

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE MEDIATING ROLES OF E-
SATISFACTION AND E-TRUST
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
WEBSITE FEATURES OF TRAVEL
AGENCIES AND ONLINE
PURCHASE INTENTION AMONG
MALAYSIAN GENERATION Z**

MUHAMMAD SAUFI BIN ANAS

Thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Hotel and Tourism Management)

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management

September 2025

ABSTRACT

This study addresses a significant theoretical and empirical void by examining the precise mechanisms through which travel agencies' website features influence the online purchase intention of Malaysian Generation Z, specifically investigating the serial mediating roles of e-satisfaction and e-trust. Employing a rigorous post-positivist, deductive quantitative approach, data were meticulously collected from 600 Malaysian Generation Z respondents (aged 18-24) in SS15 Subang Jaya and Cyberjaya, Selangor, utilizing a validated 4-point Likert scale questionnaire. Comprehensive data analysis, performed using SPSS Version 25 and SmartPLS 4, encompassed frequency, descriptive, reliability, factor analysis, regression, and serial mediation analyses. The findings conclusively demonstrate that critical website features, including security (cashless payment, personal data protection), web design (ease of use, visual appeal, navigation), and information quality (price information, online reviews), significantly contribute to Generation Z's e-satisfaction. This e-satisfaction, in turn, is a powerful determinant of e-trust, and most crucially, both e-satisfaction and e-trust serially mediate the relationship between website features and online purchase intention, illustrating how these psychological states sequentially bridge the gap between digital engagement and actual buying decisions. A key insight reveals that while basic usability is a fundamental expectation, true e-satisfaction for this demographic arises from a more comprehensive, integrated digital experience, emphasizing the importance of perceived security and end-to-end data protection. Theoretically, this research significantly expands the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by empirically validating the sequential mediating roles of e-satisfaction and e-trust within the context of intangible, high-value online travel purchases for Generation Z, offering a nuanced understanding of contemporary consumer behavior. Practically, these findings compel travel agencies to strategically invest in robust security, transparent data protection, and visually stimulating, integrated web designs that transcend mere functionality, recognizing that fostering trust through engaging interactions is a multi-step process vital for converting digital interest into loyal customers in the dynamic online travel landscape. Novelty of the study lies in its unique focus on the Malaysian Generation Z demographic and its detailed analysis of the multi-step trust formation process specifically for intangible travel products, providing a culturally specific and granular understanding previously lacking in generalized studies. The study is confined to Malaysian Generation Z, limiting the generalizability of findings due to the demographic's non-homogeneous nature. The focus on a specific age group (18-24) and geographic areas (SS15 Subang Jaya and Cyberjaya) may restrict broader applicability across the entire Generation Z cohort. Future studies should adopt longitudinal designs or adaptive models to track evolving digital behaviors of Generation Z, ensuring findings remain relevant as consumer preferences change. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods could provide deeper insights into consumer perceptions, particularly regarding online security and trust, to complement the quantitative findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah. Firstly, I wish to thank God for giving me the opportunity to embark on my PhD and for completing this long and challenging journey successfully. My deepest gratitude and sincere thanks go to my main supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hassnah Wee, and my second supervisor, Prof. Dr. Haji Mohd Salehuddin Mohd Zahari, for their invaluable guidance, unwavering support, constructive feedback, and immense patience throughout this research. Their expertise and dedication were instrumental in shaping this thesis.

My appreciation also dedicated to my lovely family for their full support. To my very dear Abah, Anas bin Harun, and my lovely Mak, , their vision, determination to educate me, and endless sacrifices laid the foundation for this achievement. This piece of victory is dedicated to both of you. My heartfelt appreciation goes to my beloved wife, Shakira Izzati binti Johari, for always providing me with motivation and unwavering support to finish my PhD journey. I also extend my gratitude to my father-in-law, Johari bin Hassan, and my mother-in-law, Saniah binti Abdul Raham, for their understanding and support. Alhamdulillah.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR’S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xviii
LIST OF FIGURES	xxiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xxv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Preamble	1
1.2 Background of Study	1
1.3 Problem Statement	4
1.4 Research Objectives	9
1.5 Research Questions	10
1.6 Scope of the Study	11
1.7 Assumption	12
1.8 Definition of Terms	13
1.8.1 Website	13
1.8.2 Website Features	13
1.8.3 Generation Z	13
1.8.4 Security	13
1.8.5 Cashless Payment	13
1.8.6 Personal Data Protection	13
1.8.7 Web Design	14
1.8.8 Visual Appeal	14
1.8.9 Ease of Use	14
1.8.10 Navigation	14
1.8.11 Information Quality	14

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

The first chapter consists of nine sections, commencing with the study background, which provides a detailed description of the relevant situation. This chapter also includes several issues and cases involving tour packages that will serve as the foundation for a study assessing Generation Z's e-satisfaction, e-trust, and online purchase intention toward travel agency website features. The following section describes the study's research objectives, research questions, research frameworks, and hypotheses. The chapter ends with an overview of the study's significance, research scope, limitations, and definitions.

1.2 Background of Study

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly reshaped global economies, compelling nations, including Malaysia, to accelerate their digital transformation agendas. While the initial response focused on immediate adaptations to maintain economic sustainability (Mahomed, 2021), particularly in the severely impacted tourism sector (Beukalaer, 2021), Malaysia has since transitioned into an endemic phase. This shift signifies that digital adoption patterns, once reactionary, are now normalized and constitute a permanent fixture in consumer behavior and industry operations (Kanapathipillai et al., 2024). In this evolving landscape, the strategic importance of managerial discretion in the travel and hospitality industry, as well as across various sectors, has become paramount. Businesses must proactively adapt their frameworks to leverage digital technologies, especially given that the tourism industry, which deals with intangible goods, has long relied on information dissemination for quality assessment (Abubakar, 2016). Consequently, digital innovations like websites have become indispensable tools for potential tourists to gather essential details before making purchase decisions (Casalo et al., 2015), and for businesses to engage effectively with customers (Buhalis & Law, 2008).