

The Influence of Social Media Influencer Attributes on Travel Booking Intention Among Generation Z in India and Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Social media influencers have become an important source of travel information for Generation Z (Gen Z), particularly as social media increasingly shapes how young travellers evaluate destinations and accommodation options. However, limited evidence explains how specific influencer attributes influence platform-specific booking intention among Generation Z in particularly in Asian contexts. This study examines the influence of influencer credibility, authenticity, and content quality on Gen Z's booking intention toward Airbnb. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 104 Gen Z social media users, primarily from India and Malaysia. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$). The regression model was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and explained 45% of the variance in booking intention ($R^2 = 0.45$), supporting H1. The findings indicate that favourable perceptions of influencer attributes are associated with stronger Airbnb booking intentions. Therefore, accommodation platforms should prioritise credible, authentic, and high-quality influencer content when targeting Gen Z travellers.

Keywords: Airbnb; Booking Intention; Gen Z; Influencer Marketing; Social Media; Travel Behavior; User-Generated Content

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally reshaped how travellers search for information, form destination images, and make booking decisions. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become key touchpoints throughout the travel customer journey, providing visually rich and experience-based content that influences destination and service awareness, evaluation, and selection (Esmaili & Ferdowsi, 2026). Within this digital environment, social media influencers, particularly travel social media influencers (TSMIs), have emerged as important intermediaries who translate destinations and brands into relatable narratives through personal storytelling, visual content, and practical information (Fielden & Holch, 2022). Influencers' perceived credibility and authenticity, as well as the quality and usefulness of their content, may shape how followers process tourism-related information and subsequently influence their travel and booking decisions (Pop et al., 2021).

Generation Z (Gen Z) is particularly embedded in this influencer-driven digital environment. As digital natives, Gen Z travellers actively use social media and frequently rely on user-generated and influencer-generated content for travel inspiration and information. Their engagement tends to increase when influencer content is perceived as authentic, visually appealing, and experience-based (Carvalho & Gonçalves Rodrigues, 2026). Recent tourism and psychology studies indicate that engagement with influencer content can stimulate parasocial interaction, flow experiences, and mental imagery, which may subsequently strengthen destination image and visit intentions (Esmaili & Ferdowsi, 2026). However, influencer effectiveness is not automatic. Evidence suggests that the impact of influencer communication depends on factors such as source credibility, narrative style, and transparency, and that exposure to influencer content does not necessarily translate into behavioural intention (Fielden & Holch, 2022; Mangan & Flaherty, 2021).

These dynamics are particularly relevant to platform-based accommodation services such as Airbnb, which depend heavily on digital visibility, consumer trust, and experience-based value. Airbnb is associated with unique accommodation, local immersion, and personalised experiences that may appeal to Gen Z travellers seeking memorable and shareable travel experiences (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022). Influencer-generated content showcasing distinctive properties, neighbourhoods, and host interactions may reinforce this positioning by shaping cognitive evaluations, such as perceived information quality and risk, as well as affective responses, such as excitement and attachment (Esmaili & Ferdowsi, 2026; Pop et al., 2021). Nevertheless, whether positive influencer content translates into platform-specific behaviour, such as booking through Airbnb, may depend on how Gen Z consumers evaluate influencer credibility, authenticity, and content quality.

Despite the growing body of research on influencer marketing in tourism, several gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly examined destination image, general travel intention, or intentions to visit particular destinations, while platform-specific accommodation booking intentions have received comparatively limited attention (Esmaili & Ferdowsi, 2026). Second, research on Gen Z and influencer marketing has often focused on Western or single-country contexts, leaving emerging Asian markets relatively underexplored despite their high levels of digital adoption (Carvalho & Gonçalves Rodrigues, 2026; Pop et al., 2021). Third, although recent studies have examined psychological mechanisms such as flow, parasocial interaction, and information processing, influencer effects are frequently treated as a broad construct rather than being examined through specific attributes such as credibility, authenticity,

and content quality (Esmaili & Ferdowsi, 2026; Fielden & Holch, 2022). Consequently, empirical evidence remains limited regarding how these specific influencer attributes affect Gen Z's intention to book through accommodation platforms such as Airbnb, particularly in India and Malaysia.

To address these gaps, this study examines the influence of perceived influencer credibility, authenticity, and content quality on Gen Z's intention to book accommodation through Airbnb. The study focuses primarily on Gen Z consumers in India and Malaysia, two Asian markets that remain relatively underexplored in the influencer marketing and tourism literature. Accordingly, this study develops and empirically tests a conceptual framework explaining the direct relationship between influencer attributes and Airbnb booking intention among Gen Z consumers.

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. Theoretically, it extends influencer marketing and Gen Z travel research by examining the relationship between specific influencer attributes credibility, authenticity, and content quality—and platform-specific booking intention. Empirically, it provides evidence from respondents primarily based in India and Malaysia, contributing to the understanding of influencer marketing within Asian tourism contexts. Practically, the findings may help Airbnb and similar accommodation platforms design influencer collaborations that emphasise credibility, authenticity, and high-quality content to support booking intention among Gen Z consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generational differences provide an important perspective for understanding tourism consumer behaviour, particularly as digitalisation continues to reshape information search and decision-making. Generations X, Y, and Z differ in their expectations, values, technology use, and preferred sources of travel information (Ivancsón Horváth et al., 2025). Orabi (2022) also examined generational differences in travel decision-making, providing a broader perspective on how travel preferences and decision-making processes may vary across age cohorts. Younger generations, particularly Generation Z (Gen Z), are highly connected to digital environments and increasingly rely on social media, online reviews, and mobile platforms when searching for travel information and evaluating tourism products and services (Bilan et al., 2024; Ivancsón Horváth et al., 2025). This digital orientation makes Gen Z particularly relevant for examining the influence of social media content on travel-related decision-making.

The growing integration of digital technologies into tourism has further transformed how travel information and services are delivered. Buhalis and Amaranggana (2014) introduced the concept of smart tourism destinations, highlighting the integration of information and communication technologies into tourism experiences. Similarly, Danyi et al. (2020) discussed the integration of artificial intelligence into tourism, with particular attention to the needs of Generation Z. Miskolczi et al. (2025) explored Gen Z's perceptions of future travel experiences, while Wee (2019) examined transformative experiences in educational travel among younger travellers. Together, these studies provide a broader understanding of the technological developments and experiential considerations relevant to Gen Z tourism behaviour.

Social media has transformed the way tourism information is created, distributed, and consumed. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube enable travellers to access visual and experience-based information that may shape destination perceptions, accommodation evaluations, and behavioural intentions. Online reviews,

user-generated content, and social media impressions have consequently become important information sources throughout the travel decision-making process (Bilan et al., 2024; Mamengko et al., 2024). For Gen Z consumers, who are accustomed to interactive and visually oriented digital environments, social media provides not only travel inspiration but also information that can support the evaluation of travel products and services (D'Arco et al., 2023).

Within this environment, social media influencers have emerged as important sources of tourism-related information. Influencers can function as digital opinion leaders who communicate personal experiences, recommendations, and evaluations to their followers. Their influence is partly derived from the relationships they develop with audiences through consistent and experience-based content (Leung et al., 2022; Lou, 2022). Unlike conventional advertising, influencer communication often incorporates personal narratives and perceived first-hand experiences, which may make promotional information appear more relatable to consumers.

The effectiveness of influencer communication, however, depends on how audiences perceive the influencer and the content being presented. Credibility represents the extent to which an influencer is perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable, while authenticity reflects whether the influencer's communication is perceived as genuine and consistent with their personal identity and experiences. Content quality relates to the relevance, usefulness, clarity, and attractiveness of the information communicated. These attributes can influence how consumers evaluate influencer-generated information and whether such information contributes to subsequent behavioural intentions (Carvalho & Gonçalves Rodrigues, 2026; Leung et al., 2022; Lou, 2022).

Credibility is particularly important in travel-related decision-making because consumers frequently rely on information from sources they perceive as reliable when evaluating unfamiliar destinations, services, and accommodation options. Influencer recommendations perceived as credible may reduce uncertainty and provide consumers with greater confidence when considering travel alternatives. However, credibility may decline when influencer communication is perceived as excessively commercial or inconsistent with the influencer's usual content. Research indicates that the perceived commercial orientation and disclosure of sponsored content can affect consumers' evaluations of influencer communication (Carvalho & Gonçalves Rodrigues, 2026; De Veirman & Hudders, 2020).

Authenticity is similarly relevant because Gen Z consumers tend to value communication that appears genuine, relatable, and experience-based. Travel content that reflects personal experiences may enable consumers to evaluate destinations and accommodation from the perspective of another traveller rather than relying exclusively on formal promotional information. Gen Z's preference for authentic and locally oriented travel experiences further strengthens the relevance of authentic influencer communication in tourism contexts (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018).

Content quality represents another important dimension of influencer effectiveness. High-quality influencer content can combine visual appeal with useful information about destinations, accommodation, accessibility, local experiences, and other aspects of travel. Carvalho and Gonçalves Rodrigues (2026) found that the enjoyability and originality of travel-related social media content can enhance its perceived usefulness and credibility among Gen Z consumers. Therefore, influencer content that is informative,

relevant, visually engaging, and experience-based may be more effective in supporting consumers' travel evaluations and behavioural intentions.

Beyond technological convenience and experiential considerations, tourism research has also examined environmental awareness and sustainability-related values among younger travellers. [Cini and Passafaro \(2019\)](#) explored young people's perspectives on ecotourism, while [Pinho and Gomes \(2023\)](#) examined Generation Z in relation to sustainable tourism. These studies provide a broader perspective on the diversity of values that may be relevant to younger travellers. Although environmental sustainability is not directly measured in the present study, this literature highlights the importance of recognising that Gen Z travel preferences may extend beyond convenience and technological accessibility.

These influencer attributes are particularly relevant to accommodation platforms such as Airbnb. Unlike standardised accommodation services, Airbnb offers diverse properties and experience-based accommodation options, which may create greater variation in consumers' expectations and evaluations. Social media influencers can communicate these experiences through visual content, personal narratives, and practical information, potentially helping consumers assess whether particular accommodation options correspond with their preferences. For Gen Z consumers, such content may be particularly influential because social media is closely integrated into their travel information search and decision-making processes.

Previous research has established that social media influencers can affect consumers' travel decisions and behavioural intentions ([Pop et al., 2021](#)). Nevertheless, much of the existing tourism literature has focused on destination image, destination visit intention, general travel behaviour, or broader influencer effectiveness. Comparatively less attention has been given to platform-specific accommodation booking intention, particularly among Gen Z consumers in Asian contexts. Furthermore, credibility, authenticity, and content quality are often discussed as characteristics of influencer effectiveness, but their combined influence on booking intention toward accommodation platforms such as Airbnb requires further empirical examination.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises influencer attributes through three key dimensions: credibility, authenticity, and content quality. These attributes are expected to influence how Gen Z consumers evaluate influencer-generated travel information and, consequently, their intention to book accommodation through Airbnb. Examining this relationship provides a focused basis for understanding the role of influencer marketing in platform-based tourism decision-making among Gen Z consumers primarily in India and Malaysia.

Hypotheses Development

Social media influencers can shape consumers' travel decisions by providing experience-based information, recommendations, and visual representations of destinations and accommodation. Their effectiveness depends on attributes such as credibility, authenticity, and content quality, which may influence how consumers evaluate travel-related information and develop behavioural intentions ([Carvalho & Gonçalves Rodrigues, 2026](#); [Leung et al., 2022](#); [Lou, 2022](#)).

For Gen Z consumers, these attributes are particularly relevant because social media is closely integrated into their travel information search and decision-making processes. Influencer content perceived as credible may increase confidence in the information provided, while authentic communication may make travel experiences appear more

relatable and genuine. High-quality content may further support decision-making by providing relevant, useful, and visually engaging information about accommodation experiences.

In the context of Airbnb, favourable perceptions of these influencer attributes may strengthen consumers' evaluations of accommodation options and increase their willingness to make a booking. Influencer-generated content that is perceived as credible, authentic, and informative may reduce uncertainty and provide experience-based information that supports accommodation decision-making. Therefore, this study proposes that influencer attributes have a significant effect on Gen Z consumers' booking intention toward Airbnb. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are formulated:

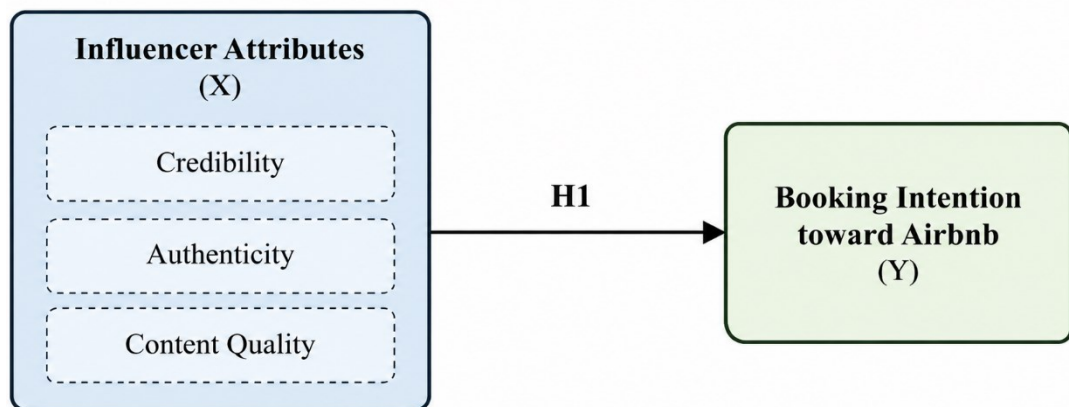
H0: Influencer attributes do not have a significant effect on booking intention toward Airbnb among Gen Z consumers.

H1: Influencer attributes have a significant effect on booking intention toward Airbnb among Gen Z consumers.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature and hypotheses developed above, this study proposes a direct relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention toward Airbnb. Influencer attributes are represented by three dimensions—credibility, authenticity, and content quality—while booking intention toward Airbnb represents the dependent variable. The proposed relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Framework



RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the effect of social media influencer attributes on Generation Z's (Gen Z) booking intention toward Airbnb. The quantitative approach enabled the study variables to be measured systematically and the hypothesised relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention to be statistically tested. A cross-sectional design was adopted because data were collected from respondents at a single point in time.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Gen Z social media users who had been exposed to travel-related influencer content and were familiar with online accommodation platforms such as Airbnb. The respondents were primarily from India and Malaysia. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed, with participants selected based on their accessibility and relevance to the research criteria.

A total of 104 valid responses were collected and included in the analysis. The respondents represented the target population relevant to examining perceptions of social media influencer attributes and booking intention toward Airbnb.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire consisting of five sections. The first section collected respondents' demographic information, including age, country of residence, gender, education level, occupation, travel budget, and annual travel frequency. The second section examined respondents' social media and travel behaviour, including their preferred social media platforms, exposure to travel-related content, engagement with travel influencers, and previous Airbnb booking experience.

The third section measured social media influencer attributes, focusing on three dimensions: credibility, authenticity, and content quality. The fourth section assessed respondents' trust in Airbnb, while the fifth section measured their booking intention toward Airbnb. All attitudinal items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Influencer attributes served as the independent variable, while booking intention toward Airbnb served as the dependent variable in the hypothesis testing. Trust in Airbnb was measured descriptively but was not included as a predictor or mediator in the regression model.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected through an online survey distributed primarily to Gen Z respondents in India and Malaysia. Online survey administration was considered appropriate because the target respondents were digitally active social media users and the study focused on their exposure to online travel and influencer content.

Following data collection, the responses were screened for completeness and consistency. A total of 104 valid responses were retained for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe respondents' demographic characteristics and social media and travel behaviour. Means and standard deviations were calculated to summarise respondents' perceptions of the study constructs.

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales, with a value of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention toward Airbnb. Simple linear regression was subsequently used to determine whether influencer attributes significantly predicted Gen Z consumers' booking intention toward Airbnb.

The statistical analyses employed in this study are summarised in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Statistical Analysis Summary

Analysis	Purpose	Technique
Demographic analysis	Describe respondent characteristics	Frequency and percentage
Descriptive statistics	Summarise study constructs	Mean and standard deviation
Reliability analysis	Assess internal consistency	Cronbach's alpha
Correlation analysis	Examine the relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention	Pearson correlation
Hypothesis testing	Test the effect of influencer attributes on booking intention	Simple linear regression

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that the collected data would be used solely for academic purposes. No personally identifiable information was included in the analysis or reporting, thereby maintaining respondent confidentiality and supporting responsible data handling.

RESULTS

Respondent Profile

A total of 104 valid responses were included in the analysis. Most respondents were aged 21–23 years (69.2%), followed by those aged 24–26 years (14.4%) and 18–20 years (9.6%). Respondents were predominantly from India (73.1%), followed by Malaysia (25.0%), while 1.9% were from other countries. Male respondents accounted for 61.5% of the sample, while female respondents represented 38.5%.

In terms of education, 48.1% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, while 46.2% held a master's degree or above. Students represented the largest occupational group (70.2%), followed by employed respondents (24.0%). Regarding travel characteristics, 42.3% identified as medium-budget travellers, while 38.5% travelled occasionally and 36.5% travelled rarely.

Instagram was the most frequently used platform for travel inspiration (63.5%), followed by TikTok and YouTube (18.3% each). Most respondents (66.3%) followed travel influencers. Regarding previous Airbnb experience, 44.2% had previously booked accommodation through Airbnb, whereas 55.8% had not. Overall, the respondent profile indicates that the sample primarily comprised digitally active Gen Z consumers with exposure to social media and travel-related content.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	21–23	72	69.2
	24–26	15	14.4
	18–20	10	9.6
	Others	7	6.7
Country	India	76	73.1
	Malaysia	26	25.0
	Others	2	1.9
Gender	Male	64	61.5
	Female	40	38.5
Education	Bachelor's Degree	50	48.1

Occupation	Master's Degree or Above	48	46.2
	Diploma	3	2.9
	High School/Pre-University	3	2.9
	Student	73	70.2
Travel Budget	Employed	25	24.0
	Self-employed	4	3.8
	Unemployed	2	1.9
Annual Travel Frequency	Medium	44	42.3
	Low	32	30.8
	High	28	26.9
Inspiration Platform	Occasionally	40	38.5
	Rarely	38	36.5
	Frequently	26	25.0
Follow Travel Influencers	Instagram	66	63.5
	TikTok	19	18.3
	YouTube	19	18.3
Airbnb Booking Experience	Yes	69	66.3
	No	35	33.7
	Yes	46	44.2
	No	58	55.8

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine the central tendency and dispersion of the study constructs. Influencer attributes recorded a mean of 3.39 (SD = 0.62), indicating a moderately positive perception of influencer characteristics among respondents. Trust in Airbnb recorded a mean of 3.38 (SD = 1.09), indicating a moderate level of trust in the platform. Booking intention recorded a mean of 3.22 (SD = 1.12), suggesting a moderate level of intention to book accommodation through Airbnb.

The relatively higher standard deviations for trust in Airbnb and booking intention indicate greater variation in respondents' perceptions of these constructs compared with influencer attributes.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Influencer Attributes	10	3.39	0.62
Trust in Airbnb	2	3.38	1.09
Booking Intention	2	3.22	1.12

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Influencer attributes achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.74, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Trust in Airbnb recorded an alpha value of 0.86, while booking intention recorded an alpha value of 0.82, indicating good internal consistency. As all Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the threshold of 0.70 used in this study, the measurement scales demonstrated adequate reliability for subsequent statistical analysis.

Table 4. Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Influencer Attributes	0.74	Acceptable
Trust in Airbnb	0.86	Good

Booking Intention	0.82	Good
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Hypothesis Testing

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention toward Airbnb. The results revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that more favourable perceptions of influencer attributes were associated with stronger booking intentions.

Simple linear regression was subsequently conducted to examine whether influencer attributes significantly predicted booking intention toward Airbnb. The regression model was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and explained approximately 45% of the variance in booking intention ($R^2 = 0.45$). The regression coefficient reported in the analysis was 1.22. Therefore, H1 was supported, indicating that influencer attributes were significantly and positively associated with Gen Z consumers' booking intention toward Airbnb.

Table 5. Correlation and Regression Results

Analysis	Statistic	Value
Pearson Correlation	r	0.67
	p-value	< 0.001
Linear Regression	Coefficient	1.22
	R^2	0.45
	p-value	< 0.001

Since the regression model was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), H1 was supported. This indicates that influencer attributes have a significant positive effect on Gen Z consumers' booking intention toward Airbnb.

DISCUSSION

Overview of the Findings

The findings demonstrate that social media influencer attributes have a significant positive relationship with Generation Z's (Gen Z) booking intention toward Airbnb. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive association between influencer attributes and booking intention ($r = 0.67$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the simple linear regression model was statistically significant ($p < .001$) and explained approximately 45% of the variance in booking intention ($R^2 = 0.45$), supporting H1. These findings suggest that more favourable perceptions of influencer credibility, authenticity, and content quality, considered collectively, are associated with stronger intentions to book accommodation through Airbnb.

The descriptive findings further indicate moderately positive perceptions of influencer attributes ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.62$) and trust in Airbnb ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.09$), while booking intention was also moderate ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.12$). These findings suggest that influencer-generated content may contribute to how Gen Z consumers evaluate accommodation options. However, because trust in Airbnb was examined only descriptively and was not included as a predictor or mediator in the regression model, the present study does not establish whether platform trust explains the relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention.

Interpretation in Relation to the Literature

The findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating the importance of influencer credibility, authenticity, and content characteristics in shaping consumers' responses to social media marketing. Influencers can function as digital opinion leaders

whose effectiveness is influenced by the credibility of their communication and the relationships they establish with their followers (Leung et al., 2022; Lou, 2022). In the tourism context, influencer-generated content can provide experience-based information that supports consumers in evaluating travel alternatives and making travel-related decisions (Pop et al., 2021).

The significant relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention also aligns with previous findings regarding Gen Z's responsiveness to authentic, relevant, and engaging social media content. Carvalho and Gonçalves Rodrigues (2026) examined how the characteristics of travel-related influencer posts contribute to Gen Z consumers' evaluations of such content. The present findings extend this perspective by demonstrating that favourable perceptions of influencer attributes are associated specifically with intention to book accommodation through Airbnb.

Credibility may be particularly relevant because accommodation booking involves uncertainty regarding property characteristics and the expected travel experience. Influencer-generated content perceived as credible may provide consumers with an additional source of information when evaluating accommodation alternatives. This is consistent with previous research indicating that influencer credibility plays an important role in consumers' responses to influencer communication (Leung et al., 2022). At the same time, the commercial nature of influencer content requires careful consideration, as sponsorship and perceived commercial orientation can affect consumers' evaluations of influencer credibility (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020).

Authenticity also provides a relevant explanation for the observed relationship. Gen Z travellers have been associated with preferences for authentic and experience-oriented tourism activities (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). Influencer content that communicates personal experiences, accommodation characteristics, and local environments may therefore be particularly relevant to this consumer segment. Such experience-based communication may allow potential travellers to visualise an accommodation experience before making a booking decision.

Content quality further contributes to the usefulness of influencer communication. High-quality content can combine visual appeal with relevant information about accommodation, destinations, and travel experiences. For Gen Z consumers, who frequently engage with visually oriented digital platforms, useful and engaging content may facilitate the evaluation of travel alternatives. This interpretation is consistent with Carvalho and Gonçalves Rodrigues (2026), who examined the importance of content characteristics in shaping Gen Z consumers' evaluations of travel-related influencer posts.

The findings can also be considered within the broader context of Generation Z's travel values and decision-making processes. Previous studies have examined the importance of environmental attitudes, personal norms, and green consumption values in tourism-related behaviour. D'Arco et al. (2023) investigated pro-environmental behavioural intentions among Generation Z travellers, while Ribeiro et al. (2023) examined determinants of pro-environmental travel behaviour and the moderating role of green consumption values. Similarly, Nilsson Vestola and Ek Styvén (2025) explored factors that encourage or inhibit Gen Z's pro-environmental travel engagement. Although the present research focuses specifically on influencer attributes and Airbnb booking intention, these studies provide a broader perspective on the values that may be relevant to younger travellers. Future research could examine whether sustainability-related

values influence how Gen Z consumers evaluate accommodation recommendations communicated through social media.

From a broader behavioural perspective, the relationship between influencer communication and booking intention can also be considered alongside established approaches to understanding consumer decisions. Rothschild (1999) proposed a conceptual framework for managing public health and social issue behaviours, while Steg and Vlek (2009) reviewed approaches to encouraging pro-environmental behaviour. Within tourism research, Sharpley (2021) emphasised the importance of sustainable tourism consumption. Although these studies address behavioural contexts that differ from Airbnb booking intention, they provide broader perspectives on the role of individual motivations, contextual conditions, and behavioural considerations. Accordingly, the present findings should be interpreted as evidence of a significant association between perceived influencer attributes and booking intention rather than proof that influencer communication necessarily results in actual accommodation bookings or sustainable travel behaviour.

The findings are particularly relevant to Airbnb because its accommodation model includes diverse properties, local experiences, and personalised travel options. Influencer-generated content may communicate these characteristics through visual storytelling and first-hand experiences, potentially making accommodation options easier for consumers to evaluate. Therefore, the findings extend previous research on influencer marketing and travel decision-making by demonstrating its relevance to platform-specific accommodation booking intention among Gen Z consumers primarily from India and Malaysia.

Practical Implications

The findings have practical implications for Airbnb and similar accommodation platforms that use influencer marketing to engage younger consumers. Influencer collaborations should prioritise credibility, authenticity, content quality, and audience relevance rather than focusing solely on follower numbers or overall reach. Influencers whose content and audiences are aligned with particular travel segments may be better positioned to communicate accommodation experiences in ways that are relevant to Gen Z consumers.

Experience-based storytelling should also be emphasised in influencer campaigns. Content showing actual accommodation experiences, property characteristics, neighbourhood environments, local experiences, and practical aspects of the booking process may provide potential travellers with useful information when evaluating accommodation alternatives. Combining visually engaging storytelling with practical information may therefore strengthen the relevance of influencer communication.

Transparency should remain an important consideration in influencer collaborations. Sponsored partnerships should be clearly disclosed, while influencers should retain sufficient freedom to communicate their experiences in a manner consistent with their usual content. Excessively scripted or promotional communication may reduce perceived authenticity and credibility, particularly when audiences perceive the content primarily as advertising (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020).

Long-term collaborations with relevant influencers may also provide greater consistency than isolated promotional posts. However, such collaborations should maintain a balance between brand objectives and the influencer's communication style. Maintaining

this balance may help preserve the credibility and authenticity that make influencer-generated content relevant to Gen Z consumers.

Potential Implementation Risks

Despite the potential benefits of influencer marketing, several implementation risks should be considered. Excessively commercial, repetitive, or scripted content may reduce perceived authenticity and cause audiences to interpret influencer recommendations as conventional advertising. This may weaken the characteristics that distinguish influencer communication from traditional promotional messages.

Another potential risk arises when promoted accommodation experiences differ substantially from consumers' actual experiences. Exaggerated or selective representations of accommodation characteristics may negatively affect perceptions of both the influencer and the accommodation platform. Accurate and transparent communication is therefore important when presenting accommodation experiences through influencer-generated content.

Influencer selection also requires careful consideration. Follower count alone may not accurately reflect audience relevance or the quality of engagement. Artificial engagement, irrelevant audiences, and inconsistent content may reduce the effectiveness of influencer collaborations. Platforms should therefore consider audience relevance, engagement quality, content consistency, and perceived credibility when selecting influencers.

Finally, repeated exposure to similar promotional content may contribute to audience fatigue. Variation in content formats, experiences, and communication approaches may help maintain audience interest. Platforms should also recognise that influencer behaviour can create reputational implications for associated brands, highlighting the importance of careful influencer selection and appropriate partnership management.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of social media influencer attributes on Generation Z's (Gen Z) booking intention toward Airbnb, with particular attention to credibility, authenticity, and content quality. Based on data collected from 104 respondents, primarily from India and Malaysia, the findings demonstrate a significant positive relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention toward Airbnb. The regression model explained approximately 45% of the variance in booking intention, supporting H1 and highlighting the relevance of influencer attributes in Gen Z consumers' accommodation booking decisions.

The findings contribute to the growing literature on influencer marketing and digital tourism by extending the discussion from general travel and destination-related intentions to platform-specific accommodation booking intention. In particular, the study indicates that credibility, authenticity, and content quality are relevant characteristics of influencer communication in the context of Gen Z travel decision-making. As social media continues to play an important role in travel information search and evaluation, influencer-generated content represents a relevant source of information for younger travellers.

From a practical perspective, Airbnb and similar accommodation platforms should consider credibility, authenticity, content quality, and audience relevance when developing influencer marketing strategies. Collaborations that communicate genuine

accommodation experiences and provide useful, visually engaging, and transparent information may better support Gen Z consumers in evaluating accommodation alternatives. Overall, the findings reinforce the importance of strategically managing influencer collaborations as part of digital marketing efforts targeting Gen Z travellers.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was based on a relatively small sample of 104 respondents and employed convenience sampling. Although respondents were primarily from India and Malaysia, the sample may not fully represent the broader Gen Z population in either country. Therefore, the findings should be generalised with caution.

Second, the study relied on self-reported responses and measured booking intention rather than actual booking behaviour. Respondents' stated intentions may not necessarily translate into subsequent accommodation bookings. Future studies could incorporate behavioural data, such as actual booking activity or previous accommodation purchasing behaviour, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer decisions.

Third, the cross-sectional research design captured respondents' perceptions at a single point in time. Consequently, the findings should not be interpreted as establishing definitive causal relationships. Longitudinal or experimental research designs could be employed in future studies to examine how exposure to influencer content affects booking decisions over time and to provide stronger evidence regarding causal relationships.

Finally, the present study focused on the direct relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention. Although trust in Airbnb was measured descriptively, it was not tested as a mediator or predictor in the regression model. Future research could examine whether platform trust mediates the relationship between influencer attributes and booking intention. Other variables, such as previous Airbnb experience, perceived risk, price sensitivity, and travel frequency, could also be investigated as potential mediators, moderators, or control variables. Comparative studies involving larger samples and additional countries may further improve the generalisability of the findings.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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