

Malaysia as a Backpacking Destination for Millennial Solo Female Travellers: Examining Destination Image, Motivation, and Intentions

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Malaysia's appeal as a backpacking destination for millennial solo female travellers. The study aims to fill a gap in the knowledge focussing on understanding the way millennial solo female travellers see their destination, what motivates them, and how their views can help to shape their travel choices interconnected with their travel plans. The factors affecting this demographic's choice of destinations and travel intentions are thoroughly examined in this study using a quantitative approach. The 164 respondents were assessed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and the findings demonstrated that psychological motive, cultural motive, personal motive, and destination image positively influence tourist travel intention among millennial solo female travellers. The study's findings offer important information for modifying marketing plans and offerings to suit the requirements and preferences of this growing and powerful tourism market, helping to position Malaysia as a welcoming and inclusive female traveller - backpacking destination.

Keywords: Solo Traveller, Backpackers, Destination Image, Travel Motivation, Travel Intention

1.0 INTRODUCTION

These days, individuals travel for more reasons than just sightseeing, they also want to experience different cultures (Álvarez-Díaz et al., 2022). Tourists can be categorized into several overarching groups based on their distinct travel needs and motivations, encompassing business and professional travellers, leisure tourists, visiting friends and family, and young individuals like backpackers (Humagain & Singleton, 2021). Over the last three decades, backpackers who are often referred to as budget travellers, have been recognized as a distinct market segment within the tourism industry representing a small yet notable portion (Martins & Costa, 2022). In 2022, Google statistics revealed a 761.15% increase in solo travel after the

pandemic (Carles et al., 2022). Notably, 85% of women aged 55 and above still prefer to travel by themselves (Nath, 2023). In this specific tourism market, observable data indicates a growing representation of female travellers (Hamid et al., 2021), which contributes to the ongoing expansion of the sector, even in the face of challenges such as safety and security concerns, as well as economic downturns (Khan et al., 2017).

There has been a noticeable increase in the backpacker trend among female solo travellers in Malaysia in recent years, signalling a substantial change in the demographics of solo adventurers (Ghai & Chowdri, 2022). As more women embrace independence and a sense of adventure, this trend signals a departure from traditional gender roles and expectations. Increased safety awareness, better transit systems, and a growing sense of female empowerment have all been linked to the growth of female backpackers traveling alone (Osman et al., 2020). These daring tourists are discovering Malaysia's varied landscapes, from thriving metropolises to isolated villages, and their adventures are changing how the nation views solo female travel. The ease of access to information and resources via the Internet is one of the major factors contributing to the rise of female solo travellers in Malaysia (Gidebo, 2021). Online resources, travel blogs, and social media have made it possible for women to network with other travellers, acquire safety information, and find lodging options that are accommodating to their needs. Solo travel is now a practical and tempting alternative thanks to this digital network that has given women the knowledge and confidence to explore Malaysia on their terms (Marengo et al., 2021). Moreover, the surge of female travellers traveling alone has forced the local tourism sector to adjust and meet their particular needs (Hosseini et al., 2021). In Malaysia, a lot of hostels and lodgings are now emphasizing creating inviting and secure surroundings for female travellers (Trogisch & Fletcher, 2020). In addition, in response to the rising demand for specialized experiences, tour operators are now providing female-focused group excursions and activities (Clarke et al., 2021). As more women travel independently and backpack as a means of self-discovery and personal development, this trend is anticipated to continue reshaping Malaysia's travel scene.

However, despite the growing popularity of backpacking as a mode of travel and the increasing number of female solo travellers, there remains a notable gap in our understanding of the underlying motivations and intentions that drive females to embark on backpacking journeys (Osman et al., 2020). Although numerous facets of backpacking and solo travel have been examined in the previous study, there has not been a thorough investigation into the specific motivation and intention of female solo travellers (Terziyska, 2021). By analysing the factors that drive and influence female solo travellers to select backpacking as their preferred travel mode, the precise intents women have when beginning such excursions, and the potential obstacles or barriers they may encounter motivates this research seeks to close this knowledge gap. Furthermore, understanding the function of destination image in affecting the travel intentions of this particular demographic faces a large knowledge gap (Nguyen & Hsu, 2022). Travel decisions and decision-making processes can be significantly influenced by how a destination is perceived (Han et al., 2020). Yet, little study has been done on how female solo travellers view destinations and how these views affect their intentions to travel on backpacking trips (Osman et al., 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine Malaysia's allure as a backpacking destination for female millennials traveling alone, with an emphasis on comprehending the relationship that exists between destination image, traveller motivation, and travel intentions. Exploring these variables behind female solo backpacking provides valuable insights into the driving forces that lead women to venture out on their own, challenge societal norms, and pursue meaningful travel experiences. This study looks at these issues to give tourism stakeholders, governments, and the travel industry useful information that will help them better meet the requirements and preferences of this powerful and diverse visitor segment.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of Backpackers

Adventure people who travel alone by themselves are known as solo backpackers. They go off on trips of exploration and discovery alone (Yang, 2020). Backpackers had their roots in the 1960s and 1970s when the "hippie trail" first appeared. Young Westerners started making overland trips from Europe to Asia around this time because they were disenchanted with modern society and looking for new ways to travel and live (Türkutarhan et al., 2022). They were especially interested in visiting places like India, Nepal, and Southeast Asia. These earliest travellers were looking for spiritual awakening, cross-cultural encounters,

and a simpler, more communal way of life (Xue & Zhang, 2020). They frequently took only the bare necessities in their bags, slept in cheap lodging facilities, and formed close-knit communities as they went. The underlying principles of adventure, discovery, and tolerance for many cultures have remained constant throughout the decades while the backpacker culture has continued to change in response to variables like better transportation, globalization, and technological improvements (Martins & Costa, 2022). This type of travel may have its own set of difficulties, but it also presents an abundance of chances for growth as a person, independence, and the making of priceless memories.

Their preference for independence is one of what makes backpackers unique. Backpacking promotes independence and adaptability since adventurers usually devise their routes, make snap judgments, and travel through foreign terrain (Agyeiwaah & Bangwayo-Skeete, 2021). As travellers overcome obstacles and see the world on their terms, this independence encourages personal development (Hosseini et al., 2021), resiliency (Veréb et al., 2022), and a strong sense of accomplishment (Cai et al., 2020). Travellers also favour experiences above material stuff. They place more value on the chance to meet people from various cultures, enjoy the local cuisine, and partake in interesting activities than they do on souvenir shopping (Park & Widyanta, 2022). Backpacking is not simply a method to experience the world, it is also a way to personally enrich and understand yourself via the sense of cultural exchange and connections that are frequently made with both locals and other travellers (Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020). In general, backpacking embodies a mindset that places value on the journey itself, where the final destination is only one aspect of the adventure, and the lessons discovered along the way are just as important as the distance covered.

2.2 Backpackers Trend

The main trend among backpackers in recent years has been an increased emphasis on responsible and sustainable travel (Włodarczyk & Cudny, 2022). Backpackers are increasingly looking for methods to reduce their environmental impact and have a good influence on the places they visit as awareness of environmental and social concerns rises (Agyeiwaah et al., 2021). Due to this, more people are choosing to stay in eco-friendly hotels, participate in volunteer work abroad, and support small companies and sustainable tourism projects (Salah et al., 2023). Backpacking trends have also been greatly influenced by technology, which has facilitated better communication, information sharing, and inspiration for travellers looking for genuine, immersive, and ethical experiences through the emergence of travel applications, online forums, and social media platforms (Liu et al., 2019).

Over the past ten years, backpacking has significantly increased in popularity in Malaysia, reflecting a global trend among young and adventurous tourists (Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020). Malaysia has been a popular travel destination for backpackers looking for unique experiences on a budget due to its rich culture, spectacular natural scenery, and affordability (Kasim & LimCha, 2019). Due to this tendency, hostels that cater to travellers with specific requirements and interests have emerged, as have local street food markets and inexpensive transit options. The rising popularity of eco-tourism and sustainable travel strategies is one noticeable aspect of Malaysia's backpacker trend (Zainil & Rahman, 2023). In Malaysia, travellers frequently look for chances to interact with local people (Nagaraj et al., 2020) and the natural world while leaving the least amount of an environmental footprint (Kongbuamai et al., 2020). In response, eco-friendly hostels, animal conservation programs, and community-based tourist experiences have been created, allowing travellers to sustainably engage with the nation's rich cultural and natural history (Mtapuri et al., 2021).

In addition, as it does elsewhere, technology is a key factor in the development of the backpacker trend in Malaysia (Martins & Costa, 2022). Travel apps, social media sites, and internet forums are used by backpackers to share information, meet travel companions, and find secret destinations. The backpacker community has grown closer together because of this interconnectedness, creating a network of assistance for visitors as they make their way around Malaysia's different landscapes and cultures (Artawa et al., 2023). Overall, the global trend of adventurous and frugal travellers seeking genuine, environmentally friendly, and community-focused travel experiences is reflected in Malaysia's backpacker trend.

2.3 Millennial Female Solo Traveller

Millennial female solo travellers have been increasingly popular in recent years, which is a remarkable and progressive growth for the travel industry (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). A growing number of millennial females are shattering stereotypes and embracing independent travel as a way of self-exploration and

building self-confidence (Yang, 2020). The existence of services that are tailored exclusively to female travel requirements, an increasing emphasis on female empowerment, and safety awareness are the trends that are driving this movement (Hamid et al., 2021). According to Otegui-Carles et al., (2022), female solo travellers place importance on selecting destinations that are known for their safety and welcoming atmosphere. There is an increasing demand for women-exclusive accommodations, tours, and workshops, fostering connections and fostering friendships among fellow female travellers (Hamid et al., 2021). Increased access to information and technology is one of the factors boosting the growth of millennial female solo travellers. The internet has democratized trip planning since the millennial generation is the first to have grown up with it. Through social media and online networks, they can quickly and easily learn about places, find lodging, and interact with other visitors. Their confidence to travel alone and explore new areas has increased because of this richness of knowledge. Many millennial women are also using their internet presence to become travel influencers, encouraging other women to go on solo journeys and creating a sense of camaraderie among female travellers (Abad & Borbon, 2021). In addition, millennial female solo travellers are dispelling myths and altering how society views women's independence and potential. They demonstrate that women can navigate the world with confidence and resiliency by sharing stories of breaking out from conventional gender roles and expectations. By bravely seeing the world on their terms, millennial female solo travellers are defying prejudices, encouraging others, and changing the narrative of female travel as this trend continues. Therefore, millennials play a significantly crucial role as the generation that shapes the trends in the business landscape (Ahmad et al., 2023).

2.4 Travel Motivation

Researchers and academics in the fields of tourism and psychology have long been interested in the reason behind travel. Understanding why people decide to travel and the underlying elements that influence their travel decisions depends critically on motivation (Nguyen, 2020). Early research on travel motivation, such as Cohen's work on "Why People Travel" from 1972, suggested that the main driving forces behind travel are the need for leisure, escape, adventure, and novelty (Lewis & D'Alessandro, (2019). These innate drives are a reflection of the primal human yearning for adventure and a change of pace. The motivation of female solo travellers is driven by the desire for genuine interactions and experiences (Osman et al., 2020). They frequently discover that being solo makes them easier to get along with and adaptable to interacting with locals and other tourists (Pung & Chiappa, 2020). This promotes deep cultural interactions and develops enduring connections that cut across boundaries and ethnicities. Women are further inspired to explore the globe on their terms by the friendships they develop with other solo travellers, particularly female intrepid travellers (Buckley & Westaway, 2020). This network provides support, encouragement, information, and safety precautions. In addition, having the freedom to create itineraries that suit their interests and preferences is motivating because it enables them to fully immerse themselves in activities that appeal to their passions, whether they be discovering historical sites, going on outdoor adventures, or participating in social and volunteer activities (Cimbaljević et al., 2019).

2.4.1 Psychological Motives

The main reasons people decide to travel are usually from a psychological perspective (Luo & Lam, 2020). These motivations include a broad spectrum of underlying needs and desires that push people to travel and engage in new activities (Feather, 2020). Travel gives a respite from the routine of everyday life, allowing people to indulge their natural curiosity and appetite for new experiences (Ovcharenko et al., 2021). This desire for novelty frequently results in the discovery of new people, places, and things, which promotes personal development and fulfilment (Câmara et al., 2022). Many people use travel as a means of escaping the stresses of work and daily routines because modern life may be hectic and stressful and travel offers the chance to recharge, relax, and disengage from the demands of daily life (Batra, 2020). Additionally, a significant psychological reason for traveling is the desire for personal growth and self-discovery (Terziyska, 2021). Many people venture into unfamiliar and difficult circumstances to better understand who they are and what they are capable of. As travellers overcome challenges and negotiate foreign environments, travel gives opportunities for self-reflection, personal development, and boosted confidence (Sengupta, 2021). This self-reflective element of travel is consistent with the human desire for self-actualization and potential realization.

2.4.2 Cultural Motives

For tourists looking for authentic and immersive experiences, cultural motivations are important motivators (Yang et al., 2023). The desire to learn about and appreciate the various cultures of the world, and interact with local traditions, customs, and ways of life is one important cultural motivation (Wu et al., 2020). Travellers are frequently drawn to locations with diverse cultural landscape that offers possibilities to partake in local festivities, rituals, and activities while also fostering cross-cultural relationships and extending their horizons (Backhaus et al. 2022). This motivation is directly related to a desire for knowledge and an interest in the narratives that have influenced societies and cultures across time. People who travel for cultural reasons frequently want to comprehend the historical and cultural significance of the locations they go to in more depth (Seyfi et al., 2019). The cultural aspect of food also has a major impact on why people travel and travellers are being lured in greater numbers to locations famed for their distinctive cuisine because of a growing trend called "food tourism" (Tao et al., 2019) Travellers can engage with a culture on a sensory level by exploring local markets, trying local cuisine, and participating in culinary events. A greater understanding of a destination's legacy may be gained by combining cultural and culinary interests and doing so also helps to generate enduring memories that visitors will treasure long after their trips are over (Tao et al., 2019).

2.4.3 Personal Motives

Personal reasons are fundamental factors that shape people's preferences for travel decisions (Abdullah et al., 2020). These motivations are quite individualized and might include a variety of unique objectives, goals, and wants. The desire for independence and freedom is a common personal driving force behind travel (Hattie et al., 2020). Travel frequently gives people a chance to escape the confines of their everyday lives, whether it's avoiding the routine of work or juggling family obligations (Ovcharenko et al., 2021). For many tourists, traveling to new places and getting a taste of other cultures can be incredibly liberating and gratifying (Wu et al., 2020). The desire for personal development and self-improvement is a significant personal reason for travel (Sun et al., 2022). People can use travel as a platform to push themselves, face their concerns, and leave their comfort zones. Additionally, the desire to have unforgettable experiences and lifelong memories is a common driving force behind travel. Many people see travel as a chance to gather memories and experiences that they may treasure and impart to others (Wei et al., 2019). A spirit of adventure and excitement is fostered by experiencing different cultures, attempting new things, and running into unexpected circumstances (Cai et al., 2020). Travellers frequently seek out off-the-beaten-path experiences for personal reasons to make their trips full of unforgettable encounters and activities that have a lasting impact on their lives (Atsiz, 2021).

2.5 Destination Image

One of the most important concepts in tourism research is the concept of the destination image since it has a significant impact on travellers' decisions and perceptions of a place (Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat, 2020). Researchers in the field have looked into the development, size, and effects of destination images on traveller behaviour (Pereira et al., 2019). The cognitive picture, which represents factual or knowledge-based information about a place, is one important aspect of a destination's image (Carreira et al., 2021). Travellers frequently develop cognitive images about a destination through sources including word-of-mouth, advertising, and online reviews, and these images influence their expectations and choices for that location (Yang et al., 2022). Affective image, which deals with the sentimental and subjective elements of a location, is another part of the destination image (Mitsugi et al., 2020). A traveller's affective perception of a destination is influenced by their emotions, wants, and feelings related to that location. Conative image, which encompasses passengers' intentions and readiness to visit a specific destination, is another component of the total destination image (Chu et al., 2022). To develop appealing and engaging destination pictures, destination marketers must fully comprehend the interplay between these cognitive, emotional, and conative components.

2.6 Travel Intention

An individual's desire to travel or go on a vacation is represented by the idea of travel intention, which is crucial to tourism research. It acts as an important steppingstone for actual travel behaviour and decision-making procedures (Mirehie, et al., 2021). Researchers have studied some variables that affect travel intention, illuminating the intricate interplay between a person's personal, contextual, and destination-related elements (Stylidis et al., 2022). Individual elements, such as motivations and traits from the

individual, play a significant role in determining travel intention. In addition, a person's inclination to travel can be strongly influenced by characteristics like age, gender, income, and previous travel experiences (Rizki et al., 2021). Studies have revealed, for instance, that younger people, sometimes known as millennials, are more likely to express a desire for adventurous and experienced travel (Nur'afifah & Prihantoro, 2021). Furthermore, environmental aspects significantly influence travel intentions. Among the outside variables that can affect travel aspirations are economic stability, political climate, and accessibility to places (Güzel et al., 2021). For instance, when the economy is doing well, people may have more intent to travel since they see it as an accessible and affordable option (Brough et al., 2021).

2.7 Hypotheses Development

2.7.1 Psychological Motive and Travel Intention

Numerous research that has investigated the connection between psychological motives and travel intention have consistently found a strong and favourable association. Li and Wu (2020) for instance, looked at British outbound tourists and discovered that those who travelled for psychological reasons like novelty, adventure, relaxation, and self-discovery had a significantly higher intention to choose particular locations that suited these goals. This suggests that people who are motivated to travel by a need for novelty or relaxation are more likely to express their intention to go to places that cater to these particular psychological requirements. The significance of psychological factors in affecting travel intention and destination decisions among a varied group of passengers is highlighted by this study.

In addition, a study by Rokni, (2021) investigated South Korean tourists' travel intentions and their underlying psychological motivations. The results showed that psychological incentives for traveling, such as novelty, relaxation, and self-discovery, were reliable predictors. While those seeking relaxation and self-discovery showed a greater intention to travel, travellers with a higher desire for fresh experiences revealed a stronger interest in exploring new locations. Therefore, this study proposed these hypotheses:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between psychological motive and travel intention.

2.7.2 Cultural Motive and Travel Intention

The dynamic relationship between cultural motivation and travel intention has been the subject of numerous researches, illuminating the crucial role that cultural motivations play in determining travellers' intents. According to a study by Lee and Bai (2016) on foreign visitors to South Korea, cultural factors, such as a keen interest in the traditions, history, and cuisine of the destination, had a substantial impact on travel intentions. Highlighting the close relationship between cultural motives and travel intention, tourists seeking cultural immersion showed a stronger interest in visiting locations that offered genuine cultural contacts.

In addition, Villamediana et al. (2020) research on visitors revealed that cultural motivations, notably the desire to see historical and heritage places, were a significant factor in determining travellers' intentions. Visitors who had a strong interest in history and culture showed a greater desire to travel to places with extensive historical and cultural resources. These results highlight how cultural motives continue to be relevant in predicting travel intention across a variety of travel contexts and populations, emphasizing the significance of promoting and improving cultural attractions and experiences to draw tourists who are interested in cultural immersion. Therefore, this study proposed these hypotheses:

H₂: There is a significant relationship between cultural motive and travel intention.

2.7.3 Personal Motive and Travel Intention

Tourism research has focused on the connection between personal motives and travel intention, demonstrating the significant impact of personal aspirations on people's intentions to travel. Wen and Huang (2019) performed research on Chinese outbound tourists' travel intents and underlying personal motivations. The study showed that individual factors, such as the need for autonomy, leisure, and the making of enduring experiences, were very important in determining travel intention. Travellers who were driven by the desire for freedom demonstrated a higher level of travel intention, demonstrating the close relationship between personal motivations and the desire to escape routine and obligations. Additionally, those who travelled for the personal purpose of relaxing showed a larger intention to travel to places where they could relax and decompress.

In addition, a study by Guttentag et al. (2017) investigated Canadian tourists' travel goals and their underlying personal motivations. The study found that travel intention was greatly impacted by personal incentives for adventure and self-discovery. Travellers who were driven by a thirst for adventure and a desire for personal development indicated a stronger intention to set out on adventures, highlighting the benefits of travel for personal fulfilment and self-discovery. Therefore, this study proposed these hypotheses:

H₃: There is a significant relationship between personal motive and travel intention.

2.7.4 Destination Image and Travel Intention

It is well known that a favourable destination image can have a substantial impact on tourists' intentions to travel to a certain location. This image is frequently created through marketing initiatives, word-of-mouth, and online evaluations. Recent studies have maintained their support for this connection. For instance, a study by Kim et al. (2017) looked at how Chinese tourists' travel intentions were influenced by their perception of the location. According to the study, a favourable destination image that takes into account both cognitive and emotive dimensions significantly and favourably affected travellers' intentions to travel.

The destination image of rural tourism locations was also the subject of a recent study by Wang and Xu (2019). The study looked at how the perception of a destination affected travellers' desire to visit rural areas. The results showed that travel intention was significantly positively impacted by a positive destination image, which was defined by impressions of tranquillity, natural beauty, and authentic experiences. This study emphasizes how important it is to customize destination image techniques to match the distinctive qualities and appeals of rural places to draw tourists looking for certain experiences. Therefore, this study proposed this hypothesis:

H₄: There is a significant relationship between destination image and travel intention.

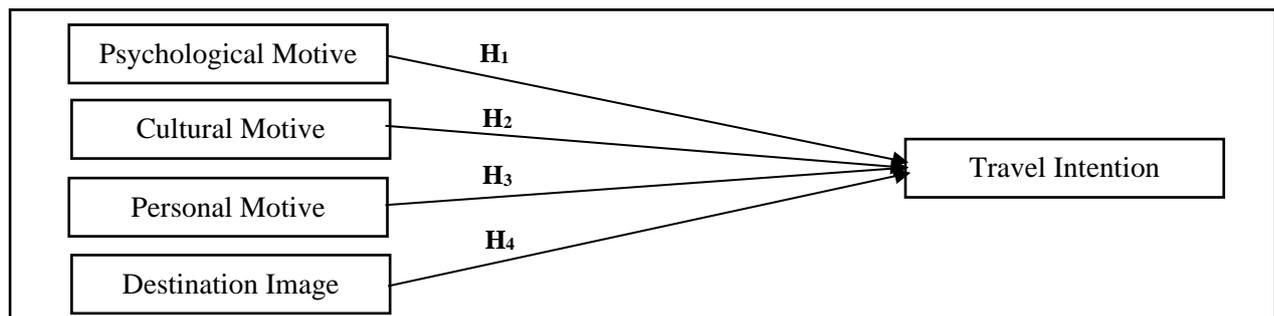


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Sourced adapted: Ejupi and Medarić (2022); and Maghrifani et al. (2021).

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The necessary data was collected using a quantitative strategy. The decision to utilize quantitative approaches is based on the study's objective, which is to identify cause-and-effect dynamics by establishing correlations between variables (Creswell, 2003). The study was carried out in a non-interventionist context using normal and ordinary circumstances (Ariffin & Zahari, 2013). Due to time and financial restrictions, data collection took place over a brief time, spanning days, weeks, or months, and was completed as a single collecting event. This method is also known as a cross-sectional sample. Millennial female visitors between the ages of 27 and 42 will make up the population of this study. Tourists from the Millennial generation who have travelled alone and are between the ages of 27 and 42 will be the study's unit of analysis.

Given that there is no information available on the total number of female Millennial travellers between the ages of 27 and 42 who have travelled alone, it is assumed that there is no sampling frame. As a result, the study's sample size will be restricted to a minimum. Recent developments suggest that when choosing a sample size, researchers should apply power analysis (Hair et al., 2019). G*Power is one of the statistical programs that can be used to perform power analysis. For business and social science academics, G*Power is frequently the top choice (Hair et al., 2017) (Faul et al., 2009).

To perform power analysis using GPower, a few procedures were involved. Researchers had chosen the "F tests" analysis from the test family selections in the software. After that, researchers selected "Linear

multiple regression: fixed model, R² deviation from zero" from the list of statistical tests. Step three required that "A-priori: Compute required sample size - given α , power, and effect size" be selected as the power analysis type. The researchers used input settings by choosing the power at 0.95, α at 0.05, and the effect size at 0.15 (medium effect). This was the environment that was most frequently recommended for social and business science research (Hair et al., 2017). The number of predictors was then entered, and this number was established by the study's hypothesis model. The number of predictors in a model was the maximum number of arrows leading to a dependent variable. Consequently, the final step involved setting the input parameter to four before clicking the "Calculate" button. Therefore, the sample size for this study was estimated using GPower 3.1.9.7 software, and 129 samples were needed as a minimum for the model to be effective.

The purposive sampling approach was adopted in this study as a non-probability sampling strategy. It is crucial to understand that purposive sampling, also known as judgment, selected, or chosen sampling, is a non-probability sampling method. When choosing people to take part in a study, researchers rely on their judgment. The purpose of choosing purposive sampling in this research was to examine a specific group or population that possessed specified attributes, such as female solo travellers, and purposive sampling enabled the selection of participants who met the requirements. To gather primary data for this study, the online questionnaire took place from February 2023 to April 2023. Researchers acquired the necessary data or information from a female traveller with prior solo travel experience. Following approval, each respondent was required to finish a survey provided with a brief overview of the study's purpose and objectives, the researcher's background, and the administration of the survey. Additionally, the surveys also emphasized that all information would be kept private and anonymous, and that participation was completely voluntary. In the development of the research instruments the variables in the study framework that were obtained from the literature review were used to construct and modify it. Items for each dimension will be taken from previous research, with some changes made to match the goals of the study. A brief introduction and the justification for the study were given on the cover page. It was prepared in simple English and Malay to facilitate the understanding of the respondents. Four screening questions were also utilized to narrow down the replies because the poll is intended for millennial female tourists from abroad and locally who have gone on solo trips.

A Likert scale of 1 to 5 was used to score each question. Scale 1 denotes strongly disagreement and scale 5 denotes high agreement. The questions used were simple and easy to understand, requiring the least amount of reading and writing, due to the variance in response profiles. In other words, respondents should be able to quickly understand a question and choose an appropriate response. Additionally, everything was presented as plainly and simply as possible, using simple language and vocabulary, to eliminate any uncertainty.

The first component of the questionnaire asked screening questions about the respondent's age, gender, and nationality as well as if they have ever travelled alone. Following the respondents' demographic data, which includes their status, education, occupation, income level, and purpose of traveling. Instruments for psychological motive, cultural motive, and personal motive were adapted from Ejupi and Medarić (2022), while instruments for travel intention were adapted from Maghrifani et al. (2021).

Table 1: Research Instrument

Section	Instrument	Sources
A(i) Screening Question	Gender (Male/Female)	Researcher
	Age (27-42)	Researcher
	Nationality	Researcher
	Have you ever had the experience of traveling alone?	Researcher
A(ii) Demographic Profile	Status	Researcher
	Level of Education	Researcher
	Occupation	Researcher
	Level of income	Researcher
	Purpose of travel?	Researcher
B Travel Motivation	Psychological Motive	
	I prefer to travel solo because of disconnecting, and withdrawal from everyday life.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	The change of environment is important to me on my solo journey.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)

	When I travel alone, I feel more confident and independent.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	Traveling alone is a time to fulfill my desires and needs.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	Cultural Motive	
	I like to visit museums and galleries on my travels in Malaysia	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	I like to try local food on the trip in Malaysia	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	I love getting to know the culture and way of life of other people and nations in Malaysia.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	I like to see the sights at my destination in Malaysia.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	I like to take part in cultural and entertainment events on my travels in Malaysia.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	Personal Motive	
	On the journey, I like to meet new people.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	On the journey, I want to broaden my horizons, explore, and discover new things.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
	I go on a journey in search of my identity and personal growth.	Ejupi and Medarić (2022)
C Destination Image	Malaysia offers interesting cultural attractions.	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	Malaysia offers interesting historical attractions.	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	Malaysia offers beautiful scenery/nature.	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	Malaysia offers nightlife.	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	Malaysia offers appealing local food	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	Malaysia has friendly people	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	Malaysia is an attractive travel destination	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	Malaysia is an interesting travel destination	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
D Travel Intention	I intend to visit/revisit Malaysia in the future.	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	I will likely visit/revisit Malaysia in the future.	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	I am interested in visiting/revisiting Malaysia in the future.	Maghrifani et al. (2021).
	I am likely to recommend Malaysia to those who want travel advice.	Maghrifani et al. (2021).

The questionnaires were carefully evaluated for validity, reliability, and translation. After back translating the English version into Malay, linguists confirmed its accuracy. The researchers, including academicians from various backgrounds and tourism experts reviewed the instruments. Their valuable feedback and recommendations during the validity check were recorded and considered for future methodological studies. To ensure the reliability of the research instruments, researchers assessed their dependability using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, a widely accepted test for multipoint-scaled items. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), Cronbach's Alpha value should be 0.7 or higher to ensure the instrument's validity. In this study, researchers calculated the reliability of each questionnaire component separately. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 was utilized by the researcher to examine the data. This study also employed descriptive analysis, which examines the mean score and standard deviation. Finally, regression analysis is used in this work as a predictive method. To describe how two or more independent variables, relate to one continuous dependent variable.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

Millennial female travellers who had previously travelled alone to Malaysia were given questionnaires as part of this study, which used Google survey form to gather data from a minimum of 146 participants. All responses were useful because of the benefits of using an online survey. The survey was completed by 164 persons in total. As a result, there were no missing responses for the study. Based on Table 2, 64% (n=105) of females who travel solo were single and the rest 36% (n=59) were married. 39% (n=64) have a degree for their level of education. For occupation, 61.6% (n=101) of these solo travellers were employed and only 4.3 (n=7) were unemployed. For the level of income, 45.7% (n=75) earned RM1500 to RM2400 per month. While for the purpose of travel, 90.9% of respondents travel for leisure purposes.

Table 2: Respondent's Profile

No.	Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Status		
	Single	105	64
	Married	59	36
2	Level of Education		
	SPM	20	12.2
	Diploma	41	25
	Degree	64	39
	Master	36	22
	PhD	3	1.8
3	Occupation		
	Student	39	23.8
	Employed	101	61.6
	Unemployed	7	4.3
	Own Business	17	10.3
4	Level of Income		
	RM1500 to Rm2400	75	45.7
	RM2500 to RM3400	53	32.3
	RM3500 to RM4400	15	9.1
	RM4500 to RM5400	7	4.4
	RM5500 and above	14	8.5
5	Purpose of Visit		
	Leisure	149	90.9
	Work	8	4.8
	Other	7	4.3

According to Table 3, there are four independent variables (psychological motive, cultural motive, personal motive, and destination image) and one dependent variable which is travel intention). Based on the result, tourist psychological motive, tourist cultural motive, destination image, and tourist travel intention were significantly high with mean scores of 4.155 (psychological motive), 4.073 (cultural motive), 4.323 (destination image), and 4.153 (travel intention) out of 5.0. However, personal motive was reported as moderate average where the mean score is 3.990 out of 5.0.

Table 3: Items and Mean Score

Variables	Items	Mean (m)	Standard Deviation (Std Dev)	Average Mean
Psychological Motive	I prefer to travel solo because of disconnecting, and withdrawal from everyday life.	4.13	0.780	4.155
	The change of environment is important to me on my solo journey.	4.12	0.782	
	When I travel alone, I feel more confident and independent.	4.24	0.742	
	Traveling alone is a time to fulfill my desires and needs.	4.13	0.815	
Cultural Motive	I like to visit museums and galleries on my travels in Malaysia.	4.12	0.820	4.073
	I like to try local food on a trip to Malaysia.	4.14	0.717	
	I love getting to know the culture and way of life of other people and nations in Malaysia.	4.05	0.793	
	I like to see the sights at my destination in Malaysia.	3.98	0.806	
Personal Motive	On the journey, I like to meet new people.	3.98	0.806	3.990
	On the journey, I want to broaden my horizons, explore, and discover new things.	4.12	0.812	

	I go on a journey in search of my identity and personal growth.	3.87	0.787	
Destination Image	Malaysia offers interesting cultural attractions.	4.38	0.579	4.323
	Malaysia offers interesting historical attractions.	4.35	0.540	
	Malaysia offers beautiful scenery/nature.	4.46	0.569	
	Malaysia offers nightlife.	4.20	0.702	
	Malaysia offers appealing local food	4.34	0.610	
	Malaysia has friendly people	4.40	.0643	
	Malaysia is an attractive travel destination	4.15	0.685	
	Malaysia is an interesting travel destination	4.30	0.666	
Travel Intention	I intend to visit/revisit Malaysia in the future.	4.09	0.750	4.153
	I will likely visit/revisit Malaysia in the future.	4.13	0.711	
	I am interested in visiting/revisiting Malaysia in the future.	4.19	0.706	
	I am likely to recommend Malaysia to those who want travel advice.	4.20	0.666	

4.1 Hypotheses Testing

This study aims to investigate the influence of psychological motive, cultural motive, personal motive, and destination image effect tourist travel intention among millennial solo female tourists. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between psychological motive and travel intention.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between cultural motive and travel intention.

H₃: There is a significant relationship between personal motive and travel intention.

H₄: There is a significant relationship between destination image and travel intention.

The dependent variable (travel intention) was regressed on predicting variables of psychological motive, cultural motive, personal motive, and destination image. The psychological motive significantly predicts tourist travel intention, $F(1,162) = 139.750$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that tourist psychological motive has a significant impact on tourist travel intention. Moreover, $R^2 = 0.463$ depicts that the model explains 46.3% of the variance in tourist travel intention. H₁ evaluates whether psychological motives positively influence travel intention. The result revealed that psychological motives positively influence tourist travel intention ($B = 0.593$, $t = 11.822$, $p = 0.000$). Hence H₁ was supported.

The cultural motive significantly predicts tourist travel intention, $F(1,162) = 170.338$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that tourist cultural motive has a significant impact on tourist travel intention. Moreover, $R^2 = 0.513$ depicts that the model explains 51.3% of the variance in tourist travel intention. H₂ evaluates whether cultural motives positively influence travel intention. The result revealed that cultural motive positively influences tourist travel intention ($B = 0.675$, $t = 170.338$, $p = 0.000$). Hence H₂ was supported.

The personal motive significantly predicts tourist travel intention, $F(1,162) = 208.438$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that tourist personal motive has a significant impact on tourist travel intention. Moreover, $R^2 = 0.563$ depicts that the model explains 56.3% of the variance in tourist travel intention. H₃ evaluates whether personal motive positively influences travel intention. The result revealed that personal motive positively influences tourist travel intention ($B = 0.901$, $t = 14.437$, $p = 0.000$). Hence H₃ was supported.

The destination image significantly predicts tourist travel intention, $F(1,162) = 86.986$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that destination image has a significant impact on tourist travel intention. Moreover, $R^2 = 0.349$ depicts that the model explains 34.9% of the variance in tourist travel intention. H₄ evaluates whether destination image positively influences travel intention. The result revealed that destination image positively influences tourist travel intention ($B = 0.500$, $t = 9.327$, $p = 0.000$). Hence H₄ was supported. Therefore, all the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Result of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Regression Weight	B	t	p-value	F	R ²	Decision
H ₁	PHM □ TI	0.593	11.822	0.000	139.750	0.463	Supported
H ₂	CM □ TI	0.675	13.050	0.000	170.338	0.513	Supported
H ₃	PEM □ TI	0.901	14.437	0.000	208.438	0.563	Supported
H ₄	DI □ TI	0.500	9.327	0.000	86.986	0.349	Supported

5.0 DISCUSSION

For millennial female solo travellers, Malaysia has become an increasingly appealing backpacking destination. It is possible to gain insight into the changing landscape of contemporary travel preferences among this demographic by understanding why Malaysia has such attractions. This study examines why millennial female solo travellers pick Malaysia for backpacking. Moreover, this study also tries to fill the knowledge gap by studying the relationship between the perception of the destination and the travel intentions of female solo backpackers. Therefore, the results indicate a significant correlation between personal motive and destination image toward tourist travel intention to Malaysia. Psychological motives and cultural motives do not influence tourist travel intention among millennial female solo travellers.

5.1 Relationship Between Psychological Motive and Tourist Travel Intention

The result of this study shows that psychological motive does not influence travel intention among millennial solo female travellers. Hence H₁ was not supported. Psychological factors are frequently viewed as significant influencers of travel intention according to previous studies. The conclusion that psychological motive strongly influences tourist intention to travel is supported by several studies. For instance, Ahmad et al. (2021) discovered that motivation is a key psychological factor that influences a person's behaviour, activity, travel plans, decisions, and behaviours. The results of the study indicate that psychological elements, such as motivation, opportunity, and aptitude, are significant in determining travel inclinations. Additionally, knowledge, perceived risk, and identity have a strong beneficial influence on travel intention, according to a Jiang et al. (2022) study. The study contends that knowledge and perceived risk are significant psychological variables that influence travel intention. Personality qualities have been linked to travel intentions in another study by Screen et al. (2023), which raises the possibility that psychological aspects have a significant impact on how people decide to travel.

5.2 Relationship Between Cultural Motive and Tourist Travel Intention

Based on the findings of these studies, millennial solo female travellers' travel intentions are positively influenced by cultural motives. H₂ was therefore supported. This is supported by several studies whereas Chi and Phuong, (2018) study found structural links between tourists' trip intentions, travel reasons, and views toward cultural souvenirs. According to the study, travellers' sentiments regarding cultural souvenirs and travel intents are favourably influenced by their travel motivations, indicating that cultural motives are crucial in determining travel intention. Wu et al. (2020) investigated the effect of cultural tourism on Chinese tourists' travel intentions. The results of the study indicate that cultural tourism significantly increases travel intention, indicating that cultural motives are a crucial factor in determining travel intention.

5.3 Relationship Between Personal Motive and Tourist Travel Intention

According to the results of this study, a personal motive has a beneficial impact on the travel intentions of millennial solo female travellers. Therefore, H₃ was supported. Travel motivation has a favourable impact on visit intention, according to a study by Khan et al. (2018) that looked into potential tourists' intentions to visit India. According to the study, individual motivations are a significant factor in determining travel intention. Another study by Terzi et al. (2022) investigated the personalities influencing travel habits in the post-COVID world. The study discovered that the main variables impacting travel intentions are motivation, opportunity, and ability. Hence, individual motivations are a significant factor in determining travel intention.

5.4 Relationship Between Destination Image and Tourist Travel Intention

These research findings indicate that destination image positively affects millennial solo female travellers' travel intentions. H₄ was consequently supported and shared a similar view from the previous study. It is common knowledge that travellers' intentions to visit a particular location can be significantly influenced

by the perception they have of the destination. For instance, Tian et al. (2021) study examined how Chinese tourists' perceptions of the area affected their travel plans. According to the study, visitors' intentions to travel were considerably and favourably impacted by a positive destination image that considers both cognitive and affective components. The study by Li et al. (2020) examined how tourists' intention to visit rural areas was influenced by their opinion of a location. The findings demonstrated that a favourable destination image such as feelings of peace, natural beauty, and real experiences significantly influenced travellers' intentions to travel there.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Malaysia is a captivating and developing backpacking destination that has won the hearts of millennial solo female travellers. The analysis of destination image, motivation, and travel intentions reveals a complex environment where Malaysia's varied options appeal to this group. A sense of security and comfort, which is essential for single female travellers, is fostered by Malaysia's reputation as a peaceful and accepting culture where visitors are welcomed with open arms.

The importance of this study goes beyond just figuring out the preferences of a certain group. It has practical ramifications for promoting tourism, gender-inclusive travel, research study, and economic growth. The study offers useful information for numerous stakeholders and contributes to the ongoing growth of the travel industry by looking at Malaysia as a backpacking destination for millennial solo female travellers. Consequently, this study provides a useful perspective where the results of this study can be used to guide Malaysian tourism boards, travel companies, and enterprises in tailoring their marketing plans and product lines to meet the interests and needs of millennial solo female visitors. The creation of more specialized and alluring goods and services might result from an understanding of this demographic's driving forces and travel aspirations. Economic growth is a practical application of the study. Malaysia may boost tourism earnings and assist local companies by catering to the tastes of millennial female solo visitors. The economic benefit includes higher spending on lodging, dining, travel, and local experiences, which helps the tourism industry and the entire economy grow.

From an academic perspective, the study provides insightful information on millennial travel habits, particularly those of female solo travellers. This study can serve as a foundation for understanding the objectives, interests, and motives of this demographic, which is becoming increasingly significant in the tourist sector. The study covers a subfield of tourism research that emphasizes solitary travel and gender-specific travel behaviour. By gaining insight into the tastes and experiences of female solo travellers, debates about gender-inclusive tourism can be informed about the difficulties and opportunities women confront.

For limitation and future research, the sample size and representativeness may be one of the study's limitations. The study may not have adequately represented the diversity of this group because it was based on a small sample of millennial solo female travellers in Malaysia. To improve the generalizability of findings, future studies might consider larger and more varied samples. Since this research relies on self-report data, biases might be higher. In the future, researchers might suggest adopting another sampling method to reduce the potential for biased data. Therefore, increasing the precision of screening questions could help researchers target the exact population they intend to approach.

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