GENERATION Z CUSTOMERS' ONLINE OUTBOUND TOURISM BOOKING INTENTION IN VIETNAM: EXTENDING THE TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL WITH INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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Abstract: This study explored the factors influencing Generation Z (Gen Z) customers' intentions to book outbound tourism online in Vietnam. Recognizing Gen Z as digital natives and a pivotal demographic, especially within Vietnam's rapidly expanding digital and outbound tourism sectors, this research aimed to comprehensively understand their online booking behaviors. The theoretical framework was built upon the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which was extended to include intercultural competence as a crucial external variable. This integration allowed for an examination of how perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude, and intercultural competence collectively shape Gen Z's intentions to book outbound tourism online. To achieve this, a structured survey was administered to 312 Vietnamese Gen Z respondents. The collected data underwent rigorous analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings provided compelling evidence that all core TAM constructs—perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitude—exerted a significant influence on online outbound booking intentions. Notably, attitude emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the profound impact of a positive mindset towards online booking platforms, followed closely by perceived usefulness, which underscores Gen Z's pragmatic approach to technology. A key contribution of this research lies in demonstrating the significant role of intercultural competence. The results revealed that intercultural competence positively impacted perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and, critically, directly influenced booking intentions. This underscores its pivotal role in facilitating cross-cultural consumer interactions and enhancing the overall online booking experience for international travel. Theoretically, this study enriches the existing literature by extending TAM with intercultural competence, thereby addressing a gap in understanding the role of cultural adaptability in technology adoption behaviors, particularly in the context of international services. Practically, these findings offer invaluable insights for tourism platforms and marketers targeting the Vietnamese Gen Z demographic. The research emphasizes the paramount importance of developing user-friendly interfaces that resonate with digital natives, creating culturally adaptive content that acknowledges and caters to cross-cultural nuances, and implementing targeted marketing strategies that effectively communicate the benefits and ease of online outbound tourism booking.

Keywords: Generation Z, Technology Acceptance Model, intercultural competence, online booking, Vietnam

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information technology has revolutionized the global tourism industry. Online booking platforms have emerged as indispensable tools for facilitating travel arrangements, offering convenience, accessibility, and personalized experiences for consumers worldwide (van der Heijden et al., 2017; Bakos & Treacy, 1986). In Vietnam, the increasing adoption of digital platforms has paralleled the burgeoning growth of the tourism sector, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z), a cohort known for its digital fluency and global connectedness. Gen Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents a distinct demographic with unique consumer behaviors, characterized by their reliance on technology, preference for user-friendly interfaces, and demand for personalized services (Ali et al., 2022). As Gen Z matures into an influential consumer group, their online outbound tourism booking behaviors warrant scholarly attention. Given Vietnam's significant economic growth and its embrace of digital transformation, the tourism industry has experienced a remarkable shift in consumer booking behavior. The rise of online platforms has redefined travel planning, enabling travelers to compare prices, read reviews, and make informed decisions with unprecedented ease (Huang & Ha, 2020). However, in the context of outbound tourism, where travelers seek international experiences, cultural diversity plays a pivotal role in shaping decision-making. Intercultural competence, defined as the ability to navigate cultural differences effectively, has increasingly gained recognition as a critical factor influencing consumer behavior in cross-cultural settings (Hammer, 2023). This is particularly relevant for Gen Z travelers, who are often exposed to diverse cultural dynamics during the booking process and their travel experiences.

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The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), has been extensively applied to understand consumer behavior in adopting technology. TAM identifies two primary constructs—perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use—as key determinants of behavioral intention. However, as tourism becomes more globalized and culturally diverse, integrating the role of intercultural competence into TAM is essential to capture the complex interplay between technology and cultural variables. Intercultural competence not only enhances individuals' ability to engage with diverse online content but also influences their perception of trust and reliability in platforms catering to international travel needs (Chen & Hwang, 2019). Therefore, applying an extended TAM model incorporating intercultural competence provides a novel perspective on how Gen Z customers in Vietnam approach online outbound tourism bookings (Salem et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of literature on the adoption of online booking platforms and intercultural competence, limited research exists on the intersection of these areas, particularly within the Vietnamese context. Vietnam's unique cultural and economic characteristics, coupled with the distinct preferences of its Gen Z population, present an opportunity to explore new dimensions of consumer behavior (Giao et al., 2021). This study aims to bridge the gap by examining the influence of TAM constructs and intercultural competence on Gen Z customers' online outbound tourism booking intention in Vietnam.

Although the TAM model has been widely utilized in tourism and technology adoption studies, there are two critical research gaps in the existing body of literature. First, while TAM provides valuable insights into the factors influencing technology adoption, it often neglects the role of cultural variables in shaping consumer behavior. Research on intercultural competence has highlighted its significance in cross-cultural interactions, particularly in the context of tourism, where cultural diversity is a defining characteristic (Hammer, 2023). However, few studies have attempted to integrate intercultural competence into TAM to examine its influence on online booking intentions. For instance, studies such as those by Ali et al. (2022); Erjavec & Manfreda (2022) have explored technology adoption in tourism but have overlooked the interplay between cultural competence and technology use. This gap underscores the need for a more comprehensive framework that incorporates intercultural dimensions to understand consumer behavior in outbound tourism (Muñoz et al., 2025).

Second, there is a dearth of research focusing specifically on Gen Z customers in Vietnam. Most studies on online booking intention have centered on broader demographic groups or have been conducted in Western contexts, limiting their applicability to Vietnamese Gen Z consumers. Gen Z travelers in Vietnam exhibit unique behaviors, such as their reliance on social media for travel inspiration, preference for visually appealing platforms, and sensitivity to cultural nuances in international travel (Kdv et al., 2024; Park et al., 2017). Existing studies, such as those by Dragolea et al. (2023); San Martín & Herrero (2012), have primarily focused on technological factors without delving into the demographic-specific tendencies of Gen Z in Vietnam. Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore the intersection of Gen Z consumer behavior, online booking platforms, and intercultural competence in the Vietnamese context.

Furthermore, while studies like Fitzgerald et al. (2018) have demonstrated the importance of self-awareness and reflective thinking in developing intercultural competence, their findings are often limited to educational interventions rather than real-world consumer behaviors. In Vietnam, where outbound tourism is rapidly growing, understanding how Gen Z customers apply intercultural competence during the online booking process is critical. This research addresses these gaps by extending the TAM model to include intercultural competence as a moderating variable and focusing on the unique characteristics of Vietnamese Gen Z travelers. This study aimed to investigate the factors influencing Gen Z customers' online outbound tourism booking intentions in Vietnam through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the role of intercultural competence. By integrating intercultural competence into the TAM framework, this study offered a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics influencing online booking behaviors in a culturally diverse and technology-driven environment. This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on TAM, intercultural competence, and Gen Z consumer behavior. Section 3 describes the research methodology, including data collection and analysis techniques. Section 4 presents the findings, followed by a discussion in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 concludes the study with implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Gen Z and intercultural competences

Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1997 and 2012, represents the first cohort of true digital natives, growing up immersed in technology and social media (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). This demographic is characterized by a strong preference for online platforms to manage various aspects of their daily lives, including travel arrangements. Their reliance on digital tools for travel inspiration, planning, and booking makes them an essential focus for tourism research (Yamagishi et al., 2023). Gen Z consumers are known for prioritizing seamless and personalized digital experiences, favoring platforms that offer ease of use, convenience, and visually appealing interfaces.

Vietnam, with its high penetration of mobile internet and growing outbound tourism market, provides an emerging context for exploring the behaviors of Gen Z travelers. As outbound tourism involves cross-border travel, Gen Z consumers in Vietnam must navigate diverse cultural landscapes, both during the booking process and their international experiences (Ho et al., 2024). This intersection of technology-driven behaviors and cross-cultural interactions underscores the importance of examining how intercultural competence influences their online booking behaviors.

Intercultural competence is defined as the ability to effectively navigate and adapt to cultural differences, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to engage constructively in culturally diverse contexts (Hammer, 2023). In the tourism domain, intercultural competence is increasingly recognized as a critical factor influencing decision-making, as consumers are exposed to diverse cultural elements during international travel planning. For Gen Z, who are often motivated by the desire for unique and authentic cultural experiences, the ability to interpret and engage with various

cultural cues plays a significant role in shaping their travel preferences and behaviors (Fitzgerald et al., 2018). Research suggests that intercultural competence enhances booking intention in online platforms that cater to diverse audiences, as it enables consumers to evaluate information and services from a culturally informed perspective. This is particularly relevant for outbound tourism booking, where understanding cultural nuances can influence perceptions of platform reliability and the overall user experience. Despite its importance, the role of intercultural competence in shaping online booking behaviors remains underexplored, particularly for Gen Z customers in Vietnam's outbound tourism market.

The Technology Acceptance Model with intercultural competence as an external variable

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), is one of the most widely used frameworks for understanding technology adoption. TAM posits that two key constructs - Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use - directly influence an individual's attitude toward using a system, which in turn impacts behavioral intention and actual usage (Tran & Khoa, 2025). TAM has been extensively applied in tourism and e-commerce research to examine consumer adoption of online booking platforms. For instance, studies by Chishty & Sayari (2024); Khoa et al. (2022) have demonstrated the effectiveness of TAM in explaining online shopping and booking behaviors.

However, these studies often overlook the role of cultural variables in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. To address this limitation, recent research advocates for the inclusion of external variables, such as intercultural competence, to enhance TAM's explanatory power in culturally diverse settings (Zhang & Zhou, 2023). Intercultural competence can influence PU and PEOU by shaping how users interpret and engage with online platforms that incorporate multicultural content and features. For example, consumers with higher intercultural competence are more likely to perceive a platform as useful and user-friendly if it aligns with their cultural expectations and facilitates cross-cultural interactions (Fitzgerald et al., 2018).

In the context of outbound tourism, intercultural competence also directly impacts booking intentions by fostering attitude and reducing uncertainty associated with international travel planning. By integrating intercultural competence into the TAM framework, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of Gen Z customers' online booking intention, particularly in Vietnam's outbound tourism market. The research model was proposed as Figure 1.
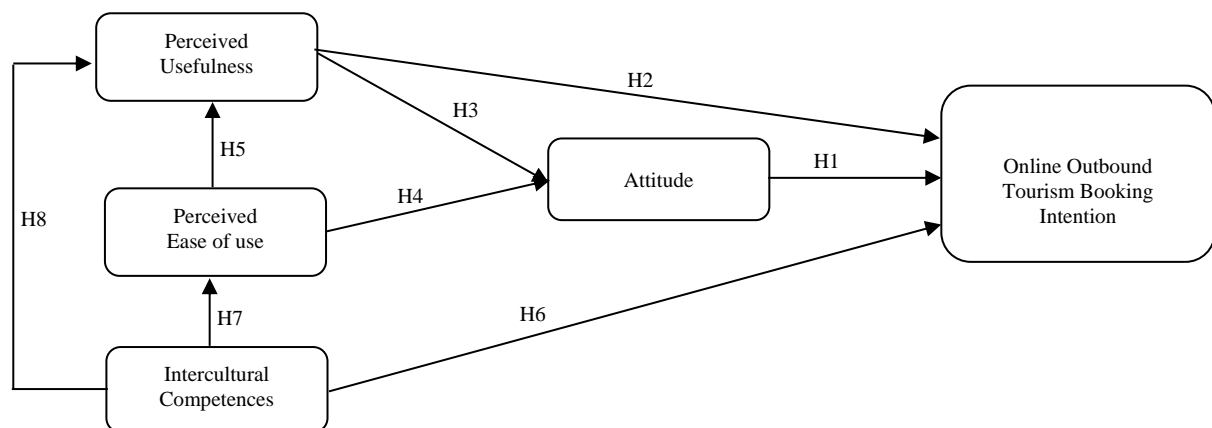

Figure 1. Theoretical model

Research hypotheses development

Attitude, defined as an individual's positive or negative evaluation of using a system, is a critical determinant of behavioral intention (Hung & Khoa, 2022; Ajzen, 1991). For Gen Z customers, a favorable attitude toward online booking platforms is shaped by their perception of the platform's usefulness and ease of use, as well as their overall satisfaction with the digital experience (Yadav & Seranmadevi, 2024; Clubbs et al., 2021). Studies have shown that a positive attitude toward technology significantly enhances users' willingness to adopt it, particularly in environments where convenience and efficiency are prioritized (Nowacki et al., 2023). In Vietnam, where Gen Z travelers are highly engaged with digital platforms, their attitude toward online outbound tourism booking is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping their booking intentions. Hence, this study proposed the hypothesis:

H1: Attitude has a positive impact on the Gen Z customer's Online Outbound Tourism Booking Intention in Vietnam.

Perceived Usefulness reflects the extent to which users believe that using a system will enhance their performance or achieve desired outcomes (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). In the context of online outbound tourism booking intention, perceived usefulness encompasses factors such as convenience, time savings, and access to comprehensive information (Tran & Khoa, 2025; Madi et al., 2024). For Gen Z travelers in Vietnam, online platforms that provide user-friendly interfaces and reliable information are perceived as highly useful, thereby increasing their intention to book. Existing research highlights the strong relationship between perceived usefulness and behavioral intention, particularly in technology-driven industries like tourism (Wong et al., 2023). Perceived usefulness not only influences behavioral intention directly but also shapes users' attitudes toward technology (Wang et al., 2015). When Gen Z customers perceive an online platform as useful, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward using it. This relationship has been validated in multiple studies, which indicate that perceived usefulness significantly enhances users' overall satisfaction and willingness to

engage with technology (Khoa, 2024). In the context of outbound tourism booking, platforms that meet Gen Z's expectations for efficiency and personalization are likely to foster favorable attitudes. Consequently, this study posited the hypotheses:

H2: Perceived Usefulness has a positive impact on the Gen Z customer's Online Outbound Tourism Booking Intention in Vietnam.

H3: Perceived Usefulness has a positive impact on the Gen Z customer's Attitude toward Online Outbound Tourism Booking.

Perceived Ease of Use refers to the degree to which a user perceives a system as easy to navigate and interact with (Anifa & Sanaji, 2022). For Gen Z travelers, who value seamless and intuitive digital experiences, Perceived Ease of Use is a critical determinant of their attitude toward online booking platforms. Research indicates that systems with high Perceived Ease of Use are more likely to elicit positive attitudes, as they reduce the cognitive effort required for interaction (Arifah & Juniarti, 2021). Perceived ease of use also influences perceived usefulness by shaping users' perceptions of the system's efficiency and reliability. When a platform is easy to use, users are more likely to perceive it as useful, as it facilitates the achievement of their goals with minimal effort (Kim et al., 2021). For Gen Z customers in Vietnam, platforms that combine ease of use with functionality are likely to be perceived as highly beneficial, enhancing their overall booking experience (Khoa & Huynh, 2024; Hur et al., 2017). Therefore, this investigation proposed the hypotheses:

H4: Perceived Ease of Use has a positive impact on the Gen Z customer's Attitude toward Online Outbound Tourism Booking.

H5: Perceived Ease of Use has a positive impact on the Perceived Usefulness of Online Outbound Tourism Booking systems.

Intercultural competence directly influences booking intentions by fostering trust and reducing uncertainty in cross-cultural interactions (Zhang & Zhou, 2023). For Vietnamese Gen Z travelers, who engage with diverse cultural content during the booking process, higher intercultural competence enhances their confidence in using online platforms for outbound tourism. Intercultural competence also contributes to perceived ease of use by enabling users to navigate culturally diverse content more effectively. Consumers with higher intercultural competence are better equipped to interpret and engage with platform features tailored to international audiences, thereby enhancing their perception of ease of use (Fitzgerald et al., 2018). Finally, intercultural competence influences perceived usefulness by enabling users to appreciate the value of culturally adaptive features in online booking platforms. For Gen Z travelers, platforms that cater to diverse cultural preferences are perceived as more useful, as they align with their expectations for personalized and inclusive digital experiences (Chen & Hwang, 2019). Consequently, this study posited the hypotheses:

H6: Intercultural Competences have a positive impact on the Gen Z customer's Online Outbound Tourism Booking Intention in Vietnam.

H7: Intercultural Competences have a positive impact on the Perceived Ease of Use of Online Outbound Tourism Booking systems.

H8: Intercultural Competences have a positive impact on the Perceived Usefulness of Online Outbound Tourism Booking systems.

METHODOLOGY
Measurement scale
The constructs in this study were measured using a structured questionnaire based on established scales, adapted to the context of Gen Z customers' online outbound tourism booking intentions in Vietnam. The questionnaire was designed to assess five main constructs: Perceived Usefulness (USE), Perceived Ease of Use (EOU), Attitude (ATI), Intercultural Competences (ICO), and Online Outbound Tourism Booking Intention (OTB). Each item was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"), ensuring that the scales captured nuanced perceptions and behaviors of the respondents. The development of the measurement scales was guided by prior research and validated instruments in technology acceptance, tourism behavior, and intercultural competence. USE, EOU, was measured with three items adapted from previous studies (Davis, 1989). ATI was measured with three items derived from prior research on technology acceptance and consumer behavior (Kirkpatrick et al., 2024). OTB was measured with three items adapted from tourism and technology adoption literature (San Martín & Herrero, 2012). Intercultural Competences represent the ability to effectively navigate and adapt to cultural differences, particularly in cross-cultural settings such as international tourism (Hammer, 2023; Fitzgerald et al., 2018). This construct was measured with four items adapted from the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and research on intercultural competence in tourism. Each scale was pre-tested for clarity with a small group of Gen Z respondents to ensure that the items were contextually relevant and understandable.

Sample and data collection
The target population for this study was Gen Z customers in Vietnam, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012. This demographic was chosen for its digital fluency, reliance on online platforms for decision-making, and increasing participation in outbound tourism. Data were collected using an online survey administered through social media platforms and online travel communities popular among young Vietnamese travelers, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Zalo. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure that the respondents met the following criteria:
1. They were Gen Z consumers residing in Vietnam.
2. They had prior experience using online platforms for tourism-related activities.
3. They had either booked or intended to book outbound tourism services in the near future.

The survey was conducted over a six-months period (from June 2024 to December 2024), and a total of 550 responses were received. After removing incomplete and invalid responses, a final sample of 312 valid responses was retained for analysis, achieving a response rate of approximately 56.72%. The sample size exceeded the recommended threshold for Partial Least Squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, ensuring adequate statistical power (Hair Jr et al., 2016). To enhance data reliability, the survey incorporated attention-check questions to identify and exclude respondents who provided inconsistent or random answers. Ethical considerations were observed, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring respondent anonymity. The data were securely stored and analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software.

The final sample of 312 respondents consisted entirely of Gen Z individuals in Vietnam. Figure 2 provides a demographic breakdown of the sample, highlighting key characteristics such as gender, age, area, and education level. The majority of the participants were female (57.69%), with males constituting 42.31% of the sample. Geographic distribution was balanced, encompassing participants from urban areas such as Hanoi (32.05%), Ho Chi Minh City (48.72%), and Da Nang (19.23%), reflecting the urban-centric nature of online booking adoption in Vietnam.
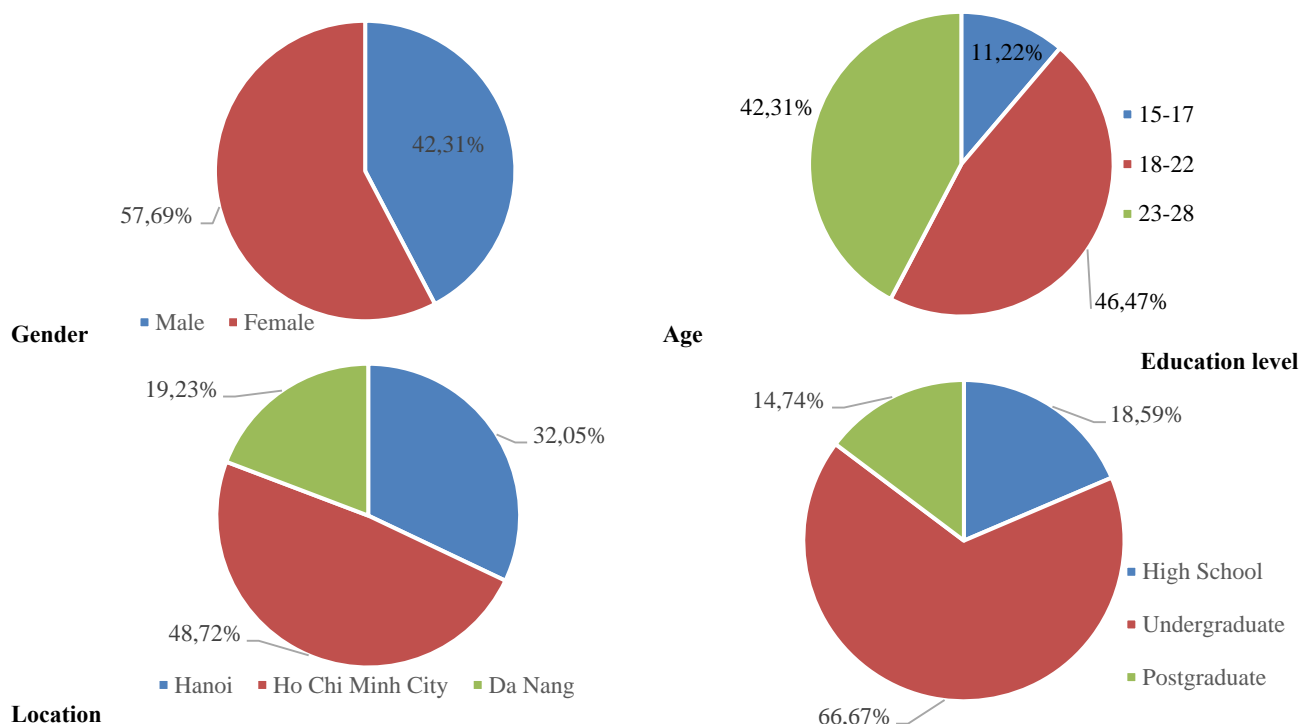

Figure 2. Demographic profile of respondents

RESULT

Measurement model assessment

The assessment of the measurement model involved examining the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the constructs used in this study. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software, with results meeting the thresholds for reliability and validity based on prior methodological recommendations (Hair Jr et al., 2016). To ensure internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR) values were assessed in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	α	CR	AVE	OL (Min - Max)
Perceived Usefulness (USE)	0.88	0.93	0.76	0.81 - 0.89
Perceived Ease of Use (EOU)	0.84	0.9	0.74	0.80 - 0.88
Attitude (ATI)	0.87	0.91	0.78	0.84 - 0.91
Intercultural Competence (ICO)	0.92	0.94	0.79	0.83 - 0.92
Online Outbound Tourism Booking Intention (OTB)	0.89	0.94	0.8	0.85 - 0.92

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	USE	EOU	ATI	ICO	OTB
Perceived Usefulness (USE)	**0.87**				
Perceived Ease of Use (EOU)	0.61	**0.86**			
Attitude (ATI)	0.58	0.55	**0.88**		
Intercultural Competence (ICO)	0.52	0.49	0.61	**0.89**	
Online Outbound Tourism Booking Intention (OTB)	0.67	0.62	0.7	0.66	**0.89**

Both metrics surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating adequate reliability. Convergent validity was examined using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs achieving AVE values above the 0.5 threshold, confirming that the items adequately explained their respective constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Outer loadings (OL) for all items exceeded 0.7, further evidencing convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 2 indicated that the square roots of AVE for each construct were higher than their correlations with other constructs.

Structural model assessment

The structural model was assessed to evaluate the relationships between constructs and test the hypotheses. The analysis included examining the R², f², Q², path coefficients, variance inflation factors (VIFs) for multicollinearity, and the significance of the structural paths.

The R² values in Table 3 indicated substantial explanatory power for the model, with Online Outbound Tourism Booking Intention achieving an R² of 0.62, Attitude achieving an R² of 0.54, Perceived Usefulness achieving an R² of 0.49, and Perceived Ease of Use achieving an R² of 0.26. Predictive relevance (Q²) in Table 3 was assessed using the blindfolding procedure, with all Q² values exceeding zero, confirming the model's predictive relevance.

Table 3. R² and Q² values

Construct	R²	Q²
Perceived Usefulness (USE)	0.49	0.31
Perceiveed Ease of Use (EOU)	0.26	0.15
Attitude (ATI)	0.54	0.36
Online Outbound Tourism Booking Intention (OTB)	0.62	0.38

Variance inflation factors (VIFs) were calculated to assess multicollinearity. All VIF values in Table 4 were the recommended threshold of 5.0, indicating no multicollinearity issues. Path coefficients (β) and their significance levels were evaluated using a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples. All hypothesized paths were significant, supporting the acceptance of all hypotheses. Effect sizes (f²) were also calculated, with values above 0.02 indicating small effects, 0.15 medium effects, and 0.35 large effects (Cohen, 2013).

Table 4. Path coefficients and effect sizes (f²)

Hypotheses	β	t-value	p-value	f²	VIF	Result
H1: ATI → OTB	0.41	5.87	<0.001	0.21	1.92	Accepted
H2: USE → OTB	0.32	4.92	<0.001	0.18	1.67	Accepted
H3: USE → ATI	0.38	6.21	<0.001	0.20	1.72	Accepted
H4: EOU → ATI	0.29	4.45	<0.001	0.14	1.62	Accepted
H5: EOU → USE	0.36	5.78	<0.001	0.19	1.68	Accepted
H6: ICO → OTB	0.27	3.89	<0.001	0.12	1.89	Accepted
H7: ICO → EOU	0.31	4.78	<0.001	0.17	1.85	Accepted
H8: ICO → USE	0.33	4.84	<0.001	0.18	1.78	Accepted

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the factors influencing Gen Z customers' online outbound tourism booking intentions in Vietnam, using an extended Technology Acceptance Model framework that incorporated intercultural competence as an external variable. The research findings provide significant insights that align with and extend existing literature, offering a nuanced understanding of Gen Z consumer behavior in tourism technology adoption.

The results confirmed that attitude has a significant positive impact on online outbound tourism booking intention (β = 0.41, p < 0.001). This finding supports prior studies emphasizing the influence of attitude on behavioral intention (Nowacki et al., 2023; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Davis, 1989). Specifically, for Gen Z travelers in Vietnam, attitude is shaped by their positive evaluation of online booking platforms, aligning with Park et al. (2017), who highlighted that favorable attitudes significantly enhance technology adoption in tourism. The study further corroborates the argument made by Zhao et al. (2015) that a positive attitude is driven by seamless digital experiences and contributes directly to behavioral intention.

Perceived Usefulness demonstrated a strong positive effect on booking intention (β = 0.32, p < 0.001), consistent with TAM's foundational propositions (Davis, 1989). This outcome aligns with Erjavec and Manfreda (2022), who observed that usefulness reflects the functional benefits of online systems, such as convenience and efficiency. In the Vietnamese context, Gen Z customers perceive online platforms as indispensable tools for comparing travel options, accessing real-time information, and ensuring efficient trip planning. Additionally, this result confirms the findings of Chen & Hwang (2019), who argued that perceived usefulness is a key motivator in technology adoption across culturally diverse markets.

The study found that Perceived Ease of Use significantly influenced attitude (β = 0.29, p < 0.001). This outcome aligns with Madi et al. (2024), who emphasized that intuitive and user-friendly interfaces are critical for fostering positive consumer attitudes. Gen Z's demand for seamless navigation and minimal cognitive effort while using online platforms mirrors findings by Park et al. (2017), particularly in the context of visually appealing and easy-to-use systems. This reinforces the importance of tailoring platform designs to Gen Z's expectations in Vietnam's burgeoning outbound tourism market.

The inclusion of intercultural competence as an external variable enriched the TAM framework, providing novel insights into Gen Z's cross-cultural interactions during the booking process. Intercultural competence significantly influenced booking intention (β = 0.27, p < 0.001), perceived ease of use (β = 0.31, p < 0.001), and perceived usefulness (β = 0.33, p < 0.001). These findings align with Hammer (2023), who emphasized the importance of intercultural competence in navigating culturally diverse contexts. The study validated assertion of Fitzgerald et al. (2018) that intercultural competence enhances trust in online platforms catering to international audiences. For Vietnamese Gen Z travelers, intercultural competence fosters confidence in interpreting and engaging with culturally diverse content, thus reducing uncertainty and enhancing overall platform reliability (Chen & Hwang, 2019). The integration of intercultural competence into the TAM framework addresses a critical research gap identified in the literature.

While Salem et al. (2024) explored TAM in tourism and technology adoption, they neglected cultural variables. By incorporating intercultural competence, this study advances the understanding of how cultural adaptability interacts with technological constructs like Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use. The findings align with Song and Sahid (2025), who argued that intercultural competence is vital for interpreting and engaging with multicultural content, especially in globalized contexts like outbound tourism. Unlike prior studies that primarily focused on Western contexts, this research highlights the unique characteristics of Vietnamese Gen Z customers, such as their reliance on social media for travel inspiration and their sensitivity to cultural nuances. The findings also align with Muñoz et al. (2025), who emphasized Gen Z's preference for visually appealing platforms tailored to their digital fluency. Importantly, this study extends the work of Fitzgerald et al. (2018) by demonstrating that intercultural competence not only enhances cross-cultural interactions but also influences technology adoption in tourism.

CONCLUSION
Theoretical contributions

By incorporating intercultural competence as an external variable, this research provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding technology adoption in cross-cultural contexts. Traditional Technology Acceptance Model studies have largely focused on the constructs of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitude as predictors of behavioral intention, often overlooking the cultural dynamics that influence decision-making in digital environments. Intercultural competence involves the ability to adapt and navigate effectively in culturally diverse interactions, which is particularly relevant in the context of online tourism booking platforms that cater to international and multicultural audiences. By integrating intercultural competence into TAM, this study addresses the limitations of traditional models that fail to account for the role of cultural adaptability in technology adoption decisions. The study significantly contributes to the growing body of knowledge on Gen Z, particularly in emerging markets like Vietnam. Gen Z customers, characterized by their digital fluency and global outlook, are not only adept at adopting technology but also exhibit a heightened sensitivity to cultural representation and diversity in online platforms. This research highlights the interplay between digital fluency, cultural adaptability, and technology adoption, offering a nuanced understanding of how these factors shape the behaviors of this influential demographic. Gen Z's ability to engage with culturally diverse content on online platforms further solidifies the importance of intercultural competence as a critical determinant of their booking intentions.

The findings of this study reinforce the relevance of TAM constructs in predicting online booking intentions, as demonstrated by foundational research by Davis (1989) and subsequent validations by Chen & Hwang (2019). Perceived usefulness remains a core determinant of behavioral intention, reflecting the functional benefits and efficiency offered by online booking platforms. Similarly, perceived ease of use significantly influences attitude by reducing cognitive effort and enhancing user experience. The inclusion of intercultural competence bridges the gap between TAM and cultural variables, demonstrating their combined explanatory power in predicting booking intentions.

By highlighting the interconnected roles of these constructs, this research provides a more holistic view of technology adoption in contexts where cultural diversity plays a central role. Unlike most studies conducted in Western settings, this research contextualizes TAM within Vietnam's unique cultural and economic landscape. Vietnam's growing digital economy, coupled with an increasing interest in outbound tourism, presents a distinctive environment for examining the applicability of TAM. Vietnamese Gen Z customers, as digital natives, are not only familiar with online technologies but are also influenced by local socio-cultural factors that differentiate their behavior from those in Western contexts. This study underscores the importance of tailoring global frameworks like TAM to specific cultural and regional settings, providing insights that are both locally relevant and globally applicable. By situating the research within Vietnam, this study advances the understanding of how TAM constructs and intercultural competence interact in an emerging market, offering implications for both academia and industry stakeholders.

Managerial Implications

Tourism platforms targeting Vietnamese Gen Z customers should prioritize user-friendly interfaces, personalized recommendations, and features that reflect cultural diversity. Technologies such as multilingual support and culturally adaptive content can enhance ICO and overall booking experiences. Marketers should leverage social media and influencer collaborations to capture Gen Z's attention. Highlighting intercultural features and promoting trustworthiness can resonate with this demographic's preferences. Tourism companies should invest in training programs to enhance intercultural competence among employees, ensuring culturally sensitive customer interactions and improved service delivery. Policymakers can promote digital transformation in the tourism sector by supporting initiatives that integrate cultural diversity into online platforms. This aligns with Vietnam's broader goals of economic growth and internationalization.

Limitation and further research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The study focused exclusively on Gen Z customers in Vietnam, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other demographics or regions. The cross-sectional nature of the research limits the ability to capture changes in consumer behavior over time. A longitudinal approach could provide deeper insights. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results.

Cross-cultural comparisons or age group sampling can solve these constraints in future investigations.

This study only examined Gen Z customers in Vietnam, but include older generations or consumers from different cultures could improve our understanding of online booking behaviour. Researchers can evaluate how cultural values, technology infrastructure, and societal norms affect online tourism booking platform adoption through cross-cultural comparisons. This broader approach may uncover considerable differences in perceived usefulness, ease of use, and intercultural competency, revealing the TAM framework's universal and context-specific features.

Moreover, longitudinal research would be useful in analyzing Gen Z's behavior over time, especially as technology advances and new tourism features or platforms emerge. A longitudinal approach could reveal changes in preferences, attitudes, and booking patterns, revealing technology adoption trends. Further research could incorporate external elements like perceived risk, trust, and social influence to the TAM framework.

For instance, perceived risk may influence online booking behavior, especially for overseas travel. Social influence, including peer recommendations and online evaluations, may also reveal how Gen Z makes decisions in a social and digital ecology. Adding these variables to the model might improve its explanation and application.

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