attend (Abdul Jabar et al., 2024; Lamari & Bouslama, 2025).

Influencer marketing, online reviews and content created by users further enhance media influence by providing social validation and electronic word-of-mouth that enhance trust, engagement and behavioural intention (Di Dalmazi et al., 2024; Salmiah et al., 2024; Tarigan et al., 2026; Zollo et al., 2021). An example of festivals in Malaysia is the Rainforest World Music Festival that has proved influencer marketing can raise awareness of the event and encourage the younger audience to join the event (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021).

From a TPB perspective, such media exposure may contribute to the formation of behavioral beliefs by providing information and persuasive cues that shape individuals' evaluations of festival participation. Therefore, positive and credible media content may contribute to more favorable attitudes and stronger behavioral intentions towards festival attendance. Festival organizers should consequently encourage participants to share their experiences through digital platforms, as user-generated content can strengthen

awareness, engagement and longer-term festival relationships (Habachi et al., 2024; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Putra, 2025).

Social Interaction

Social interaction is the process through which people exchange information, share experiences, and develop a sense of belonging within a social group. In the context of festivals, interactions among visitors, event crews, and companions contribute to memorable experiences, visitor satisfaction, and stronger emotional bonds (Li et al., 2025; Yin et al., 2023). Digital platforms also allow these interactions to be extended beyond the event itself, allowing participants to maintain relationships and engage with festival communities before and after the event (Barbe et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024).

Previous studies suggest that social interaction strengthens social capital by promoting cooperation, reciprocity, and a sense of community among festival participants (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2021; Wood & Kinnunen, 2020). Festivals also promote social and cultural inclusion through the gathering of diverse groups to share common experiences, thus encouraging social cohesion and community sustainability (Gradinaru, 2021; Hassanli et al., 2021; Quinn et al., 2021; Stevenson, 2021).

For Generation Z, social interaction extends beyond face-to-face communication to include digital engagement and online content sharing (Barbe et al., 2020). Within the TPB perspective, social interaction can be primarily associated with normative beliefs and subjective norms. The preferences, approval and participation of friends and peers may create social expectations regarding festival attendance, while opportunities to participate with others may strengthen the perceived social value of attending.

Thus, social interaction provides a contextual basis for understanding how peer influence, social validation and opportunities for shared experiences may contribute to Generation Z's behavioral intention. Providing opportunities for peer interaction and digital participation may therefore encourage future engagement, repeat attendance and positive word-of-mouth (Li et al., 2025; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Salmiah et al., 2024; Sirianni & Sabbagh, 2020; Wang et al., 2024).

Festival Image

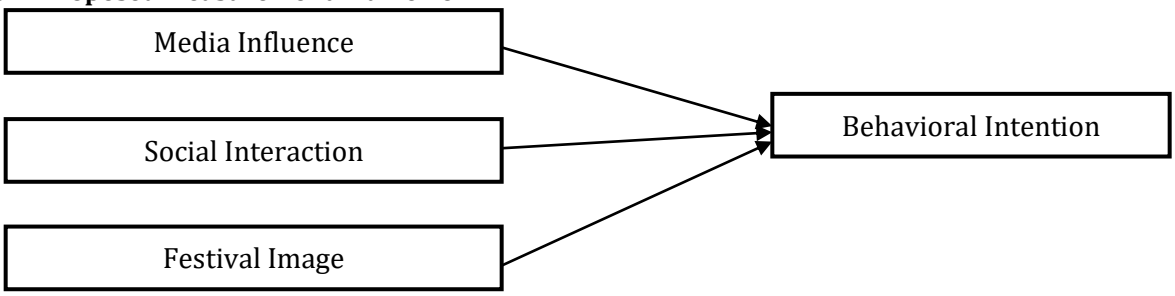
Festival image refers to visitors' overall perceptions and evaluations of a festival, shaped by cognitive and emotional reactions to the event (Chen & Yu, 2024). The positive image of a festival improves the perceived quality, authenticity, and emotional attachment, leading to increased visitor satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intentions (Supriono & Yulianto, 2021). Previous studies have shown that high-quality programs, physical facilities and authentic cultural experiences are important in creating a favourable image of the festival and enhancing visitors' emotional connection with the event (Chen & Yu, 2024; Supriono & Yulianto, 2021).

From a TPB perspective, festival image can be related to behavioural beliefs and the formation of attitude towards festival participation. A favourable image based on perceptions of quality, attractiveness, authenticity and uniqueness may lead individuals to form more positive evaluations of attending the festival, which may subsequently contribute to stronger behavioural intention. In addition to influencing the event experience, festivals can contribute to destination branding through the promotion of local culture and the attraction of domestic and international visitors (Abou-Shouk et al., 2024; Amorim et al.,2020).

The Malaysian government has also used cultural festivals to reinforce the country's tourism image and promote tourism development through initiatives such as the Malaysia Truly Asia campaign (Ayob, 2003). Festivals can further contribute to regional economic development through cultural heritage preservation and the encouragement of year-round tourism activities (Yalçınkaya & Çaylan, 2026).

Unlike one-off special events, festivals are recurring and culturally embedded, allowing organizers to build stronger emotional connections and longer-term relationships with visitors (Supriono & Yulianto, 2021). Maintaining a positive festival image through authentic cultural experiences and effective event management is therefore important in strengthening positive evaluations, repeat attendance, visitor loyalty and behavioural intentions.

Figure 1: Proposed Measurement Framework



3. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative pilot survey to develop and conduct a preliminary validation of a measurement instrument assessing the behavioural intention of Generation Z towards festival events. The questionnaire was developed based on a thorough review of the literature and comprised four primary constructs: Media Influence, Social Interaction, Festival Image, and Behavioural Intention. Measurement items were adapted from established scales and refined to suit the Malaysian Generation Z context. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. Before distribution, the questionnaire underwent expert review to establish content validity (Connelly, 2008).

Data collection for the pilot study was conducted online using a self-administered web-based survey distributed across a university campus. A convenience sampling technique was employed, targeting Generation Z students who had experience attending local festival events. The digital survey link was disseminated through online campus platforms and student messaging channels. Screening questions were embedded at the start of the questionnaire to verify that respondents belonged to the Generation Z segment and had attended at least one festival before participating in a past event.

A total of 36 eligible Generation Z respondents completed the pilot survey. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics were utilized to provide an overview of respondent characteristics, while internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with values of 0.70 or above considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2022). The findings were used to confirm the reliability and suitability of the instrument for future large-scale empirical research.

Figure 2: Development of Measurement Instrument

Construct	Operational Definition	Source of Measurement Items	No. of Items	Adaptation
Media Influence	The extent to which digital media, social media platforms, online reviews, and promotional content influence Generation Z's perceptions and intention to attend festivals and special events.	Li et al. (2018); Kwok et al. (2017)	7	Adapted and modified to suit the Malaysian festival context.
Social Interaction	The degree to which opportunities for interaction, relationship building, and shared experiences with family, friends, and other festival attendees influence participation intention.	Wang et al. (2024); Li et al. (2025); Barbe et al. (2020)	7	Items adapted to reflect festival-based social experiences among Generation Z.

Construct	Operational Definition	Source of Measurement Items	No. of Items	Adaptation
Festival Image	Overall perception of the attractiveness, uniqueness, quality, and reputation of a festival that shapes visitors' evaluation and intention to participate.	Koo, Byon & Baker (2014); Kim et al. (2017); Chen & Yu (2024); Supriono & Yulianto (2021)	6	Items modified to capture the cognitive and affective image of festivals.
Behavioural Intention	The likelihood that Generation Z intends to attend, revisit, and recommend festivals and special events in the future.	Koo et al. (2014); Gorgadze et al. (2021); Lamari & Bouslama (2025)	7	Adapted to measure intention to participate in festivals and special events.

The measurement instrument was developed from an extensive review of the festival, tourism, event management and consumer behavior literature. This study combined measurement items from several validated studies to better capture the multidimensional nature of Generation Z's behavioral intention towards festival events. Several items were slightly modified in wording to ensure contextual relevance in the Malaysian festival industry while maintaining the original conceptual meaning of each construct.

4. Findings

Respondents' Profile

A total of 36 Generation Z respondents participated in this pilot study. The respondents comprised 29 females (80.6%) and 7 males (19.4%). Most respondents were aged between 22 and 23 years (58.3%), followed by 20–21 years (30.6%) and 24 years and above (11.1%). In terms of festival experience, the majority had attended more than 10 festivals or special events (33.3%), followed by 3–5 events (27.8%), 6–10 events (27.8%), and 1–2 events (11.1%) during the past two years. This indicates that the respondents possessed relevant festival experience and were considered appropriate participants for evaluating the proposed measurement instrument.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 36)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	7	19.4
	Female	29	80.6
Age	20–21 years	11	30.6
	22–23 years	21	58.3
	24 years and above	4	11.1
Festival Attendance (Past Two Years)	1–2 events	4	11.1
	3–5 events	10	27.8
	6–10 events	10	27.8
	More than 10 events	12	33.3

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the proposed measurement instrument. As presented in Table 2, all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold value of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of the Measurement Instrument

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Media Influence	7	0.864	Good
Social Interaction	7	0.871	Good
Festival Image	6	0.872	Good
Behavioural Intention	7	0.933	Excellent

Overall, the findings indicate that all constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, suggesting that the proposed measurement instrument is reliable and appropriate for use in the main study.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were performed to examine respondents' overall responses to the proposed measurement instrument. As shown in Table 3, all constructs recorded high mean scores, indicating positive responses and suggesting that the questionnaire items were clearly understood by the respondents.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the Measurement Instrument

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Media Influence	4.39	0.61	High
Social Interaction	4.14	0.71	High
Festival Image	4.34	0.60	High
Behavioural Intention	4.38	0.59	High

Overall, respondents reported high levels of agreement across all constructs, indicating that the proposed measurement instrument was appropriate, understandable, and relevant for measuring Generation Z's behavioural intention towards festivals and special events. The pilot study successfully achieved its objective of evaluating the preliminary reliability of the proposed measurement instrument. Prior to assessing scale reliability, data normality was evaluated by examining the skewness and kurtosis values for all construct items.

All values fell within the acceptable thresholds of ±2.0 for skewness and ±2.0 for kurtosis, confirming that the data satisfied the assumption of normal distribution (Hair et al., 2022). All constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.864 to 0.933. In addition, all constructs recorded high mean scores, suggesting that respondents clearly understood the questionnaire items and responded consistently. These findings indicate that the proposed measurement instrument is reliable and suitable for future large-scale empirical research involving Generation Z.

5. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

The findings have practical implications for festival organizers and tourism stakeholders. The strong influence of media, social interaction and festival image suggests that participation not only depends on the event program but also on how festivals are communicated, experienced and perceived.

Festival organizers should strengthen digital and social media strategies through engaging short-form content, behind-the-scenes materials, attendee testimonials and user-generated content to build awareness, credibility and anticipation. Moreover, organizers should incorporate social interaction into event design through group activities, interactive installations, social spaces and collaborative experiences that encourage Generation Z to attend and participate with friends. Event organizers should also create a clear and consistent festival image across all promotional communication and the actual event experience. Branding, entertainment, venue design and activities should reflect a distinctive identity that is relevant to Generation Z.

The findings also have implications for policymakers and tourism organizations such as Tourism Malaysia. The identified factors can be used for the development of youth-oriented festival strategies, promotional campaigns and support programs. Tourism stakeholders could use digital platforms and youth-focused content to position

Malaysian festivals as attractive social and experiential destinations for younger audiences. The measurement instrument could also be used as a baseline to gauge Generation Z's perceptions and intentions to participate in government-supported festivals and tourism events.

As this study represents a preliminary pilot validation, future research should test the instrument using larger and more representative samples and further examine factors such as perceived value, authenticity, event experience and satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the event management literature by developing and preliminarily validating an integrated measurement instrument for assessing Generation Z's behavioral intention towards festival events. The pilot findings indicate the instrument had good internal consistency and provided preliminary evidence for the instrument being appropriate for further large-scale empirical investigations.

The instrument provides researchers and practitioners with a framework for examining the evolving preferences and participation behavior of Generation Z in the current festival context. Additionally, given the preliminary nature of the validation process it provides opportunities to identify possible inadequacies in measures used to capture constructs and the structure of the instrument prior to their application at large scales.

Further studies are needed to fully establish the validity of this instrument through larger and more diverse samples within different contexts and festivals. A pre-validated instrument reduces the chances of making structural and measurement errors when embarking upon high-budget and nationally significant research initiatives into festival events in Malaysia.

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