



DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER CHOICE IN NICHE TOURISM: A STUDY OF ADVENTURE AND WELLNESS AMONG GENERATION Z IN BENGALURU

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Abstract

This study examines the determinants of consumer choice in niche tourism specifically adventure and wellness segments among Generation Z travelers in Bengaluru. As digital natives increasingly seek experiential, personalized, and meaning-driven travel, understanding what drives their booking decisions has become critical for tourism providers. Using a descriptive-exploratory quantitative design, data were collected from Gen Z respondents through a structured online questionnaire and analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha for reliability testing, Pearson correlation to examine relationships between key variables, and Chi-Square tests to identify demographic associations.

Findings reveal that "Instagrammability" is the strongest predictor of booking intent, followed by trip cost and burnout relief. Burnout recovery emerged as the dominant travel motivation, while short "micro-cations" were the preferred travel format. Gender differences were observed, with males favoring high-energy adventure and females leaning toward holistic wellness. The study concludes that niche tourism providers must prioritize visual storytelling, digital responsiveness, and value-driven pricing to effectively engage the Gen Z demographic in Bengaluru.

Keywords: Generation Z, niche tourism, adventure tourism, wellness tourism, Instagrammability, micro-cations, Bengaluru, consumer behavior

INTRODUCTION

a) Introduction

The Indian tourism industry has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, driven largely by changing consumer preferences and the rising influence of Generation Z. Unlike earlier generations that prioritized conventional sightseeing and luxury-oriented travel, Generation Z travelers seek experiences that are meaningful, personalized, and aligned with their lifestyle values. This shift has led to the rapid growth of niche tourism segments

such as adventure tourism, wellness retreats, eco-tourism, and experience-based travel.

Generation Z, often described as digital natives, relies heavily on technology throughout the travel journey—from destination discovery to booking and post-travel sharing. Social media platforms, influencer content, and visually appealing destinations play a major role in shaping travel decisions. Concepts such as "Instagrammability," authenticity, and storytelling have become key determinants of destination choice. At the same time, this generation shows heightened awareness of mental health, sustainability, and work-life balance, which has increased demand for wellness tourism and short-duration travel experiences such as micro-cations.

India, with its diverse geography and cultural richness, is well positioned to cater to these evolving preferences. Destinations offering adventure activities, holistic wellness practices, and eco-conscious experiences are witnessing increased interest, particularly among urban youth in cities like Bengaluru and Delhi. While cost sensitivity remains a factor, Generation Z travelers are increasingly willing to spend on high-value experiences that provide emotional satisfaction and personal growth rather than traditional luxury.

The integration of digital tools such as travel apps, AI-based planners, and chatbots has further reshaped travel planning behavior. Ease of use, quick access to information, and personalized recommendations strongly influence booking intentions. This technological reliance highlights the importance of understanding how digital experiences and service quality contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty in niche tourism markets.

In this context, the present study aims to examine the factors influencing niche tourism preferences among Generation Z travelers, with specific focus on experiential appeal, cost considerations, burnout relief, digital engagement, and brand loyalty. By analyzing these dimensions, the study seeks to provide insights that can help travel service providers design experiences that better align with the expectations of young



travelers and strengthen their long-term relationship with niche tourism brands.

b) The scope and significance

The geographical area of Bengaluru specifically defines the scope of this study, which focuses on the Generation Z population. Bengaluru's distinct socioeconomic position, which is home to a concentrated population of tech-savvy, well-off young professionals who are the main customers of niche experiential tourism, justifies this focus. The research looks at factors like social media buzz, trip cost, and service quality aspects as determinants of choice in the adventure and wellness categories.

The study's academic and practical contributions are what make it significant. In practical terms, it provides data-driven insights to help both established hospitality companies and travel startups optimize their marketing strategies for the "burnout" demographic. In this way, the triggers that cause a booking to occur, whether it be a viral video on Instagram or a sense of commitment to sustainability, can be better understood and catered to by the provider. From an academic perspective, this research represents a necessary addition to the existing body of knowledge on digital niche tourism in emerging markets such as India.

c) Review of Literature

a. **Semara, I.M.T., & Lestari, A.A.A.S. (2021)** examined nature-based tourism preferences among youth and found a shift away from purely hedonistic travel toward experiences rooted in nature connection. Their study highlighted that "Instagrammable" landscapes act as a major pull factor for Generation Z, as aesthetic appeal is closely tied to how young travelers perceive value and meaning in their trips. The findings suggest that visual appeal and experiential authenticity are central to Gen Z travel decisions, reinforcing the importance of eco-experiential tourism offerings.

b. **Pricope-Vancia, D., et al. (2023)** explored the role of Generation Z in shaping the modern tourism industry and identified them as the most dynamic driver due to their strong preference for technology-enabled travel experiences. The study emphasized that seamless digital integration in travel planning is not merely an added convenience but a fundamental expectation for digital natives. This insight indicates that destinations and service providers must prioritize high-tech, mobile-friendly, and digitally immersive experiences to remain relevant for younger travelers.

c. **Rajput, R., & Gandhi, S. (2025)** investigated eco-conscious travel behavior among Generation Z and found that 55% of respondents make travel decisions influenced by authentic digital storytelling rather than traditional advertising. Their research highlighted the strong impact of influencers and social media narratives in shaping sustainable travel choices. This finding underscores the growing importance of digital authenticity and social proof in influencing youth travel intentions.

d. **Dillette, A.K., et al. (2020)** studied wellness and yoga tourism and concluded that the retreat environment plays a more influential role than physical luxury in shaping tourist satisfaction. Their research emphasized that psychological, emotional, and spiritual depth outweigh material comfort, particularly in wellness-oriented travel. This insight is especially relevant in the Indian context, where spiritual and holistic tourism offerings align strongly with youth seeking mental restoration and burnout relief.

e. **Smith, J. (2023)** examined the psychological drivers of youth travel behavior and identified Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as a powerful push factor influencing destination choice. The study found that young travelers are motivated to document and share unique travel experiences as part of their social identity, thereby increasing demand for offbeat and niche destinations. This highlights how social validation and digital visibility influence travel intentions among youth.

f. **Niyo Industry Report (2025)** analyzed spending patterns of Generation Z in metropolitan cities such as Bengaluru and revealed that although Gen Z is highly budget-conscious, "experience" is the fastest-growing spending category. The report suggests that young consumers are willing to compromise on luxury accommodation in favor of high-value niche experiences. This indicates a clear trade-off behavior where experiential richness outweighs traditional luxury in travel decision-making.

d) Objectives of the study

- To quantify the demand for adventure and wellness activities in the Bengaluru region.
- To compare the influence of social media buzz versus trip cost in decision-making.
- To evaluate the relationship between travel experiences and brand loyalty.
- To identify demographic variations in tourism preferences



e) Statement of the Problem

Despite the rapid growth in experiential tourism, there remains a significant degree of uncertainty regarding whether social media engagement and viral "buzz" actually lead to sustained, repeatable bookings. There is a perceptible tension between the budget constraints of young professionals and their desire for high-value, exclusive niche experiences. Furthermore, a critical gap exists between the digital efficiency required in the planning phase and the emotional depth necessary to foster long-term destination loyalty. For providers, the challenge lies in balancing the pursuit of "Instagrammability" with the delivery of authentic, high-quality service that meets the restorative needs of the "burnout" demographic.

f) Hypotheses

H1: Instagram ability and Booking Intentions

- H0: There is no significant relationship between the perceived "Instagram ability" of a niche destination and the booking intentions of Gen Z travellers in Bengaluru.
- H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the perceived "Instagrammability" of a niche destination and the booking intentions of Gen Z travellers in Bengaluru.

H2: Micro-cations vs. Traditional Retreats

- H0: There is no significant difference in the demand for short-duration "Micro-cations" compared to longer traditional retreats among urban Gen Z professionals.
- H1: The demand for short-duration "Micro-cations" is significantly higher than the demand for longer traditional retreats among urban Gen Z professionals.

H3: Well-being vs. Trip Cost

- H0: Mental well-being and emotional restoration are not significantly stronger predictors of destination choice than trip cost for the tech-sector demographic.
- H1: Mental well-being and emotional restoration are significantly stronger predictors of destination choice than trip cost for the tech-sector demographic.

H4: Gender and Niche Preferences

- H0: There is no significant difference between genders regarding their preference for adventure-based activities versus wellness-based retreats.
- H1: There is a significant difference between genders regarding their preference

for adventure-based activities versus wellness-based retreats.

g) Limitations of the study

- The study is restricted to Bengaluru, meaning results may not be generalizable to other Indian cities or rural regions.
- The use of convenience sampling tends to over-represent tech-savvy professionals and students, potentially excluding diverse socio-economic groups.
- Conducted between December and January, the research captures seasonal winter trends and may not reflect preferences during the monsoon or summer.
- Data from self-reported surveys are subject to social desirability bias, where respondents might overstate interest in wellness or eco-tourism to align with social trends.
- Findings are specific to Adventure and Wellness tourism and may not apply to other niche segments like culinary or heritage travel.
- While statistically valid for a mini-project, a sample of 200 respondents may not fully capture the vast cultural diversity of Bengaluru's Gen Z population.
- As a descriptive-exploratory study, the research identifies correlations but cannot definitively establish long-term cause-and-effect relationships.

i) CHAPTER SCHEME

1. Introduction
2. Methodology and Database
3. Data Analysis and Interpretation
4. Summary of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion.

I. METHODOLOGY AND DATABASE

a) TYPE OF RESEARCH

This study utilises a Descriptive cum Exploratory Quantitative Research Design to identify the drivers of niche tourism through exploratory analysis, while statistically measuring Gen Z preferences and travel characteristics in Bengaluru using structured survey data



b) SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The study utilizes a **Non-Probability Convenience Sampling** method, concentrated geographically on **Bengaluru** and distributed through **targeted digital circulation** via social media and WhatsApp, to efficiently gather data from accessible and digitally active Gen Z respondents.

c) SAMPLE SIZE

The study targets a sample size of **72 respondents** within the Gen Z demographic in Bengaluru, a figure justified by the resource and time constraints of the 12-week research timeline, while remaining statistically sufficient for conducting exploratory analysis and basic hypothesis testing.

d) SAMPLE DESIGN

- Employs a **Non-Probability Purposive Sampling** design to collect data from a specific, relevant population segment.
- Restricted to respondents with **prior travel experience** and a history of using **digital platforms** for trip planning.
- Focused exclusively on **Generation Z (aged 18–28)** to capture both past and current niche tourism behaviors.
- Geographically concentrated on **Bengaluru** to ensure findings accurately reflect the preferences of the urban tech-sector demographic.
- Targets individuals with specific travel backgrounds to ensure data is grounded in **actual user behavior** rather than speculation.

e) INSTRUMENTATION TECHNIQUE

- **Primary Instrument:** A **structured online questionnaire** was developed as the primary data collection tool to systematically capture quantitative travel data.
- **Platform & Distribution:** The instrument was designed in **Google Forms** to facilitate easy digital distribution and accessibility for the tech-savvy Gen Z demographic.
- **Question Design:** The survey utilizes **close-ended questions**, including **multiple-choice** and **5-point Likert scales**, to quantify perceptions of travel motivations, destination appeal, and booking intentions.
- **Measurement Focus:** This structured approach allows for the objective measurement of psychological variables

like "Instagrammability" and "well-being" through numerical scores.

- **Data Integrity:** Forced-response settings were implemented in the digital form to ensure a complete and usable dataset of 72 respondents for statistical analysis.

f) ACTUAL COLLECTION OF DATA

- **Primary Mode:** Data was collected entirely online using **Google Forms**, ensuring a seamless digital experience for the target respondents.
- **Distribution Channel:** The questionnaire link was shared via **social media platforms (LinkedIn, Instagram) and WhatsApp groups**, specifically targeting Gen Z travellers to ensure they had relevant travel experience.
- **Response Rate:** Out of all distributed forms, **72 valid responses** were recorded, which were then cleaned and prepared for statistical analysis in SPSS.
- **Operational Efficiency:** This online mode of collection provided convenience, reduced geographical barriers within Bengaluru, and ensured quicker responses within the limited timeframe of the research project.

g) TOOLS USED FOR TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS FOR THE STUDY

The collected data were analysed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical tools to validate the research framework.

- **Descriptive Tools:** Included **frequencies, percentages, and means** to summarise the demographic profile and general travel preferences of Gen Z respondents.
- **Inferential Tools:**
 - **Correlation Analysis:** Used to examine the relationship between social media influence, mental well-being, and eco-consciousness with booking intentions.
 - **Chi-Square Test:** Employed to test the association between categorical variables, such as demographic factors and niche tourism preferences.
- **Hypothesis Testing:** These tools facilitated the objective testing of the null and alternative hypotheses to draw meaningful conclusions about Gen Z travel choices.

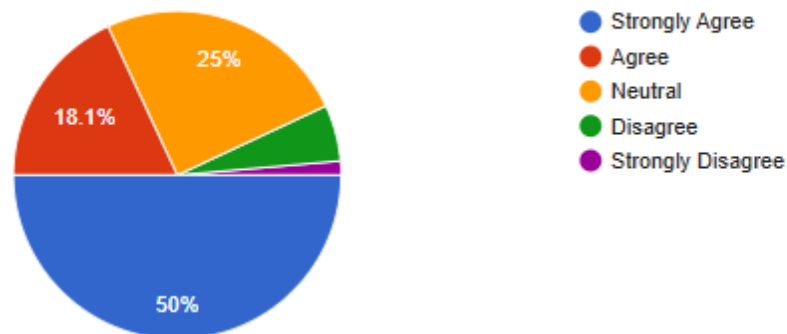


II. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.

A) To quantify the demand for adventure and wellness activities in the Bengaluru region.

1. How often do you take "Micro-cations" (short trips of 1–3 days) from Bengaluru?

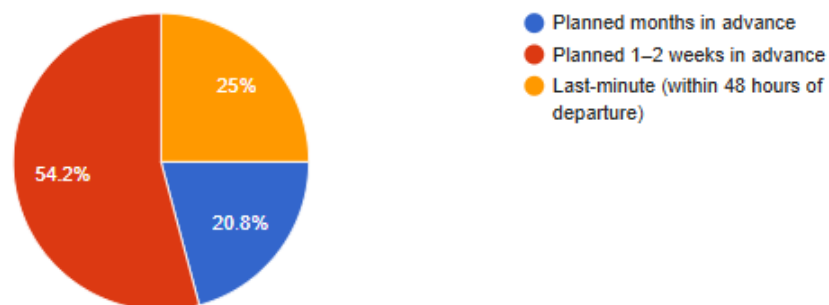
72 responses



The largest segment (**50%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** with taking short 1–3 day trips, indicating that the "Micro-cation" has become the dominant travel paradigm. Another **25%** remain **Neutral**, suggesting situational flexibility where travel depends on work/academic pressure. The remaining **7%** who disagree highlight opportunities to convert traditional vacationers through low-friction, weekend-only marketing.

2. How spontaneous are your travel bookings?

72 responses



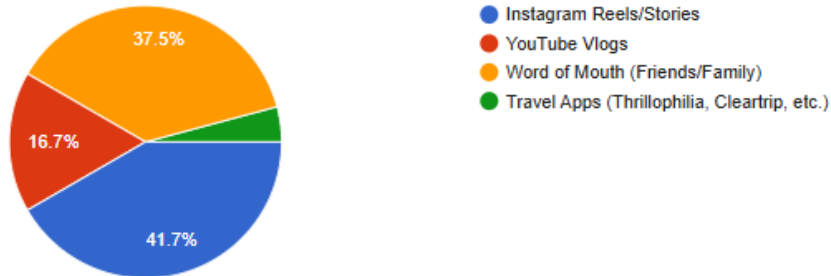
The largest segment (**54.2%**) represents those who plan **1–2 weeks in advance**, indicating a preference for "Tactical Spontaneity" among Gen Z. Another **25%** said they book **Last-minute**, suggesting situational flexibility based on immediate burnout relief needs. The remaining segment (**20.8%**) plans months in advance, highlighting opportunities for providers to offer "early-bird" discounts to secure guaranteed long-term occupancy.

B) To compare the influence of social media buzz versus trip cost in decision-making.

3. What is your primary source for discovering new travel destinations?



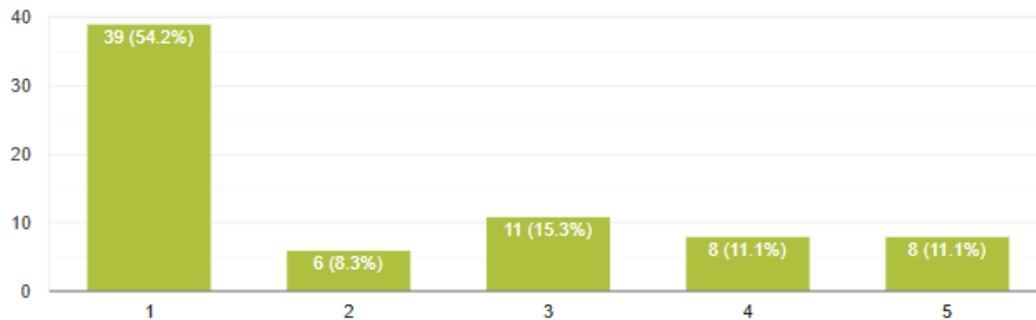
72 responses



The largest segment (**41.7%**) represents **Instagram Reels/Stories**, indicating the strong dominance of visual social proof in the discovery phase. Another **37.5%** rely on **Word of Mouth**, suggesting situational flexibility where digital inspiration is validated by peer trust. The remaining segments (**YouTube and Apps**) make up under **21%**, highlighting opportunities to focus marketing budgets on influencer-led visual storytelling rather than traditional search-based ads.

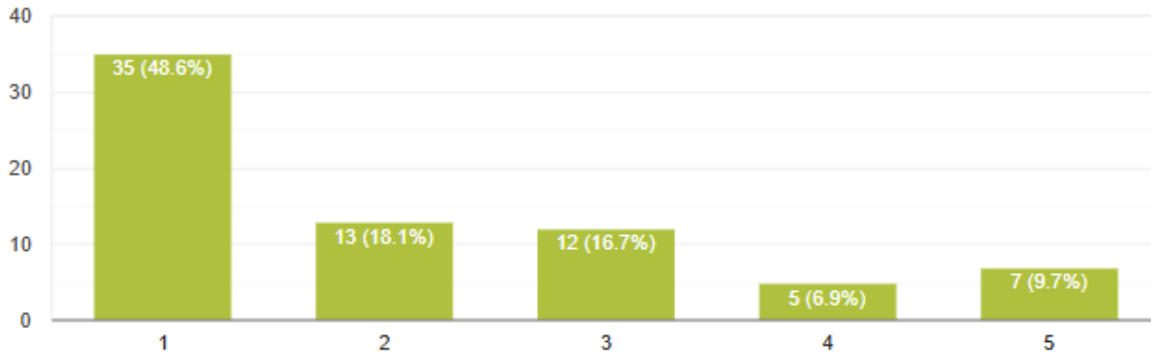
4. I prioritize destinations based on how attractive they will look on my social media profile

72 responses



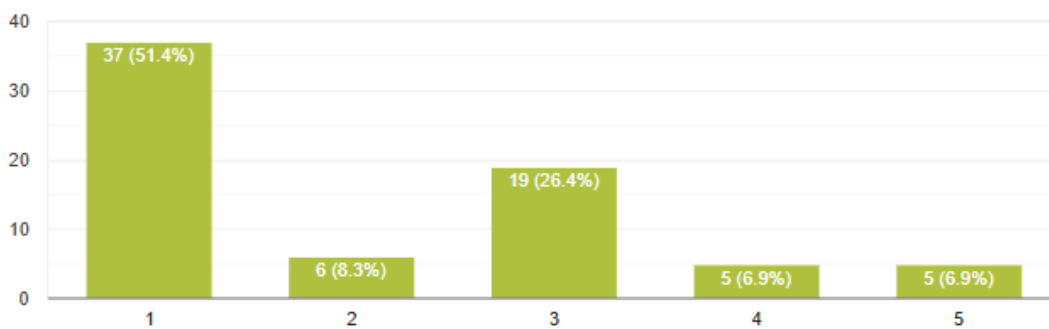
The largest segment (**54.2%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** with prioritizing destinations based on their social media potential, indicating that "visual currency" is the dominant choice determinant for over half of Gen Z. Another **23.6%** lean toward a **Moderate/Neutral** stance (scores 2 and 3), suggesting situational flexibility where aesthetics are important but not the sole factor. The remaining **22.2%** (scores 4 and 5) represent those who deprioritize social media, highlighting opportunities to market "authentic/off-the-grid" experiences for this minority.

5. Influencer "vlogs" and authentic reels impact my decision more than traditional travel advertisements



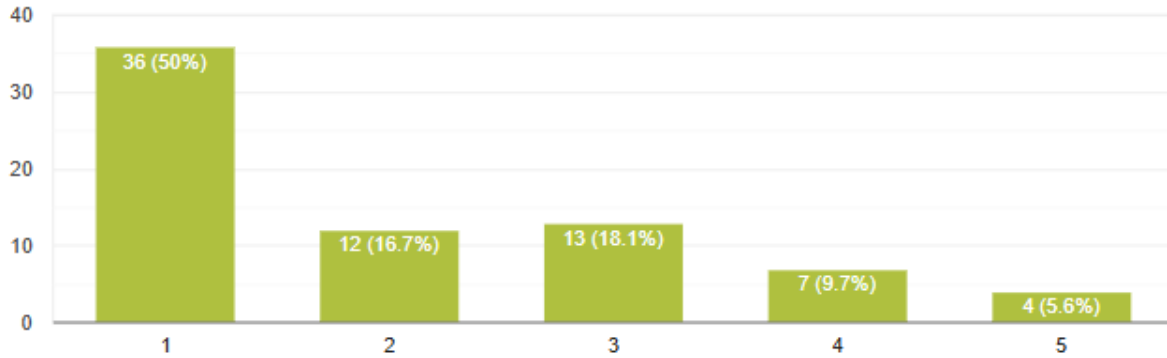
The largest segment (**48.6%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** that influencer content is more persuasive than traditional advertisements, confirming the dominance of peer-led authenticity. Another **34.7%** (scores 2 and 3) suggested situational flexibility, where they consume digital content but remain skeptical of overly polished vlogs. The remaining **16.7%** represent a resistant segment, highlighting opportunities to build trust through transparent, direct-to-consumer service credentials.

6. I am willing to pay a premium price for a unique experience even if it exceeds my initial budget



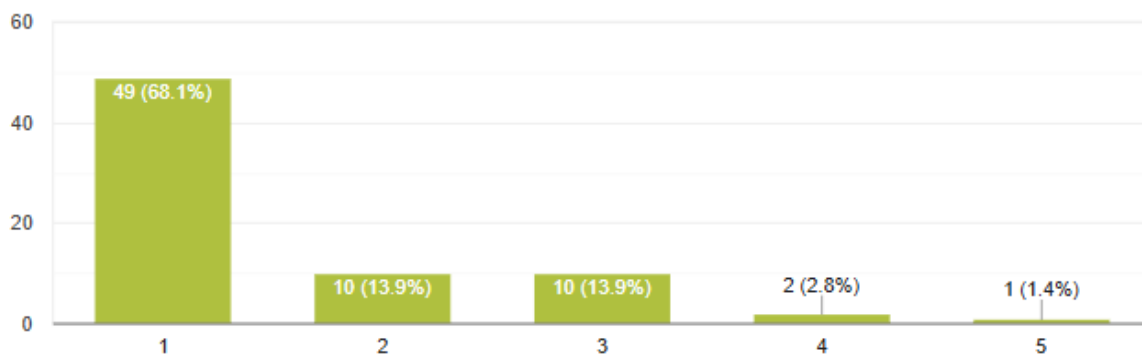
The largest segment (**51.4%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** they would exceed their budget for unique experiences, indicating that "exclusivity" is a dominant value. Another **34.7%** (scores 2 and 3) suggests situational flexibility where the premium depends on the perceived rarity of the experience. The remaining **13.9%** make up the budget-strict group, highlighting opportunities to offer high-quality, standardized niche packages for cost-conscious travelers.

7. A low trip cost is more important to me than the exclusive "vibe" of the destination



The largest segment (**50%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** that low trip cost is more important than the "vibe," indicating that price-sensitivity remains the dominant gatekeeper. Another **34.7%** (scores 2 and 3) suggested situational flexibility, where they might trade off cost for a superior aesthetic. The remaining **15.3%** prioritize the "vibe" regardless of cost, highlighting opportunities for premium niche providers to cater to this aesthetic-first segment.

8. My primary motivation for niche travel is seeking relief from corporate/academic burnout

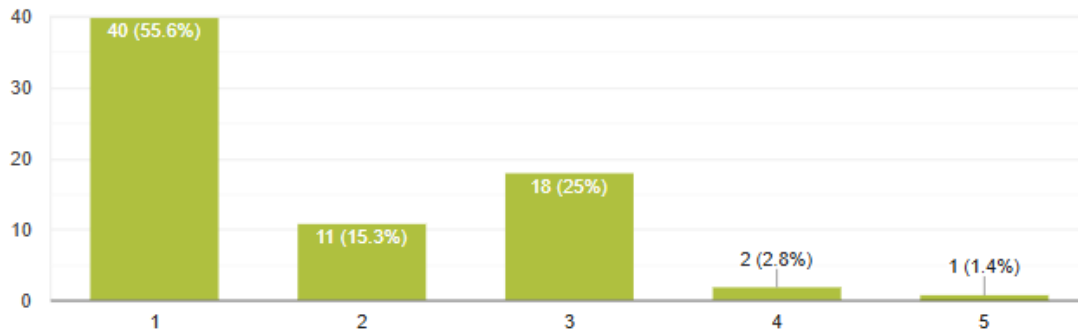


The largest segment (**68.1%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** that relief from burnout is their primary motivator, confirming that niche tourism is a dominant "mental health tool" for nearly two-thirds of respondents. Another **27.8%** (scores 2 and 3) suggested situational flexibility, where travel is also driven by general curiosity or social trends. The remaining **4.2%** make up a small minority, highlighting opportunities to market niche travel as a means for skill-building or technical adventure.

C) To evaluate the relationship between travel experiences and brand loyalty.

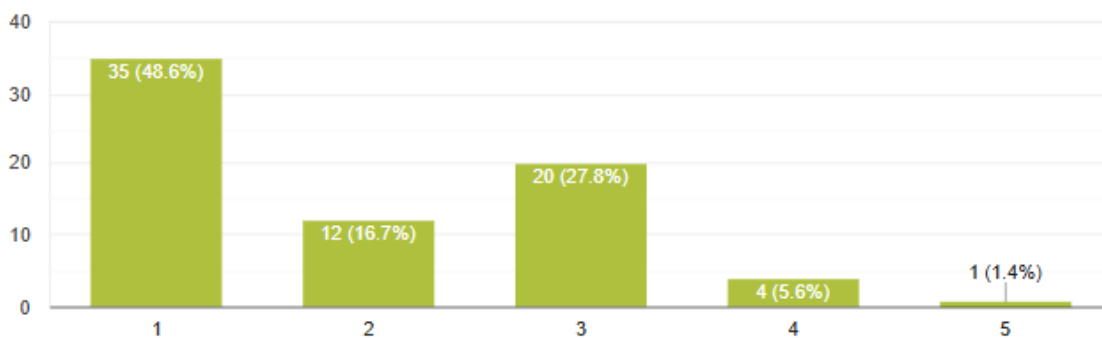


9. I feel safe during high-intensity activities because the guides appear professionally trained and certified



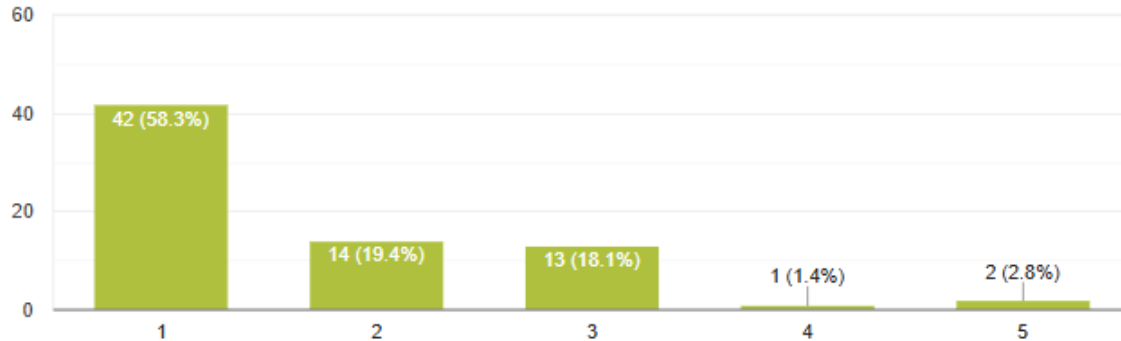
The largest segment (55.6%) represents those who **Strongly Agree** that guide training ensures their safety, indicating that "professionalism" is the dominant trust factor. Another 40.3% (scores 2 and 3) suggested situational flexibility, where safety is assumed but verified through online reviews. The remaining 4.2% represent a highly cautious segment, highlighting opportunities for providers to showcase international certifications to secure this safety-first group.

10. The staff at wellness retreats understands my personal need for mental restoration and silence



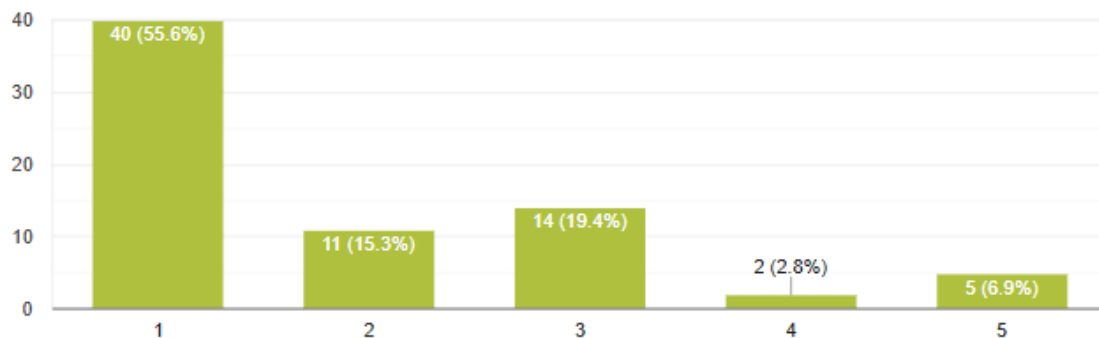
The largest segment (48.6%) represents those who **Strongly Agree** that staff understanding of restoration needs is crucial, indicating that "emotional intelligence" is a dominant service requirement. Another 44.4% (scores 2 and 3) suggested situational flexibility, where they value general hospitality quality over specific empathy. The remaining 7% highlight opportunities for "no-frills" self-guided wellness for those who prefer silence over interaction.

11. I prefer providers that offer quick, real-time assistance via WhatsApp or integrated chatbots



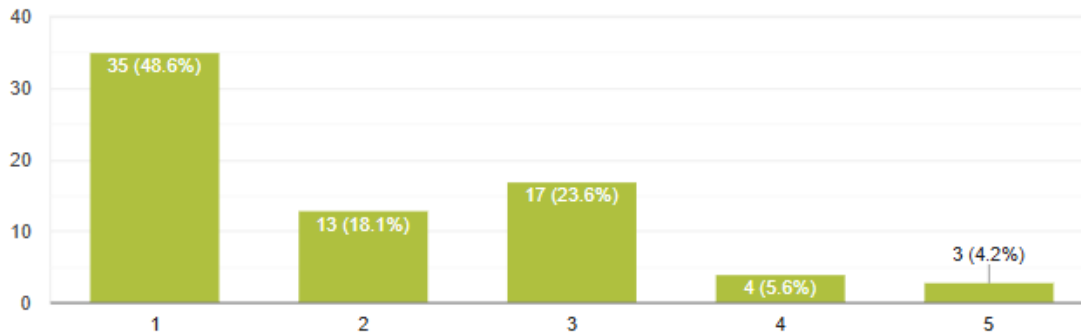
The largest segment (**58.3%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** that they prefer WhatsApp or chatbot assistance, indicating that "digital responsiveness" is the dominant service standard. Another **37.5%** (scores 2 and 3) suggested situational flexibility, where they use digital tools but still appreciate a human touch. The remaining **4.2%** highlight opportunities for high-touch personal concierge services for the minority who prefer traditional phone support.

12. I can easily recognise and recall the branding of major niche tourism players in Bengaluru



The largest segment (**55.6%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** that they can easily recall major niche brands, indicating that "brand recall" is dominant in this market. Another **34.7%** (scores 2 and 3) suggested situational flexibility, where awareness exists but doesn't strictly dictate choice. The remaining **9.7%** highlight opportunities for new market entrants to penetrate the segment with high-intensity visual sub-branding.

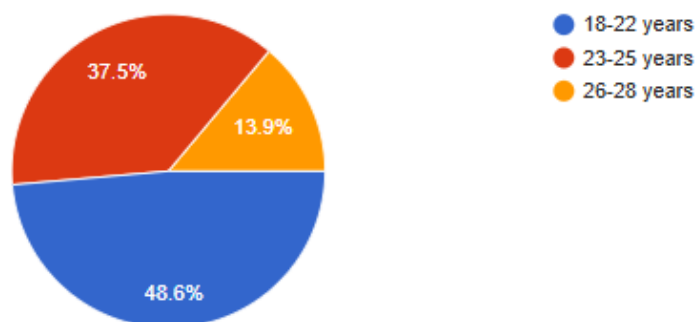
13. I intend to book my future travel experiences with the same niche provider I have used previously



The largest segment (**48.6%**) represents those who **Strongly Agree** with their intent to rebook with the same provider, indicating that "loyalty" is dominant for nearly half of travelers. Another **41.7%** (scores 2 and 3) suggested situational flexibility, where they are open to repeat bookings but might explore others for variety. The remaining **9.7%** highlight opportunities to create exclusive loyalty clubs or repeat-client discounts to lock in the switch-prone segment.

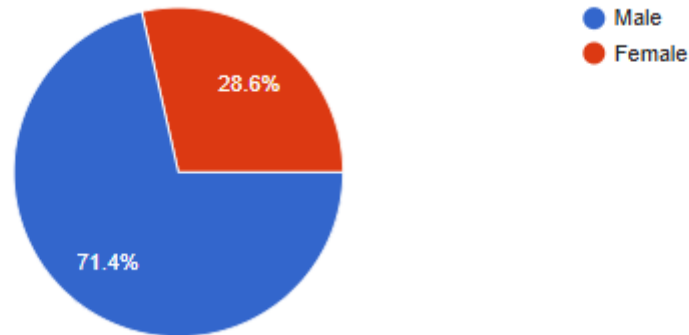
D) To identify demographic variations in tourism preferences

14. Age



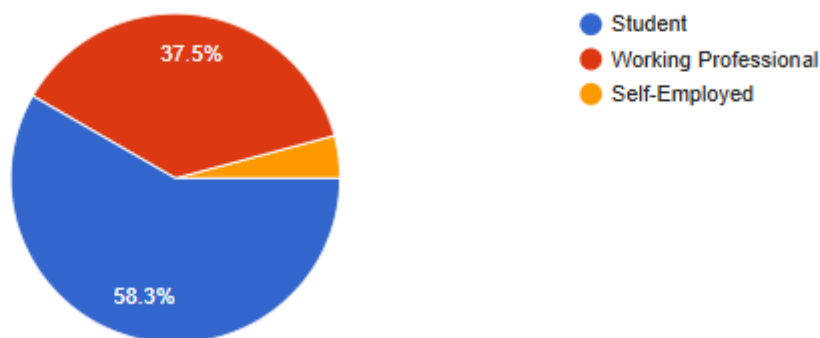
This data shows the distribution of age demographics among niche tourism participants in Bengaluru. The largest segment (**48.6%**) represents the **18–22 age bracket**, indicating a strong market dominance among younger Gen Z students. Another **37.5%** are aged **23–25**, suggesting situational flexibility as respondents transition from academic to early-career roles. The remaining segment (**13.9%**) consists of those aged **26–28**, highlighting opportunities to build age-specific premium retreats for the slightly more established demographic.

15. Gender



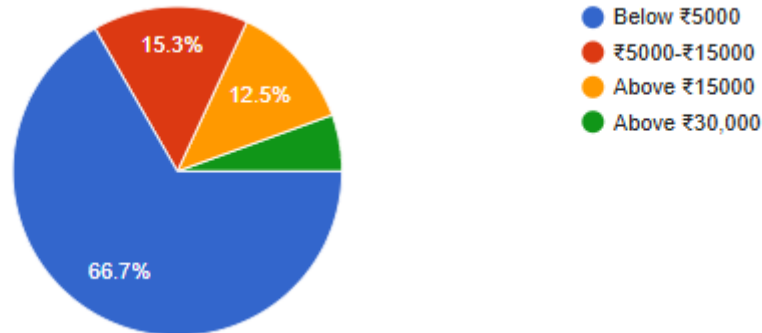
The largest segment (72.2%) represents **Male** respondents, indicating a strong male dominance in current niche tourism participation. The remaining 27.8% segment (**Female**) highlights significant strategic opportunities to design safety-focused and gender-specific adventure and wellness packages to boost participation among women, who currently lean toward more cautious travel patterns.

16. Current Employment Status



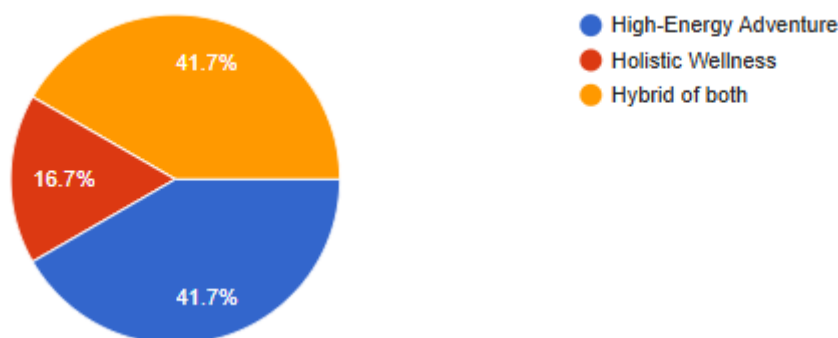
This distribution shows the occupational background of the respondents. The largest segment (58.3%) represents **Students**, indicating that the niche tourism market is primarily driven by the academic calendar. Another 37.5% are **Working Professionals**, suggesting situational flexibility where travel is used as a corporate burnout recovery tool. The remaining segment (4.2%) represents the **Self-Employed**, highlighting opportunities for long-stay digital nomad packages.

17. Monthly Disposable Income for Travel



The largest segment (**66.7%**) represents those with a budget **Below ₹ 5000** confirming that niche tourism in Bengaluru is currently a high-volume, low-ticket game. Another **15.3%** have budgets between **₹5000–₹ 15,000** suggesting situational flexibility for mid-range experiences. The remaining segment (**above ₹ 15,000**) makes up under **20%**, highlighting opportunities to introduce high-margin, exclusive premium services for the affluent tier.

18. Which niche tourism segment do you prefer the most?



This data shows an equal segment dominance (**41.7% each**) for **High-Energy Adventure** and **Hybrid experiences**, indicating that over **83%** of Gen Z travellers seek active engagement. The remaining segment (**16.7%**) represents pure **Holistic Wellness**, highlighting opportunities to bundle wellness as a "recovery" feature within adventure trips to satisfy the 90.1% who prioritize high-intensity activity.

Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha)

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): The questionnaire items are not internally consistent and are unreliable.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): The questionnaire items are internally consistent and reliable.

The reliability analysis yielded a **Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.914** for the scale comprising **12 items**.



Interpretation:

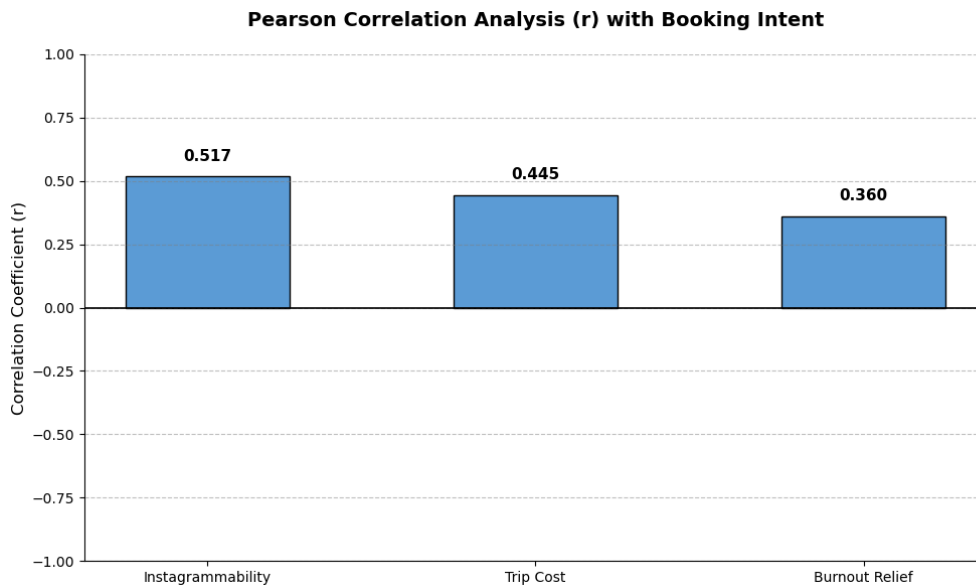
The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.914 indicates a very high level of internal consistency among the questionnaire items. This suggests that the statements included in the instrument reliably measure the underlying constructs of the study. Since the alpha value is well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, the scale can be considered highly reliable. Therefore, the measurement instrument used in the study is consistent and suitable for further statistical analysis, ensuring that the results derived from the data are dependable and valid.

Correlation Test

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant correlation between Instagrammability, Trip Cost, Burnout Relief and Booking Intent.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant correlation between Instagrammability, Trip Cost, Burnout Relief and Booking Intent.

The correlation results indicate positive relationships between the selected factors and booking intent. Instagrammability shows a moderate positive correlation with booking intent ($r = 0.517$), followed by Trip Cost ($r = 0.445$) and Burnout Relief ($r = 0.360$).



Interpretation:

The correlation analysis reveals that Instagrammability has the strongest association with booking intent, suggesting that visually appealing and shareable experiences play a key role in influencing customer booking decisions. Trip Cost also demonstrates a moderate positive relationship, indicating that perceived affordability and value for money significantly affect booking behaviour. Burnout Relief shows a positive but comparatively weaker correlation, implying that while relaxation and stress reduction motivate customers, they are not the primary drivers of booking intent. Overall, the results suggest that booking decisions are more

strongly influenced by experiential appeal and cost considerations than by emotional or wellness-related factors alone.

Chi-Square Test

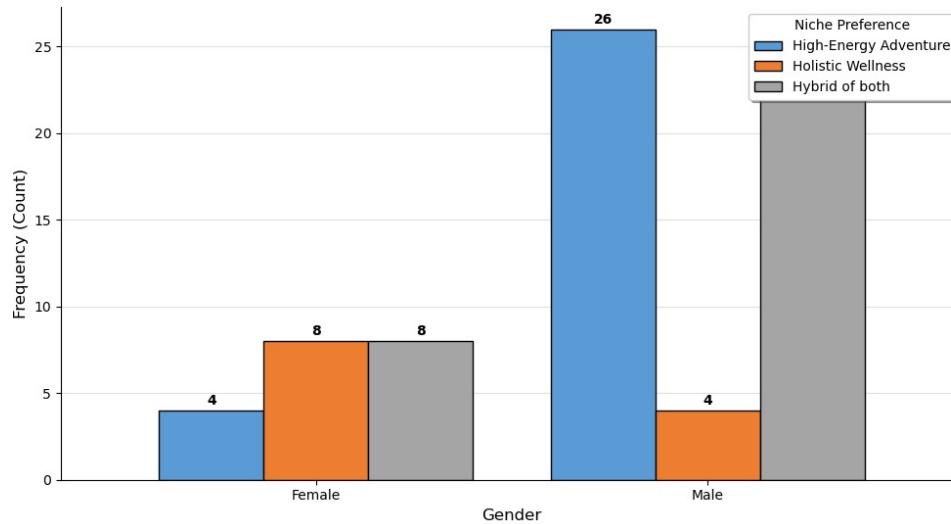
H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant association between gender and niche preference.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant association between gender and niche preference.

A chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between gender and niche preference categories (High-Energy Adventure, Holistic Wellness, and Hybrid of Both).



Crosstab: Gender * Niche Preference (Chi-Square Visualization)



Interpretation:

The crosstabulation analysis indicates noticeable differences in niche preferences across gender groups. Male respondents show a strong inclination toward **High-Energy Adventure** and **Hybrid experiences**, whereas female respondents are relatively more inclined toward **Holistic Wellness** and **Hybrid options**. This variation suggests that niche preference patterns differ between males and females. The results imply that gender may play a role in influencing the type of travel or experience niche preferred by customers, highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive segmentation and targeted marketing strategies.

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