Do-it-yourself versus packaged tours: A generational comparison of post-pandemic travel choice among Filipino Gen Z and Millennials

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Journal of Tourism, Culinary, and Entrepreneurship

e-ISSN: 2776-0928

Publisher:
School of Tourism,
Universitas Ciputra Surabaya,
Indonesia

Keywords:
DIY Travel
Packaged Tours
Travel Behavior
Generation Z
Millennials

Received: *August 27, 2026*
Revised: *September 21, 2026*
Accepted: *September 25, 2026*

ABSTRACT

This study examines post-pandemic domestic travel choices—specifically Do-It-Yourself (DIY) travel versus packaged tours among Filipino Generation Z (Gen Z) and Millennials. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, quantitative survey data and qualitative open-ended responses were gathered from active domestic travelers in the Philippines. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) served as interpretive frameworks to evaluate decision considerations alongside a thematic analysis of travel trade-offs, integrating both strands to contextualize cohort patterns. Findings indicate a predominant preference for DIY travel overall, with Gen Z demonstrating a stronger inclination toward independent travel compared to Millennials, who show a higher relative preference for packaged tours. Freedom and personalization emerged as primary decision considerations for both cohorts. However, secondary priorities diverged: Gen Z emphasized safety and social media influence, whereas Millennials prioritized cost and environmental impact. Qualitatively, while DIY travel fosters autonomy, it induces planning fatigue; conversely, packaged tours offer convenience but face criticism for schedule rigidity. These integrated insights inform customizable hybrid tour products and targeted destination management strategies for emerging generational markets.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global travel and tourism industry underwent unprecedented disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting fundamental shifts in consumer mobility, risk perception, and decision-making frameworks during the recovery period (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2020). As global borders reopened and domestic corridors re-established operational capacity, younger consumer cohorts specifically Generation Z (Gen Z) (born 1997–2012) and Millennials (born 1981–1996) emerged as the primary engines of tourism revitalization. According to reports by the World Travel & Tourism Council (2021, 2024), consumer preferences among younger demographics have progressively moved toward decentralized,

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flexible, and value-aligned travel arrangements. Globally, 65% of travelers under the age of 35 prefer independent travel arrangements (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021), while 73% actively seek off-peak destinations to mitigate overcrowding and optimize costs (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024). Within the Philippines, travel and tourism serve as pivotal drivers of socio-economic stability, contributing 12.9% to national employment in 2023, representing 6.21 million jobs and PHP 482.54 billion in visitor spending (Department of Tourism, 2024; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024). Comprising roughly 35% of the national labor force (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024), Filipino Gen Z and Millennials drive domestic expenditure, with 66% expanding their travel budgets post-pandemic and nearly half willing to increase trip allocations by 50% or more for experiential, culturally immersive, or ecologically responsible vacations (Delfinado, 2024).

Despite their shared market prominence, Gen Z and Millennials navigate distinct decision-making dynamics when choosing between Do-It-Yourself (DIY) travel. DIY is defined as self-planned, independently booked itineraries and structured packaged tours, which bundle transportation, lodging, meals, and structured sightseeing into fixed-price offerings (Backhaus et al., 2023). The rapid evolution of Online Travel Agency (OTA) such as Klook, Airbnb, and Trip.com, along with short-form visual content on TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube, has significantly lowered the barriers to independent itinerary curation (Natalia et al., 2025). Technological innovations and social media platforms interact to reshape consumer autonomy, enabling travelers to design flexible schedules, control budgets, and pursue authentic local culinary and micro-entrepreneurial engagements (Firman, 2025). Furthermore, DIY travel allows young consumers to eliminate agency surcharges and secure schedule autonomy (American Express, 2024; Statista, 2024). However, independent travel exposes consumers to distinct operational and psychological risks, including booking scams, localized safety concerns, and digital planning fatigue (Adityaji et al., 2023; Elnur & Akgün, 2025).

Conversely, modern packaged tours retain strategic relevance by restructuring product portfolios around transparent pricing, seamless logistics, and heightened safety assurances (Huang et al., 2021; Philippine Travel Agencies Association, 2024). Modern group travel appeals to risk-averse and eco-conscious segments through flexible cancellation terms, small-group configurations, and structured community-engagement initiatives (Islam et al., 2023; Zhong et al., 2022). Nevertheless, rigid packaged tours continue to face criticism for restricting cultural immersion and commercializing traveler experiences (Kusumawidjaya et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2023). In response, service providers must continuously adapt operational practices to balance consumer safety assurances with schedule flexibility to maintain youth market engagement (Iskandar, 2024).

To evaluate how young travelers navigate these trade-offs, established psychological frameworks offer valuable interpretive lenses. Cheng et al. (2023) demonstrate that behavioral

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choices among young consumers are driven by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, underlining the operational utility of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in modeling generational choices. In parallel, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) accounts for the intrinsic motivations of autonomy and competence that propel independent travel. While social media trends like Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) frequently act as initial exposure triggers, long-term travel decisions and market retention ultimately depend on experience quality, value alignment, and post-consumption satisfaction (Fatimah, 2026). Across the Asia-Pacific region, over 79% of Gen Z and Millennial travelers rely on digital platforms and opinion leaders to guide these decision considerations (TTG Asia, 2025).

While the Philippine domestic tourism sector relies heavily on young demographics, a critical empirical and theoretical gap persists. Existing literature frequently homogenizes Gen Z and Millennials into a single "young traveler" category, failing to account for how distinct developmental milestones, financial independence, and lifestyle priorities differentiate these two cohorts. Furthermore, current research relies primarily on macro-level market metrics or platform trends rather than examining how underlying decision drivers, such as cost, safety, social media influence, personal freedom, environmental impact, and community engagement, differentially map onto behavioral choice frameworks across generational lines. By addressing this gap, this study examines the post-pandemic domestic travel choices of Filipino Gen Z and Millennials, providing empirical clarity to inform customizable hybrid tour products and targeted destination management strategies.

This study formulates two directional hypotheses and two qualitative research questions:

H_1: Gen Z travelers are significantly more likely to prefer DIY travel over packaged tours compared to Millennial travelers in the domestic travel context.

H_2: Millennial travelers are significantly more likely to prefer packaged tours over DIY travel compared to Gen Z travelers.

RQ_1: What key decision considerations (i.e., cost, social media, safety, freedom/personalization, family influence, peer influence, environmental impact, community engagement, and blogs/vlogs) shape the choices of Gen Z and Millennial domestic travelers in the Philippines when evaluating DIY travel versus packaged tours?

RQ_2: How do Gen Z and Millennial domestic travelers in the Philippines qualitatively perceive the trade-offs (advantages and disadvantages) of DIY travel and packaged tours?

To provide a comprehensive interpretive framework, this study integrates four distinct theoretical lenses into a unified conceptual model:

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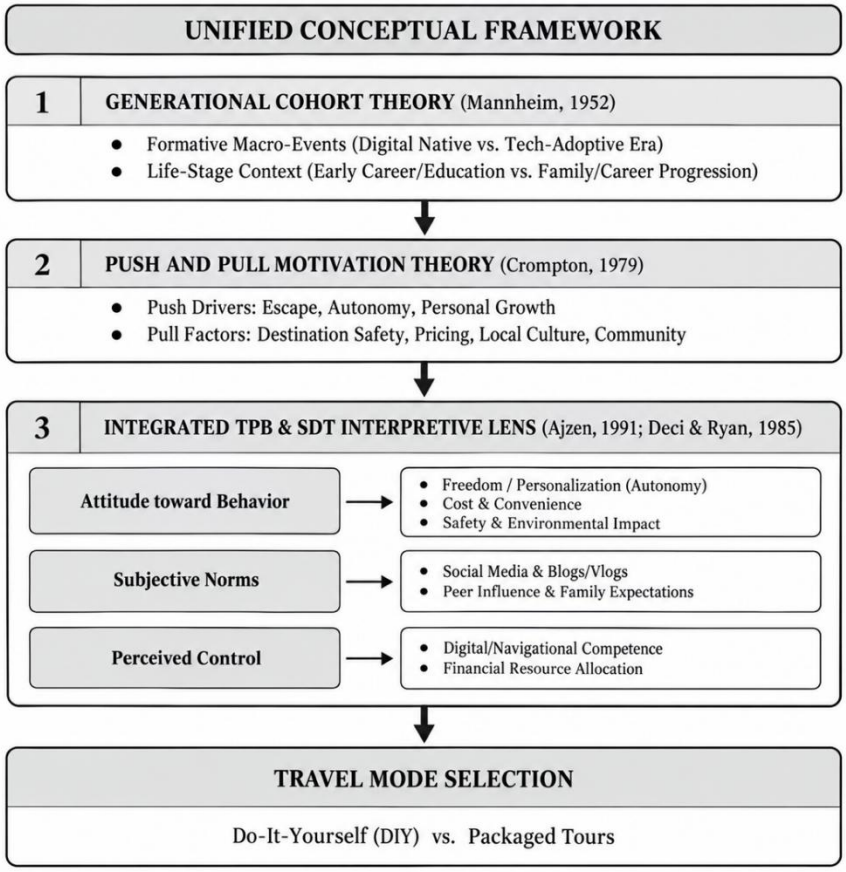


Figure 1. Unified Conceptual Framework for Generational Travel Choice
Source: Adapted from Ajzen (1991)

This unified framework bridges macroeconomic and psychological decision drivers:

a. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991): Serves as the primary operational scaffolding. Attitude toward the behavior is evaluated through considerations of cost, personal freedom, safety, and environmental impact. Subjective norms are captured through social media influence, travel blogs/vlogs, peer opinions, and family expectations. Perceived behavioral control (PBC) is reflected in financial flexibility, navigational confidence, and digital literacy needed to execute self-planned travel.
b. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985): Complements TPB by explaining the intrinsic psychological needs underlying traveler attitudes, specifically autonomy (desire for unconstrained personalization), competence (mastery over itinerary planning), and relatedness (connection to local communities and travel companions).
c. Push and Pull Travel Motivation Theory (Crompton, 1979): Connects internal psychological desires that "push" individuals toward mobility (e.g., escape, autonomy) with external destination attributes that "pull" them toward a specific mode (e.g., curated tour safety, promotional deals, culinary authenticity).
d. Generational Cohort Theory (Mannheim, 1952): Explains how shared historical and socio-technological formative events shape macro-level cohort values. To prevent confounding,

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cohort effects (formative macro-experiences) are explicitly distinguished from age and life-stage progression (e.g., advancing career responsibilities, income growth, and family caregiving duties typical of older cohorts).

This study investigates domestic travel choices observed during the calendar year 2024, examining a sample of 300 active Filipino domestic travelers comprised of Gen Z (defined by birth years 1997–2012) and Millennials (defined by birth years 1981–1996) who completed domestic travel during 2024. Older demographics and international travel patterns are excluded to isolate youth and young professional domestic mobility.

The findings contribute to academic literature and practical tourism administration. For tour operators and travel agencies, the empirical data supports a transition toward flexible, customizable "hybrid" packages. For Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), local culinary entrepreneurs, and regional policymakers, the results inform targeted digital campaigns, eco-certified infrastructure, and enhanced destination safety protocols (Firman, 2025). Finally, for domestic travelers, the study provides a practical framework to evaluate financial and logistical trade-offs while establishing a baseline for future research within emerging Southeast Asian tourism markets.

2. METHODOLOGY

Sampling, Context, and Respondent Profile

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, systematically combining quantitative survey methodology with qualitative thematic analysis to evaluate decision-making drivers in domestic travel (Firman, 2025). The target population comprised active Filipino domestic travelers belonging to Gen Z and the Millennial. To ensure chronological accuracy, age ranges were reconciled against established birth-year definitions as of the 2024 reference year: Gen Z (born 1997–2012; aged 18–27 during data collection) and Millennials (born 1981–1996; aged 28–43 during data collection). The individual traveler served as the unit of analysis.

Data collection was executed over a four-week recruitment period from June 2, 2024, to July 2, 2024. A non-probability voluntary response sampling strategy was implemented online by distributing digital survey links across verified local travel communities (e.g., Facebook travel groups, community forums, and the r/TravelPH subreddit). To ensure balanced cohort representation and mitigate online sampling bias, targeted on-site intercept sampling was simultaneously conducted across higher education campuses (e.g., De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde) and commercial corridors along Vito Cruz Street, Manila.

A total of 320 raw survey responses were initially captured (all responses were captured online). Data scrubbing procedures excluded 20 invalid submissions: 2 duplicate responses, 18 incomplete responses. To achieve equal cohort representation without oversampling, strict

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quota management was applied to the remaining 300 validated responses, resulting in fixed sub-cohorts of Gen Z (n=150) and Millennials (n=150).

The non-probability sampling design (voluntary online) and geographical concentration in Metro Manila represent inherent methodological limitations that constrain national generalizability. Potential systematic differences between subsamples were evaluated: online respondents exhibited slightly higher engagement in social media travel planning.

Data Collection Methods, Measures, and Ethics

To ensure complete transparency, Table 1 details the operational constructs, underlying theoretical lenses, and exact survey questionnaire items utilized. Data were gathered using a structured survey instrument divided into three core sections:

a. Section 1 (Demographic Profile & Travel Patterns): captured participant demographics, domestic travel frequency, and primary travel preference (DIY travel, packaged tours, or both).
b. Section 2 (Behavioral Determinant Measures): evaluated nine distinct decision considerations using single-item measures rated on a 4-point Likert scale: cost, travel blogs/vlogs, social media, freedom/personalization, peer influence, family influence, safety, environmental impact, and community engagement.
c. Section 3 (Qualitative Trade-Offs): collected open-ended qualitative responses regarding perceived primary advantages and disadvantages of DIY travel versus packaged tours.

Table 1. Behavioral Factor Operationalization and Survey Questionnaire Items

Operational Factor	Theoretical Dimension	Item	Exact Questionnaire Item (Actual Survey Instrument)
Cost & Affordability	TPB (Attitude) / SDT	8.1	I often choose DIY travel because it allows me to save more money.
		8.2	I consider total package cost as a major factor in choosing between DIY and packaged tours.
Blogs / Vlogs	TPB (Subjective Norms)	9.1	I rely on travel vlogs or blogs when deciding where and how to travel.
Social media	TPB (Subjective Norms)	9.2	I'm influenced by what I see on social media when choosing destinations.
Freedom / Personalization	TPB (Attitude) / SDT (Autonomy)	10.1	DIY travel gives me more freedom to explore.
		10.2	Packaged tours limit my travel experience.
Peer Influence	TPB (Subjective Norms)	11.1	My travel choices are influenced by friends or companions.
Family Influence	TPB (Subjective Norms)	11.2	My travel choices are influenced by my family members.
Safety & Security	TPB (Attitude / PBC)	12.1	I feel more secure when joining packaged tours.
		12.2	Safety concerns impact my choice of travel style.
Environmental Impact	TPB (Attitude) / SDT	13.1	I consider the environmental impact of my travel decisions.
Community Engagement	TPB / SDT (Relatedness)	13.2	I support travel communities in my travel decisions

Note: The actual survey instrument utilizes a mix of single-item and two-item indicators across the nine behavioral constructs. For multi-item constructs (Cost, Freedom/Personalization, and Safety), item scores can be aggregated or reported per sub-dimension to preserve precise operational alignment with the dataset.

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A 4-point forced-choice Likert scale (omitting a neutral midpoint) was selected to prevent central tendency bias and encourage definitive stance evaluation among young respondents. Content validation was conducted by a panel of three expert evaluators specializing in tourism management, hospitality administration, and quantitative methodology. A pilot pre-test (n=12) was executed prior to full deployment; items demonstrated high clarity, and minor phrasing adjustments were implemented based on participant feedback. Because single-item indicators were utilized for individual factor rankings, Cronbach's alpha is not reported; this single-item approach is formally noted as a survey limitation.

Ethical procedures complied strictly with academic standards. As this was an exploratory study, the study protocol did not undergo review and received formal approval from the Institutional Review Board / Research Ethics Committee as this was not yet established during the period of the study. Participants reviewed and accepted electronic informed consent detailing voluntary participation and confidentiality. Personal identifiers were scrubbed prior to analysis, and data files were secured in encrypted cloud storage.

Demographic Profile and Cohort Disaggregation

To avoid confounding generational cohort effects with developmental life-stage and socio-economic variables, demographics were disaggregated separately by generational cohort prior to analysis. Furthermore, income brackets were adjusted to eliminate data gaps, and gender identity was methodologically separated from sexual orientation.

Table 2. Cohort-Specific Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile (N=300)

Demographic Variable	Total Sample ($N = 300$) n(%)	Gen Z ($n = 150$) n(%)	Millennials ($n = 150$) n(%)
Gender Identity			
Female	162 (54.0%)	88 (58.7%)	74 (49.3%)
Male	126 (42.0%)	54 (36.0%)	72 (48.0%)
Prefer not to say	12 (4.0%)	8 (5.3%)	4 (2.7%)
Employment Status			
Student	128 (42.7%)	122 (81.3%)	6 (4.0%)
Full-Time Employed	133 (44.3%)	18 (12.0%)	115 (76.7%)
Part-Time / Freelance	27 (9.0%)	8 (5.3%)	19 (12.7%)
Unemployed / Seeking	12 (4.0%)	2 (1.3%)	10 (6.7%)
Monthly Income Bracket			
Below ₱20,999 (Low Income)	131 (43.7%)	118 (78.7%)	13 (8.7%)
₱21,000 – ₱43,828 (Lower Middle)	88 (29.3%)	22 (14.7%)	66 (44.0%)
₱43,829 – ₱76,699 (Middle Income)	52 (17.3%)	8 (5.3%)	44 (29.3%)
₱76,700 and Above (Upper Middle/High)	29 (9.7%)	2 (1.3%)	27 (18.0%)
Marital / Family Status			
Single (No Dependents)	218 (72.7%)	144 (96.0%)	74 (49.3%)
Married / With Dependents	82 (27.3%)	6 (4.0%)	76 (50.7%)

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Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures

Dataset processing was executed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28.0). Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means (M), standard deviations (SD). A one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to check the normality of the data. Results showed that all items had a significance value of $p < 0.05$, indicating that the data were not normally distributed. However, since this study is descriptive in nature and does not involve inferential hypothesis testing, checking for normality was not required. The analysis therefore focused on descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies in order to interpret the responses. Mean scores derived from the 4-point scale were interpreted using a standard four-interval continuum:

Table 3. Likert Scale Interpretation Key

Mean Range (M)	Median (Md)	Interpretation
3.25 – 4.00	4.0	High Influence / Strongly Agree
2.50 – 3.24	3.0	Moderate High Influence / Agree
1.75 – 2.49	2.0	Moderate Low Influence / Disagree
1.00 – 1.74	1.0	Low Influence / Strongly Disagree

Qualitative Analysis & Mixed-Methods Integration

Qualitative narrative data from open-ended responses were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis framework. A total of 264 usable qualitative responses were extracted (138 Gen Z, 126 Millennials). Prompt questions queried: (1) "What primary advantages and disadvantages do you experience when planning DIY travel?" and (2) "What specific trade-offs do you associate with booking pre-packaged tours?"

Open-ended entries submitted in Filipino/Tagalog or Taglish were transcribed, translated into English using back-translation procedures to ensure semantic fidelity, and coded inductively and deductively using NVivo 14. To ensure analytical transparency, exemplar quotations are tagged with cohort identifiers (e.g., "Gen Z Participant 34", "Millennial Participant 118") and provided with exact English translations where applicable.

To operationalize a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, quantitative and qualitative strands were integrated using a Joint Display (Table 4), explicitly illustrating where qualitative narratives confirm, explain, or qualify quantitative statistical findings:

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Table 4. Joint Display Integrating Quantitative Survey Metrics and Qualitative Findings

Decision Construct	Quantitative Cohort Pattern	Qualitative Exemplar Quotation (Survey Responses)	Mixed-Methods Integration
Freedom / Autonomy	Top decision driver across both cohorts • Gen Z: $M = 3.62, SD = 0.64$ • Millennials: $M = 3.64, SD = 0.58$ *(Item 10.1: "DIY travel gives me more freedom to explore.")*	"The main advantage of DIY travel is the flexibility to create a personalized itinerary that matches my interests, schedule, and budget... allowing authentic local experiences." — **Gen Z Participant 6** "I have freedom to explore the places without limiting my time... I can plan the whole trip according to my preference." — **Millennial Participant 15**	**Confirmation & Explanation:** Qualitative narratives directly confirm the quantitative scores, illustrating that behavioral attitude toward DIY travel is strongly anchored in intrinsic desires for self-determination and schedule control (SDT Autonomy).
Planning Stress / Fatigue	Prevalent qualitative trade-off Identified as a major operational friction point across both cohorts during DIY execution.	"The main disadvantage of DIY travel is that it requires a lot of time and effort to plan and organize every detail... It can lead to unexpected stress if things don't go as planned." — **Gen Z Participant 6** "Thorough planning is much needed or else you will be lost and end up wasting your time." — **Millennial Participant 15**	**Qualification:** Qualifies high DIY autonomy ratings by demonstrating that unbundled independent planning introduces cognitive load, decision fatigue, and logistical stress.
Convenience & Safety	Higher security & hassle-free preference in Packaged Tours • Packaged Security (Item 12.1): $M_{Mil} = 2.93$ vs. $M_{GenZ} = 2.77$ • Safety Influence (Item 12.2): $M_{Mil} = 3.48$ vs. $M_{GenZ} = 3.41$	"Packaged tours are more organized and offer less hassle or convenience." — **Millennial Participant 1** "Joining packaged tours provides guidance from professionals who know the location when traveling to unfamiliar places." — **Gen Z Participant 4**	**Explanation:** Explains why packaged tours maintain strategic appeal among travelers seeking to mitigate logistical risks, leveraging agency expertise to enhance perceived behavioral control (TPB).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Profile and Demographic Context

The validated sample comprised N = 300 domestic travelers split equally between Gen Z (n = 150, 50.0%) and Millennials (n = 150, 50.0%). Females represented 58.0% of participants (n = 174), mirroring broader domestic tourism participation patterns in the Philippines. The majority were single (n = 242, 80.7%), aligning with student (n = 139, 46.3%) and early-to-mid career employed statuses (n = 133, 44.3%). Household incomes fell largely within lower-middle to upper-middle brackets, with 89.6% earning below ₱131,484 monthly. In terms of mobility, 80.7% of respondents completed between 1 and 3 domestic trips in 2024, confirming active post-pandemic travel engagement.

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Table 5. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Age Cohort	Gen Z (18–28 years)	150	50.0%
	Millennials (29–44 years)	150	50.0%
Gender	Female	174	58.0%
	Male	124	41.3%
	Gay / Non-binary	2	0.7%
Civil Status	Single	242	80.7%
	Married	53	17.7%
	Separated / Divorced / Widowed	5	1.7%
Employment Status	Student	139	46.3%
	Employed (Full / Part-time)	133	44.3%
	Self-Employed / Freelance	28	9.3%
Monthly Income	₱10,957 – ₱21,914	90	30.0%
	₱21,914 – ₱43,828	91	30.3%
	₱76,699 – ₱131,484	88	29.3%
	₱131,484 – ₱219,140	31	10.3%
2024 Travel Frequency	1 Time	123	41.0%
	2 to 3 Times	119	39.7%
	4 or More Times	58	19.3%

Source: Author's Data Processing (2024)

Comparative Travel Preference Analysis

Overall, DIY travel emerged as the dominant preference across the sample (53.0%, n = 159), compared to packaged tours (22.7%, n = 68) and hybrid usage (24.3%, n = 73). However, cohort disaggregation reveals significant structural divergences.

Table 6. Distribution of Domestic Travel Style Preferences by Cohort

Travel Preference	Overall (*N* = 300)	Gen Z (*n* = 150)	Millennials (*n* = 150)
DIY Travel	159 (53.0%)	94 (62.7%)	65 (43.3%)
Packaged Tours	68 (22.7%)	14 (9.3%)	54 (36.0%)
Both (Hybrid)	73 (24.3%)	42 (28.0%)	31 (20.7%)

Source: Author's Data Processing (2024)

Addressing RQ_1, Gen Z exhibited a marked inclination toward DIY travel (62.7%) compared to Millennials (43.3%). Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Gen Z's preference is associated with a need for intrinsic autonomy and flexible pacing. Qualitative narratives reinforce this, with Gen Z participants noting, "I can travel freely without worrying about adhering to a fixed schedule," and highlighting unbundled cost savings ("Mas nakakatipid ako sa DIY"). Under the TPB theory (Ajzen, 2002), Gen Z possesses high perceived behavioral control (PBC) due to digital fluency with booking engines (e.g., Klook, Airbnb) and social navigation tools.

Addressing RQ_2, millennials demonstrated a nearly four-fold increase in preference for packaged tours (36.0%) compared to Gen Z (9.3%). Generational Cohort Theory explains this shift through evolving life stages (Mannheim, 1952). As Millennials navigate full-time employment (44.3%) and family obligations, convenience and risk mitigation outweigh total

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schedule autonomy. Qualitative responses highlight that Millennials seek to avoid cognitive fatigue ("Planning from scratch is mentally exhausting") and value pre-arranged logistics ("It saves time and effort; everything is arranged"). Packaged tours offer these travelers predictability and reduced planning stress, despite critiques regarding schedule rigidity ("rushed site visits") and agency markups.

To capture the nuanced trade-offs underlying these statistical choices, qualitative open-ended responses were synthesized using reflexive thematic analysis. Table 7 outlines the primary thematic categories, overarching codes, and illustrative qualitative quotes across both travel formats.

Table 7. Qualitative Thematic Mapping of Perceived Travel Style Trade-Offs

Travel Choice	Theme	Initial Codes / Sub-themes	Exemplar Qualitative Quote
DIY Travel	Autonomy vs. Cognitive Strain	Unfiltered schedule control, budget customization, digital planning fatigue, logistical anxiety	"I think traveling itself should be fun and not draining but sometimes packaged tour gets packed with all the stuff that ends up exhausting you. I think having your own time and own pace would be nicer." – Gen Z participant 36
Packaged Tours	Convenience vs. Rigid Confinement	Stress-free execution, structured safety, rushed itineraries, commercialized corridors	"Saves time, no restrictions on time, can go anywhere you want" – Gen Z participant 72

Source: Author's Qualitative Coding Synthesis (2024)

Integrated Evaluation of Behavioral Determinants

To address RQ_3, nine behavioral determinants were evaluated across both cohorts. Normality testing via the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielded $p<0.001$ across all factors, confirming non-normal distributions and justifying non-parametric statistical evaluation.

Table 8. Evaluation and Generational Rankings of Behavioral Determinants

Factor	Gen Z Mean (*M*)	Gen Z Rank	Millennial Mean (*M*)	Millennial Rank	Overall Mean (*M*)	Overall Rank	Mann-Whitney *U*	*z*-score	*p*-value
Freedom/ Personalization	3.65	1	3.57	1	3.61	1	10420.5	-1.12	.263
Safety	3.40	2	3.45	4	3.43	2	10815.0	-0.63	.529
Cost	3.28	5	3.48	2	3.38	3	9120.0	-2.71	.007
Environmental Impact	3.21	8	3.48	2	3.34	4	8845.5	-3.08	.002
Family Influence	3.34	3	3.26	6	3.30	5	10540.0	-0.98	.327
Community Engagement	3.23	6	3.36	5	3.30	6	9812.0	-1.82	.069
Social Media	3.29	4	3.15	8	3.22	7	9350.5	-2.42	.016
Travel Blogs / Vlogs	3.23	7	3.05	9	3.14	8	9210.0	-2.59	.010
Peer Influence	3.06	9	3.19	7	3.12	9	9715.0	-1.94	.052

Source: Author's Data Processing (2024)

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Freedom and personalization ranked first overall (M = 3.61), serving as a fundamental driver across both generations without significant cohort variance (U=10420.5,p=.263). Satisfying the psychological need for autonomy, personal flexibility allows travelers to avoid pre-packaged, commercialized itineraries. Qualitative responses revealed that personalization is heavily tied to culinary exploration; young travelers noted that DIY arrangements permit spontaneous culinary experiences and local food hopping, whereas traditional packaged tours restrict food choices to pre-arranged, large-scale buffet restaurants. Safety ranked second overall (M = 3.43, p=.529). Post-pandemic health awareness and risk management remain important pull factors (Crompton, 1979), with DIY travelers mitigating risk through digital mapping and qualitative respondents noting that packaged tours offer security via professional local guides. Significant divergences emerged across secondary factors:

a. Cost & Environmental Impact: Mann-Whitney U testing revealed significant generational differences for cost (U=9120.0,z=-2.71,p=.007) and environmental impact (U=8845.5,z=-3.08,p=.002). Millennials ranked cost (M = 3.48) and environmental impact (M = 3.48) tied for second place, whereas Gen Z ranked cost fifth (M = 3.28) and environmental impact eighth (M = 3.21). Millennials evaluate cost through a value-for-money framework, seeking transparent pricing alongside sustainable accommodations. Gen Z, conversely, treats cost as an unbundling exercise to achieve budget travel.
b. Social Media & Digital Channels: Social media exerted a significantly stronger influence on Gen Z (M = 3.29, Rank 4) than Millennials (M = 3.15, Rank 8; U=9350.5,z=-2.42,p=.016). Similarly, travel blogs/vlogs showed higher influence for Gen Z (M = 3.23) than Millennials (M = 3.05; U=9210.0,z=-2.59,p=.010). Under TPB's subjective norms, short-form visual content (TikTok, Instagram Reels) act as a primary discovery tool for Gen Z. Peer influence ranked lowest overall (M = 3.12, p=.052), indicating that while social media provides initial inspiration, final booking choices are guided by autonomy, financial limits, and safety.

4. CONCLUSION

This study evaluated domestic travel decision-making dynamics between DIY arrangements and packaged tours among Filipino Gen Z and Millennials in the post-pandemic context. Overall, DIY travel emerged as the primary choice (53.0%), frequently associated with preferences for freedom, schedule flexibility, and customized itineraries. Interpreted through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, this emphasis on autonomy aligns with existing conceptual frameworks suggesting that autonomous decision-making plays a key role in travel satisfaction among younger consumer demographics.

However, distinct generational divergences were observed. Gen Z demonstrated a strong preference for DIY travel, leveraging mobile technologies and digital platforms to unbundle costs and maintain schedule independence. Conversely, Millennials showed a

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higher propensity for packaged tours compared to Gen Z, placing greater value on convenience, time efficiency, financial predictability, and environmental sustainability as career and family responsibilities evolve. While freedom and destination safety remain universal priorities across both cohorts, secondary motivators highlight distinct behavioral priorities: Gen Z is influenced by social media discovery and family considerations, whereas Millennials prioritize cost value, environmental sustainability, and local community engagement.

Managerial and Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study offers conceptual insights into TPB by illustrating how digital fluency may interact with perceived behavioral control among younger cohorts, potentially inclining behavioral intentions toward self-directed travel over packaged alternatives. Furthermore, drawing on Generational Cohort Theory helps contextualize how shared macro-experiences and life-stage dynamics could influence the relative importance of subjective norms and attitudes when evaluating logistical trade-offs.

The empirical findings offer actionable strategic directions for tourism entrepreneurs, travel agencies, and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) seeking to capture evolving post-pandemic youth markets. To maintain analytical clarity, these recommendations are presented in two tiers: direct empirical directives supported by study data, followed by broader exploratory proposals designed to address observed market gaps:

a. Data-Backed Strategic Directives

Targeted Generational Marketing & Channel Optimization: Distribution strategies must align with cohort-specific decision triggers identified in the data.

- Gen Z: Marketing campaigns should emphasize visual, short-form content platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels (M=3.29), featuring authentic, off-the-beaten-path destinations paired with direct booking interfaces.
- Millennials: Communication strategies should prioritize cost-value transparency and environmental responsibility (M=3.48), emphasizing clear pricing structures, time-saving convenience, carbon-offset initiatives, and verified eco-certifications.

Risk Mitigation & Safety Infrastructure for Independent Travel: Destination management initiatives must directly target identified tourist vulnerabilities. High concern for destination safety (M=3.45) indicates that Local Government Units (LGUs) and DMOs must deploy centralized, mobile-accessible digital portals at entry points featuring real-time transit schedules, official guide registries, standardized assistance desks, and geo-tagged emergency support to alleviate safety anxieties among DIY travelers.

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b. Exploratory & Conceptual Proposals

Travel Agency Business Model Adaptation (The "Unbundled Flexi-Tour"): To reconcile the strong preference for DIY autonomy (53.0%) with the structural convenience of traditional group arrangements, operators could transition toward an "Unbundled Flexi-Tour" model. Under this conceptual framework:

- Agencies provide essential, low-friction base packages (e.g., inter-island transfers, accredited accommodations, mandatory eco-insurance) while keeping daily itineraries unbundled.
- Travelers can opt into on-demand micro-experiences (e.g., eco-guided hikes, curated local culinary passes) via mobile portals.
- Theoretical Context: While psychological constructs were not explicitly modeled using structural equations, this modular structure conceptually addresses travelers' desire for perceived behavioral control, price customization, and schedule flexibility without introducing logistical fatigue.

Community-Integrated Digital Pathways for DMOs: To support independent tourists while safeguarding local economic capture, regional DMOs can construct community-based digital directories. By linking self-navigating DIY travelers directly with verified local micro-entrepreneurs and street-food vendors, destinations can reduce reliance on predatory middlemen and ensure tourism expenditures directly enrich host communities.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While this study provides insights into post-pandemic domestic travel behavior in the Philippines, several methodological and theoretical limitations present opportunities for future academic inquiry. This study utilized a non-probability sampling method, which inherently limits the statistical generalizability of the findings across the broader population. Although targeted at Filipino Gen Z and Millennials in urban and suburban settings, non-probability sampling increases the risk of selection bias. Future research should implement probability sampling techniques or stratified random sampling across a wider socio-economic and geographic spectrum, including Generation Alpha, Generation X, and Baby Boomers, to validate and extend these findings through a comprehensive cross-generational comparative model.

Theoretical interpretations relying on the TPB and SDT were applied conceptually rather than through a formal structural equation model (SEM). Because underlying constructs (such as perceived behavioral control, autonomy, and subjective norms) were not directly measured using validated latent variable scales, this study offers descriptive associations rather than empirical model validation. Future studies should employ PLS-SEM or CB-SEM to quantitatively evaluate the structural paths and mediating mechanisms between these

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psychological constructs and travel choices. The cross-sectional design captures participant preferences at a single point in time in the post-pandemic context. Employing longitudinal research designs across multiple travel seasons would help track how generational preferences evolve alongside macroeconomic fluctuations, inflation shocks, and emerging technological developments. The geographic scope was restricted to domestic mobility within the Philippines. Replicating this study's framework in other emerging Southeast Asian markets—such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand, would help evaluate the regional generalizability of these preferences and identify cross-cultural nuances in youth travel decision-making.

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