OPEN ACCESS

https://doi.org/10.62159/dawuh.v7i3

DAWUH: Islamic Communication Journal Vol . 7 No. 3 (2026)

Check for updates

Research Article

Digital Cultural Representation, Intercultural Communication, and Generation Z Tourist Mobility in Baubau

Wa Nurfida[1*], Sry Mayunta[2], Jornie Lumintao[3], Maria Ulfa[4], Fadel Arroyan[5], Nirmala Sari Anwar[6]

[1,2,4,5,6] Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton, Indonesia
[3] Central Mindanao University, Philippines
Email*: nfida246@gmail.com

Received: August 10, 2026	Revised: October 28, 2026	Accepted: November 2, 2026

Abstract

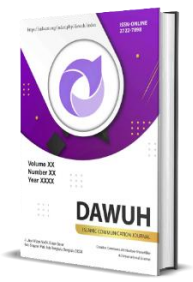
Digital media increasingly shape cultural tourism experiences, yet previous studies have largely emphasized destination image and visit intention, leaving limited evidence concerning the association between digital cultural representation, interpersonal communication, and intra-destination mobility. This study examined the structural associations among digital cultural representation, interpersonal intercultural communication, and self-reported Generation Z tourist mobility in Baubau, Indonesia. A cross-sectional survey involved 220 Generation Z cultural tourists between October and December 2025. Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), specifying digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication as reflective constructs and tourist mobility as an exploratory formative composite. Statistical significance was assessed using 10,000 bootstrap subsamples. Digital cultural representation was positively associated with tourist mobility ($\beta = 0.290$, $p < 0.001$) and interpersonal intercultural communication ($\beta = 0.559$, $p < 0.001$). Interpersonal intercultural communication was also positively associated with mobility ($\beta = 0.394$, $p < 0.001$). A significant indirect association ($\beta = 0.221$, $p < 0.001$) was consistent with a complementary statistical mediation pattern. These findings suggest a digital–relational–spatial association linking perceived cultural representation, interpersonal communication, and self-reported tourist mobility. However, the cross-sectional design does not establish temporal ordering or causal mediation. The findings offer a basis for further longitudinal research and for exploring integrated digital and interpersonal communication strategies in cultural tourism.

Keywords: Digital cultural representation; Generation Z; Interpersonal intercultural communication; Tourist mobility.

Publisher's Note:

Yayasan Darussalam Bengkulu stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright
2026 by the author(s).
License Yayasan Darussalam, Bengkulu, Indonesia.
This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0)
license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).



INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has developed beyond the consumption of tangible heritage into a participatory process through which visitors interpret history, encounter local communities, and construct meanings about places. For this study, Baubau's cultural tourism landscape was examined across four areas: Benteng Keraton Buton/Limbo Wolio, Baadia–Malige, Kampung Tenun Sulaa/Limbo Topa, and Limbo Bungi/Wantiro. Official site-level data on visitor distribution and comparative digital reach were unavailable. The empirical problem is therefore not an assumed concentration of visitors around a particular attraction, but the unresolved question of whether exposure to digital cultural content is associated with self-reported movement across Baubau's cultural sites. This question is important because cultural tourism has developed beyond the consumption of tangible heritage into a participatory process through which visitors interpret history, encounter local communities, and construct meanings about places. Communication is consequently central to cultural tourism because heritage meanings are produced through narratives, symbols, values, and social encounters as well as through physical sites (Richards, 2018).

Digital media have substantially altered how cultural meanings are produced, represented, and circulated within tourism. Through Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, travel blogs, and other platforms, destinations are communicated through photographs, short videos, captions, hashtags, testimonials, and user-generated narratives. Digital cultural representation in this study refers to the perceived presentation of a destination's historical narratives, cultural symbols, traditions, values, communities, and heritage sites through social-media content. Because the questionnaire did not distinguish content producers, the construct covers content encountered by respondents from official tourism actors, local communities, tourism businesses, influencers, and other users; it does not compare these source categories. The focus is instead on perceived completeness, visual appeal, authenticity, credibility, interaction, emotional engagement, and relevance to local identity. Digital representation is thus a selective communication process that shapes which cultural elements become visible and how audiences interpret them (Kim et al., 2017; Volo & Irimiás, 2021).

The relationship between digital cultural representation and tourism behavior is particularly relevant to Generation Z. Generational membership was treated as a cohort-based analytical category rather than a universally fixed chronological boundary. Mannheim, (1952) explains generations through shared sociohistorical location, while Ryder, (1965) conceptualizes cohorts through common temporal entry and exposure to historical and institutional conditions. In the 2025 data-collection period, the age range of 18–29 captured the older young-adult segment of a cohort socialized during the expansion of mobile connectivity, visual social media, algorithmic recommendations, and user-generated content. This study-specific boundary is consistent with tourism research locating Generation Z from the mid-1990s onward and emphasizing the digital embeddedness of its travel experiences (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018; Liu et al, 2023). It should not be interpreted as a universal demographic definition. Generation Z members actively evaluate tourism content, compare information across platforms, consult peer networks, and reproduce travel experiences through personal digital narratives.

Previous studies have established a relationship between tourism-related digital content and travel decision-making. User-generated travel posts influence destination evaluation and travel decisions, although their effects vary according to platform characteristics and users' information-processing patterns (Z. Wang et al., 2022). The perceived quality of social media tourism information also influences travel intention directly and indirectly through trust and self-congruity

(H. Wang & Yan, 2022). Similarly, credible, authentic, and engaging content produced by social media creators can strengthen tourist engagement and destination attractiveness (Hussain et al., 2024). These studies demonstrate the importance of digital communication in tourism behavior. Nevertheless, existing research has predominantly examined destination image, engagement, attitudes, visit intention, or destination choice. Less attention has been given to how digital cultural representations are associated with tourists' movements within a destination after a visit has occurred.

This distinction is important because travel intention and intra-destination tourist mobility are not conceptually equivalent. Travel intention concerns willingness or plans to visit, whereas tourist mobility concerns movement and engagement across locations after arrival. In this study, the exploratory formative mobility composite comprises six non-interchangeable components: Y1, breadth of cultural destinations visited; Y2, exploration beyond the initially intended primary attraction; Y3, Visits across cultural locations; Y4, diversity of routes used to reach those locations; Y5, Perceived adequacy of time for cultural-site engagement; Y6, extension of the trip by adding further cultural locations. Each component captures a different behavioral dimension, so removing one would alter the meaning and coverage of the mobility composite.

Tourist mobility research has increasingly used geotagged photographs, mobile-phone records, location-based social media, and other digital traces to map connections among tourist attractions (Jin et al., 2018; Mou et al., 2020; Reif & Schmücker, 2020; Zheng et al., 2021). Ding et al., (2024), Hardy et al., (2020), and Park et al., (2023), demonstrate that intra-destination movement forms complex networks in which prominent and less-visible attractions perform different spatial functions. Although this research stream effectively describes where tourists move, it provides less explanation of the communication processes that encourage movement from one cultural site to another. Conversely, digital tourism communication research explains how online information shapes destination perceptions and travel intentions but rarely connects mediated cultural representation with tourists' spatial behavior after arrival. The novelty of this study lies in integrating digital cultural representation as mediated communication, interpersonal intercultural communication as a relational mechanism, and self-reported intra-destination mobility as spatial behavior within a single PLS-SEM model. This digital–relational–spatial framework extends previous research by examining whether interpersonal intercultural communication mediates the association between digitally encountered cultural representations and tourists' reported movement across cultural sites.

Digital representation alone may be insufficient to transform online interest into broader cultural exploration. Visual content can introduce a destination, but visitors may still require interpersonal communication to interpret unfamiliar symbols, verify digital information, negotiate cultural differences, and discover locations beyond attractions prioritized by algorithms. Interpersonal intercultural communication occurs when visitors interact with local residents, cultural practitioners, guides, tourism workers, other visitors, or members of digital communities who possess different cultural backgrounds and knowledge (Fan et al., 2017; Lu et al., 2021). This communication may take place before a journey through online conversations and peer recommendations or during a visit through face-to-face encounters.

In this context, interpersonal intercultural communication involves openness, empathy, respect for cultural differences, communicative equality, clarity, sensitivity to cultural norms and symbols, and the ability to adapt communication styles. These qualities can transform abstract

digital images into situated cultural understanding. Research on tourist intercultural competence shows that the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact responsibly with other cultures supports active participation and memorable cultural experiences (Fan et al., 2022). Interpersonal intercultural communication may therefore serve as a relational mechanism through which digital representations acquire contextual meaning and encourage broader mobility. Conversely, limited cultural information, stereotypes, communication barriers, or insensitive interactions may confine visitors to visually popular sites without developing a deeper understanding of the cultural landscape.

Baubau provides a relevant setting for examining these relationships. As a former center of the Buton Sultanate, the city possesses historical and cultural resources associated with the Buton Palace Fortress, customary institutions, religious heritage, oral traditions, local languages, culinary practices, and community rituals. These resources have been identified as potential foundations for cultural tourism and locally based creative-economy development (Government, 2025). However, the availability of cultural heritage does not by itself establish whether online cultural exposure is associated with movement across multiple sites. The Baubau case therefore enables the study of a communication problem in a secondary cultural city without making unsupported claims about site-level visitor concentration

Previous studies have examined trust, self-congruity, destination attractiveness, attitudes, and memorable experiences as mechanisms connecting social media communication with tourism behavior (Alzaydi & Elsharnouby, 2023; H. Wang & Yan, 2022). Other studies have separately investigated tourist intercultural competence and participation (Fan et al., 2022) or mapped movement patterns among tourist attractions (Ding et al., 2024). However, these research streams remain fragmented. Limited empirical attention has been given to interpersonal intercultural communication as a mediating mechanism between digital cultural representation and self-reported intra-destination mobility. Furthermore, available evidence is concentrated primarily on internationally established destinations and large digital markets, leaving secondary cultural cities in Eastern Indonesia underrepresented in communication and tourism research.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating three research streams whose limitations have usually remained separate. First, digital tourism studies have predominantly examined destination image, engagement, attitudes, or visit intention; this study instead uses self-reported intra-destination mobility as the outcome. Second, prior mediation research has emphasized cognitive and attitudinal mechanisms such as trust, self-congruity, destination attractiveness, and attitudes; this study tests interpersonal intercultural communication as a relational mediator. Third, mobility studies effectively map where tourists move but provide less explanation of the communication process connecting digital exposure with spatial exploration. Combining mediated representation, interpersonal communication, and mobility in one PLS-SEM model therefore advances a digital–relational–spatial explanation in the underrepresented context of a secondary cultural city in Eastern Indonesia

This study therefore aims to examine the structural associations among digital cultural representation, interpersonal intercultural communication, and self-reported Generation Z tourist mobility in Baubau. Specifically, it investigates the direct associations between digital cultural representation and tourist mobility, between digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication, and between interpersonal intercultural communication and tourist mobility. It also examines whether the specified PLS-SEM model yields a statistically significant

indirect association between digital cultural representation and tourist mobility through interpersonal intercultural communication. Given the cross-sectional design, this indirect association is interpreted as statistical mediation rather than evidence of temporal or causal mediation. The findings are expected to contribute to tourism communication scholarship by integrating mediated, interpersonal, and spatial dimensions within an association-based analytical framework.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative explanatory cross-sectional survey design to examine structural associations among digital cultural representation, interpersonal intercultural communication, and Generation Z tourist mobility within a single data-collection period. Digital cultural representation was specified as the exogenous construct, Generation Z tourist mobility as the endogenous construct, and interpersonal intercultural communication as the mediator. Because the observations were collected at one time point, the model estimates predictive structural associations and does not establish temporal precedence or causal effects (Spector, 2019).

Participants and Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling because a comprehensive sampling frame of Generation Z cultural tourists visiting Baubau was unavailable. Participants were selected based on four eligibility criteria: (1) be 18–29 years old; (2) have visited at least one cultural destination in Baubau during the preceding 12 months; (3) have accessed digital content concerning Baubau's culture or tourism; and (4) voluntarily agree to participate. The age boundary represents the study-specific cohort operationalization explained in the Introduction. Incomplete responses and responses from participants who did not satisfy the eligibility criteria were excluded. The purposive designation refers to eligibility-based inclusion; recruitment also involved participant-mediated forwarding of the survey link, as described below.

A total of 245 questionnaire responses were received during the data collection period. Following the screening process, 25 responses were excluded: eight respondents were outside the specified age range of 18–29 years, four had not visited a cultural tourism destination in Baubau within the required period, ten did not meet the criterion of having accessed relevant digital cultural tourism content, and three submitted incomplete responses or responses deemed unsuitable for analysis. Consequently, 220 valid responses were retained for the final PLS-SEM analysis. No missing values were identified in the final analytical dataset.

Table 1. Demographic and Travel Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Age group (years)	18–21	76	34.5
	22–25	112	50.9
	26–29	32	14.5
Gender	Female	122	55.5
	Male	98	44.5
Educational attainment	High school or equivalent	102	46.4
	Diploma	29	13.2
	Bachelor's degree	81	36.8
	Graduate degree	8	3.6
Place of residence	Baubau City	85	38.6

	Buton area outside Baubau	46	20.9
	Other Indonesian regions	71	32.3
	International visitors	18	8.2
Primary digital platform	TikTok	80	36.4
	Instagram	71	32.3
	YouTube	35	15.9
	Facebook	23	10.5
	Other platforms	11	5.0
Number of cultural visits in the previous 12 months	Once	40	18.2
	Twice	68	30.9
	Three times	61	27.7
	Four times	31	14.1
	Five times	20	9.1

The participants comprised 220 Generation Z cultural tourism visitors in Baubau. They were between 18 and 29 years of age, with a mean age of 22.62 years. The sample included 122 women (55.5%) and 98 men (44.5%). Regarding educational attainment, 102 participants (46.4%) had completed senior high school or its equivalent, 81 (36.8%) held a bachelor's degree, 29 (13.2%) held a diploma, and eight (3.6%) had completed postgraduate education. The participants were residents of Baubau, other regions of Indonesia, and foreign countries. TikTok and Instagram were the digital platforms most frequently used by the participants.

Sample-size adequacy was evaluated using the inverse square root method. Assuming a significance level of 5%, statistical power of 80%, and a minimum anticipated path coefficient of 0.20, the estimated minimum sample size was 155 participants. The final sample of 220 responses therefore exceeded the minimum requirement for PLS-SEM analysis (Kock, 2015).

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising participant characteristics and 20 measurement items. The Indonesian-language items were adapted or developed with reference to digital cultural representation through social media, intercultural sensitivity and tourist intercultural competence, and intra-destination tourist mobility (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Ding et al., 2024; Fan et al., 2022; Lew & McKercher, 2006; Peco-Torres et al., 2021). Appendix A reports the item codes, English translations, indicator meanings, response scales, sources or adaptation bases, and measurement specifications.

Digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication were specified reflectively because their items represent manifestations of the underlying constructs, are expected to covary, and have similar directional relationships with their respective latent concepts. The seven digital cultural representation items covered completeness, visual appeal, authenticity, credibility, user interaction, emotional engagement, and local-identity relevance. The seven interpersonal intercultural communication items covered openness, empathy, respect for cultural differences, equality, clarity, cultural sensitivity, and communication adaptation.

Generation Z tourist mobility was operationalized as an exploratory formative composite encompassing six conceptually distinct dimensions of self-reported intra-destination travel behavior and spatiotemporal engagement: breadth of cultural destinations visited (Y1), exploration beyond the initially intended primary attraction (Y2), Visits across cultural locations (Y3), diversity of

travel routes (Y4), Perceived adequacy of time for cultural-site engagement (Y5), and trip extension through additional cultural destinations (Y6). The selection of these dimensions was informed by the literature on tourist movement patterns and intra-destination mobility (Lew & McKercher, 2006; Jin et al., 2018; Ding et al., 2024).

The formative measurement specification was adopted because the six indicators represent distinct components of the operationalized construct rather than interchangeable manifestations of a single latent trait. Each indicator captures a different aspect of tourism-related movement or engagement, and variation in one dimension does not necessarily correspond to equivalent variation in the others. For example, visiting a greater number of cultural destinations does not necessarily imply using more diverse travel routes or spending longer periods at individual sites. Likewise, the visits across cultural locations is conceptually distinct from extending an itinerary by adding previously unplanned destinations. Removing any of these indicators would narrow the intended conceptual coverage of the composite.

The six indicators were therefore retained to preserve the theoretical breadth of the exploratory mobility composite, encompassing spatial breadth, exploratory behavior, Visits across cultural locations, route variation, temporal engagement, and trip extension. However, Perceived adequacy of time for cultural-site engagement (Y5) reflects a temporal aspect of cultural-site participation rather than spatial displacement itself. Accordingly, the composite should be interpreted as a broad, exploratory operationalization of self-reported tourist mobility and related spatiotemporal engagement, rather than as an objective measure of tourist movement.

The indicator selection was theoretically informed but was not subjected to a formal expert-based content-validity assessment before field administration. A supplementary retrospective content-validity assessment was subsequently conducted after the main data collection, involving three practitioners with expertise in cultural tourism, interpersonal intercultural communication, and digital communication. This additional assessment was intended to evaluate item relevance, clarity, and conceptual coverage and should not be interpreted as pre-administration validation. The formative measurement model was specified using Mode B, whereas Mode A was applied to the two reflective constructs.

All 20 measurement items used five-point agreement response scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The formative mobility indicators therefore represented respondents' agreement with statements describing self-reported mobility-related behavior and engagement rather than direct measures of behavioral frequency, duration, or spatial displacement. No formal pilot test or cognitive pretesting was conducted before the administration of the main questionnaire.

Supplementary Content-Validity Assessment

To strengthen the content-validity evidence of the research instrument, a supplementary expert-based assessment was undertaken involving three practitioners with expertise in cultural tourism, interpersonal intercultural communication, and digital communication. The assessment focused on the original 20 Indonesian-language questionnaire items, comprising seven digital cultural representation indicators (X1–X7), seven interpersonal intercultural communication indicators (M1–M7), and six Generation Z tourist mobility indicators (Y1–Y6).

The assessment examined item relevance, clarity, and conceptual coverage in relation to the operational definitions of the three constructs. Each expert independently evaluated the relevance and clarity of all 20 items using a four-point rating scale. Relevance was rated from 1 (not relevant)

to 4 (highly relevant), while clarity was rated from 1 (not clear) to 4 (very clear). The experts also considered the comprehensiveness of each construct's indicators and provided qualitative comments regarding item wording, conceptual appropriateness, potential overlap, and construct coverage.

Item-level agreement was evaluated using the Item-Level Content Validity Index (I-CVI), calculated as the proportion of experts assigning a rating of 3 or 4 to an item. The Scale-Level Content Validity Index based on the averaging method (S-CVI/Ave) was calculated as the mean I-CVI across the items within each construct and across the complete instrument. Relevance and clarity were analyzed separately. An I-CVI threshold of 0.78 and an S-CVI/Ave benchmark of 0.90 were adopted as reference criteria. Given the panel of three experts, an item required positive ratings from all three reviewers to achieve an I-CVI of 1.00 and satisfy the adopted item-level criterion.

Quantitative content-validity indices were interpreted alongside the experts' qualitative comments to identify areas requiring further conceptual clarification or instrument refinement. The supplementary assessment was conducted after the main survey data collection and is therefore reported as a retrospective content-validity evaluation rather than pre-administration instrument validation or pilot testing. The original questionnaire responses used in the PLS-SEM analysis were not modified retrospectively. The assessment was intended to provide additional evidence concerning content relevance and coverage while acknowledging that it does not replace prospective pretesting or establish formative convergent validity through redundancy analysis.

Research Procedure and Period

Data collection was conducted from October to December 2025. Recruitment activities covered four cultural tourism areas in Baubau: (1) Benteng Keraton Buton/Limbo Wolio, (2) Baadia–Malige, (3) Kampung Tenun Sulaa/Limbo Topa, and (4) Limbo Bungi/Wantiro. Prospective participants were approached in connection with their visits to these cultural sites, and the questionnaire link was distributed individually through WhatsApp. The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms. Some initial recipients subsequently forwarded the survey link to their WhatsApp communities. Therefore, the recruitment procedure involved eligibility-based purposive sampling supplemented by participant-mediated questionnaire distribution.

To reduce the possibility of duplicate submissions, the Google Forms "Limit to 1 response" setting was enabled, restricting submissions to one response per Google account. Although this measure reduced the likelihood of repeated submissions from the same account, it could not completely prevent individuals from submitting multiple responses through different accounts. All submitted questionnaires were subject to eligibility and data-quality screening before statistical analysis.

The number of prospective participants approached directly by the researcher was not recorded. Furthermore, the number of invitations distributed through secondary WhatsApp communities and the number of responses attributable to direct versus forwarded invitations were not systematically documented. Consequently, the total number of individuals invited to participate and the overall response rate could not be reliably determined. The non-probability sampling approach and untracked participant-mediated distribution may have introduced selection bias and limited the statistical generalizability of the findings. Accordingly, the results should be interpreted as associations observed among the surveyed eligible participants rather than as statistically representative estimates of all Generation Z cultural tourists visiting Baubau.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved adult participants aged 18–29 years who completed a voluntary, self-administered online questionnaire. The questionnaire included a yes/no item asking respondents to confirm that their participation was undertaken without coercion. This confirmation documented voluntary participation but did not, by itself, constitute comprehensive evidence of a formal informed-consent process.

Administrative permission to conduct the study was obtained through a research permit issued by the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton under reference number NO : B/1064/UMB.3.2/PTh.01.04/2025, dated 2025. This permit constituted administrative authorization to conduct the research and was not equivalent to institutional research ethics committee approval or exemption. No formal institutional ethics committee approval or documented ethics exemption was obtained before data collection.

Regarding respondent identification, the questionnaire included an optional ID field intended solely for respondent numbering. The Google Forms setting for collecting email addresses was configured as "Do not collect"; therefore, email addresses were not automatically collected as part of the questionnaire responses. Although these procedures limited the collection of direct personal identifiers, they do not independently establish complete anonymity. Accordingly, the study does not make an unqualified claim of full respondent anonymity. The absence of formal prospective institutional ethics review is acknowledged as a limitation of the study.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 3. PLS-SEM was appropriate because the model combined reflective and formative measurement specifications and estimated direct and indirect structural relationships within a mediation framework (Hair et al., 2019). Model estimation used the path-weighting scheme, standardized data with mean zero and variance one, initial weights of 1.0, a maximum of 300 iterations, and a stopping criterion of 10^{-7}. Digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication were estimated using Mode A, whereas Generation Z tourist mobility was estimated using Mode B

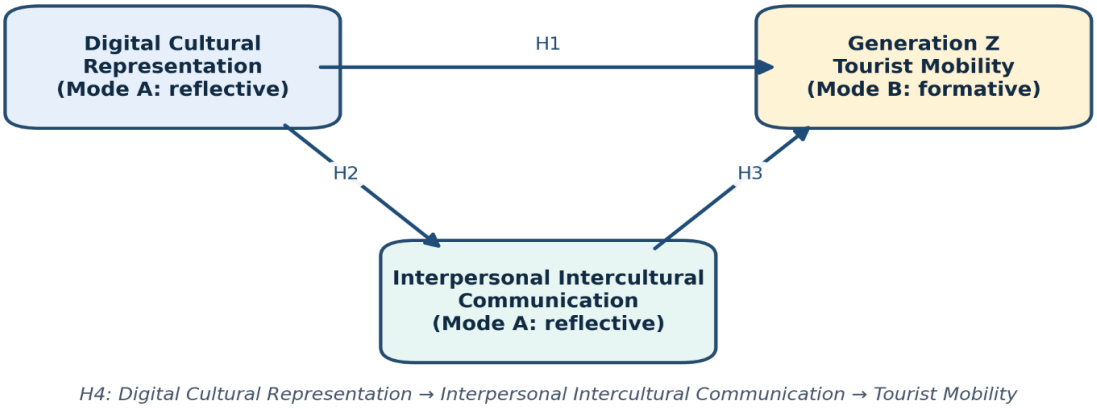


Figure 1. Hypothesized Research Model and Measurement Specifications

Note. Mode A = reflective measurement; Mode B = formative measurement; H4 represents the indirect pathway through interpersonal intercultural communication.

Source: Developed by the authors

Model evaluation was conducted in two stages. First, the reflective measurement models were evaluated using outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, (rho_A), composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). Outer loadings of at least 0.708, reliability values between 0.70 and 0.95, AVE values of at least 0.50, and HTMT values below 0.85 were used as the principal assessment criteria (Hair et al., 2020).

The formative measurement model was assessed based on content validity, indicator collinearity, and the significance and relevance of outer weights. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values below 3 were regarded as ideal, whereas values below 5 indicated the absence of critical collinearity. The statistical significance of the outer weights was evaluated through bootstrapping. A formative indicator with a nonsignificant outer weight could be retained when its outer loading remained substantively relevant and its inclusion was theoretically necessary to preserve the construct's content domain (Becker et al., 2023).

Second, the structural model was evaluated using predictor VIF values, path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Predictive relevance was assessed using the blindfolding procedure with an omission distance of 7. A (Q^2) value greater than zero indicated that the model exhibited predictive relevance for the corresponding endogenous construct. To complement the blindfolding-based predictive relevance assessment, out-of-sample predictive performance was evaluated using the PLSpredict procedure in SmartPLS 3. The analysis employed the original dataset of 220 valid observations and the previously specified PLS-SEM model. Ten-fold cross-validation with ten repetitions was applied. Predictive performance was assessed using indicator-level Q^2predict values, root mean squared error (RMSE), and mean absolute error (MAE). Q^2predict values were used to evaluate predictive relevance relative to the naïve indicator-mean benchmark, while RMSE and MAE values obtained from PLS-SEM were compared with those generated by a linear regression model (LM) benchmark. The assessment primarily focused on the six indicators of Generation Z tourist mobility and additionally examined the seven indicators of interpersonal intercultural communication.

The statistical significance of the path coefficients was assessed using bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrapping with 10,000 subsamples, a two-tailed test, and a 5% significance level. Path coefficients were interpreted together with t statistics, p values, and 95% bootstrap confidence intervals. The mediating effect was determined by examining the indirect relationship between digital cultural representation and tourist mobility through interpersonal intercultural communication. Mediation was considered significant when the 95% bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero. When the direct and indirect effects were both significant and had the same direction, the relationship was classified as complementary partial mediation (Nitzl et al., 2016).

Data and Measurement Validity

Measurement evaluation followed the specification of each construct. The reflective constructs were assessed for internal-consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The exploratory formative mobility composite was assessed through content coverage, indicator collinearity, outer-weight significance, and outer-loading relevance. Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE, and HTMT were not applied to the formative composite because

internal consistency is not an appropriate validity criterion for non-interchangeable formative indicators.

Because all constructs were measured using a single self-report questionnaire during the same data-collection period, potential common method bias (CMB) was considered. Several procedural measures were implemented during questionnaire administration, including voluntary participation, assurances of confidentiality, neutral questionnaire instructions, and informing respondents that there were no correct or incorrect answers. These procedures were intended to reduce evaluation apprehension and socially desirable responding.

In addition to these procedural measures, potential common method bias was statistically assessed using the full-collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) approach proposed by Kock (2015). Latent variable scores for digital cultural representation, interpersonal intercultural communication, and Generation Z tourist mobility were extracted from the SmartPLS 3 PLS Algorithm results for the 220 valid observations. Each latent variable was separately regressed on the remaining two latent variables using ordinary least squares regression. The corresponding full-collinearity VIF was calculated using the formula $VIF = 1/(1 - R^2)$, where R^2 represents the coefficient of determination obtained from each supplementary regression. Following Kock (2015), a VIF threshold of 3.3 was adopted as the diagnostic criterion for potentially problematic full collinearity.

The full-collinearity assessment was employed as a supplementary statistical diagnostic rather than definitive evidence of the absence of common method bias. Although VIF values below the adopted threshold indicate that problematic full collinearity was not detected, they cannot completely exclude method-related bias arising from the use of single-source, cross-sectional self-report data. Accordingly, the findings were interpreted with due consideration of these methodological limitations.

Methodological Limitations

The cross-sectional design limits temporal and causal inference; consequently, the terms direct and indirect effects are used only as conventional statistical labels for PLS-SEM parameters and not as proof of causation. Although the researcher's initial dissemination channel was direct WhatsApp messaging, purposive sampling and untracked participant-mediated forwarding into communities not observed by the researcher restrict assessment of network-based selection bias and broader population generalizability. The reach of secondary forwarding and the attribution of responses to direct versus forwarded invitations could not be determined.

All constructs were measured through self-reported responses collected during a single data-collection period, which may introduce recall bias, socially desirable responding, and common method variance. Although the supplementary full-collinearity VIF assessment yielded values below the diagnostic threshold of 3.3, this finding does not conclusively establish the absence of common method bias. Furthermore, the study did not incorporate temporal separation, independent data sources, or an independently measured marker variable. Future research should employ multiple measurement sources, temporal separation, or longitudinal designs to provide stronger evidence concerning potential method-related bias and the robustness of the structural relationships.

The formative measurement of Generation Z tourist mobility represents an additional methodological limitation. Although the six indicators were theoretically selected to capture distinct dimensions of self-reported intra-destination mobility and spatiotemporal engagement, the available measurement evidence remains preliminary. Four of the six indicators had statistically

nonsignificant outer weights, and their retention was justified primarily by their conceptual relevance and outer-loading magnitude rather than comprehensive measurement validation.

Although no formal expert-based content-validity assessment was conducted before field administration, a supplementary retrospective evaluation was subsequently undertaken with three practitioners representing relevant areas of expertise. This assessment provides additional evidence concerning the content relevance and conceptual coverage of the original indicators, subject to the results of the expert evaluations. However, because the assessment was conducted after the main survey, it cannot substitute for pre-administration instrument validation or cognitive pretesting.

Consequently, the mobility composite should be regarded as exploratory rather than as a fully validated measurement instrument. The inclusion of duration of engagement as a temporal component also indicates that the operationalized construct extends beyond spatial displacement alone. Future studies should incorporate systematic expert review, formal content-validity assessment, and an independent global mobility criterion for redundancy analysis. Validation against objective movement data or longitudinal travel records would further strengthen the construct's measurement properties and support more robust interpretations of tourist mobility.

An additional limitation concerns institutional research ethics oversight. Although administrative research permission was obtained from the institution's Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM), no formal institutional ethics committee approval or documented exemption was obtained before data collection. The questionnaire included a voluntary-participation confirmation, and Google Forms was configured not to collect email addresses automatically. Nevertheless, these measures do not replace prospective institutional ethics review or comprehensive documentation of informed consent. Future studies should obtain appropriate ethics committee approval or a formal exemption determination before data collection and implement clearly documented informed-consent and data-protection procedures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Following the eligibility and data-quality screening of 245 submitted questionnaires, 220 valid responses were included in the final partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis.The model comprised digital cultural representation as the exogenous construct, interpersonal intercultural communication as the mediating construct, and Generation Z tourist mobility as the endogenous construct. Digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication were specified as reflective constructs using Mode A, whereas Generation Z tourist mobility was specified as a formative construct using Mode B. Statistical significance was assessed using bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrapping with 10,000 subsamples, a two-tailed test, and a 5% significance level.

Reflective Measurement Model Assessment

The reflective measurement model assessment covered digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication. The assessment criteria included outer loadings, Cronbach’s alpha, (rho_A), composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity of the Reflective Constructs

Construct	Outer Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	(rho_A)	Composite Reliability	AVE	Assessment
Digital cultural representation	0.789–0.882	0.926	0.931	0.940	0.693	Satisfactory
Interpersonal intercultural communication	0.778–0.858	0.920	0.921	0.936	0.676	Satisfactory

All indicators of the two reflective constructs had outer loadings above 0.70. The loadings for digital cultural representation ranged from 0.789 to 0.882, whereas those for interpersonal intercultural communication ranged from 0.778 to 0.858. These results indicate that the indicators were strongly associated with their respective constructs.

Cronbach's alpha and (\rho_A) values for both constructs exceeded 0.70. The composite reliability values were 0.940 for digital cultural representation and 0.936 for interpersonal intercultural communication. Their respective AVE values were 0.693 and 0.676, indicating that each construct explained more than 50% of the variance in its indicators. Therefore, both reflective constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability and convergent validity.

Discriminant validity between digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication was also established. The HTMT value of 0.603 indicates that the constructs were empirically related while remaining conceptually distinct. Generation Z tourist mobility was excluded from the assessments of HTMT, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE because it was specified as a formative construct.

Formative Measurement Model Assessment

The formative measurement model of Generation Z tourist mobility was assessed by examining indicator collinearity, the statistical significance of outer weights, the magnitude of outer loadings, and the theoretical relevance of each indicator. The construct was specified as an exploratory formative composite representing six distinct dimensions of self-reported intra-destination mobility and spatiotemporal engagement. The assessment results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Assessment of the Formative Generation Z Tourist Mobility Construct

Indicator & meaning	Outer Weight	*t*	*p*	Outer Loading	VIF	Decision
Y1 – Breadth of destinations	0.185	1.673	.094	0.718	1.635	Retained
Y2 – Exploration beyond primary attraction	0.323	2.646	.008	0.825	1.882	Significant
Y3 – Visits across cultural locations	0.069	0.587	.557	0.655	1.634	Retained
Y4 – Route diversity	0.210	1.884	.060	0.742	1.714	Retained
Y5 – Perceived adequacy of time for cultural-site engagement	0.123	1.069	.285	0.620	1.418	Retained
Y6 – Trip extension/additional locations	0.379	3.129	.002	0.851	1.847	Significant

The variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.418 to 1.882, remaining below the recommended threshold of 3.0. These results indicate that excessive collinearity was not detected among the six formative indicators.

The bootstrapping analysis revealed that two indicators had statistically significant outer weights: exploration beyond the primary attraction (Y2; weight = 0.323, p = 0.008) and trip

extension through additional cultural locations (Y6; weight = 0.379, p = 0.002). These indicators demonstrated statistically significant relative contributions to the estimated formative composite.

In contrast, four indicators had nonsignificant outer weights: breadth of cultural destinations visited (Y1; weight = 0.185, p = 0.094), visits across cultural locations (Y3; weight = 0.069, p = 0.557), route diversity (Y4; weight = 0.210, p = 0.060), and Perceived adequacy of time for cultural-site engagement (Y5; weight = 0.123, p = 0.285). Nevertheless, their outer loadings were 0.718, 0.655, 0.742, and 0.620, respectively. All four loadings exceeded 0.50, indicating positive absolute associations with the estimated composite despite the absence of statistically significant relative contributions.

The four indicators were provisionally retained based on their theoretical relevance and their role in preserving the intended conceptual domain of the formative composite. Specifically, Y1 represents the spatial breadth of cultural destinations visited, Y3 reflects self-reported visits across cultural locations, Y4 reflects variation in travel routes, and Y5 represents the temporal dimension of engagement at cultural sites. These dimensions provide conceptually distinct information that is not fully interchangeable with the exploratory extension captured by Y2 or the addition of further cultural destinations captured by Y6.

Removing these indicators solely because their outer weights were statistically nonsignificant would narrow the operational definition of the construct. This retention decision is consistent with methodological guidance suggesting that formative indicators with nonsignificant outer weights may be retained when their outer loadings indicate sufficient absolute relevance and their inclusion is theoretically justified (Hair et al., 2019). Nevertheless, this decision remains provisional because statistical indicator relevance and theoretical justification do not constitute comprehensive measurement validation.

The convergent validity of the formative composite could not be established because the questionnaire did not include an independent global measure of tourist mobility required for redundancy analysis. A supplementary retrospective expert-based content-validity assessment was also undertaken after the primary data collection. The assessment involved three practitioners specializing in cultural tourism, interpersonal intercultural communication, and digital communication. The quantitative and qualitative findings from this additional assessment are reported separately in the Content Validity Assessment subsection. Nevertheless, the absence of an independent global mobility criterion means that the convergent validity of the formative composite remains unestablished.

Therefore, Generation Z tourist mobility is interpreted as an exploratory formative composite rather than a fully validated measurement instrument. Future research should strengthen its measurement properties through systematic expert assessment, independent content-validity evaluation, and redundancy analysis using a separate global criterion. Where feasible, additional validation should incorporate objective mobility indicators, such as travel itineraries, GPS trajectories, or geotagged movement records.

Content Validity Assessment

The supplementary retrospective content-validity assessment involved three practitioners specializing in cultural tourism, interpersonal intercultural communication, and digital communication. The assessment examined the relevance, clarity, and conceptual coverage of the 20 measurement items across the three research constructs. Item-level and scale-level content-validity indices were calculated separately for relevance and clarity, as presented in Table 4.

Table. 4. Results of Expert-Based Content-Validity Assessment

Construct	Number of Items	I-CVI Relevance Range	S-CVI/Ave Relevance	S-CVI/Ave Clarity
Digital Cultural Representation	7	1.000–1.000	1.000	0.905
Interpersonal Intercultural Communication	7	1.000–1.000	1.000	0.952
Generation Z Tourist Mobility	6	0.333–1.000	0.778	0.833
Overall Instrument	**20**	**0.333–1.000**	**0.933**	**0.900**

The digital cultural representation construct demonstrated an S-CVI/Ave of 1.000 for relevance and 0.905 for clarity. All seven indicators achieved an I-CVI of 1.000 for relevance, indicating unanimous positive relevance ratings among the three experts. However, the clarity assessment identified X3 (perceived cultural authenticity) and X5 (digital interaction) as requiring further consideration, each obtaining a clarity I-CVI of 0.667.

Similarly, interpersonal intercultural communication obtained an S-CVI/Ave of 1.000 for relevance and 0.952 for clarity. All seven indicators achieved unanimous positive relevance ratings. Nevertheless, M4, representing communicative equality, received a clarity I-CVI of 0.667, suggesting that the wording required further examination to minimize potential ambiguity.

In contrast, Generation Z tourist mobility demonstrated comparatively weaker content-validity indices, with an S-CVI/Ave of 0.778 for relevance and 0.833 for clarity. Three indicators did not achieve unanimous positive relevance ratings: Y1 (I-CVI = 0.667), Y3 (I-CVI = 0.667), and Y5 (I-CVI = 0.333). These findings suggested that the conceptual relevance of some mobility indicators required further examination, particularly regarding potential overlap between multiple-site visitation and visits across cultural locations, as well as the distinction between perceived time allocation and spatial mobility.

At the overall instrument level, the assessment S-CVI/Ave values were 0.933 for relevance and 0.900 for clarity. Although these values met the adopted scale-level reference benchmark, item-level findings revealed that content-validity concerns were concentrated in the exploratory formative tourist mobility composite. Therefore, the overall indices should not be interpreted as evidence that every construct or item achieved satisfactory content validity.

The qualitative expert comments in the research further highlighted potential ambiguity in the interpretation of cultural authenticity, the multiple behavioral actions included in the digital-interaction item, and the wording of communicative equality. For the mobility composite, particular attention was directed toward potential conceptual overlap between Y1 and Y3 and the interpretation of Y5 as perceived time allocation rather than directly observed mobility or visit duration.

These research findings demonstrate how supplementary expert assessment can inform instrument refinement and strengthen the interpretation of formative indicators. Nevertheless, retrospective expert assessment cannot substitute for pre-administration pretesting or establish formative convergent validity through redundancy analysis. Accordingly, any interpretation of the tourist mobility construct should remain exploratory until further measurement evidence becomes available.

Common Method Bias Assessment

Potential common method bias was examined using the full-collinearity VIF approach based on the latent variable scores obtained from the SmartPLS 3 PLS Algorithm. Each of the three constructs was separately regressed on the other two constructs to obtain its corresponding full-

collinearity VIF value. As presented in table 5, the full-collinearity VIF values were 1.588 for digital cultural representation, 1.701 for interpersonal intercultural communication, and 1.581 for Generation Z tourist mobility. All values were below the diagnostic threshold of 3.3 suggested by Kock (2015).

Table 5. Full-Collinearity VIF Assessment

Construct	Full-Collinearity VIF	*Threshold*	*Assessment*
Digital Cultural Representation	1.588	3.3	Below threshold
Interpersonal Intercultural Communication	1.701	3.3	Below threshold
Generation Z Tourist Mobility	1.581	3.3	Below threshold

These results indicate that problematic full collinearity was not detected under the adopted diagnostic criterion. However, because all constructs were measured using the same self-report questionnaire during a single data-collection period, the possibility of common method bias cannot be completely excluded. The full-collinearity VIF results should therefore be interpreted as supplementary diagnostic evidence rather than conclusive proof that the model estimates are unaffected by method-related bias.

Structural Model Assessment

Following the assessment of the reflective and formative measurement models, the PLS algorithm was applied to estimate the structural relationships among the constructs. Figure 2 presents the standardized path coefficients, the coefficients of determination (R^2) for the endogenous constructs, the outer loadings of the reflective indicators, and the outer weights of the formative indicators.

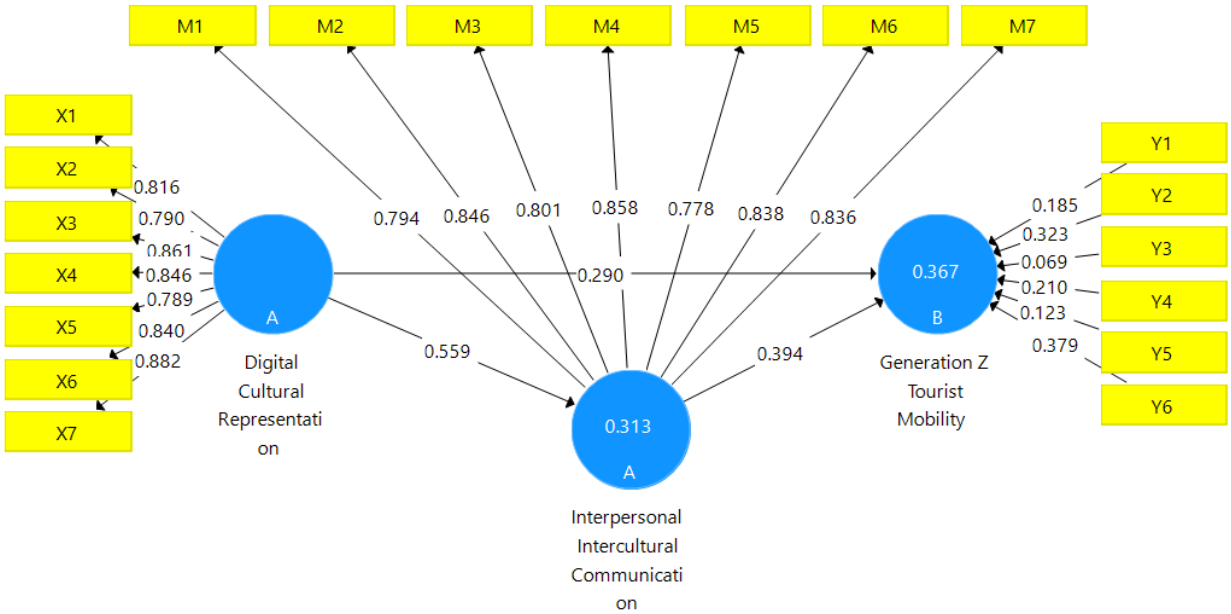


Figure 2. PLS Algorithm Results for the Estimated Research Model

Source: Primary data processed by the authors, 2026

As shown in Figure 2, Digital Cultural Representation was positively associated with Interpersonal Intercultural Communication (β = .559) and Generation Z Tourist Mobility (β = .290). Interpersonal Intercultural Communication was also positively associated with Generation Z Tourist Mobility (β = .394). The model explained 31.3% of the variance in Interpersonal Intercultural

Communication and 36.7% of the variance in Generation Z Tourist Mobility. The statistical significance of these relationships was subsequently evaluated using bootstrapping with 10,000 subsamples

The structural model was evaluated by examining collinearity among the predictor constructs, coefficients of determination, effect sizes, path coefficients, and the significance of the direct and indirect relationships. The inner VIF value for digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication in predicting tourist mobility was 1.456, indicating that collinearity between the predictor constructs was not a concern.

Table 6. Coefficients of Determination for the Endogenous Constructs

Endogenous Construct	(R^2)	Adjusted (R^2)
Interpersonal intercultural communication	0.313	0.310
Generation Z tourist mobility	0.367	0.362

Digital cultural representation explained 31.3% of the variance in interpersonal intercultural communication. Digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication jointly explained 36.7% of the variance in Generation Z tourist mobility. These findings demonstrate that the predictor constructs provided meaningful explanatory power for tourist mobility, although a substantial proportion of its variance remained attributable to factors outside the proposed model.

The effect-size assessment showed that digital cultural representation had a large effect on interpersonal intercultural communication ($f^2 = 0.456$). Interpersonal intercultural communication had a medium effect on tourist mobility ($f^2 = 0.169$), whereas the direct effect of digital cultural representation on tourist mobility was small ($f^2 = 0.091$). Despite its relatively small magnitude, the direct effect of digital cultural representation remained statistically significant and substantively relevant to the model.

Direct-Effect Testing

The proposed direct relationships were evaluated using path coefficients, *t* statistics, *p* values, and bootstrap confidence intervals. The results are presented in table 7.

Table 7. Direct-Effect Testing

Structural Path	(β\beta)	*t*	*p*	95% BCa CI	Decision
Digital cultural representation → Generation Z tourist mobility	0.290	4.183	< 0.001	[0.141, 0.414]	Supported
Digital cultural representation → Interpersonal intercultural communication	0.559	11.952	< 0.001	[0.458, 0.643]	Supported
Interpersonal intercultural communication → Generation Z tourist mobility	0.394	5.704	< 0.001	[0.242, 0.516]	Supported

Digital cultural representation had a positive and statistically significant structural relationship with Generation Z tourist mobility (β = 0.290), $t = 4.183$, $p < .001$). The 95% BCa confidence interval ranged from 0.141 to 0.414 and did not include zero. This result indicates that stronger digital representations of Baubau's historical narratives, cultural symbols, traditions, local communities, and heritage sites were associated with greater self-reported mobility and cultural exploration among Generation Z visitors.

Digital cultural representation also had a positive and statistically significant relationship with interpersonal intercultural communication (β = 0.559), $t = 11.952$, $p < .001$). This relationship had the largest path coefficient in the model, with a 95% BCa confidence interval of [0.458, 0.643]. The finding indicates that exposure to digital cultural representations was associated with greater

openness among Generation Z visitors to seek information, clarify cultural meanings, and communicate with local residents, guides, cultural practitioners, and other visitors.

Interpersonal intercultural communication had a positive and statistically significant relationship with Generation Z tourist mobility (β = 0.394), t = 5.704, p < .001). Its 95% BCa confidence interval of [0.242, 0.516] did not include zero. Thus, intercultural interactions characterized by openness, respect, empathy, communication clarity, and adaptability were associated with greater movement and exploration across cultural sites in Baubau.

Indirect Association and Statistical Mediation

The indirect-effect analysis showed that digital cultural representation had a positive and statistically significant relationship with Generation Z tourist mobility through interpersonal intercultural communication.

Table 8. Mediation-Effect Testing

Indirect Path	(β\beta)	*t*	*p*	95% BCa CI	Decision
Digital cultural representation → Interpersonal intercultural communication → Generation Z tourist mobility	0.221	5.043	< .001	[0.135, 0.305]	Significant mediation

The estimated indirect association between digital cultural representation and Generation Z tourist mobility through interpersonal intercultural communication was positive and statistically significant (β = 0.221, t = 5.043, p < 0.001). The 95% bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence interval ranged from 0.135 to 0.305 and did not include zero. This finding supports the presence of a statistically significant indirect association within the specified PLS-SEM model. However, it does not establish that interpersonal intercultural communication causally transmits the relationship between digital cultural representation and tourist mobility.

The direct association between digital cultural representation and tourist mobility remained statistically significant after the mediator was included in the model. Because both direct and indirect associations were positive and statistically significant, the results were consistent with a complementary partial statistical mediation pattern. The variance accounted for (VAF) was 43.2%, representing the proportion of the estimated total structural association attributable to the indirect pathway in the specified model. This percentage should not be interpreted as the proportion of actual tourist movement causally explained or transmitted by interpersonal intercultural communication. The cross-sectional data do not establish temporal precedence or causal mediation.

Predictive Relevance and Model Fit

The blindfolding procedure with an omission distance of seven yielded Stone–Geisser's Q^2 values of 0.208 for interpersonal intercultural communication and 0.194 for Generation Z tourist mobility. Both values were positive, indicating cross-validated predictive relevance under the blindfolding procedure. However, these results were distinguished from the out-of-sample predictive performance assessment conducted using PLSpredict.

The PLSpredict analysis employed ten-fold cross-validation with ten repetitions. All six Generation Z tourist mobility indicators exhibited positive Q^2predict values, ranging from 0.0966 (Y5) to 0.1916 (Y6). These results indicated that PLS-SEM predictions outperformed the naïve indicator-mean benchmark. Nevertheless, comparisons with the linear-model (LM) benchmark revealed mixed predictive performance. PLS-SEM yielded lower RMSE and MAE values than LM

for Y1, Y2, and Y5, whereas Y3, Y4, and Y6 exhibited higher prediction errors. Therefore, the model did not consistently outperform the LM benchmark for the primary outcome construct.

Table 9. PLSpredict Assessment of Generation Z Tourist Mobility

Item	Q^2predict	PLS RMSE	LM RMSE	PLS MAE	LM MAE	Assessment
Y1	0.1112	1.1385	1.1479	0.9435	0.9580	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM
Y2	0.1549	1.1952	1.2156	0.9998	1.0044	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM
Y3	0.1133	1.1281	1.1213	0.9295	0.9230	LM Outperforms PLS-SEM
Y4	0.1569	1.0787	1.0775	0.9207	0.9018	LM Outperforms PLS-SEM
Y5	0.0966	1.1362	1.1515	0.9265	0.9332	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM
Y6	0.1916	1.1064	1.0878	0.9268	0.9005	LM Outperforms PLS-SEM
M1	0.2163	1.0823	1.1070	0.8946	0.9120	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM
M2	0.2174	1.0636	1.0937	0.8718	0.8938	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM
M3	0.1820	1.1772	1.2097	0.9782	1.0091	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM
M4	0.2113	1.1371	1.1628	0.9420	0.9643	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM
M5	0.1973	1.1344	1.1588	0.9448	0.9663	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM
M6	0.1968	1.1329	1.1624	0.9471	0.9662	PLS-SEM Outperforms LM

For interpersonal intercultural communication, all seven indicators (M1–M7) demonstrated positive Q^2predict values ranging from 0.1820 to 0.2174. Furthermore, PLS-SEM produced lower RMSE and MAE values than the LM benchmark for all seven indicators. These findings indicated more consistent predictive performance for interpersonal intercultural communication than for Generation Z tourist mobility. Overall, the results supported a qualified interpretation of the model's out-of-sample predictive performance, particularly regarding its exploratory formative mobility outcome.

As supplementary model information, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) was 0.040, the normed fit index (NFI) was 0.936, and RMS_theta was 0.117. These indices were not interpreted as substitutes for out-of-sample predictive performance assessment. Furthermore, PLSpredict evaluates predictions using held-out folds from the original dataset and does not constitute independent external-sample validation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that digital cultural representation was associated with Generation Z tourist mobility through two complementary pathways: a direct pathway and an indirect pathway through interpersonal intercultural communication. Among the direct structural relationships, the association between digital cultural representation and interpersonal intercultural communication was the strongest (β = .559; f^2 = .456), followed by the association between interpersonal intercultural communication and tourist mobility (β = .394; f^2 = .169). The direct association between digital cultural representation and tourist mobility was comparatively smaller

(β = .290; f^2 = .091). This ordering indicates that digital cultural representation was more strongly related to interpersonal intercultural communication than directly to tourists' movement, while interpersonal communication represented a more proximal correlate of mobility across cultural sites. For Baubau, the observed associations suggest that tourism stakeholders may consider connecting digital cultural narratives with opportunities for interpersonal communication, locally informed recommendations, and integrated cultural itineraries. However, the effectiveness of these strategies in changing tourist behavior or redistributing visitor movement requires further empirical evaluation.

Discussion

The findings indicate that digital cultural representation is positively associated with self-reported Generation Z tourist mobility, both directly and indirectly through interpersonal intercultural communication in the specified structural model. The significant indirect association is consistent with the proposed digital–relational–spatial framework, in which digital cultural representation, interpersonal communication, and tourist mobility are statistically interconnected. Nevertheless, because all three constructs were measured during the same survey period, the findings do not establish whether digital exposure preceded interpersonal communication or whether interpersonal communication subsequently influenced tourist mobility. Accordingly, the proposed framework should be interpreted as a theoretically informed pattern of structural associations rather than an empirically confirmed causal mechanism.

Digital Cultural Representation and Generation Z Tourist Mobility

The significant positive association between digital cultural representation and tourist mobility suggests that perceived digital cultural content is related to self-reported mobility among Generation Z cultural tourists in Baubau. This finding is consistent with previous literature emphasizing the relevance of digital media to Generation Z tourism experiences. Photographs, short videos, historical narratives, visitor reviews, location tags, and user-generated stories provide resources through which tourists imagine destinations and organize their travel routes. This finding is consistent with the argument that Generation Z's tourism experiences are not shaped solely at the destination but are constructed throughout the processes of information seeking, planning, documentation, and the subsequent circulation of travel experiences through social networks (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). The visual and interactive characteristics of social media may provide opportunities for cultural destinations to be recognized, compared, and interpreted through digital communication.

The findings also extend previous evidence demonstrating that social media can strengthen cultural destination personality and tourist engagement (Filieri et al., 2021; Khan & Fatma, 2021; Peco-Torres et al., 2021). TikTok content has also been found to influence destination choices among younger tourists through information usefulness, visual appeal, and user engagement (Pop et al., 2022; Wengel et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023). In Baubau, this relationship was reflected not only in tourists' initial destination evaluations and choices but also in their reported breadth of sites visited, movement between sites, visits across cultural locations, perceived adequacy of time for cultural-site engagement, and extension of subsequent visits. This study therefore extends previous research on pretravel digital communication by examining its association with self-reported intra-destination tourist mobility.

The significant direct relationship may also be explained by the ability of digital representation to reduce travel uncertainty. Content displaying the physical characteristics of a site, accessibility, available activities, visitor experiences, and connections between locations provides practical cues that help tourists decide where to travel. Wang et al., (2022) demonstrated that user-generated travel posts influence decision-making, although the strength of this influence depends on platform characteristics and how users process information (Kim et al., 2017; Z. Wang et al., 2022). The quality of social media information may also strengthen travel intention through trust and congruity between destination image and tourists' self-concepts (H. Wang & Yan, 2022). In the present study, the observed association is consistent with the possibility that digital cultural information is relevant to tourists' reported exploration of cultural attractions in Baubau. However, the cross-sectional data do not establish whether exposure to digital information preceded or influenced specific travel decisions.

However, the strength of digital representation does not derive exclusively from the completeness of its information. Cultural narratives and symbols can also create emotional meanings associated with a place. Social media storytelling can connect destinations with tourist experiences, identities, and imaginations, thereby strengthening engagement with a destination brand (Lund et al., 2018). In Baubau, narratives concerning the Buton Sultanate, the Buton Palace Fortress, community traditions, religious heritage, local languages, culinary practices, and other cultural expressions can establish narrative connections between sites. When the historical and social relationships among these locations are clearly communicated, tourists may become interested not only in a single visually popular attraction but also in following a broader cultural narrative from one place to another.

Digital Cultural Representation and Interpersonal Intercultural Communication

The strongest structural relationship linked digital cultural representation with interpersonal intercultural communication ($\beta = .559$). This finding supports the study's principal theoretical contribution: digital representation may be theoretically understood as a potential relational trigger within a digital–relational–spatial pathway. Digital cultural cues may encourage tourists to seek clarification, local interpretations, and recommendations through encounters with guides, cultural practitioners, and residents. This perspective extends studies focused primarily on destination image or visit intention by examining the statistical associations among digital cultural representation, interpersonal intercultural communication, and self-reported mobility across cultural sites. These associations do not establish a temporal sequence among the three constructs. However, this interpretation remains associative rather than causal.

This finding is particularly important because promoting culture through social media involves a selective representation of meaning (Kim et al., 2017; Volo & Irimiás, 2021). Not all cultural elements receive equal visibility, and not every symbol can be adequately explained through photographs or short-form videos. Mele et al., (2021) demonstrated that cultural tourism promotion on Instagram is shaped by cultural contexts and values; consequently, the same communication strategy does not necessarily produce uniform interpretations among audiences from different cultural backgrounds. Interpersonal communication therefore complements digital representation by providing cultural context, correcting misunderstandings, and offering locally grounded interpretations.

Interpersonal Intercultural Communication and Tourist Mobility

Tourists should not be regarded as passive recipients of digital messages. Members of Generation Z can compare information across platforms, evaluate content credibility, consult their social networks, and verify information through direct experiences. Research on social media marketing among Generation Z indicates that entertainment, interaction, trendiness, and personalization have different effects on this generation's travel behavior (Liu et al., 2023). Attention-grabbing content is therefore not automatically accepted as an accurate representation of culture. Interactions with residents, guides, cultural practitioners, and other tourists provide a space for verification through which Generation Z tourists can connect online images with the cultural realities encountered at the destination.

The significant positive relationship between interpersonal intercultural communication and tourist mobility indicates that tourists' movements are not determined solely by the physical attractiveness of a destination or the availability of digital information. Tourist mobility is also socially constructed. Open, clear, empathetic, and respectful communication may reduce unfamiliarity, increase tourists' sense of safety, and provide practical knowledge about other locations that they have not previously encountered (Fan et al., 2017; Lu et al., 2021). Recommendations from residents or cultural practitioners can direct tourists toward sites that do not commonly appear in popular search results, while explanations of the relationships between sites can encourage tourists to extend their routes and duration of stay.

This finding is consistent with Chen & Rahman, (2018), who found that tourist engagement strengthens cultural contact and that such contact contributes to memorable tourism experiences . Fan et al., (2022) further demonstrated that intercultural competence including responsibility, understanding, appreciation, and action is associated with active tourist participation and memorable cultural experiences. The present study extends these arguments by demonstrating that intercultural communication is also associated with self-reported spatial behavior, particularly the breadth of exploration and movement within a destination.

Interpersonal intercultural communication may therefore be understood as a mechanism for reducing barriers to tourist mobility. Tourists who do not understand the language, norms, accessibility, or meanings associated with a cultural site may restrict their visits to well-known and easily recognizable attractions. Conversely, interactions that provide contextual explanations and locally informed recommendations may increase tourists' confidence in exploring secondary locations. The quality of encounters between tourists and local communities may be associated with tourists' reported exploration of additional cultural sites. Nevertheless, the present study did not directly examine whether these encounters changed actual movement patterns or redistributed visitors across cultural destinations.

The Mediating Role of Interpersonal Intercultural Communication

The principal finding regarding the mediating construct was a significant indirect association between digital cultural representation and Generation Z tourist mobility through interpersonal intercultural communication. This pattern is consistent with complementary partial statistical mediation within the specified PLS-SEM model. From a theoretical perspective, digital cultural content may be associated with tourists' willingness to engage in intercultural communication, while interpersonal interactions may be associated with broader cultural-site exploration. However, these possible processes were not observed sequentially, and the cross-sectional design does not permit conclusions about causal transmission. Interpersonal intercultural communication is therefore

interpreted as a theoretically relevant relational component of the observed association rather than an empirically established causal mediator.

The proposed relational pathway differs conceptually from statistical mediation models commonly examined in digital tourism research, which have focused on constructs such as trust, self-congruity, destination attractiveness, attitudes, and destination image. For example, Wang & Yan, (2022) positioned trust and self-congruity as mediators between social media information quality and travel intention. Alzaydi & Elsharnouby, (2023), meanwhile, identified the mediating roles of destination attractiveness and attitudes toward the positive impacts of tourism. The present study complements these cognitive and evaluative mechanisms by introducing a relational mediator. The proposed framework considers interpersonal intercultural communication as a theoretically relevant relational component alongside digital cultural representation and self-reported tourist mobility, without establishing a causal process among these constructs.

Based on the observed associations, Figure 3 summarizes the proposed digital–relational–spatial pathway. At the digital stage, cultural representation provides visibility and preliminary cultural cues and is associated with interpersonal intercultural communication (β = .559). At the relational stage, interpersonal encounters provide contextual explanations and cross-site recommendations and are associated with self-reported tourist mobility (β = .394). Digital cultural representation also retains a smaller direct association with mobility (β = .290), while its indirect association through interpersonal intercultural communication is β = .221, 95% BCa CI [.135, .305]. The spatial stage comprises destination breadth, exploration beyond the primary attraction, visits across cultural locations, route diversity, perceived adequacy of time for cultural-site engagement, and trip extension. This pathway integrates mediated representation, interpersonal communication, and spatial behavior but should be interpreted as a conceptual representation of cross-sectional associations rather than a confirmed temporal or causal sequence.

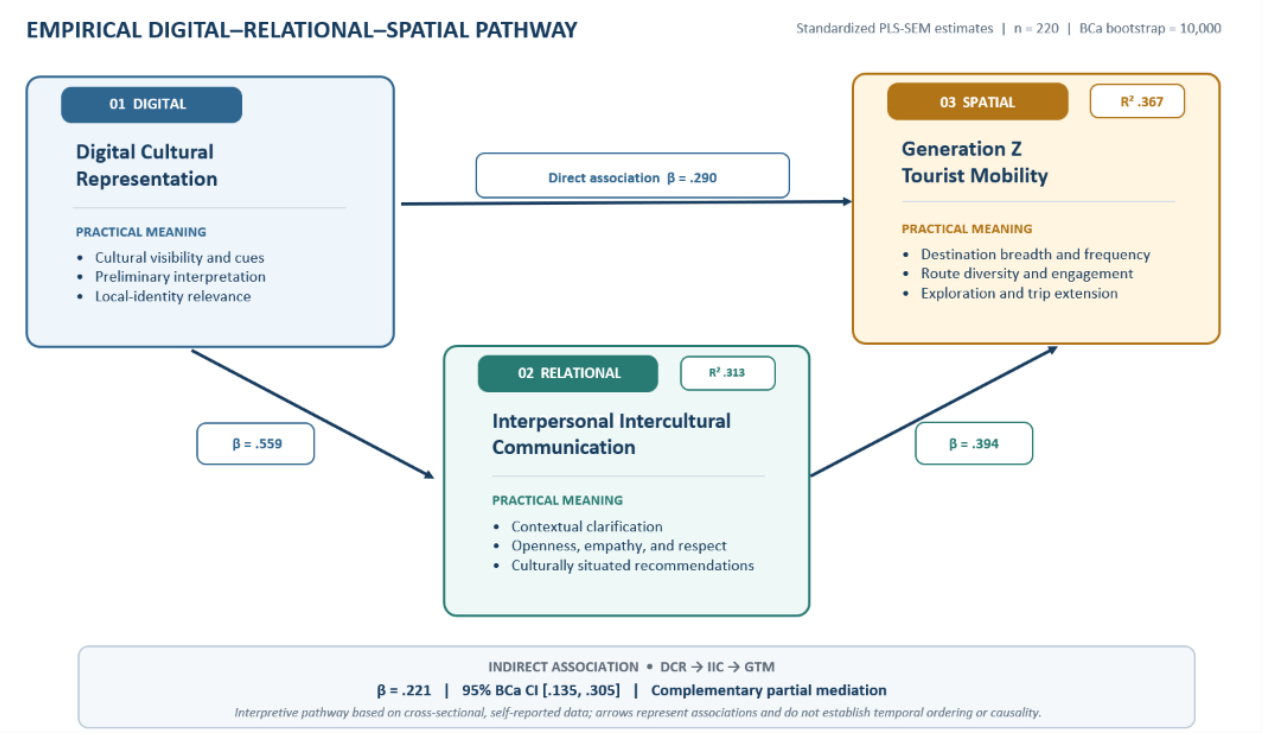


Figure 3. Proposed Digital–Relational–Spatial Association Framework

Note. β values represent standardized PLS-SEM structural coefficients, while R^2 values indicate explained variance in the specified model. The directional arrows represent hypothesized statistical relationships and do not establish

temporal ordering or causality. The significant indirect pathway represents statistical mediation within the cross-sectional model rather than causal mediation.

Interpretation of the Formative Indicators of Tourist Mobility

The formative measurement assessment showed that exploration beyond primary attractions and repeat or extended visits made the strongest relative contributions to tourist mobility. This pattern indicates that Generation Z mobility cannot be adequately understood solely through the number of visits. Mobility also concerns tourists' willingness to move beyond dominant travel routes and to expand subsequent journeys based on prior experiences. This finding is relevant to intradestination mobility research demonstrating that popular attractions, connecting locations, and secondary attractions perform different functions within tourist movement networks (Ding et al., 2024; Hardy et al., 2020; Park et al., 2023).

Although several formative indicators did not have statistically significant relative weights, their absolute contributions and conceptual relevance supported their retention. The formative mobility composite captures six non-interchangeable behavioral dimensions: Y1, the breadth of cultural destinations visited; Y2, exploration beyond the initially intended primary attraction; Y3, the Visits across cultural locations; Y4, the diversity of routes used to reach those locations; Y5, the Perceived adequacy of time for cultural-site engagement; and Y6, trip extension through the addition of further cultural locations. Removing an indicator solely because its relative weight is not statistically significant would narrow the construct's conceptual domain. In Baubau, tourist mobility therefore encompasses not only visit frequency but also spatial breadth, exploration beyond the primary attraction, route variation, temporal engagement, and the extension of a cultural journey.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to tourism communication scholarship in three respects. First, it extends research beyond destination image and travel intention by examining self-reported intradestination mobility, recognizing that visit intention does not necessarily translate into exploratory behavior. Second, the study examines interpersonal intercultural communication as a statistical mediator within a proposed digital–relational–spatial association framework. This framework connects perceived digital cultural representation, interpersonal communication, and self-reported tourist mobility without assuming that their observed relationships establish a causal or temporal sequence. Third, by examining Baubau, the study expands the geographical scope of tourism communication research to a secondary cultural city in Eastern Indonesia, where rich cultural resources coexist with unequal digital visibility across heritage sites.

Practical Implications

The findings indicate that Baubau's tourism communication strategy should move beyond visibility metrics by connecting digital attention with culturally meaningful routes. A Sultanate heritage route could link Benteng Keraton Buton/Limbo Wolio and Baadia–Malige, while complementary itineraries could connect Kampung Tenun Sulaa/Limbo Topa and Limbo Bungi/Wantiro. At participating sites, community-approved QR-code narratives could provide historical context, access information, documentation rules, and recommendations for the next cultural location. Local governments and destination managers should also train guides, cultural communities, site managers, tourism businesses, and residents in intercultural storytelling, empathetic clarification, accessible language, documentation ethics, and cross-site recommendations. Community-based digital-content protocols should specify who may document cultural practices, which meanings require local explanation, and which rituals or symbols should

not be recorded. These proposals translate the observed associations into actionable strategies; they were not tested as interventions and do not demonstrate actual visitor redistribution.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

These findings should be interpreted cautiously. The cross-sectional design cannot establish temporal order or causality, and purposive sampling limits generalization. Although the Google Forms link was initially distributed directly through WhatsApp, participant forwarding into communities outside the researcher's observation prevents determination of secondary reach and response attribution. All constructs were self-reported during the same survey period, creating potential common method variance; although full-collinearity VIF values of 1.581–1.701 did not indicate dominant common method bias, this diagnostic cannot eliminate it. Tourist mobility was not verified through objective location traces, and the exploratory formative composite lacked an independent global criterion for redundancy analysis. Future studies should employ longitudinal or comparative designs, broader or probability-based samples where feasible, GPS traces, geotagged social-media data, and itinerary tracking. They should also include an independent global mobility measure and examine accessibility, cost, safety, cultural motivation, place attachment, and peer influence.

Although the PLSpredict assessment established positive Q^2predict values for the endogenous indicators, comparisons with the linear-model benchmark indicated mixed predictive performance for the primary mobility outcome. PLS-SEM produced lower prediction errors than LM for only three of the six formative mobility indicators. Therefore, the out-of-sample predictive performance of the proposed model should be regarded as conditional and not uniformly superior to an alternative benchmark. In addition, the cross-validation procedure relied on held-out folds of the original cross-sectional sample rather than an independent external dataset. Future research should examine predictive robustness across new samples, destinations, and time periods, while further validating the exploratory formative mobility composite.

CONCLUSION

This study found positive structural associations among digital cultural representation, interpersonal intercultural communication, and self-reported Generation Z tourist mobility in Baubau, Indonesia. Digital cultural representation was positively associated with tourist mobility both directly and indirectly through interpersonal intercultural communication. The significant indirect association was consistent with a complementary partial statistical mediation pattern, suggesting that interpersonal intercultural communication represents a theoretically relevant relational component of the digital–relational–spatial framework.

These findings contribute to tourism communication research by integrating digitally mediated cultural representations, interpersonal intercultural communication, and self-reported intra-destination mobility within a single analytical model. Nevertheless, the cross-sectional design does not establish temporal ordering, causal effects, or causal mediation. Furthermore, the formative mobility composite remains exploratory because its convergent validity could not be established through redundancy analysis.

From a practical perspective, the observed associations suggest that Baubau's tourism stakeholders may consider integrating culturally responsible digital narratives with intercultural communication initiatives and information connecting prominent and less-visible cultural sites.

Such strategies represent potential directions for tourism development rather than interventions whose effectiveness has been demonstrated by the present study.

Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs, independent measures of tourist mobility, and objective movement data to examine temporal relationships and evaluate the proposed framework more rigorously. Further validation of the formative mobility construct and comparisons across cultural destinations would also strengthen the generalizability and interpretability of the findings.

REFERENCES

Alzaydi, Z. M., & Elsharnouby, M. H. (2023). Using social media marketing to pro-tourism behaviours: The mediating role of destination attractiveness and attitude towards the positive impacts of tourism. *Future Business Journal*, *9*, 42. https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-023-00220-5

Becker, J.-M., Cheah, J.-H., Gholamzade, R., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2023). PLS-SEM's most wanted guidance. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *35*(1), 321–346. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2022-0474

Cheah, J.-H., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., Ramayah, T., & Ting, H. (2018). Convergent validity assessment of formatively measured constructs in PLS-SEM: On using single-item versus multi-item measures in redundancy analyses. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *30*(11), 3192–3210. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2017-0649

Chen, H., & Rahman, I. (2018). Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience and destination loyalty. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *26*, 153–163. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.10.006

Ding, D., Zheng, Y., Zhang, Y., & Liu, Y. (2024). Understanding attractions' connection patterns based on intra-destination tourist mobility: A network motif approach. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *11*, 636. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03093-3

Fan, D. X. F., Tsaur, S.-H., Lin, J.-H., Chang, T.-Y., & Tsai, Y.-R. (2022). Tourist intercultural competence: A multidimensional measurement and its impact on tourist active participation and memorable cultural experiences. *Journal of Travel Research*, *61*(2), 414–429. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287520982372

Fan, D. X. F., Zhang, H. Q., Jenkins, C. L., & Lin, P. M. C. (2017). Does tourist–host social contact reduce perceived cultural distance? *Journal of Travel Research*, *56*(8), 998–1010. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287517696979

Filieri, R., Yen, D. A., & Yu, Q. (2021). #ILoveLondon: An exploration of the declaration of love towards a destination on Instagram. *Tourism Management*, *85*, 104291. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104291

Government, B. C. (2025). *Baubau berpeluang jadi poros ekonomi kreatif di Indonesia Timur*. Baubau City Government. https://web.baubaukota.go.id/berita_detail/baubau-berpeluang-jadi-poros-ekonomi-kreatif-di-indonesi-timur

Haddouche, H., & Salomone, C. (2018). Generation Z and the tourist experience: Tourist stories and use of social networks. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, *4*(1), 69–79. https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-12-2017-0059

Hair, J. F., Howard, M. C., & Nitzl, C. (2020). Assessing measurement model quality in PLS-SEM using confirmatory composite analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, *109*, 101–110.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.069

Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, *31*(1), 2–24. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203

Hardy, A., Birenboim, A., & Wells, M. (2020). Using geoinformatics to assess tourist dispersal at the state level. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *82*, 102903. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102903

Hussain, K., Didarul Alam, M. M., Malik, A., Tarhini, A., & Al Balushi, M. K. (2024). From likes to luggage: The role of social media content in attracting tourists. *Heliyon*, *10*(19), e38914. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e38914

Jin, C., Cheng, J., & Xu, J. (2018). Using user-generated content to explore the temporal heterogeneity in tourist mobility. *Journal of Travel Research*, *57*(6), 779–791. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287517714906

Khan, I., & Fatma, M. (2021). Online destination brand experience and authenticity: Does individualism–collectivism orientation matter? *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, *20*, 100597. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100597

Kim, S.-E., Lee, K. Y., Shin, S. I., & Yang, S.-B. (2017). Effects of tourism information quality in social media on destination image formation: The case of Sina Weibo. *Information & Management*, *54*(6), 687–702. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2017.02.009

Kock, N. (2015). Common Method Bias in PLS-SEM: A Full Collinearity Assessment Approach. *International Journal of E-Collaboration*, *11*(4), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJeC.2015100101

Liu, J., Wang, C., Zhang, T., & Qiao, H. (2023). Delineating the effects of social media marketing activities on Generation Z travel behaviors. *Journal of Travel Research*, *62*(5), 1140–1158. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875221106394

Lu, L., Wong, I. A., & Zhang, Y. (2021). Second language acquisition and socialization in international trips. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *47*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2021.02.007

Lund, N. F., Cohen, S. A., & Scarles, C. (2018). The power of social media storytelling in destination branding. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, *8*, 271–280. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.05.003

Mannheim, K. (1952). The Problem of Generations. In P. Kecskemeti (Ed.), *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (pp. 276–322). Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Mele, E., Kerkhof, P., & Cantoni, L. (2021). Analyzing cultural tourism promotion on Instagram: A cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *38*(3), 326–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2021.1906382

Mou, N., Zheng, Y., Makkonen, T., Yang, T., Tang, J., & Song, Y. (2020). Tourists' digital footprint: The spatial patterns of tourist flows in Qingdao, China. *Tourism Management*, *81*, 104151. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104151

Nitzl, C., Roldan, J. L., & Cepeda, G. (2016). Mediation analysis in partial least squares path modeling: Helping researchers discuss more sophisticated models. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, *116*(9), 1849–1864. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-07-2015-0302

Park, S., Zu, J., Xu, Y., Zhang, F., Liu, Y., & Li, J. (2023). Analyzing travel mobility patterns in city destinations: Implications for destination design. *Tourism Management*, *96*, 104718.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104718

Peco-Torres, F., Polo-Peña, A. I., & Frías-Jamilena, D. M. (2021). Brand personality in cultural tourism through social media. *Tourism Review*, *76*(1), 164–183. https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-02-2019-0050

Pop, R.-A., Săplăcan, Z., Dabija, D.-C., & Alt, M.-A. (2022). The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions: The role of trust in consumer decision journey. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *25*(5), 823–843. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2021.1895729

Reif, J., & Schmücker, D. (2020). Exploring new ways of visitor tracking using big data sources: Opportunities and limits of passive mobile data for tourism. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, *18*, 100481. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100481

Richards, G. (2018). Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *36*, 12–21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2018.03.005

Ryder, N. B. (1965). The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change. *American Sociological Review*, *30*(6), 843–861. https://doi.org/10.2307/2090964

Spector, P. E. (2019). Do not cross me: Optimizing the use of cross-sectional designs. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *34*(2), 125–137. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-018-09613-8

Volo, S., & Irimiás, A. (2021). Instagram: Visual methods in tourism research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *91*, 103098. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103098

Wang, H., & Yan, J. (2022). Effects of social media tourism information quality on destination travel intention: Mediation effect of self-congruity and trust. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 1049149. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1049149

Wang, Z., Huang, W.-J., & Liu-Lastres, B. (2022). Impact of user-generated travel posts on travel decisions: A comparative study on Weibo and Xiaohongshu. *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights*, *3*(2), 100064. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annale.2022.100064

Wengel, Y., Ma, L., Ma, Y., Apollo, M., Maciuk, K., & Ashton, A. S. (2022). The TikTok effect on destination development: Famous overnight, now what? *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, *37*, 100458. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2021.100458

Zheng, Y., Mou, N., Zhang, L., Makkonen, T., & Yang, T. (2021). Chinese tourists in Nordic countries: An analysis of spatio-temporal behavior using geo-located travel blog data. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, *85*, 101561. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compenvurbsys.2020.101561

Zhou, Q., Sotiriadis, M., & Shen, S. (2023). Using TikTok in tourism destination choice: A young Chinese tourists' perspective. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *46*, 101101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2023.101101

APPENDIX A. Questionnaire Items and Measurement Specifications

This appendix reproduces the 20 measurement statements used in the Indonesian-language Google Forms questionnaire for the study "Digital Cultural Representation, Intercultural Communication, and Generation Z Tourist Mobility in Baubau." The Indonesian statements correspond to questions 7–26 in the original form; the English versions are translations prepared for reporting and were not the wording administered to respondents.

All 20 items used the same five-point agreement response scale: 1 = Sangat Tidak Setuju (strongly disagree); 2 = Tidak Setuju (disagree); 3 = Netral/Ragu-ragu (neutral/uncertain); 4 = Setuju (agree); and 5 = Sangat Setuju (strongly agree). These are agreement responses, not objective movement counts, recorded visit durations, or an alternative behavioral-intensity scale.

Table A1. Original Indonesian Measurement Statements and English Translations

Item	Indicator meaning	Original Indonesian statement (administered)	English translation (for reporting)
A. Digital Cultural Representation (X1–X7) — Reflective (Mode A)			
X1 / Q7	Information completeness	Konten media sosial tentang destinasi budaya memberikan informasi yang cukup lengkap bagi saya untuk memahami budaya yang ditampilkan.	Social media content about cultural destinations provides sufficiently comprehensive information for me to understand the culture presented.
X2 / Q8	Visual attractiveness	Foto, video, dan tampilan visual budaya di media sosial membuat budaya destinasi tersebut terlihat menarik.	Photographs, videos, and other visual presentations of culture on social media make the destination's culture appear attractive.
X3 / Q9	Perceived authenticity	Konten budaya yang saya lihat di media sosial menggambarkan budaya lokal secara autentik.	The cultural content I see on social media portrays local culture authentically.
X4 / Q10	Perceived credibility	Informasi budaya yang disampaikan melalui media sosial saya anggap dapat dipercaya.	I consider cultural information shared through social media to be trustworthy.
X5 / Q11	Encouragement to interact	Konten budaya di media sosial mendorong saya untuk berinteraksi, misalnya dengan memberi respons, bertanya, berkomentar, atau mencari informasi lebih lanjut.	Cultural content on social media encourages me to interact, for example, by responding, asking questions, commenting, or seeking further information.
X6 / Q12	Emotional interest	Konten budaya yang saya lihat di media sosial membangkitkan ketertarikan emosional saya terhadap budaya destinasi tersebut.	The cultural content I see on social media arouses my emotional interest in the destination's culture.
X7 / Q13	Distinctive local identity	Konten media sosial mampu menampilkan ciri dan identitas budaya lokal yang membedakan destinasi tersebut dari tempat lain.	Social media content can present distinctive features and identities of local culture that differentiate the destination from other places.
B. Interpersonal Intercultural Communication (M1–M7) — Reflective (Mode A)			
M1 / Q14	Intercultural openness	Saya terbuka untuk berkomunikasi dengan masyarakat lokal yang memiliki latar belakang budaya berbeda dari saya.	I am open to communicating with local people whose cultural backgrounds differ from my own.

M2 / Q15	Perspective-taking / empathy	Ketika berinteraksi dengan masyarakat lokal, saya berusaha memahami situasi dan sudut pandang mereka.	When interacting with local people, I try to understand their circumstances and perspectives.
M3 / Q16	Respect for differences	Saya menghargai nilai, kebiasaan, dan pandangan masyarakat lokal meskipun berbeda dengan budaya saya.	I respect the values, customs, and views of local people even when they differ from my own culture.
M4 / Q17	Communicative equality	Saya berkomunikasi dengan masyarakat lokal sebagai mitra yang setara tanpa merasa budaya saya lebih baik daripada budaya mereka.	I communicate with local people as equals without considering my own culture superior to theirs.
M5 / Q18	Communication clarity	Saya berusaha menyampaikan maksud saya dengan cara yang jelas ketika berkomunikasi dengan masyarakat yang berbeda budaya.	I try to convey my intended meaning clearly when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.
M6 / Q19	Sensitivity to local norms	Saya memperhatikan norma, simbol, kebiasaan, dan aturan sosial setempat ketika berinteraksi dengan masyarakat lokal.	I pay attention to local norms, symbols, customs, and social rules when interacting with local people.
M7 / Q20	Communication adaptation	Saya mampu menyesuaikan cara berkomunikasi dengan situasi dan kebiasaan budaya masyarakat lokal.	I am able to adapt my way of communicating to the situations and cultural customs of local people.
C. Generation Z Tourist Mobility (Y1–Y6) — Exploratory Formative (Mode B)			
Y1 / Q21	Breadth of cultural-site visits	Saat melakukan perjalanan wisata, saya mengunjungi beberapa lokasi budaya yang berbeda dalam satu destinasi.	When traveling, I visit several different cultural locations within a single destination.
Y2 / Q22	Exploration beyond the main site	Saya cenderung mengeksplorasi lokasi budaya lain di luar objek wisata utama yang awalnya ingin saya kunjungi.	I tend to explore other cultural locations beyond the main attraction I originally intended to visit.
Y3 / Q23	Visits across cultural locations	Saya melakukan kunjungan ke berbagai lokasi wisata budaya selama berada di suatu destinasi.	I visit various cultural tourism locations while staying at a destination.
Y4 / Q24	Diversity of travel routes	Saya menggunakan rute atau pola perjalanan yang beragam untuk menjangkau berbagai lokasi budaya dalam suatu destinasi.	I use diverse routes or travel patterns to reach different cultural locations within a destination.
Y5 / Q25	Perceived adequacy of time at sites	Saya meluangkan waktu yang cukup untuk berada dan melakukan aktivitas pada lokasi-lokasi budaya yang saya kunjungi.	I allocate sufficient time to stay and engage in activities at the cultural locations I visit.
Y6 / Q26	Trip extension to additional sites	Setelah mengunjungi destinasi budaya utama, saya cenderung memperluas perjalanan dengan menambahkan kunjungan ke lokasi budaya lainnya.	After visiting the main cultural destination, I tend to extend my trip by adding visits to other cultural locations.

Source: The author-research. Item codes X, M, and Y correspond to the study's PLS-SEM measurement model. English translations and short indicator labels were prepared for manuscript reporting.

Table A2. Construct Specifications and Conceptual Development Bases

Construct	Items	Specification	Conceptual literature informing development (not a claim of verbatim adaptation)
Digital Cultural Representation	X1–X7	Reflective; Mode A	Kim et al. (2017); Peco-Torres et al. (2021). Concepts include tourism-related social-media information quality and cultural representation.
Interpersonal Intercultural Communication	M1–M7	Reflective; Mode A	Chen and Starosta (2000); Fan et al. (2022). Concepts include intercultural sensitivity and tourist intercultural competence.
Generation Z Tourist Mobility	Y1–Y6	Exploratory formative; Mode B	Lew and McKercher (2006); Ding et al. (2024). Concepts include intra-destination travel movement and patterns of exploration across sites.

Measurement and reporting notes. The presented wording preserves the administered Indonesian items. Y3 reports agreement with visiting different cultural sites rather than a numeric count of visits; Y5 reports perceived sufficiency of time spent at sites rather than objectively recorded duration. The formative mobility block should therefore be interpreted as self-reported mobility-related behavior and engagement, not observed travel trajectories.

Scope. This appendix documents the 20 construct-measurement items. Screening and respondent-profile questions appearing earlier in the original Google Form are not reproduced here.