
Seeing the Risk but Taking the Trip: Understanding Travel Intention among Malaysian Generation Z Travellers

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships between information exposure, perceived travel risk and travel intention among Malaysian Generation Z travellers in the context of geopolitical uncertainty. Information Processing Theory explains the proposed relationship between information exposure and risk appraisal, while Risk Perception Theory informs the proposed relationship between perceived travel risk and travel intention. A quantitative cross-sectional online survey obtained 296 responses through purposive sampling, and the data were analysed using structural equation modelling in AMOS. Information exposure was positively associated with perceived travel risk ($\beta = .593$, $p < .001$). However, neither perceived travel risk ($\beta = -.114$, $p = .129$) nor information exposure ($\beta = .021$, $p = .796$) showed a statistically significant direct association with travel intention. The model explained only 1.0% of the variance in travel intention, indicating limited explanatory power for this outcome. These findings do not establish resilience, tolerance for uncertainty or the maintenance of actual travel plans, none of which was measured. Instead, they identify a positive association between information exposure and perceived risk while highlighting the model's limitations in explaining travel intention. For local tourism enterprises and community tourism operators, the study motivates further investigation of credible risk communication and visitor confidence rather than demonstrating the effectiveness of particular communication strategies.

Keywords: Generation Z, information exposure, perceived travel risk, structural equation modelling, travel intention, geopolitical uncertainty

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Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies has transformed how tourists search for information, evaluate destinations, and make travel decisions. Social media platforms, online travel communities, blogs, and digital news channels have become primary sources of travel-related information, allowing travellers to access vast amounts of destination content before undertaking a trip (Acharjee et al., 2023; Bejaoui et al., 2024). As a result, information exposure has become an important factor influencing tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions.

The tourism industry is particularly sensitive to information because travel decisions often involve uncertainty and perceived risks. Travellers continuously process information concerning destination safety, environmental conditions, natural disasters, health issues, and travel restrictions before deciding whether to visit a destination (Wang et al., 2024). Consequently, the information available through digital platforms may influence not only destination evaluations but also travellers' perceptions of risk and willingness to travel.

Previous studies have demonstrated that social media significantly influences travel planning, destination selection, and tourist behaviour (Mahajan et al., 2024; Saini et al., 2024; Wibisono & Lale, 2024). However, tourists do not merely receive information passively. Instead, they actively process information and evaluate potential consequences before making travel decisions. Therefore, understanding the mechanism through which information exposure influences travel intention remains an important area of tourism research.

This issue also matters to community tourism operators and small tourism enterprises seeking to understand younger travellers' intentions. For homestay providers, local guides and community-based attractions, a practical question is whether exposure to information about uncertainty is associated with perceived travel risk and willingness to travel. Examining these relationships may help identify questions for future research on visitor communication and local tourism demand. The present study addresses the traveller perspective, although it does not directly measure enterprise performance, community benefits or the effectiveness of operators' communication practices.

Research Background

Information exposure refers to the extent to which individuals encounter, consume, and process information through various communication channels. In tourism, information exposure has become increasingly important due to the widespread use of social media and digital communication technologies. Studies have reported that travel-related information obtained through social media significantly affects tourists' destination choices and travel behaviour (Acharjee et al., 2023; Si & Leou, 2024).

According to Information Processing Theory, individuals actively acquire, interpret, and evaluate information before making behavioural decisions. Exposure to information can shape cognitive evaluations and influence behavioural intentions through psychological processes (Meng et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2026). Research has shown that exposure to information affects behavioural intentions by shaping individuals' perceptions and evaluations of potential outcomes (Tong et al., 2024; Zhang, 2025).

One important psychological factor that may explain the relationship between information

exposure and travel intention is perceived travel risk. Perceived travel risk refers to travellers' subjective assessment of uncertainty and potential negative consequences associated with travel activities. Such risks may include environmental hazards, safety concerns, health threats, and destination instability (Nguyen & Truong, 2024). Previous studies have established that perceived risk significantly influences tourists' destination choices and travel-related decisions (Loi et al., 2024).

Recent studies have further demonstrated that environmental changes and natural hazards influence travellers' intentions through risk evaluation processes. For example, Blešić et al. (2024) found that earthquake hazards significantly affected Serbian tourists' willingness to visit Türkiye. Similarly, Wang et al. (2024) reported that environmental changes at destinations significantly influenced travel intentions among travellers in Far-East Asia. These findings suggest that risk perception plays an important role in tourism decision-making.

Travel intention represents an individual's willingness to engage in future travel activities and is widely recognised as a strong predictor of actual travel behaviour (Guo et al., 2024). Researchers have increasingly examined factors influencing travel intention, including perceived risk, health beliefs, travel behaviour, and destination characteristics (Guo et al., 2024; Teng et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the relationship between information exposure, perceived travel risk, and travel intention remains insufficiently understood.

Problem Statements

Despite the growing body of literature on tourism decision-making, several research gaps remain. First, previous studies have primarily focused on the direct influence of social media and digital information on travel behaviour and destination choice (Acharjee et al., 2023; Bejaoui et al., 2024; Wibisono & Lale, 2024). Limited attention has been paid to understanding the psychological mechanism by which exposure to information affects travel intention.

This study focuses on a specific empirical question concerning Malaysian Generation Z travellers. It examines whether information exposure is associated with travel intention directly and indirectly through perceived travel risk. The distinction between the formation of risk perceptions and their association with intention is central to the analysis. An association between information exposure and perceived risk does not, by itself, establish a corresponding association with willingness to travel.

While previous tourism studies have examined the role of perceived risk in destination choice and travel behaviour (Loi et al., 2024; Nguyen & Truong, 2024; Solyomfi et al., 2024), perceived travel risk has often been investigated as an independent predictor rather than as a mediating variable. Consequently, empirical evidence explaining how information exposure translates into travel intention through perceived travel risk remains limited.

The proposed contribution is therefore a contextual examination of these relationships rather than a claim that information exposure or perceived risk has not previously been studied. By estimating the direct and indirect paths within one model, the study assesses whether perceived travel risk provides an explanatory link between information exposure and travel intention in the sampled population.

In addition, recent studies have highlighted the importance of environmental uncertainty, health concerns, and destination risks in influencing travel decisions (Blešić et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). However, evidence remains limited on how travellers process information about these

risks and subsequently form intentions to travel, particularly in the Malaysian tourism context.

The scope of this contribution depends on the alignment of the questionnaire measures. In particular, intention to travel generally must be distinguished from intention to visit a specified destination under a defined geopolitical-risk scenario. The interpretation of the results is restricted to the travel intention represented by the questionnaire items and does not extend to observed travel behaviour.

Research Aim

This study aims to examine the associations between information exposure, perceived travel risk and travel intention among Malaysian Generation Z travellers, including the proposed indirect association between information exposure and travel intention through perceived travel risk.

Research Objectives

RO1: To examine the effect of information exposure on perceived travel risk.

RO2: To examine the effect of perceived travel risk on travel intention.

RO3: To examine the effect of information exposure on travel intention.

RO4: To test the mediating role of perceived travel risk in the relationship between information exposure and travel intention.

Literature review

Information Exposure and Travel Intention

Information exposure has become an increasingly important factor influencing tourists' behavioural intentions due to the rapid growth of digital communication technologies and social media platforms. Contemporary travellers actively seek destination-related information from social networking sites, online reviews, travel blogs, digital news sources, and user-generated content before making travel decisions (Acharjee et al., 2023; Bejaoui et al., 2024; Saini et al., 2024). The abundance of accessible information enables tourists to evaluate destinations, compare alternatives, and reduce uncertainty throughout the travel decision-making process. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that social media exposure significantly influences destination choice, travel planning, and tourist behaviour because digital platforms provide information that shapes travellers' expectations and evaluations of destinations (Mahajan et al., 2024; Si & Leou, 2024; Wibisono & Lale, 2024).

The influence of information exposure extends beyond tourism contexts and has been shown to affect behavioural intentions in various domains. Research indicates that exposure to environmental information through social media significantly influences individuals' intentions to engage in environmentally responsible behaviour by shaping their cognitive evaluations and perceptions of consequences (Meng et al., 2023; Tong et al., 2024). Similarly, Chen et al. (2026) found that social media information influences behavioural intentions through cognitive and affective processes. These findings suggest that information exposure serves not only as a source of knowledge but also as a mechanism that shapes behavioural intentions through individual interpretation and evaluation of available information.

Information Processing Theory provides a useful explanation for understanding the relationship between information exposure and travel intention. The theory proposes that individuals actively receive, process, organise, and interpret information before making decisions. Travellers are therefore not passive recipients of information but actively evaluate destination-related information and utilise it in forming behavioural intentions. Since travel decisions often involve uncertainty and financial, physical, or psychological risks, the information encountered by travellers is likely to influence their willingness to visit destinations. Consequently, information exposure is expected to have a significant influence on travel intention.

H1: Information exposure significantly affects travel intention.

Information Exposure and Perceived Travel Risk

Information exposure has also been recognised as an important antecedent of risk perception. Information obtained through social media and digital communication channels influences how individuals perceive uncertainty, threats, and potential negative consequences. Studies conducted outside the tourism context have consistently demonstrated that exposure to information significantly shapes public perceptions of risk. For example, Huang and Bu (2025) found that social media exposure significantly influenced public perceptions of climate-related risks, while Zhang (2025) reported that climate information exposure increased risk perception and subsequently influenced behavioural outcomes. Similarly, Meng et al. (2023) showed that environmental information exposure affected behavioural intentions through cognitive evaluations of environmental risks.

Within tourism settings, travellers are increasingly exposed to information concerning environmental degradation, health risks, safety issues, natural disasters, political instability, and destination crises. Such information may influence how travellers evaluate the potential risks associated with visiting a destination. The concept of incidental exposure further suggests that individuals may encounter travel-related information even when they are not actively searching for it, particularly through algorithm-driven social media platforms and digital news feeds (Barnidge, 2025; Masood et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024). Consequently, repeated exposure to destination-related information may contribute to the development of risk perceptions among travellers.

Information Processing Theory suggests that information exposure precedes cognitive evaluation. Before making travel decisions, individuals assess the relevance, credibility, and implications of available information. Therefore, greater exposure to destination-related information is likely to influence travellers' perceptions regarding potential risks associated with travel activities. Based on these arguments, information exposure is expected to significantly affect perceived travel risk.

H2: Information exposure significantly affects perceived travel risk.

Perceived Travel Risk and Travel Intention

Perceived travel risk refers to travellers' subjective assessment of uncertainty and potential negative consequences associated with travel activities. Travel decisions often involve concerns related to personal safety, health, environmental conditions, financial losses, transportation

reliability, and destination stability. As a result, risk perception has become one of the most important determinants of tourist behaviour and destination choice.

Previous tourism studies consistently demonstrate that perceived risk significantly influences travel-related decisions. Loi et al. (2024) found that perceived risk played a significant role in shaping international tourists' destination choices in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. Similarly, Nguyen and Truong (2024) reported that tourists' perceptions of health and safety risks influenced their travel preferences and behavioural responses. These findings indicate that travellers actively evaluate risk factors before deciding whether to visit a destination.

Recent studies have further demonstrated the importance of risk perception in tourism contexts characterised by uncertainty and environmental challenges. Blešić et al. (2024) found that earthquake hazards significantly reduced Serbian tourists' willingness to visit Türkiye, highlighting the role of natural disaster risks in tourism decision-making. Likewise, Wang et al. (2024) reported that environmental changes at destinations significantly influenced travellers' intentions across Far-East Asian countries. Their findings suggest that travellers become increasingly cautious when they perceive environmental instability or destination-related risks.

Solyomfi et al. (2024) provide additional evidence, finding that travellers' risk tolerance significantly influences willingness to undertake international travel. Individuals with lower tolerance for uncertainty tend to perceive greater levels of travel risk and are therefore less likely to engage in travel activities. Similarly, Teng et al. (2025) demonstrated that risk-related considerations significantly influence adventure tourists' travel decisions under uncertain conditions. Collectively, these studies suggest that perceived travel risk serves as a critical predictor of travel intention.

Risk Perception Theory explains that individuals evaluate potential threats before engaging in a behaviour. When perceived risks exceed acceptable levels, individuals are likely to avoid or postpone the behaviour. In tourism contexts, travellers who perceive higher levels of risk are expected to demonstrate lower intentions to travel. Therefore, perceived travel risk is expected to significantly influence travel intention.

H3: Perceived travel risk significantly affects travel intention.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Travel Risk

Although previous studies have established the importance of information exposure and perceived risk separately, limited tourism research has investigated the mechanism through which information exposure influences travel intention. Existing tourism studies have primarily examined the direct effects of social media, destination information, and risk perception on travel behaviour (Acharjee et al., 2023; Loi et al., 2024; Wibisono & Lale, 2024). Consequently, the underlying psychological process linking information exposure and travel intention remains insufficiently understood.

Evidence from broader behavioural studies suggests that information exposure influences behavioural outcomes through the formation of risk perceptions. Huang and Bu (2025) found that social media exposure affects behavioural responses through perceived climate risks, while Zhang (2025) demonstrated that risk perception mediates the relationship between information exposure

and behavioural engagement. Similarly, Meng et al. (2023) reported that information exposure influences behavioural intentions through cognitive evaluation processes.

Within tourism settings, travellers are exposed to various forms of destination-related information before making travel decisions. This information may increase awareness of potential risks and subsequently influence travel intentions. Studies examining destination hazards, environmental changes, and safety concerns consistently show that risk perceptions affect tourists' behavioural decisions (Blešić et al., 2024; Nguyen & Truong, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that travellers first process destination-related information, evaluate potential risks, and subsequently develop intentions to travel.

The two theoretical perspectives serve distinct roles in the proposed model. Information Processing Theory provides the rationale for examining how exposure to information relates to cognitive appraisal, represented here by perceived travel risk. Risk Perception Theory provides the rationale for examining whether perceived travel risk is associated with travel intention. Together, these perspectives motivate the proposed indirect pathway from information exposure to travel intention through perceived travel risk. A direct pathway from information exposure to travel intention is also estimated to assess the association remaining after accounting for perceived risk. Because the data are cross-sectional, the proposed ordering is theoretically specified rather than established through observed temporal change.

H4: Perceived travel risk mediates the relationship between information exposure and travel intention

Research methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the influence of information exposure on travel intention and the mediating role of perceived travel risk among Malaysian Generation Z travellers. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to empirically test hypothesised relationships derived from Risk Perception Theory and examine the structural relationships among latent constructs using statistical modelling techniques.

Risk Perception Theory posits that individuals evaluate potential threats and uncertainties before engaging in a particular behaviour. In tourism settings, exposure to information about geopolitical conflicts, environmental instability, and international crises may influence travellers' perceptions of risk, which in turn affects their willingness to travel (Blešić et al., 2024; Loi et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, the quantitative approach was deemed suitable for assessing the direct and indirect effects among information exposure, perceived travel risk, and travel intention.

2. Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Malaysian Generation Z individuals aged between 18 and 27 years. Generation Z was selected because this cohort is among the most digitally connected and is highly exposed to travel-related information through social media, online news portals, and digital communication platforms. Previous studies have demonstrated that social media and online information significantly influence travel decision-making and destination choice among younger travellers (Acharjee et al., 2023; Bejaoui et al., 2024; Si & Leou, 2024).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents possessed the characteristics relevant to the study objectives. Participants were required to be Malaysian citizens, belong to Generation Z, and have prior exposure to travel-related information through digital media. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study focused on a specific population segment with direct experience of information exposure and travel-related decision-making. The analysis included 296 responses. Participants were recruited purposively through an online survey and self-selected into the study. The sample therefore represents eligible individuals reached through the recruitment channels who chose to participate, rather than a probability sample of Malaysian Generation Z.

3. Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections. The measurement items were designed to capture the constructs of information exposure, perceived travel risk, and travel intention.

Information Exposure

Information exposure was operationalised as the extent to which respondents encountered and consumed information regarding geopolitical conflicts, international crises, and global uncertainty through digital communication channels. The construct was measured using five items (F1–F5). Previous studies have demonstrated that information exposure through social media and digital platforms significantly influences behavioural evaluations and decision-making processes (Acharjee et al., 2023; Meng et al., 2023; Zhang, 2025).

Perceived Travel Risk

Perceived travel risk refers to travellers' subjective assessment of uncertainty and potential negative consequences associated with travel activities. The construct was measured using five items (C1–C5). Previous tourism studies support the inclusion of perceived travel risk, as risk perceptions significantly influence destination choice and travel-related decisions (Loi et al., 2024; Nguyen & Truong, 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

Travel Intention

Travel intention refers to an individual's willingness and likelihood to engage in future travel activities. The construct was measured using five items (B1–B5). Travel intention is widely recognised as a strong predictor of actual travel behaviour and has been extensively applied in tourism research (Guo et al., 2024; Teng et al., 2025).

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The use of a five-point Likert scale facilitates respondents' understanding and provides sufficient variability for statistical analysis.

4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms, messaging applications, and online communities. The online survey approach was considered

appropriate because the target respondents were digitally active Generation Z individuals who frequently access travel-related information through online platforms.

Prior to participation, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could discontinue participation at any stage of the survey.

Upon completion of data collection, the dataset was screened for missing values, incomplete responses, and response inconsistencies. Only complete and valid responses were retained for subsequent analysis.

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed because it enables the simultaneous assessment of measurement properties and structural relationships among latent constructs while accounting for measurement error (Kline, 2016).

The analysis followed a two-step approach comprising measurement model assessment and structural model evaluation.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and describe the distribution of the study variables. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to provide an overview of the sample profile and respondents' perceptions.

Measurement Model Assessment

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement model before testing the structural relationships. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Values exceeding 0.70 indicate satisfactory internal consistency. Convergent validity was assessed using standardised factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Factor loadings greater than 0.60 and AVE values exceeding 0.50 indicate adequate convergent validity. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, whereby the square root of AVE for each construct should be greater than the correlations between constructs.

Structural Model Assessment

Following the establishment of a satisfactory measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesised relationships among information exposure, perceived travel risk, and travel intention.

Model fit was assessed using multiple goodness-of-fit indices, including Chi-square divided by degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The use of multiple fit indices is recommended because it provides a more comprehensive evaluation of model adequacy (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016).

The acceptable threshold values adopted in this study were adopted from Heir, 2019:

$CMIN/DF < 5.00$

$CFI \geq 0.90$

$TLI \geq 0.90$

$RMSEA \leq 0.08$

The significance of the hypothesised relationships was determined using standardised regression coefficients, critical ratios, and p-values.

Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of perceived travel risk was examined using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Bootstrapping is widely recommended because it provides more accurate estimates of indirect effects and does not require a normality assumption.

The indirect effect was considered significant when the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval excluded zero. The mediation analysis examined whether perceived travel risk served as the underlying mechanism through which information exposure influenced travel intention.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research prior to participation and were assured that all information would be treated confidentially. Participation was voluntary, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

Results

Respondents' Profile

A total of 296 valid responses were obtained and included in the analysis. Respondents were primarily Malaysian Generation Z individuals aged 18 to 27 years. Of the total respondents, 228 (77.0%) were female, while 67 (22.6%) were male. The relatively higher proportion of female respondents suggests greater participation among female Generation Z travellers in the survey.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 296)

Variable Frequency Percentage (%)		
Male	67	22.6
Female	228	77.0
Total	296	100.0

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were conducted to examine the overall levels of information exposure, perceived travel risk, and travel intention among Malaysian Generation Z travellers. The mean values were interpreted using the following scale:

- 1.00–2.33 = Low
- 2.34–3.66 = Moderate
- 3.67–5.00 = High

The findings indicate that respondents reported a moderate level of information exposure ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.56$). This suggests that Generation Z travellers are regularly exposed to information regarding geopolitical conflicts, international crises, and global uncertainty through digital platforms and social media. The result is consistent with previous studies highlighting the growing role of digital information in shaping travel-related decisions (Acharjee et al., 2023; Bejaoui et al., 2024).

Perceived travel risk was moderate to high ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.60$), indicating that respondents generally viewed geopolitical uncertainty as a factor that may affect travel safety and decision-making. This finding aligns with previous studies demonstrating that political instability, environmental changes, and global crises influence tourists' risk perceptions (Blešić et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

Interestingly, travel intention recorded a moderate level ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.64$). This result suggests that respondents exhibited some hesitation about travelling during periods of geopolitical uncertainty. The relatively lower mean score may indicate that perceived risks associated with global conflicts influence future travel decisions among Malaysian Generation Z travellers.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Information Exposure	3.33	0.56	Moderate
Perceived Travel Risk	3.49	0.60	Moderate
Travel Intention	2.42	0.64	Moderate

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability and convergent validity of the three latent constructs, namely Information Exposure, Perceived Travel Risk, and Travel Intention. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), while convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

The results indicated that all constructs achieved satisfactory levels of reliability. Information Exposure recorded the highest Cronbach's alpha value ($\alpha = .900$), followed by Perceived Travel Risk ($\alpha = .888$) and Travel Intention ($\alpha = .711$). These values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency among the measurement items (Kline, 2016). Travel intention achieved a composite reliability of .803, but its AVE of .459 fell below the .50 criterion adopted in this study. Its standardised loadings ranged from .403 to .779. These results indicate limited evidence of convergent validity despite acceptable internal consistency. Structural relationships involving travel intention should therefore be interpreted cautiously.

Convergent validity was assessed through standardised factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The factor loadings for Information Exposure ranged from .776 to .841, while Perceived Travel Risk recorded loadings ranging from .824 to .857. These values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating that the indicators adequately represented their respective constructs. Travel Intention demonstrated factor loadings ranging from .403 to .779, with four indicators exceeding the recommended threshold. Although one item recorded a relatively lower loading, the construct retained acceptable reliability and was therefore maintained for subsequent analysis.

Furthermore, Information Exposure achieved a CR of .899 and an AVE of .642, while Perceived Travel Risk recorded a CR of .919 and an AVE of .693. Both constructs exceeded the recommended criteria of $CR \geq .70$ and $AVE \geq .50$, demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity. Travel Intention achieved a CR value of .803, indicating acceptable construct reliability. However, the AVE value of .459 was slightly below the recommended threshold of .50. Nevertheless, according to Fornell and Larcker's recommendation, convergent validity may still be considered acceptable when Composite Reliability exceeds .60 despite a marginally lower AVE value. Therefore, the Travel Intention construct was retained in the model.

Table 3 Reliability and Convergent Validity Assessment

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	Assessment
Information Exposure	.900	.899	.642	Accepted
Perceived Travel Risk	.888	.919	.693	Accepted
Travel Intention	.711	.803	.459	Accepted

Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was evaluated to examine the hypothesised relationships among information exposure, perceived travel risk and travel intention using standardised path coefficients, p values and coefficients of determination (R^2). Interpretation of these relationships remains subject to the measurement limitations identified for travel intention.

Information exposure was positively and significantly associated with perceived travel risk ($\beta = .593$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Respondents reporting greater exposure to information concerning geopolitical conflicts, international crises and global uncertainty also reported higher perceived travel risk. This association is consistent with the proposed information appraisal pathway. However, the cross-sectional design does not establish that information exposure caused increased perceived risk.

The association between perceived travel risk and travel intention was negative but not statistically significant ($\beta = -.114$, $p = .129$). Therefore, H3 was not supported. The direct association between information exposure and travel intention was also not statistically significant ($\beta = .021$, $p = .796$), and H1 was not supported. These findings indicate insufficient statistical evidence for the proposed direct relationships with travel intention in the specified model. They do not establish that respondents were unaffected by risk, demonstrated resilience or maintained their travel plans.

Information exposure and perceived travel risk jointly explained 1.0% of the variance in travel intention ($R^2 = .010$), indicating limited explanatory power for this outcome. Consequently, the model provides only a limited account of travel intention among the sampled Malaysian Generation Z respondents. Other theoretically relevant determinants warrant investigation, but the present analysis cannot establish their contributions. These results should also be interpreted cautiously given the measurement concerns surrounding travel intention and the limitations of the purposive, self-selected sample.

Table 4 Structural Path Estimates

Hypothesis	Path	Reported β	Reported p	Decision
H1	Information exposure $\rightarrow$ Travel intention	.021	.796	Not supported
H2	Information exposure $\rightarrow$ Perceived travel risk	.593	< .001	Supported
H3	Perceived travel risk $\rightarrow$ Travel intention	-.114	.129	Not supported
H4	Information exposure $\rightarrow$ Perceived travel risk $\rightarrow$ Travel intention	-.068	.356	Not supported

Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of Perceived Travel Risk in the relationship between Information Exposure and Travel Intention was examined using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Bootstrapping was employed because it provides a robust estimation of indirect effects and does not require the assumption of normality.

The mediation analysis examined whether Information Exposure influences Travel Intention indirectly through Perceived Travel Risk. According to mediation theory, a significant indirect effect is established when the mediating variable significantly transmits the independent variable's effect to the dependent variable.

The results indicated that Information Exposure significantly influenced Perceived Travel Risk ($\beta = .593$, $p < .001$). However, the relationship between Perceived Travel Risk and Travel Intention was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.114$, $p = .129$). Consequently, the indirect effect of Information Exposure on Travel Intention through Perceived Travel Risk was not significant.

The findings suggest that although exposure to information concerning geopolitical conflicts and international uncertainty increases travellers' perceptions of risk, these heightened risk perceptions do not significantly influence their intention to travel. As a result, Perceived Travel Risk does not function as a mediating mechanism linking Information Exposure and Travel Intention among Malaysian Generation Z travellers.

Table 5 Mediation Analysis Results

Relationship	Direct Effect (β)	Indirect Effect (β)	Total Effect (β)	Result
Information Exposure $\rightarrow$ Travel Intention	.021	-.068	-.047	Not Significant

Table 6 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis Statement	Result
H1 Information Exposure significantly affects Perceived Travel Risk.	Supported
H2 Perceived Travel Risk significantly affects Travel Intention.	Not Supported
H3 Information Exposure significantly affects Travel Intention.	Not Supported
H4 Perceived Travel Risk mediates the relationship between Information Exposure and Travel Intention.	Not Supported

The absence of a significant mediation effect indicates that Perceived Travel Risk cannot explain how Information Exposure influences Travel Intention in the present study. Although respondents showed greater awareness of travel-related risks when exposed to information about geopolitical uncertainty, that awareness did not translate into behavioural intentions. This finding suggests that Malaysian Generation Z travellers may be relatively tolerant of uncertainty and continue to maintain their travel plans despite recognising potential risks associated with geopolitical conflicts and global instability.

The findings further imply that Generation Z travel intentions may be influenced by factors beyond risk perceptions, such as travel motivation, destination attractiveness, social influence, financial capability, or prior travel experiences. Consequently, future studies should consider incorporating additional psychological and behavioural variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of travel intention under conditions of geopolitical uncertainty.

Discussion

The principal finding was a positive association between information exposure and perceived travel risk. Respondents reporting greater information exposure also reported higher perceived risk. This pattern is broadly consistent with research examining information exposure and risk perceptions in environmental communication contexts (Huang & Bu, 2025; Zhang, 2025). Related research has also examined how environmental information exposure relates to behavioural intentions through cognitive evaluation processes (Meng et al., 2023). These studies provide a conceptual comparison rather than direct evidence about geopolitical travel risk. The present finding is consistent with the proposed information appraisal pathway, although the cross-sectional design cannot establish its direction. Respondents who perceive greater risk may also seek or attend to more information, a possibility requiring further investigation.

Neither information exposure nor perceived travel risk showed a statistically significant direct association with travel intention in the specified model. Previous tourism research has examined risk in relation to destination choice, willingness to visit destinations affected by hazards, and travel intentions under environmental change (Blešić et al., 2024; Loi et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). However, differences in populations, risk contexts and outcome measures limit direct comparisons with the present findings. The non-significant results indicate insufficient statistical support for the proposed direct relationships in this sample. They do not establish that travel intention is unaffected by risk or that it demonstrates resilience or tolerance for uncertainty. Although resilience and risk tolerance feature in related tourism research (Guo et al., 2024; Solyomfi et al., 2024), neither was measured directly in the present study, and no generational comparison was undertaken.

The limited explanatory power for travel intention is central to interpretation. With a reported R^2 of .010, the model accounted for only 1.0% of variation in this outcome. Its contribution is therefore more evident in the observed association between information exposure and perceived risk than in explaining travel intention. Previous studies have considered broader frameworks involving planned behaviour, health beliefs and resilience, suggesting possible directions for theoretically informed model development (Guo et al., 2024; Teng et al., 2025). Potential explanations for the weak intention results include omitted determinants and limitations in measuring travel intention. However, these possibilities require further investigation rather than being treated as established explanations for the present findings.

The alignment of the measures also requires consideration. Previous tourism studies have examined outcomes tied to particular destinations or travel contexts, including willingness to visit Türkiye following earthquake hazards and destination choice in the Mekong Delta (Blešić et al.,

2024; Loi et al., 2024). In the present study, if the information exposure and risk items concern geopolitical uncertainty while the intention items concern travel generally, respondents may report intentions relating to destinations or circumstances different from those represented by the risk items. The questionnaire wording must therefore guide the scope of interpretation. The present data cannot establish whether respondents changed destinations, postponed trips or maintained existing bookings.

For community tourism enterprises, the results identify a question for further investigation concerning the relationship between risk information and visitor perceptions. Research addressing destination risks and travel intentions provides relevant background for examining this question in local tourism settings (Loi et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). However, neither those contextual comparisons nor the present findings establish that particular communication strategies protect visitor confidence, increase bookings or improve enterprise performance. Future research could involve homestay providers, local guides and community-based attractions in evaluating whether clear and credible safety information is associated with visitor trust and booking intention. Research involving local operators, defined travel scenarios and behavioural outcomes is needed before conclusions can be drawn about benefits for community enterprises.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the relationships between information exposure, perceived travel risk and travel intention among Malaysian Generation Z respondents. Information exposure was positively associated with perceived travel risk ($\beta = .593$, $p < .001$). However, neither information exposure ($\beta = .021$, $p = .796$) nor perceived travel risk ($\beta = -.114$, $p = .129$) showed a statistically significant direct association with travel intention. The reported indirect effect was also not statistically significant ($\beta = -.068$, $p = .356$).

The model explained only 1.0% of the variance in travel intention, indicating limited explanatory power for this outcome. Its contribution lies primarily in identifying an association between information exposure and perceived risk within the sampled population. The findings do not establish that respondents were resilient or continued travelling despite perceived risk. Further research requires stronger measurement of travel intention and closer alignment between information exposure, risk context and the intended travel activity.

Limitation of the study

Several limitations qualify the findings. The study used purposive online recruitment and voluntary participation, limiting the representativeness of the sample. Female respondents accounted for approximately 77% of the stated sample, further limiting generalisation across genders. The cross-sectional design does not establish temporal ordering or causal relationships, and self-reported intention cannot be interpreted as actual travel behaviour.

Travel intention demonstrated limited convergent validity, with an AVE of .459 and a minimum standardised loading of .403, despite a composite reliability of .803. This measurement

concern warrants caution when interpreting the structural results. All constructs were measured through the same questionnaire at one point in time, creating the possibility of common method bias.

The model explained only 1.0% of the variance in travel intention. Resilience and risk tolerance were not directly measured and cannot be inferred from the non-significant relationships. The study also did not measure enterprise performance or the effectiveness of communication strategies among community tourism operators.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

This study extends Risk Perception Theory by showing that information exposure significantly shapes perceived travel risk, but perceived risk alone is insufficient to explain travel intention among Generation Z travellers. The findings challenge the conventional assumption that higher perceived risk leads to lower travel intention and suggest that other psychological and behavioural factors may play a more important role in influencing travel decisions.

Practical Implications

The findings indicate that tourism stakeholders should focus on providing accurate and timely information to travellers while maintaining confidence in destination safety. Since Generation Z travellers remain willing to travel despite perceiving risks, destination marketers should emphasise destination preparedness, safety measures, and reliable travel information through digital platforms and social media channels.

Future Research

Future research should specify whether the outcome concerns general travel intention or intention to visit a named destination under a defined geopolitical-risk scenario. Questionnaire items for information exposure, perceived risk and intention should refer to compatible contexts and time frames. Longitudinal research could examine changes in perceptions and intentions, while follow-up measures of bookings or completed trips could distinguish stated intention from behaviour.

Model extensions should be guided by theory rather than by the objective of increasing explained variance alone. Potential variables include destination image, travel motivation, perceived behavioural control, financial capability, social influence and trust in destination safety. Resilience and risk tolerance should be measured directly if they are proposed as explanations. Variables not collected in the present survey require new data.

For community business and entrepreneurship, future studies could involve homestay providers, local guides and community tourism operators in evaluating communication strategies.

Experimental comparisons of messages that differ in source credibility, safety detail and acknowledgement of uncertainty could assess their effects on perceived risk, trust and booking intention. Where feasible, studies should also examine actual enquiries, bookings and cancellations to evaluate the relevance of communication practices to enterprise outcomes.

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