



Decoding the Desires of a New Generation: Crafting Creative Tourism Experiences for Gen Z in Hanoi

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Abstract

Research Purpose:

This study investigates the determinants of Generation Z tourists' satisfaction with the creative atmosphere of tourism destinations, focusing on Vietnam. It aims to advance theoretical understanding of tourism atmospherics and provide evidence-based guidance for destination managers to attract and retain young travellers.

Research Motivation:

Previous studies emphasize "experience" in Gen Z tourism, yet limited attention targets atmospheric dimensions—namely novelty, joy, artistry, hedonism, and distinctiveness—shaping satisfaction. Addressing this gap holds significant academic and managerial value.

Research Design and Method:

A quantitative methods approach was employed to examine how creative atmospheric dimensions were contextualized in Hanoi by 127 Gen Z tourists. Multiple regression analysis using SPSS was conducted to test the impact of five hypothesized creative atmosphere dimensions on satisfaction.

Main Findings:

Hedonic atmosphere (pleasurable and enjoyable environment) exerted the strongest positive effect on Gen Z tourist satisfaction, followed by distinctive atmosphere (unique and original environment). Novel, joyful, and artistic atmospheres were positively correlated but lacked significant independent effects.

Practical Implications:

The findings advise Vietnamese tourism managers to prioritize creating hedonic and distinctive atmospheres to enhance satisfaction. This targeted approach enables the design of meaningful experiences resonating with young tourists, fostering loyalty and competitive advantage.

Contribution:

This study expands academic discourse by isolating key creative atmosphere components critical to tourists' evaluative processes and offers practical guidance for strategic atmospheric design to improve experiential quality.

Keywords: novel atmosphere, joyful atmosphere, artistic atmosphere, hedonic atmosphere, distinctive atmosphere, young tourists.

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N. D. Nguyen and P. T. K. Ngoc (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Emerging Challenges: Business Dynamics in Disruptive Economy (ICECH 2025)*, Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research 377,

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6239-622-7_28

1. INTRODUCTION

In the heart of Southeast Asia, Vietnam's tourism industry is experiencing a vibrant renaissance. Its stunning landscapes and profound cultural heritage have long been a draw, but today, a new energy is reshaping its trajectory, fueled by an influx of young, adventurous travelers. Generation Z (Gen Z) is at the head of this new wave. They were born and reared during the digital revolution (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018). They are not just tourists; they are experience-seekers and digital explorers who want to travel in ways that go beyond the conventional. They want new experiences, happiness, and a strong sense of connection with others. Their tastes are changing the way people travel around the world (Robinson and Schänzel, 2019). This study project examines the core of this emerging frontier, concentrating on a vital and swiftly expanding sector: creative tourism (Cheng and Chen, 2023; Pratminingsih et al., 2025; Wei et al., 2023). This type of travel, which is specifically designed to excite and engage tourists' creative faculties through immersion experiences with local arts, crafts, and culture, thrives in Vietnam's dynamic artistic communities and emerging innovation centers. But as this field grows, an important issue comes up: What do these innovative experiences really make Gen Z travelers happy? This study seeks to address that inquiry by analyzing the essence of creative tourism, transcending mere activities to investigate the intangible yet influential factors that determine Gen Z's contentment and, ultimately, their allegiance to a location.

The modern tourism industry does well when it has a deep grasp of its customers, and Gen Z is a particularly interesting puzzle in this complicated picture. Previous studies have identified the overall significance of "experience" in the travel motivations of Generation Z (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011); nonetheless, a substantial deficiency persists in our comprehension of the particular factors that render an experience gratifying for this demographic. A lot of the research that is already out there focuses on concrete activities or broad ideas of authenticity. It doesn't really talk about the more subtle, atmospheric elements that make a voyage memorable. We know that Gen Z wants to have unique experiences, but what makes those experiences distinctive? How do feelings of newness, happiness, or artistic connection come together to make a satisfying whole?

This work immediately addresses this deficiency. It goes beyond just listing activities to look at the five important atmospheric factors that we think are the real reasons why Gen Z is happy in creative tourist settings: Novelty, Joy, Artistic Expression, Hedonism, and Distinctiveness. While the popularity of creative tourism in Vietnam is on the rise, research into how these specific atmospheric elements resonate with Gen Z remains remarkably limited. We lack a detailed understanding of how different demographic factors within this generation influence their satisfaction, which specific factors are the most powerful drivers, and what role active participation plays in shaping their overall perception. Without this knowledge, tourism stakeholders are left to guess at the desires of this influential demographic, potentially missing the opportunity to craft truly resonant and successful offerings (Chen et al., 2023). This study is designed to address this critical gap by providing a detailed, empirical investigation into the determinants of Gen Z's satisfaction with creative tourism in Vietnam. By focusing on the five key atmospheric dimensions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive blueprint for tourism stakeholders, policymakers, and creative communities. The purpose is not merely academic; it is to equip the industry with the practical knowledge needed to attract, satisfy, and retain the Gen Z traveler. To achieve this, our research addresses central questions that directly address the identified gaps in the literature: *Which atmospheric factors most significantly influence overall satisfaction with the creative experience?* By answering these questions, this study will make both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it will be one of the first to systematically report on the specific atmospheric factors that influence satisfaction within the context of creative tourism for Gen Z. It will build upon and extend existing frameworks by providing a more granular understanding of this generation's travel psychology (Chen et al., 2016).

Practically, the findings will provide an invaluable evidence base for the Vietnamese tourism industry. The detailed information gathered on Gen Z's expectations and the factors that attract them will serve as a guide for tourism experts, venue managers, and creative professionals. It will help them create and plan exciting, intricate, and engaging tourism experiences that are just right for this important group of people. The goal of this research is to make Gen Z happier and more involved in creative tourism activities. This will help Vietnam's tourism industry grow sustainably and innovatively, and it will also serve as a model for other places that want to attract the next generation of travelers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONTEXT

In the fiercely competitive landscape of global tourism, where economic stagnation and geopolitical tensions demand new strategies for differentiation, creativity has emerged as the industry's new currency. In response, destinations from bustling metropolises to serene rural landscapes are re-imagining themselves as creative spaces, moving beyond traditional attractions to cultivate environments that foster a fun, artistic, and engaging atmosphere (Tan et al., 2016; Richards & Wilson, 2007). The strategic integration of creative elements and deep cultural significance is now recognized as a critical factor in enhancing a destination's distinctiveness and appeal, marking a promising new frontier in the global

tourism industry (Cheng & Chen, 2021; Richards, 2011a). However, the very concept of "creativity" is inherently abstract, posing a significant challenge: how do tourists actually perceive and experience this intangible quality? While previous research has identified constructs like "creative experience" as a measurable proxy, these are often analyzed through a supply-side lens, focusing on the products and services offered by the destination (Tan et al., 2016). This study pivots from that perspective by adopting the more holistic concept of the creative atmosphere (CA). We define this not as a static feature, but as a unique and dynamic milieu shaped by the interplay of creative people, processes, products, and environments (Richards, 2011b). This atmosphere is a living system—a district's creative energy, for example, emerges from the organic interactions between its artists, writers, and innovators, creating a dynamic that stimulates and attracts visitors (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010). This distinction reveals a critical gap in the existing literature. A substantial body of research has explored concepts like creative tourism (Salman & Uygur, 2010) and tourist motivations (Chang et al., 2014), but these studies have predominantly focused on what the destination provides. Largely overlooked is the demand-side perspective: a deep, nuanced understanding of how tourists themselves perceive, interpret, and are affected by the creative atmosphere of a cultural space.

At the heart of any creative atmosphere lies a nation's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is defined by UNESCO (2003) as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities, groups, or individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This heritage is transmitted from generation to generation, constantly recreated in response to the environment, history, and interaction with nature, providing a sense of identity and continuity that promotes respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. ICH encompasses five main categories: (a) oral traditions including languages; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals, and festivals; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (e) traditional craftsmanship (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2019; UNESCO, 2003). Unlike tangible cultural property, ICH exists in living practice and must be actively maintained by communities to avoid extinction (Tan, Lim, Tan, & Kok, 2020). It is intricately linked to tourism as an experiential tourism product, often serving as a primary attraction for visitors to places, events, or festivals (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2019). Festivals celebrating specific ICH play a critical role in fostering emotional connections and national pride, while sustainable tourism development can motivate conservation and transmission of endangered intangible heritage (Fu et al., 2018; Su et al., 2019).

Vietnam's broader tourism outlook complements Hanoi's achievements. The country aims to receive 22-23 million international tourists and up to 130 million domestic visitors in 2025, with total tourism revenue forecasted at approximately US\$41.2 billion (HanoiTimes, 2024). Vietnam has been honored consecutively as the "World's Leading Heritage Destination" and "Asia's Leading Destination," reinforcing its global cultural tourism appeal. Strategic priorities include digital transformation of tourism services, infrastructure development with AI integration, talent retention, innovative governance, and public-private partnerships, all of which shape a forward-looking heritage tourism paradigm (Vietnam News, 2025; Hanoi Times, 2024).

Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, exemplifies a successful heritage destination innovating within this framework. In 2024, Hanoi welcomed over 27 million tourists, including 6.35 million international visitors, marking substantial annual growth rates of 12% and 34%, respectively. Tourism revenue exceeded US\$4.32 billion, an 18.3% increase over the previous year (Hanoi Times, 2024). Recognized as a top cultural destination by the UN World Tourism Organization since 2022, Hanoi has invested in preserving cultural and historical relics and promoting 42 city-level heritage sites. The city innovates by linking heritage attractions with its nighttime economy through tours such as "Sacred Night" at Hoa Lo Prison and "Decoding the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long," thereby enhancing both cultural engagement and visitor experience. Hosting over 3,000 cultural, artistic, and sports events in 2024, including the Hanoi Creative Design Festival with 300,000 attendees, Hanoi nurtures its creative industries and engages its community in heritage valorization (Hanoi Times, 2024; Vietnam Plus, 2025). Hanoi epitomizes the dynamic integration of intangible cultural heritage and creative tourism innovation. Through active preservation, community involvement, and novel tourist experiences, the city sustains its cultural identity while strengthening its global tourism profile. This model highlights how cultural heritage can serve as a catalyst for economic growth and cultural vitality, ensuring the continuity of living heritage for future generations. Via tourism websites and platforms, the following characteristics of Hanoi has been uncovered.

(i) Novel Atmosphere

Hanoi's novel atmosphere is defined by its unique coffee culture, notably the hidden cafes nestled in narrow alleys and the iconic egg coffee, characterized by creamy, sweet foam—a distinctly inventive experience unmatched elsewhere (Giang Cafe, 1946). Architecturally, the city juxtaposes European colonial buildings with traditional temples and pagodas, alongside modern skyscrapers, creating a dynamic sense of discovery. Approximately 15 museums immerse visitors in diverse art, science, and heritage narratives, enriching the cultural landscape. The Nhật Tân Bridge, Vietnam's largest cable-stayed bridge, features five diamond-shaped towers and vibrant, color-changing lighting that contrasts strikingly with Hanoi's historic image, illuminating the cityscape nightly. Turtle Tower, uniquely located on a Hoàn Kiếm Lake islet, blends European Gothic with Vietnamese architectural styles, symbolizing the city's fusion of East and West while serving

as a memorable landmark. Collectively, these elements cultivate a contemporary yet culturally resonant urban atmosphere that captivates visitors through its blend of tradition and innovation.

(ii) Joyful Atmosphere

Hanoi's joyful atmosphere is characterized by diverse entertainment options, from serene lakes and traditional water puppet shows during the day to vibrant nightlife along lively streets such as Tạ Hiện and Xuân Diệu. The city's pleasant climate enhances visitor comfort, especially during recommended seasons, fostering a welcoming environment. The renowned hospitality of local residents—though not always explicitly noted—significantly enriches the city's inviting spirit. Streets like Hồ Hoàn Kiếm, with bustling food stalls and souvenir shops, exude a lively communal charm. Ba Đình Square, beyond its historical significance, hosts daily flag ceremonies that cultivate a collective sense of pride and joy. Collectively, these elements create an engaging, warm, and festive ambiance that continuously captivates both locals and tourists, contributing to Hanoi's reputation as a vibrant and joyful cultural destination.

(iii) Artistic Atmosphere

Hanoi's artistic atmosphere is deeply rooted in its rich cultural heritage, exemplified by its numerous museums dedicated to art, history, and science, which foster continuous engagement with creative expressions. Traditional water puppet shows at the renowned Thang Long Theatre showcase vibrant folklore and Vietnamese rural life through intricate puppetry and live music, preserving an ancient art form (Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre, 2025). Architectural landmarks such as the Temple of Literature, St. Joseph's Cathedral, and the Fine Arts Museum further enhance the city's artistic landscape. The historic Trần Quốc Pagoda, with over 1,500 years of history, symbolizes diverse artistic styles reflected in its architecture and serene gardens. Additionally, Turtle Tower's unique fusion of European Gothic and Vietnamese design embodies Hanoi's cultural synthesis, serving as a striking artistic landmark. Collectively, these elements contribute to an immersive artistic ambiance that engages both residents and visitors, underscoring Hanoi's status as a vibrant cultural center.

(iv) Hedonic Atmosphere

Hanoi's hedonic atmosphere is known for its variety street food and traditional delicacies like phở and bánh cuốn, which are often called "food lovers' paradise." These dishes are a feast for the senses. There are a lot of stores to choose from, so you can find something that fits your budget and enjoy shopping. The city's strong nightlife, with busy pubs and colorful neighborhoods, makes it fun and exciting to be with other people. Hồ Hoàn Kiếm Street is a great example of this hedonistic liveliness. There are many food vendors selling local foods, which makes it a lively place to eat and enjoy the sights and sounds. Ba Đình Square and the regions around Hoàn Kiếm Lake are also social spaces where people can relax and have fun together. These places help make the city feel friendly and happy. All of these things make Hanoi a place full of fun things to do, with food, socializing, and entertainment all coming together to make a fun and memorable atmosphere for both locals and tourists.

(v) Distinctive Atmosphere

Hanoi has a unique vibe since it is cheap and easy to get there. It has high-quality but affordable places to stay and eat that draw a wide range of tourists. The city's rich cultural history is shown in its distinctive customs, like the creation of egg coffee and traditional water puppetry, which give it a memorable personality (Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre, 2025). Architecturally, landmarks like Nhật Tân Bridge symbolize the city's fusion of history and modernity, featuring five gates and dynamic lighting that creates a standout gateway. The Trần Quốc Pagoda, the oldest in Hanoi, is internationally recognized for its architectural beauty and spiritual significance. Ba Đình Square holds unparalleled historical and symbolic importance as the site of Vietnam's declaration of independence. The iconic Turtle Tower, situated centrally on Hoàn Kiếm Lake, uniquely combines Gothic and Vietnamese architectural elements, reinforcing Hanoi's cultural identity. Together, these elements contribute to a cityscape that is both culturally rich and distinctively appealing, blending tradition with contemporary features to offer a singular urban experience.



Cultural (36), adventure (34), experience (36), exploration (34), nightlife (21), art (25, creativity (25)

Fig. 1. Word Cloud of creative atmosphere in Hanoi via tourism website

Clear evidences are profound for all five creative atmospheric elements. Hanoi is portrayed as a city that is novel and surprising, joyful and lively, artistically vibrant, hedonically pleasurable, and unmistakably distinctive—making it a compelling and memorable destination for international travelers. Hanoi is portrayed as a city with novel and unique sights, a joyful and lively street life, rich artistic and architectural heritage, hedonistic pleasures in food and public gatherings, and distinctive landmarks that embody its layered history and cultural identity. These “superlatives” collectively enrich the city’s atmosphere, making it a multifaceted and memorable destination.

This study utilizes Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) to identify which atmospheric factors most significantly influence overall satisfaction with creative tourism experiences. Rooted in psychology, CAT elucidates how individuals mentally evaluate external stimuli, such as cultural performances and creative engagements, through appraisal dimensions relevant to their personal goals (Scherer, 2009; Lazarus, 1991). These cognitive appraisals evoke emotional responses, which in turn shape attitudes, satisfaction levels, and behavioral intentions (Ma et al., 2013; Johnson & Stewart, 2005). CAT emphasizes that emotions arise from individuals’ subjective interpretations of experiences rather than the stimuli alone (Skavronskaya, Moyle, & Scott, 2020a, 2020b). Positive emotions generated through this process foster favorable attitudes and loyalty toward the destination or event, whereas negative emotions may induce avoidance behaviors (Jiang et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2016). Unlike earlier models, such as the Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm, CAT accounts for intermediary cognitive processes between stimulus reception and emotional outcomes, offering a more precise explanation of tourist satisfaction (Tuerlan, Li, & Scott, 2021). This framework is particularly relevant for understanding how key atmospheric elements—namely Novelty, Joy, Artistic Expression, Hedonism, and Distinctiveness—interact cognitively and emotionally to influence Gen Z’s creative tourism satisfaction and destination loyalty, addressing critical gaps in contemporary tourism research.

3. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Novel atmosphere

The concept of “novel atmosphere” in tourism refers to the perception of freshness, newness, and uniqueness that tourists experience within the cultural environment of a destination. Cheng and Chen (2023) describe this atmosphere through characteristics such as newfangled, cool, fresh, special, fashionable, and modern elements. This sense of novelty is heightened in destinations that integrate “fresh” components like tours exploring historic quarters and traditional craft villages, alongside “special” elements manifested through unique cultural festivals (Mohammad et al., 2020). For example, ecotourism locations might use virtual reality to make it feel like you’re exploring nature while still fostering a “cool” image by offering activities like climbing, trekking, and kayaking.

These kinds of places make tourists happy because they encourage creativity and spark curiosity and imagination (Robinson, 2021). The search for new places to stay has become very popular, especially among Gen Z visitors who are very linked to the internet and high-tech world. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023) says that about 72% of Gen Z travelers like places that are new, cool, and different. An Airbnb poll of 3,000 Gen Z tourists from 10 countries found that 75% actively look for new and modern experiences (Airbnb, 2020). This backs up what you said.

This research underscores the essential necessity of developing new, experiential surroundings customized to the interests of the emerging generation of global visitors, so guaranteeing that cultural destinations stay dynamic and attractive in the modern tourism context. We propose the following hypothesis:

H1. Novel atmosphere positively impacts satisfaction

3.2. Joyful atmosphere

When people talk about a "joyful atmosphere" in creative tourism places, they mean that travelers can be happy, excited, and motivated by new and unique experiences. Cheng and Chen (2023) characterize this word as the emotive environment that markedly elevates visitor happiness by cultivating a joyful and innovative atmosphere. Positive emotions, like happiness, are very important for how happy tourists are with their trip, especially when it comes to the creative parts of the place they are visiting (Al-Msallam, 2020). The increase of these pleasant feelings enhances tourists' views of originality and innovation, thereby increasing satisfaction levels (Langley, 2018).

A happy environment also starts a feedback loop that reinforces itself (Sun & Huang, 2022). When tourists are happy, they usually provide favorable reviews, which encourages the location to keep improving and adding to its innovative offers. This loop not only keeps people coming back, but it also draws in new people looking for fun experiences, which leads to more pleasure and fresh ideas.

This is especially true for Generation Z visitors, who are full of youthful energy and love intense, engaging experiences. It is commonly known that Gen Z likes engaging, dynamic spaces that make their discovery of new places more interesting (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). Their reasons for traveling are closely tied to having fun, and lively, interesting places provide both pleasure and chances to learn new things. Gen Z wants experiences that are both fun and educational, and interactive installations and new recreational areas give them that (Chen et al., 2023).

In conclusion, creating a happy environment is an important aspect of creative tourism. It makes visitors happy by giving them positive emotional experiences and starts a circle of innovation and engagement that lasts, especially for Gen Z, who are tech-savvy and want to have new experiences. We put forward the following hypothesis:

H2. Joyful atmosphere positively impacts satisfaction

3.3. Artistic atmosphere

An artistic atmosphere in tourism is when visitors feel warm, sincere, and romantic because of the creative aesthetics in a destination's architecture and interior design (Cheng & Chen, 2023). This atmosphere is often linked to places with a lot of culture, including museums, art galleries, historic towns like Venice, and art shows or performances. It has a big effect on how visitors feel and what they think. Technological innovations, including virtual reality, augment these encounters by immersing visitors in authentic artistic settings, facilitating profound emotional and educational engagement (Liu et al., 2021). Destination managers may stimulate visitors' senses, create a unique creative ambiance, and make experiences that people will remember and want to come back for by carefully planning and designing things like lighting, color, and space arrangement (Cheng & Chen, 2023). There is a strong correlation between aesthetics and visitor satisfaction (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). In the last several decades, creative and artistic neighborhoods have also popped up. These are small areas where arts, culture, and creativity come together, and they have had a big impact on cultural tourism (Evans, 2009; Mommaas, 2004). A pertinent example is Shanghai's M50 creative art district, where visitors immerse themselves in a postindustrial artistic environment that has become a magnet for tourists seeking authentic artistic encounters (Michel, 2021). Engagement in artistic activities such as museum visits or attending performances can generate a range of emotions, from relaxation to excitement, depending on the nature of the art presented (Gómez, 2021). Tourists commonly report heightened satisfaction when participating in such artistic events, as the artistic environment positively affects both the spirit and soul. It offers not only visual delight but also emotional depth, creating opportunities for personal solace and reflection—similar to the evocative experience of viewing Van Gogh's paintings or wandering through nostalgic exhibitions like "Memory of Hanoi's Streets." In this way, artistic spaces function therapeutically, providing respite from everyday stressors.

While focused studies on the artistic atmosphere's impact on Generation Z traveler satisfaction are limited, broader research suggests that the warmth, sincerity, and romance characteristic of artistic environments align well with Gen Z's values and preferences. This alignment implies promising potential for artistic atmospheres to engage and satisfy this digitally native, experience-driven generation. We propose the following hypothesis:

H3. Artistic atmosphere positively impacts satisfaction

3.4. Hedonic atmosphere

One significant element in fostering a creative tourism environment is the "hedonic atmosphere," which pertains to the feelings of satisfaction, enjoyment, and pleasure that tourists derive from the creative qualities of a destination (Cheng &

Chen, 2023). This atmosphere is characterized by environments that deliver sensory stimulation, relaxation, and a general sense of pleasure to visitors. For example, homestay resorts located in urban centers like Hanoi, designed with vibrant and harmonious color schemes, integrate natural landscapes and aromas, and offer premium amenities, enable tourists to alleviate fatigue and stress, thereby enhancing their experience.

Pleasure, a central feature of the hedonic atmosphere, is recognized as an intrinsic component of peak experience, often linked to playfulness and the affirmation of life's meaning (Kusmarini et al., 2020; Rivera, 1989). This pleasure is a crucial aspect of tourists' emotional responses and a primary determinant of overall satisfaction. Supporting this, Johnson et al. (2009) found among British hotel guests that pleasure strongly motivates positive evaluations of customer satisfaction and happiness. The hedonic atmosphere also positively influences the broader creative ambiance at tourist destinations. Research by Smith and Jones (2022) demonstrated that when visitors feel happy, relaxed, and comfortable, they are more receptive to novel experiences and ideas. Correspondingly, Brown (2023) affirmed that the hedonic atmosphere facilitates easier connections among tourists.

Despite the established benefits of the hedonic atmosphere across diverse demographics, there is a paucity of research specifically addressing its impact on Generation Z travelers. General findings suggest a positive influence on Gen Z's creative environment; however, this demographic's distinct characteristics—deep association with technology and the internet, preference for novel and adventurous experiences over peaceful immersion in nature—indicate that the influence of hedonic elements on their travel experiences remains underexplored. Given Gen Z's predilection for intense and unique emotional experiences rather than traditional relaxation, further investigation is warranted to understand fully how hedonic atmospheres shape their tourism satisfaction and creative engagement. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. Hedonic atmosphere positively impacts satisfaction

3.5. Distinctive atmosphere

The concept of a "distinctive atmosphere" in tourism encapsulates the uniqueness, originality, and rarity perceived by visitors, which significantly influences their satisfaction with a destination (Cheng & Chen, 2023). This atmosphere, particularly in creative or culturally rich sites, distinguishes a place through memorable qualities that set it apart from others, often through unique aesthetic features that enrich the tourist experience (Mattila & Gao, 2017). Visually appealing and innovative environments contribute positively to visitors' impressions, thereby elevating overall satisfaction (Zhou et al., 2022).

Tourist spots that really show off their culture by mixing local traditions, arts, and heritage into a creative setting tend to draw in people who want real and immersive experiences, which makes visitors much happier (Chiu et al., 2016). Generation Z travelers, in particular, desire unique and immersive experiences when they travel. They find tremendous value in the varied atmospheres that different places offer (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). This group of people is very interested in unique architectural designs and unusual cityscapes. They actively seek out places that are different from the norm (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019; Pinho, 2020). Also, the visual appeal of a place, which is typically shown through the idea of "Instagrammability," is a big factor in Gen Z's travel choices. This generation is quite active on social media, thus they value visually appealing and photogenic aspects a lot. This adds to their total trip happiness (Shevachman, 2017). This framework supports a theoretical model that focuses on how satisfied Generation Z is with creative tourism in Vietnam. It positions the unique atmosphere as a key factor in modern tourism experiences that lead to engagement and satisfaction. Consequently, the ensuing hypothesis is posited:

H5. Distinctive atmosphere positively impacts satisfaction

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Sampling & data collection

This study employed a quantitative research design using an online survey questionnaire to investigate Generation Z's satisfaction with Vietnam's creative tourism experiences. The primary objective was to assess satisfaction levels, collect pertinent data, and provide informed recommendations grounded in empirical evidence. The target population consisted of Generation Z individuals who have previously engaged with Vietnam's creative tourism sector.

Data collection was facilitated through self-administered questionnaires developed using the Google Forms platform. Participants were recruited via convenience sampling, targeting internet-connected members of Generation Z who had encountered creative tourism atmospheres. The survey link was disseminated by the authors through multiple digital communication channels, including Facebook Messenger, Zalo, and other online platforms. The back-translation method was employed in this study. In the survey, respondents were first asked a screening question to identify a creative destination in Hanoi, followed by demographic questions to ensure they belonged to Generation Z. An attention-check item, unrelated to the survey content, was also included. Respondents were compensated for their participation. Hanoi

residents who live in the city and have experienced a creative destination or atmosphere were also eligible to take part in the survey. Among the 300 participants reached, a total of 128 valid and usable responses were collected.

Analytical procedures involved reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency, alongside exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify underlying constructs. Regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between independent variables representing different atmospheric characteristics and the dependent variable of tourist satisfaction. Descriptive statistics summarized participant demographics and response patterns. All data analyses were performed using SPSS software to evaluate the quality of measurement scales, test model fit, and quantify variable interactions within the conceptual framework. To ensure objectivity and minimize potential bias, no members of the research team participated in data collection. This methodological rigor enhances the credibility of the findings, supporting their use in guiding strategic development within Vietnam's creative tourism sector.

4.2 Survey instrument and measures

The survey instrument was developed to measure each of the five creative atmosphere dimensions alongside overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Building on relevant literature on tourism atmospherics and experience design (e.g. Cheng & Chen, 2023), we created multi-item scales for Novel, Joyful, Artistic, Hedonic, and Distinctive Atmosphere perceptions.

Table 1. Measurement items

Construct	Item Code	Item Statement
Novel Atmosphere	NA1	"You feel a newfangled atmosphere here."
	NA2	"You feel a cool atmosphere here."
	NA3	"You feel a fresh atmosphere here."
	NA4	"You feel a special atmosphere here."
	NA5	"You feel a fashionable atmosphere here."
	NA6	"You feel a modern atmosphere here."
Joyful Atmosphere	JA1	"You feel an inspiring atmosphere here."
	JA2	"You feel an exhilarating atmosphere here."
	JA3	"You feel a delightful atmosphere here."
	JA4	"You feel a resonant atmosphere here."
	JA5	"You feel an exciting atmosphere here."
Artistic Atmosphere	AA1	"You feel a warm atmosphere here."
	AA2	"You feel a simple atmosphere here."
	AA3	"You feel a romantic atmosphere here."
	AA4	"You feel a therapeutic atmosphere here."
Hedonic Atmosphere	HA1	"You feel a happy atmosphere here."
	HA2	"You feel a satisfying atmosphere here."
	HA3	"You feel a pleasurable atmosphere here."
	HA4	"You feel an enjoyable atmosphere here."
Distinctive Atmosphere	DA1	"You feel a unique atmosphere here."
	DA2	"You feel a different atmosphere here."
	DA3	"You feel an extraordinary atmosphere here."
	DA4	"You feel an original atmosphere here."

The respondent profile reveals a predominantly young sample, with 84.3% of participants aged between 18 and 24, followed by smaller groups in the 25-30 (10.2%), 31-40 (2.4%), and 41-50 (3.1%) age brackets. This age distribution indicates a strong representation of younger adults, likely aligning with a focus on Generation Z and early Millennials. In terms of participation in creative activities, 100% of respondents reported having experience engaging in creative endeavors. Regarding gender, the sample comprises 64.6% female respondents and 35.4% male, suggesting a higher female participation rate in the study. Travel frequency data indicate that the majority of respondents travel occasionally (59.1%), while 25.2% travel rarely. A smaller proportion of 11.8% travel frequently, and only 3.9% travel very frequently, illustrating a range of travel habits with occasional travelers predominating. Experience with immersive technologies showed that 8.3% had engaged with virtual reality (VR), 0.75% with augmented reality (AR), and a small fraction (1.13%)

with other types of creative spaces, indicating moderate familiarity with emerging digital tools linked to creative tourism experiences. Overall, the demographic and experiential profile points toward a primarily young, female-majority sample with varied travel frequencies and a strong inclination toward creative activities and emerging technologies, pertinent to studies of Gen Z travelers and creative tourism engagement.

Table 2. Description of the participant

Respondent's Profile	Valid	Frequency	Percent (%)
age	18-24	107	84.3
	25-30	13	10.2
	31-40	3	2.4
	41-50	4	3.1
gender	Male	45	35.4
	Female	82	64.6
Frequency of Traveling	Rarely	32	25.2
	Occasionally	75	59.1
	Frequently	15	11.8
	Very frequently	5	3.9
Experience different types of creative spaces (*)	VR	22	8.3
	AR	2	0.75
	Other	3	1.13

In reality, the Ceramic Road in Hanoi is one of the most representative works of art in Hanoi and a very popular scenic spot. It is a painting assembled by millions of ceramic fragments, which is very new compared with other ordinary art paintings. However, this ceramic painting has not brought fun and satisfaction to the younger generation like Generation Z, because they prefer to experience rather than just watch. Therefore, Bat Trang Pottery Making Village is more favored by Generation Z, as they can not only watch the process of making pottery to make products but also personally experience pottery making and bring it back as a souvenir. This creates a distinctive experience for the Z gene that cannot be provided by the ceramic pathway.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presented regression analysis evaluates the impact of five independent variables—Novel Atmosphere (NA), Joyful Atmosphere (JA), Artistic Atmosphere (AA), Hedonic Atmosphere (HA), and Distinctive Atmosphere (DA)—on the dependent variable, Satisfaction (ST).

Table 3. Correlation

	NA	JA	AA	HA	DA	ST	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
NA	1						0.919	0.937	0.712
JA	.630**	1					0.941	0.955	0.808
AA	.740**	.656**	1				0.836	0.891	0.674
HA	.622**	.632**	.710**	1			0.920	0.943	0.807
DA	.741**	.662**	.678**	.618**	1		0.897	0.928	0.765
ST	.641**	.584**	.611**	.694**	.642**	1	0.889	0.947	0.900

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis of Atmosphere Dimensions Predicting Satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.147	.384			2.985	.004		
	NA	.085	.088	.100		.963	.338	.369	2.708
	JA	.046	.087	.050		.531	.597	.459	2.177
	AA	.082	.068	.109		1.208	.230	.488	2.051
	HA	.348	.083	.381		4.179	.000	.480	2.082
	DA	.256	.089	.273		2.878	.005	.444	2.250

a. Dependent Variable: ST

The model demonstrates a strong explanatory power with an R value of 0.770 and an R² of 0.593, indicating that approximately 59.3% of the variance in satisfaction is accounted for by these five atmospheric factors. The adjusted R² of 0.573 suggests that the model maintains robust predictive capacity while adjusting for the number of predictors. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.020 indicates no significant autocorrelation in residuals, supporting the model's validity.

The overall regression model is highly significant ($F = 29.667, p < .001$), confirming that collectively the atmospheres significantly predict visitors' satisfaction levels. This suggests a meaningful relationship exists between the set of five atmospheres and tourist satisfaction.

Looking individually at predictors, two atmospheres show statistically significant positive influences on satisfaction: Hedonic Atmosphere (HA): The strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.381, t = 4.179, p < .001$), indicating that pleasure, enjoyment, and sensory indulgence in tourism environments significantly enhance visitor satisfaction. Distinctive Atmosphere (DA): Also significant ($\beta = 0.273, t = 2.878, p = .005$), suggesting that uniqueness and originality positively affect satisfaction. H4 and H5 are support. The other atmospheres—Novel (NA), Joyful (JA), and Artistic (AA)—though positively related to satisfaction (standardized β ranging from 0.05 to 0.11), are not statistically significant at conventional levels ($p > .05$). This indicates that while these atmospheres contribute to satisfaction, their effects are weaker or possibly mediated by other factors not captured here. H1, H2, and H3 are not supported.

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values range from 2.051 to 2.708 for all predictors, below the critical threshold of 5, indicating no serious multicollinearity concerns. Tolerance values between 0.369 to 0.488 further corroborate this. The collinearity diagnostics, including eigenvalues and condition indices, show condition indices below 30 and no variables exhibiting disturbing variance proportions simultaneously in dimensions with high condition indices, reinforcing the absence of problematic multicollinearity.

The findings highlight the predominant influence of hedonic and distinctive atmospheres in shaping Generation Z tourists' satisfaction with creative tourism experiences. The pleasure derived from sensory and leisure aspects, coupled with the appreciation for originality and cultural distinctiveness, motivates higher satisfaction. Although the novel, joyful, and artistic atmospheres are positively correlated with satisfaction, their independent contributions are less pronounced within this model, suggesting potential indirect effects or interactions that warrant further investigation.

The pronounced impact of a Hedonic Atmosphere on satisfaction is consistent with prior studies emphasizing the role of pleasure and fun in tourist experiences. A rich body of work on tourism "atmospherics" has shown that environments evoking positive emotions—such as enjoyment, comfort, and excitement—tend to foster higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. For example, Joseph-Mathews et al. (2009) found that atmospheric cues in hedonic service settings significantly shape customers' emotional responses. Importantly, the strong influence of hedonic elements in our study aligns with recent research focusing on young tourists. Brown and Green (2023), for instance, highlight that a vibrant, playful atmosphere can stimulate engagement and social interaction among Gen Z tourists, ultimately enhancing their creative collaboration and satisfaction. In our case, features like Hanoi's bustling night markets, street food scene, and entertainment districts likely contributed to such a hedonic ambience, thereby leaving Gen Z visitors feeling gratified and happy with their experience. This result underscores that destinations aiming to appeal to younger tourists should ensure the experience is fun, not just educational or novel—a finding that dovetails with broader tourism behavior research showing positive emotions boost revisit intentions.

Likewise, the significance of a Distinctive Atmosphere in driving satisfaction offers valuable insight into Gen Z preferences. This generation is often described as seeking unique, authentic experiences that set their travels apart from the ordinary (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). Our study confirms that an atmosphere imbued with distinctiveness – characterized by originality, cultural authenticity, and features that can only be found in that particular destination – substantially elevates Gen Z tourist satisfaction. Hanoi's case illustrates this: while the city offers many new sights, it is the singular blend of French colonial and Vietnamese heritage architecture, the iconic egg coffee, or the centuries-old Water Puppet show that give the atmosphere a distinctive flavor. These kinds of authentic differentiators likely explain why distinctiveness emerged as a key satisfaction driver in our results.

Overall, our findings contribute to a more refined understanding of what “atmosphere” means for next-generation tourists. Hedonic enjoyment and distinctiveness clearly stand out as the cornerstones of satisfaction in creative tourism contexts for Gen Z, while other atmospheric elements play supporting roles. These insights extend the theoretical frameworks of tourism experience by pinpointing which emotional and environmental cues matter most for younger travelers' positive evaluations. In doing so, the study addresses the identified research gaps and highlights that the quality of the experience (how fun and unique it is), rather than just the presence of various experience components, is fundamental to satisfying the new generation of tourists.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Contribution

Following the collection and rigorous analysis of survey data, this study explored five characteristic atmospheres—Novel, Joyful, Artistic, Hedonic, and Distinctive—to understand their influence on Generation Z tourists' experiences within creative tourism contexts. Additional variables such as age, gender, travel frequency, and participants' prior exposure to different types of creative environments were examined to anticipate how these factors shape perceptions of creative tourism atmospheres. The study also assessed overall satisfaction and revisit intentions subsequent to experiencing the destination.

The primary objective was to elucidate Generation Z's satisfaction levels with various creative tourism atmospheres and to identify the key determinants influencing their perceptions and behavioral intentions. Employing a survey methodology allowed for the systematic collection of participant feedback, which was then incorporated into a comprehensive research model designed to capture the complex interplay between atmospheric characteristics and visitor responses.

The findings from this research aim to contribute valuable insights for creative tourism enterprises. By providing empirical documentation and evaluative evidence, the study supports efforts to enhance service quality, destination management, and the overall visitor experience. Importantly, the results offer strategic guidance for boosting Generation Z's appreciation of diverse tourism offerings, thereby fostering the sustainable growth of Vietnam's creative entertainment and cultural tourism sectors. The study carries important implications for tourism management and destination marketing, particularly in creative and cultural tourism niches. First, the findings underline the value of experience design that maximizes hedonic enjoyment and distinctiveness. Destination managers and attraction developers should prioritize investments in entertainment, interactivity, and one-of-a-kind offerings. For example, ensuring that tours and activities are fun, participatory, and shareable is likely to yield greater satisfaction among Gen Z visitors than traditional passive sightseeing. Managers might incorporate interactive workshops (craft, art, or cooking classes), game-like elements, or social events into cultural attractions to boost the hedonic atmosphere. Also, it's important to point out what makes a place truly unique. This could mean showing off real local traditions, unique architectural or natural characteristics, or “hidden gem” experiences that tourists can't get anywhere else. Marketing messages should be written in a way that shows how unique and unusual the experience is.

To connect with Gen Z, it's a good idea to use digital media and new technology. Tourism marketers should use social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, as well as material made by users, to show off the best and most unique things about the destination. This is because this generation is very connected to the internet. Working with young influencers or content creators can be especially helpful for getting your message out to more people and making it seem more real. This is because these people are popular with Gen Z and can share experiences in a way that makes sense to them. Also, using immersive technologies can make the experience better both in person and online. For example, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) apps can let people who are thinking about visiting see or interact with creative activities and cultural locations in a virtual way.

Cultural exchange programs are another important way for Gen Z to connect with local artists, communities, and craftspeople, which makes their travel experiences more real and creative. Travel experiences can be designed to encourage creativity and cultural appreciation among young travelers by supporting eco-friendly activities, putting on art and music festivals, offering language immersion, and providing courses to help people learn new skills. Vietnam's natural beauty shines through in adventure and outdoor activities, and personalized travel experiences give Generation Z the tools they need to tell their own tales. Collaborating with local designers, artists, and entrepreneurs helps make unique products

and experiences. Strong storytelling and cultural narratives help people better grasp Vietnam's history, customs, and cultural variety.

This study utilizes Vietnam's burgeoning creative tourism sector to assess Generation Z's contentment with these experiences. The research indicates that Gen Z favors immersive, interactive, and authentic activities that foster significant links with local cultures and promote social good (Cohen, 2008; Pearce, 2018; Getz, 2010). Vietnam has a lot of different things to offer, from artisanal workshops to lively street food excursions, that fit these needs. However, problems with accessibility, cost, and marketing make it hard to fully meet these needs. By filling in these deficiencies and building on Vietnam's current strengths, the country can better attract and keep Generation Z tourists, which will help both visitors and local communities (Mbaiwa, 2017). The findings provide significant insights for customizing creative tourism experiences that resonate with Gen Z's adventurous attitude, hence advancing Vietnam's sustainable tourism development objectives.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

This study provides several important contributions to the academic literature on tourism atmospherics, generational cohort theory, and consumer behavior.

Refinement and Prioritization of Tourism Atmospherics Theory: This research moves beyond treating "creative atmosphere" as a monolithic concept. By disaggregating it into five distinct dimensions (Novel, Joyful, Artistic, Hedonic, Distinctive), the study reveals a clear hierarchy of influence. The core theoretical contribution is the finding that Hedonic and Distinctive atmospheres are the primary drivers of satisfaction for Gen Z, while the other dimensions have non-significant independent effects. This challenges the assumption that all positive atmospheric elements contribute equally, suggesting that for this demographic, the pleasure of the experience and its uniqueness are the most critical components in their cognitive appraisal process.

Advancement of Generational Cohort Theory in Tourism: The study adds significant nuance to the understanding of Generation Z as tourists. It empirically validates that Gen Z's satisfaction is not merely driven by novelty or digital integration, but by a deeper need for experiences that provide both sensory pleasure and enjoyment (Hedonic) and a sense of uniqueness and authenticity (Distinctive). This aligns with broader theories about Gen Z's desire for experiences that are both immediately gratifying and identity-affirming, offering them unique social currency. The findings help construct a more sophisticated theoretical profile of the Gen Z traveler, moving beyond surface-level characteristics.

Empirical Application of Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT): The research provides a strong empirical application of CAT within a creative tourism context. According to CAT, individuals evaluate environmental stimuli, leading to emotional and behavioral responses. This study identifies the specific atmospheric stimuli—a pleasurable environment and a unique setting—that trigger the most powerful positive cognitive appraisals for Gen Z tourists, which in turn leads to satisfaction. It pinpoints the most salient appraisal dimensions for this generation, confirming that the interpretation of the atmosphere, particularly its hedonic and distinctive qualities, is what ultimately shapes their positive evaluation.

6.3 Practical Implications

The findings offer highly actionable strategic guidance for tourism managers, marketers, policymakers, and cultural heritage organizations aiming to attract and satisfy Generation Z.

For Destination Managers and Marketers (Hanoi & Beyond):

Prioritize Investments in Hedonic and Distinctive Experiences: The message is clear: to win over Gen Z, make the experience fun and unique.

To Enhance the Hedonic Atmosphere: Focus on sensory indulgence and enjoyment. This includes promoting Hanoi's renowned street food culture through curated tours, developing vibrant nightlife zones, creating comfortable and aesthetically pleasing public spaces for relaxation, and integrating interactive, playful elements into attractions (e.g., gamified city tours, hands-on craft workshops like the Bat Trang pottery example).

To Enhance the Distinctive Atmosphere: Aggressively market what makes the destination "one-of-a-kind." For Hanoi, this means highlighting iconic elements like egg coffee, water puppetry, the unique blend of French colonial and Vietnamese architecture, and "hidden gem" locations. Marketing campaigns should use compelling storytelling and visuals that scream originality and authenticity, creating "Instagrammable" moments that Gen Z can use to build their social identity.

Strategically Position Other Atmospheric Elements: The non-significance of Novel, Joyful, and Artistic atmospheres does not mean they should be ignored, but rather that they should be used as supporting elements. An artistic gallery or performance becomes more appealing if it is hosted in a distinctive historic building and offers a hedonic café experience.

A novel technology like AR should not be a standalone gimmick but should be used to enhance the story of a distinctive cultural site. A joyful festival should be centered around distinctive local traditions to make it more memorable than a generic event.

Tailor Digital Marketing Content: Marketing communications aimed at Gen Z must reflect these priorities. Use platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and collaborations with travel influencers to showcase the fun, sensory, and unique aspects of the destination. Content should be visually rich, authentic, and focus on the feeling of the experience (pleasure, excitement, discovery) rather than just listing attractions.

For Policymakers and Cultural Heritage Organizations:

Foster a Supportive Ecosystem for Creative Tourism: City planners and cultural ministries should create an environment where unique, pleasure-focused tourism can thrive. This includes simplifying regulations for street food vendors, supporting local artisans, preserving unique architectural heritage, and providing grants for creative entrepreneurs who blend traditional culture with modern, experience-based business models.

Encourage Interactive and Immersive Heritage Experiences: As highlighted by the comparison between the static Ceramic Road and the hands-on Bat Trang Pottery Village, passive observation is less satisfying for Gen Z. Heritage sites should be encouraged and incentivized to move beyond being mere museums. Policies should support the development of workshops, interactive exhibits, and participatory cultural activities that allow tourists to engage creatively and hedonically with intangible cultural heritage, transforming them from spectators into creators. This approach ensures that cultural preservation is dynamic and engaging for the next generation of travelers.

6.4. Limitations

This study acknowledges two primary limitations that may affect the robustness and generalizability of its findings. Firstly, the relatively small sample size employed poses a significant constraint. A limited number of participants can undermine the statistical power of the analysis, potentially reducing the confidence readers may place in the results. A larger sample would enable more reliable and precise conclusions by better capturing the variability within the population and enhancing the study's external validity.

Secondly, while this research focused on three central criteria influencing Generation Z's satisfaction with creative tourism atmospheres, it recognizes that a broader array of factors—both direct and indirect—may also play critical roles. Due to constraints in time and resources, the study was unable to comprehensively explore all these additional elements or contextual variables that could influence visitor contentment. Moreover, the absence of face-to-face interviews limited the opportunity to gather in-depth, qualitative insights and direct participant responses, which could have enriched the understanding of nuanced experiences.

In summary, recognizing these limitations is essential, underscoring the need for further research. Future studies should aim for larger and more diverse samples and adopt mixed-methods approaches, including qualitative interviews, to fully elucidate the complex characteristics of atmospheres that influence youth satisfaction in creative tourism settings.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding: This research is funded by Vietnam National University, Hanoi under grant number [QG.25.126]

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