

# The Comparison of ASEAN Gen Y Traveling Behaviors: Implications for Tourism Policy Development

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## Abstract

This article aims to compare the traveling behaviors of Generation Y (Gen Y) in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or ASEAN Member States and analyze tourism policies that address these behaviors. Drawing on literature reviews and related studies, it examines Gen Y's travel tendencies, the tourism policies of ASEAN, and the integration of these behaviors into policy frameworks. Currently, Gen Y represents the largest demographic group and demonstrates distinct traveling behaviors compared to other cohorts. Most Gen Y in ASEAN engages in lifestyle and experiential tourism, often characterized as niche travel. Understanding Gen Y's evolving demands and behavior is pivotal for formulating effective tourism policies aligned with economic and social objectives. Moreover, integrating these insights into policymaking can foster the development of an integrated tourism management framework, contributing to sustainable tourism growth in ASEAN.

**Keywords:** Generation Y, ASEAN, Traveling behavior, Tourism policy, Tourism

## Introduction

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (2025) reported that a projected 1.4 billion tourists traveled abroad in 2024, representing a virtual recovery (99%) of pre-pandemic levels, according to UN Tourism's most recent World Tourism Barometer. Due to strong post-pandemic demand, excellent performance from major source economies, and the continued recovery of destinations in Asia and the Pacific, the forecast represents an 11% increase over 2023, or 140 million more foreign visitor arrivals. Even though arrivals were only 87% pre-pandemic levels in 2024 (compared to 66% at the end of 2023), Asia and the Pacific (316 million) continued to recover quickly. 2024 saw a 33% rise in foreign arrivals, up 78 million from 2023 UN (2025). Strong post-pandemic demand from major outbound markets, such as the United States, Europe, and China, has driven the sharp rebound in tourism. The economic recovery and loosening of travel restrictions in these countries enabled a surge in

outbound tourism. Additionally, improved consumer confidence, accelerated by mass vaccination campaigns and more predictable travel regulations, encouraged international travel.

Southeast Asia experienced a robust tourism recovery in 2024, welcoming 121.3 million foreign visitors across the region. Thailand remained the top destination with 35.5 million tourists, followed by Malaysia (25.0 million) and Vietnam (17.6 million). Singapore (16.6 million), Indonesia (13.9 million), Cambodia (6.7 million), and the Philippines (5.9 million) also saw strong arrivals. Vietnam led in year-over-year growth, posting a remarkable 39.5% increase, allowing it to surpass Singapore in total arrivals and move into third place regionally. Thailand and Malaysia followed with 28.1% and 24.2% growth, respectively. Cambodia (22.9%), Singapore (21.9%), and Indonesia (19.6%) also recorded solid gains. The Philippines saw more modest growth at 9.2% (The Outbox Company,

2024). Despite having lower absolute numbers than some neighbors, Vietnam's rapid growth highlights its rising momentum as a key tourism player in Southeast Asia.

The increased number of tourists leads to the generation of various traveling behaviors. So, each country must divide the tourists based on their behaviors in order to conduct tourism marketing. Marketing influences and uniquely affects each generation. Nowadays, most hotel marketers categorize the world's 7 billion residents according to their birth year. According to Rowson (2016), a person's personality, social mores, and values are shaped by their historical period in which they are born. The Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y are the generations marketers are currently interacting with and living with. Because each generation is considered unique, marketers must develop distinct strategies tailored to their specific characteristics. Understanding how marketing functions and distinguishing between the target markets for the organization are crucial for marketers. Businesses are reaching out to multigenerational customers to comprehend and attract their attention, claims Walgrove (2015). Hotel corporations aim to reach all generations through their marketing approach with their content. According to the study, economists have divided demography into 6 groups, including the baby boomers. Generation Baby Boomer, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha (Banerjee, 2023). The Economic Intelligence Center (EIC, 2014) emphasized that countries worldwide primarily target Generation Y tourists as a major consumer group. In addition, the data is consistent with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (2022), which states that there will be 72.24 million millennials in the United States, making them the largest age group. Additionally, they recently overtook Gen X as the largest generation working. Millennials, who range in age from their mid-20s to their early 40s, are leaving a lasting impression on the workforce. Compared to their predecessors, millennials have more career mobility in the workplace. According to Gallup, Millennials switch companies for a variety of reasons. Instead of permanent employment, this generation aims for lifetime employability. This would mean that this group contains working people with the highest proportion among the four groups. Also, the

tourists in this group have earned a high income and purchasing power. So, it is interesting to note that this group will be a guide who can determine the world's possibilities in the next 20 years (Liu et al., 2023). Based on the prediction of several economists (Ketter, 2020; Shao. et al,2021; Liu et al., 2023), they identified that this group has spent an average of 200 trillion US dollars per year. Importantly, Asia is considered as a continent with the largest Gen Y population. up to 1 billion people, or around 86 percent of Gen Y worldwide. (Ketter, 2020)

Researchers have studied Generation Y tourist behavior in conjunction with monitoring population shifts from the service economy to the experience economy. So, it is important for tourism these days. As a result of the determination of tourism policy, the policy has played an important role in defining the directions of a country in various subjects. Then, Elliott (2020) mentioned that "Policy is a handle on the way we are governed, a concept which we use to make sense of what we do". Otherwise, Shao et al. (2021) mentioned, "Public policy is more than what governments do. Policymaking is a political activity, influenced by (and constitutive of) the economic and social characteristics of society, as well as by the formal structures of government and other features of the political system". Therefore, policymakers in Asian countries have developed tourism policies to guide national tourism directions and accommodate the behavior of Generation Y tourists. So, it is a factor that has influenced enhancing the capability to support tourism.

## Literature review

### Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Culos-Reed (2000) noted that the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a psychological model developed that explains how behavioral intentions guide individual behavior. Three core components—attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—influence these intentions. TPB is commonly applied in health promotion, environmental actions, consumer behavior, and tourism studies to understand and predict how people make decisions and act in real-life situations (Soomro et al., 2022). Understanding the travel behaviors of Generation Y, or Millennials, has become increasingly important for tourism policy development, particularly within the

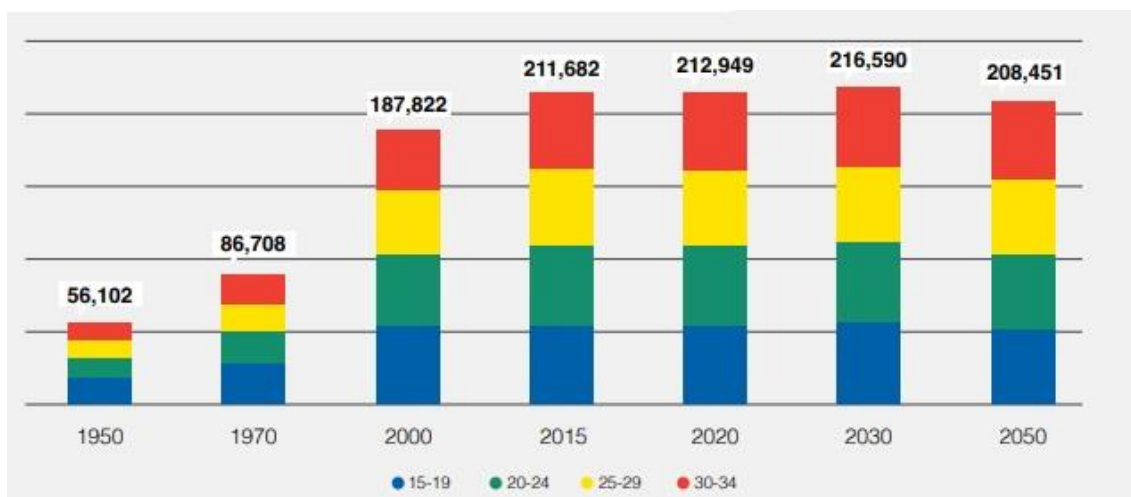
diverse and rapidly evolving ASEAN region. As one of the largest and most influential travel segments, Gen Y exhibits distinct preferences shaped by digital lifestyles, a desire for authentic experiences, and growing social and environmental awareness (Liu et al., 2023). ASEAN member states, each with unique cultural, economic, and political contexts, face opportunities and challenges in responding to these evolving demands. This article explores and compares existing research on Gen Y travel behavior across ASEAN countries, highlighting key trends, national differences, and the policy implications necessary to enhance competitiveness, regional integration, and sustainable tourism growth.

### Tourist behavior of generation Y in ASEAN member states

Scholars refer to individuals born between 1980 and 1999 as millennials or Generation Y (Gen Y). They

are independent, tech-savvy, globally connected, and unafraid to try new things and visit lesser-known locations. Gen Y has expanded its influence beyond starting fashion trends or traveling to distant destinations. Instead, they look for meaning and purpose in every location they visit, learn about their culture, and often engage with strangers (Muslim et al., 2020). Millennials are seasoned party animals, workaholics, and wild shopaholics who live life to the fullest. They go on trips to have fun and make money. They frequently work for companies that allow them to travel and cover the cost (Talati, 2022).

This demographic represents a substantial portion of the population and is a primary target for global marketers due to their significant purchasing power and spending habits. Figure 1 highlights the proportion of Gen Y populations in ASEAN member states.



**Figure 1** ASEAN youth population ages 15 to 34 (thousand).

**Source:** Association of Southeast Asian Nations (2022).

ASEAN’s youth population (ages 15-34) has shown significant growth over the decades. In 1950, the youth population was approximately 56.1 million, which increased to 86.7 million by 1970. A substantial rise occurred by 2000, reaching 187.8 million, followed by continued growth in 2015 with 211.7 million and 212.9 million in 2020. The population is projected to peak at 216.6 million by 2030, before slightly declining to 208.5 million in 2050. Throughout the timeline, all four age groups (15-19, 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34) have contributed to this growth, with relatively balanced

proportions, indicating a strong and stable youth demographic crucial for workforce development, tourism, and social policy planning across ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2022)

Tourism is identified as a key economic driver within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) . which comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam—. Tourism accounts for over 10% of the GDP in all ASEAN member states, with projections suggesting an increase to 15% by 2025.

Consistent with UNWTO predictions ASEANstats (2025) projected that the number of tourists visiting the ASEAN region will increase from 123 million in 2020

to 152 million in 2025 and 187 million by 2030. Table 1 illustrates ASEAN member states' tourist arrivals and growth rates in ASEAN member states in 2024.

**Table 1** Number of tourists in ASEAN member states in 2024.

Destination Country	Total visit
Thailand	28,150,016
Malaysia	20,141,846
Singapore	13,610,404
Vietnam	12,602,434
Indonesia	11,677,825
Cambodia	5,453,231
Philippine	5,450,557
Lao	3,417,629
Myanmar	1,284,731
Brunei Darussalam	133,630

**Source:** ASEANstats (2025).

In 2024, ASEAN member states recorded varying levels of international tourist arrivals, reflecting differences in tourism infrastructure, policy effectiveness, and destination appeal. Thailand led the region with 28.15 million international visitors, followed by Malaysia (20.14 million) and Singapore (13.61 million). These top-performing countries benefit from strong branding, well-developed transport networks, and diversified tourism offerings. Vietnam (12.6 million) and Indonesia (11.68 million) attracted significant tourists, indicating steady post-pandemic recovery and the growing appeal of cultural and nature-based tourism. Mid-tier destinations like Cambodia (5.45 million) and the Philippines (5.45 million) showed similar visitor levels, suggesting shared opportunities for growth in heritage and beach tourism. Smaller markets such as Laos (3.42 million) and Myanmar (1.28 million) attracted fewer tourists, potentially due to limited connectivity and ongoing political challenges in Myanmar's case-Brunei Darussalam recorded the lowest number of arrivals at 133,630, reflecting its niche tourism positioning and smaller capacity (ASEANstats, 2025).

ASEAN's rapid growth in international tourism underscores its role as a vital region in global tourism. Member states collectively generate significant tourism revenue, amounting to 12.4% of GDP, expecting to reach 15% by 2025. Despite setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry has shown a promising recovery. Beh et al. (2022) reported that tourist arrivals in the six largest ASEAN economies increased from 39 million in 2022 to 91 million in 2023 and projected that inbound tourism would return to pre-pandemic levels in 2024, reaching 120-130 million arrivals.

Researchers further divide Generation Y into two subgroups: those born in the early 1980s, who regard technology as a tool for improvement, and those born in the 1990s, who were raised in an era of digital technology and globalization. Muslim et al. (2020) characterized both groups as independent, adaptable, and reliant on technology and social media for decision-making. On the other hand, values and the stage in life of an individual are important influences on Generation Y, in general, and on holidays.

**Table 2** Generation Y – In general vs on vacation.

Generation Y	
General	On vacation
- Born in 1965-1976	- Short holiday, four times a year on average
- Independent	- Holiday with family
- Work -life Balance	- Need to relax
- Loyal	- Hotel standards and its reviews are extremely importance
- Appreciative of what they have	
- Adoptive	- Attracting, sightseeing and local culture
- Demanding open to new things and possible	

**Source:** Rojewska (2023).

Generation Y, or Millennials (born approximately between 1981 and 1996) , represents a significant segment of the global tourism market due to their high mobility, digital fluency, and desire for experiential travel. Understanding Gen Y’s travel behavior in the context of ASEAN is critical for shaping tourism policies that resonate with their preferences and expectations. Studies such as Jeaheng et al. (2023) and Pahrudin et al. (2021) reveal that Gen Y travelers are primarily motivated by relaxation, cultural exploration, and new experiences. However, the degree to which these motivations manifest varies by country. For example, cultural tourism is highly favored among Thai and Vietnamese Gen Y tourists, while shopping and culinary experiences are more prominent in Singapore and Malaysia. This suggests that national tourism policies must emphasize distinct cultural assets and lifestyle offerings to attract Gen Y tourists effectively. Gen Y’s travel preferences emphasize freedom, flexibility, and self- expression. Social media often influences their decisions, and their travel behaviors reflect a desire for unique experiences and personal fulfillment. Consequently, understanding the nuances of Gen Y’s travel behaviors is essential for ASEAN member states to design effective tourism policies that cater to this influential demographic.

In conclusion, the comparative literature on ASEAN Gen Y travel behavior provides valuable insights for tourism policy development. By aligning tourism strategies with the values, expectations, and behavioral patterns of Gen Y— while accounting for national and cultural differences— policymakers can enhance destination competitiveness and sustainable tourism growth.

**Findings and discussion**

A comparative thematic framework was developed to compare Generation Y traveling behaviors across ASEAN member states, a based on recurring behavioral patterns observed in existing academic research. The framework consists of five core dimensions: Travel motivations, tourism activities, influences on travel decisions, searching for information for travel planning, travel planning, and length of stay/trip. The researchers collected data from research articles and reports for each ASEAN country and coded them into a matrix (as shown in Table 4). Each theme was analyzed for presence or absence in each country, providing a visual and comparative cross- national perspective on Gen Y tourism behavior.

**Table 3** Tourist behavior of generation Y based on ASEAN member states.

ASEAN Generation Y Traveling Behaviours	Thailand	Malaysia	Singapore	Vietnam	Indonesia	Philippines	Cambodia	Laos	Myanmar	Brunei
Research Topic (Authors)	Jeaheng et al (2023) ; Du et al (2020)	Patwary & Omar (2020)	Wu (2020)	Hung et al (2021)	Pahrudin et al (2021)	Ibrahim (2021)	Sophea et al (2022)	Sibounheuang (2023)	May (2022) ; Dagoon rt al (2022)	Chin et al (2024) ; Gani (2022)
<b>Motivations for travel and tourism</b>										
Relaxation	√		√	√						√
Visiting relatives					√		√			
New experiences		√				√				
Cultures and traditions								√	√	
<b>Tourism activities</b>										
Cultural/Local		√			√		√	√		
Shopping		√	√	√	√	√				√
Foods	√		√	√						
<b>Influences on travel decision</b>										
Social media/Celebrities	√	√		√		√				√
Friends			√	√	√					√
Family members			√				√	√	√	
<b>Searching information for travel planning</b>										
Social media	√	√	√		√	√				√
Friends				√						
Family members							√	√	√	
<b>Travel planning</b>										
Have a traveling plan in advance	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
<b>Length of stay/trip</b>										
Less than 1 days	√		√							
1-3 days				√	√	√		√	√	
3-7 days		√					√			√

According to Table 3, the data analysis reveals that the primary motivation for Generation Y tourists in ASEAN member states is relaxation. Notably, Generation Y tourists from Malaysia and the Philippines tend to travel to unfamiliar destinations to gain new experiences and meet new people. Meanwhile, Generation Y tourists in Laos and Myanmar are driven by cultural experiences and sharing perspectives, reflecting a trend toward culturally immersive tourism.

The highlight of Generation Y tourism in ASEAN is engaging in activities that involve learning about local cultures and connecting with local communities. For example, Indonesia often offers cultural activities, Malaysia emphasizes religious tourism focusing on Islamic and halal experiences, and Laos promotes religious tourism to immerse visitors in its unique local traditions. Shopping is also popular among Generation Y tourists in countries like Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Food consumption at tourist destinations also plays a significant role, especially in Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam. Social media and celebrities heavily influence travel decisions for Generation Y tourists across ASEAN, highlighting their technological expertise and preference for online research and bookings. This group seeks value and is willing to pay for perceived quality. In Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, family members often influence travel decisions and planning, reflecting a collective approach to travel. Moreover, most Generation Y tourists in ASEAN plan their trips, with the typical length of stay being 1-3 days.

#### **Tourism policy of ASEAN member states**

The researchers implemented the following multi-step process to ensure a systematic and comprehensive review of the tourism strategies of ASEAN countries: First, they identified the Member States, which included all ten ASEAN countries within the scope of the review. Next, primary sources were targeted for document collection and source validation, including national tourism master plans and strategic frameworks, official government publications and ministry websites, regional ASEAN reports, and reports from international agencies such as UNWTO. A qualitative content analysis framework was used to maintain consistency. Key focus areas for each strategy in each country. This

structured and transparent review process allowed for a balanced and evidence-based analysis of ASEAN member states' tourism strategies. It also provided a foundation to examine how these policies align with regional goals and respond to the behavioral trends of target segments such as Generation Y.

The tourism behavior of Generation Y across ASEAN is broadly similar. Many ASEAN member states, especially those in the early stages of tourism development, have prioritized the tourism industry as a cornerstone for driving national economic growth. These nations have developed strategies and policies tailored to the specific behaviors of Generation Y tourists.

#### ***Cambodia***

The Cambodian government has focused on domestic tourism development, particularly in three key provinces: Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanoukville. Sihanoukville is being developed into a major seaside destination, aligning with Generation Y tourists' preference for domestic travel (Rashid, 2020).

#### ***Laos***

Laos emphasizes economic and cultural cooperation with foreign nations to enhance local well-being, particularly among its diverse ethnic groups. The country supports arts and cultural heritage by promoting traditions, conserving historical sites, and publicizing its rich culture to attract foreign tourists (Chusakul & Nonthapot, 2021).

#### ***Myanmar***

Myanmar boasts significant religious, cultural, and historical sites that attract global visitors. Key destinations include Bagan, Inle Lake, and traditional pagodas. Domestic tourism is growing, with rising demand for weekend travel amenities in cities like Mandalay and Yangon (Kraas et al., 2020).

#### ***Vietnam***

Vietnam's rapid tourism growth has significantly contributed to its economy, addressing employment issues, promoting cultural exchanges, and reducing poverty. Tung (2020) emphasized that stakeholders

must address societal challenges to support the sector's sustainable development.

### ***Thailand***

Thailand's National Tourism Development Plan (2023-2027) aims to balance tourism development by focusing on niche markets such as health and wellness tourism and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions). The plan promotes Thai lifestyles, enhances tourist confidence, and targets high-potential markets to boost spending (Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand, 2024).

### ***Brunei Darussalam***

Brunei emphasizes Islamic tourism by showcasing its rich Islamic heritage, such as mosques and cultural landmarks. It collaborates with tour companies to create travel packages targeting Middle Eastern tourists, leveraging its strong cultural ties with the region (Sulaiman, 2024).

### ***Malaysia***

Malaysia's tourism strategy focuses on international trade shows, digital marketing, and improving technology use. The country targets short-distance travelers, families, and niche markets, enhancing accessibility and connectivity (Haigh, 2020).

### ***Singapore***

Singapore has developed a tourism strategy centered on three key pillars: storytelling (highlighting Singapore's unique identity), targeting specific demographics, and enhancing services. The primary focus is on working millennials aged 20-34, who enjoy photography and exploring new destinations (Eijdenberg et al, 2022).

### ***Indonesia***

Indonesia promotes cooperation with neighboring countries like Singapore and Malaysia to attract tourists through discounts during the low season. Efforts include improving low-cost transportation and expanding airline services to connect with major markets like India and China (Koerner et al., 2024).

### ***The Philippines***

The Philippines focuses on scuba diving tourism and farm tourism. It aims to position itself as a global leader in farm tourism by hosting summits and promoting agritourism as an evolving trend (Yamagishi et al., 2024).

The tourism behavior of Generation Y across ASEAN is consistent mainly, characterized by a desire for authentic experiences, digital connectivity, and short, frequent trips. Recognizing the economic potential of this demographic, many ASEAN member states—particularly those in early or transitional stages of tourism development—have aligned their national strategies to meet the expectations and behaviors of Gen Y travelers. From Cambodia's domestic tourism development to Thailand's focus on wellness and niche markets, each country has tailored its approach based on local strengths and market trends. Nations like Laos and Myanmar emphasize cultural heritage and community-based tourism, while Singapore and Malaysia adopt data-driven, tech-enabled strategies to target working millennials. Vietnam and Indonesia focus on regional cooperation and infrastructure, whereas Brunei and the Philippines highlight religious and agritourism niches. These diverse yet targeted policies demonstrate a regional understanding that appealing to Generation Y is essential for tourism growth and broader economic and cultural development within ASEAN.

### **The implications of tourism policy development on the tourist behavior of generation Y in ASEAN**

The author uses the process of Literature review to systematically collect and analyze tourism strategies from each ASEAN member state, involving the systematic collection and analysis of official national tourism plans, strategic frameworks, and relevant policy documents published between 2015 and 2024. Primary sources included government websites, ASEAN reports, and international organizations such as UNWTO and ADB. A qualitative content analysis focused on key themes such as tourism policy development, Behavior of tourism, and Generation Y in ASEAN. The researchers compared data across countries to identify common trends, policy gaps, and alignment with the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan. Limitations, such as outdated documents or unavailable English translations,

were acknowledged to ensure transparency and credibility of the analysis.

The analysis of tourism policies in ASEAN member states reveals alignment with the travel behaviors of Generation Y. For example:

- **Cambodia** aligns its domestic tourism development with the preferences of Generation Y tourists for local travel.

- **Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei** emphasize religious tourism to attract culturally inclined Generation Y tourists.

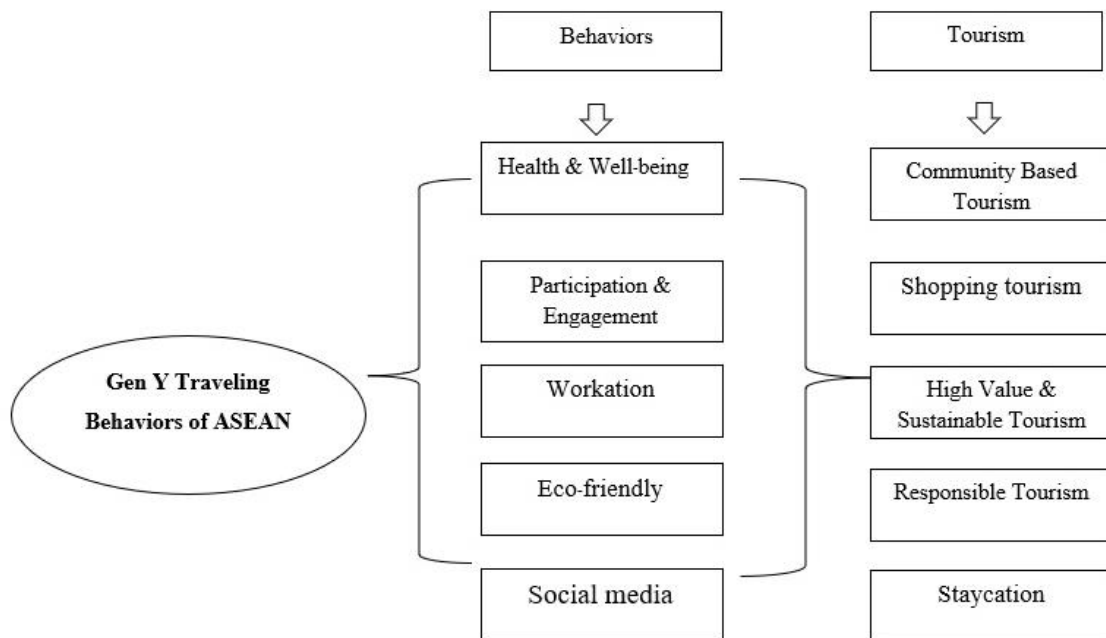
- **The Philippines** promotes marine tourism to satisfy Generation Y’s desire for novel experiences.

- **Singapore** focuses on urban development and scenic attractions, appealing to Generation Y’s love for photography and exploration.

- **Thailand** capitalizes on culinary tourism, a common interest among Generation Y tourists.

- **Vietnam and Myanmar** prioritize natural attractions, which resonate with Generation Y’s appreciation for nature.

Overall, ASEAN member states have crafted comprehensive tourism strategies that address the diverse preferences of Generation Y tourists, ensuring sustainable and targeted development.



**Figure 2** Gen Y Traveling Behaviors of ASEAN

From the research study and literature review, the researcher summarized the behavior of Generation Y tourists and determined that the tourism pattern was consistent. Figure 2 shows the overall behavior of Generation Y tourists in ASEAN countries. ASEAN tourists emphasize quality and sustainable travel experiences, such as environmental conservation and supporting local communities. Most ASEAN tourists prefer to plan their trips. Most tourists use research and plan trips using AR, VR, or AI. These behaviors can lead to support for different forms of community-based Tourism, High Value & Sustainable Tourism, Responsible Tourism, and Shopping tourism

The ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 envisions ASEAN becoming a high-quality tourism destination by 2025. According to Pai et al. (2024), millennials are among the highest-spending tourist groups, often prioritizing quality over quantity in travel, offering unique and diverse travel experiences under responsible and sustainable tourism ( Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2016). This overall vision aligns closely with Generation Y tourists’ travel preferences, emphasizing activities catering to their diverse interests. These include experience-oriented, creativity-driven, and adventure-based tourism, which resonates strongly with this demographic. Under the

ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan, one key focus is supporting and marketing high-quality travel. Gen Y tourists are identified as a major significant target group within ASEAN, and targeted marketing strategies are required to capture their interest. The plan proposes thematic tourism products, including destinations, routes, and conceptual travel areas. Examples include Mekong River tourism and cruise routes, ecotourism in the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), resort corridors, adventure circuits, and pilgrimage routes. These offerings align well with Gen Y's travel behavior when properly marketed and supported, presenting opportunities and challenges for tourism development in ASEAN (Hung et al, 2021).

### Conclusion

Generation Y, born between 1980 and 2000, is currently aged 24-44 and represents a significant portion of the global working-age population. Asia, in particular, has the highest concentration of Gen Y individuals. In ASEAN, Gen Y tourists display distinct travel behaviors, including a preference for backpacking and independent planning. They rely on information from travel blogs, personal reviews, and social media influencers, often seeking recommendations based on authentic experiences and local insights.

For lifestyle tourism, Gen Y travelers prioritize experiences that immerse them in local cultures, such as sampling authentic cuisine and exploring attractions frequented by locals. These experiences create a sense of excitement and emotional connection, encouraging frequent travel. In addition to cultural experiences, many Gen Y tourists prioritize culinary tourism, traveling to savor original and authentic dishes from around the world.

The ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan,—and individual member state policies, reflects a strong alignment with these travel behaviors. Policies focusing on thematic tourism, cultural immersion, and sustainability are well-suited to Gen Y preferences. Therefore, enhancing marketing efforts and policies targeting this group will position ASEAN as a top destination for Gen Y travelers, driving growth in the tourism sector while promoting sustainable development across the region.

### Recommendations

#### 1. Focus on marketing for gen Y tourists

Despite Gen Y representing the most significant proportion of tourists in ASEAN, marketing efforts targeting this group remain limited. Given their high spending potential and preference for experience-rich travel, ASEAN member states should prioritize marketing strategies tailored to their needs. Highlighting experiences that emphasize local lifestyles, and cultural immersion can further unlock tourism potential in the region. Traveling in ASEAN has mainly utilized the cost of natural resources and cultures.

#### 2. Promote sustainable tourism aligned with Gen Y behavior

ASEAN tourism heavily relies on natural and cultural resources. To ensure sustainable tourism appeals to Gen Y, member states should design products and services tailored to their interests. Emphasizing the unique strengths of each country's offerings can establish ASEAN as a premier destination for this demographic.

#### 3. Leverage AI to personalize the Gen Y travel experience

Integrate AI chatbots and virtual assistants for 24-hour customer service, especially on social media and mobile apps, where Gen Y engages most.

#### 4. Future research

The research should focus on integrating behavioral theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior or the Push-Pull Motivation Model to deepen the understanding of generational travel trends in a regional context.

### Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

No Generative AI tools are used to create content in this article.

### CRedit author statement

**Benjamaporn chumnanchar:** Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation. **Sirinpa Wongsaraj:** Supervision, Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

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