



**E-PROCEEDING HOTWEC 6.0**

**THE GAME ON 2022:**

**THE FUTURE IS  
BRIGHT**

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THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT**

**FACUTLY OF HOSPITALITY, TOURISM AND WELLNESS,  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA KELANTAN**

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Published by: Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness Universiti Malaysia Kelantan  
Kampun Kota, Pengkalan Chepa Karung Berkunci 36 16100 Kota Bharu, Kelantan

e ISBN 978-967-0021-47-8



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# The Role of User Generated Content (UGC) in Selection of Eating Place Among Generation Z

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## **ABSTRACT**

*User-generated content (UGC) is a media content created or produced by the general public rather than paid professionals and primarily distributed on the internet. The recommendations from UGC can help increase levels of trust among Generation Z in selecting an eating place. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the role of UGC in selecting an eating place among Generation Z. When it comes to finding information, Generation Z appear to have embraced many sites for identifying user-generated media when deciding to choose an eating place. 384 respondents participated in this study which was conducted through WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and others. This study focused on Generation Z in Malaysia, born in 1997 until 2012. The results showed that source credibility, viral content, and trust significantly and positively influence the selection of eating places.*

**Keywords:** *User Generated Content (UGC), Selection of eating place, Source credibility, Viral content, Trust*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Generation Z can be a "digital natives" and are extremely active on social media by sharing their opinions and experiences via several online platforms and mobile technologies (Csobanka, 2016). This group of individuals is dependent on and familiar with the use of technology as they have been exposed to the Internet since birth (Edmund Goh, 2018). Unlike other generations, Generation Z cannot live without Internet. User-generated content (UGC) is quite resilient and influences Generation Z's decisions in selecting eating places.

UGC is defined as "forms of electronic communication such as websites for social networking and microblogging through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos (Webster, 2021). The form of UGC consists a variety of social networking selection from Websites to chat rooms, forums, blogs and discussion boards. YouTube and instagram Instagram are the most popular online platforms among teens. Almost 95% of teens have access to a smartphone, and 45% say they are online almost constantly (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). They have one advantage over previous generations which is to live: living in a much more conducive economy. Nowadays, Generation Z is using these platforms to generate quality content for eating places. For example, Saji.my is one of the blogs that displays a list of delicious, best and most interesting places to eat in Malaysia.

Selection of eating places become one of the critical roles in influencing the Generation Z. Elements of service such as ambience and layout influence Generation Z to visit the place (Patwary & Rashid, 2016). Besides that, the information provided by the restaurant itself through their physical environments, such as the decorations, sound and lighting, will play a determining role when consumer make their choice in the selection eating place. This shows how eating places play a role in selecting eating. Selection of eating places has become an integral part of people's lives. This is because people have changed their attitudes about food and increased disposable income (Alom, 2019). Therefore, eating out takes typically place in

eating place, which has become an essential part of our daily lifestyles. An eating place offers a place to relax and enjoy the company of family, friends and business associates become more demanding from the customers (Walker, 2017). Thus, this study proposed three research objectives to explain the phenomenon.

1. To examine the relationship between source credibility and selection of eating places.
2. To examine the viral content that will affect the selection of eating places.
3. To examine the relationship between trust and selection of eating places.

## **Significance of the Study**

### **Generation Z**

This study was significant for Generation Z. Since Generation Z were significant contributors to the selection of eating places, they looked at User Generated Content (UGC), such as factors affecting selection of eating places. Generation Z needs to focus on the sources they visit. Thus, this study can help Generation Z be more sensitive about selecting a clean dining area and more concerned about the condition of the dining room and its environment. This will make Generation Z more confident in selecting an eating place.

### **Future researcher**

This study can help future researchers overcome the barriers Generation Z faced in selecting places to eat, in addition to providing valuable information to them. Therefore, they can understand the importance of UGC in making a decision. In addition, this study can also be an appropriate guideline for those who intend to select suitable and exciting places to eat in the future.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Source Credibility**

Source credibility is a valuable source for consumers to seek information about the quality of services or goods (Hudson et al., 2015). Generation Z is more likely to pay attention to the shared material on the internet if they feel the content is of good quality or the sources that they are reading are trustworthy (Dedeoglu, 2019). This is because Generation Z are more likely to create strong connections with sites on the internet that they find beneficial and convenient for them to use ( Patwary et al., 2022). Generation Z likes to believe and trust everything on the internet, especially review about something new or trendy such as viral cafés or restaurants. Therefore, the role of UGC can impact Generation Z's perspective on the sources, which are influenced by source credibility in choosing products or services to purchase (Salehi-Esfahani et al., 2016).

Generation Z take UGC as something important for them so that they know the place they will visit is trustworthy. Thus, the content shared about new eating places that are easy to understand, reliable, and persuasive can persuade Generation Z to choose the eating place. Salehi-Esfahani et al. (2016) mentioned that people would place a higher value on the usefulness of a review if they consider it reliable (high in knowledge and trustworthiness). Further, through the reviews shared, Generation Z will likely form a bond with those who share a similar understanding.

### **Viral Content**

Viral content would be any type of online content that spreads at an incredible rate. Views, likes, shares, and comments on viral posts typically achieve massive reach and high engagement on social media. The term "viral" is slang for spreading social media material (Gifty M, 2020). The production of viral content is famous among social media eating place as

a communication strategy. The source of viral material is frequently important because it gives the potential to the eating place to create engaging social media content. Therefore, business owner of eating place is encouraged to create highly contagious or viral material that has the potential to increase the participation of Generation Z. Viral content is content that has been shared repeatedly by social media users and has a high virality score value compared to other content (Deza and Parikh, 2015).

Generation Z relies more on viral content when making decisions. According to Liu et al. (2007), a good UGC can assist Generation Z in gaining an unbiased understanding of a product in making a decision. In addition, Patwary (2022) mentioned that Generation Z is more reliant on content created by other users, particularly on social media. Thus, Generation Z will look for prior information before deciding to choose eating place.

Generation Z is more inclined to base their decisions on previous experiences, such as viral material, rather than gathering knowledge for the first time to make an informed selection about where to eat.

### **Trust**

Generation Z is more likely to trust User Generated Content (UGC) in the selection of eating places. Since not all UGC is helpful to consumers, they look toward professional or credible content to make the selection of eating places (Ding, Veeman, & Adamowicz, 2015). UGC is effectively meaningful in choosing eating place when the consumers trust the content. By having reliable content or resources, Generation Z will be more confident to make their own decisions in the selection of eating places. Trust on social media also plays an important role when deciding to choose an eating place (Ding, Veeman, & Adamowicz, 2015).

When Generation Z trusts a brand, they believe that the food is high quality. Moreover, by maintaining a high level of food quality, consumers perceive trust as an essential component in the selection of eating places (Sung Ho Han, Bang Nguyen, Timothy J. Lee, 2015). UGC with high ratings and pictures culminated in the highest trust perceptions (Cheol Woo Park, Ian Sutherland, Seul Ki Lee, 2021). So, trust has a positive impact on the effectiveness of Generation Z in the selection of eating places (Cheol Woo Park, Ian Sutherland, Seul Ki Lee, 2021). By having reliable content, Generation Z will be more confident in creating their motives when choosing a place to eat.

### **Selection of Eating Place**

Eating place selection criteria are the most important attributes that Generation Z uses in deciding where to dine-out (Contributor, 2021). A good eating place can be defined as sets a high standard for its food quality and ensures that consumerting a high standard for its food quality and ensuring that consumers receive the same quality with every meal (Contributor, 2021). Serving quality food can earn the restaurant a good reputation and compel the consumer to return for repeat visits. Generation Z may apply diverse criteria in evaluating the importance of attributes affecting their eating place choice.

Generation Z is likely to use UGC as their reference when selecting a good eating place. UGC, such as online reviews and social media, provides a wide range of valuable textual information. It has become a potential way to understand Generation Z demands in selecting eating places (. This is because UGC is written by people who already have experience dining at the eatery that Generation Z is interested to know more about. Therefore, this has made Generation Z rely more on UGC when selecting the eating place.

## Research Hypotheses

This study investigates the relationship among these discussed variables. Based on the literature discussed, the hypotheses of this study were summarized in the following manner:

- H<sub>1</sub>** Source credibility has a positive relationship with the selection of eating place
- H<sub>2</sub>** Viral content has a positive relationship with the selection of eating places.
- H<sub>3</sub>** Trust has a positive relationship with the selection of eating place

## Research Framework

Figure 1 below shows the research framework used for this study.

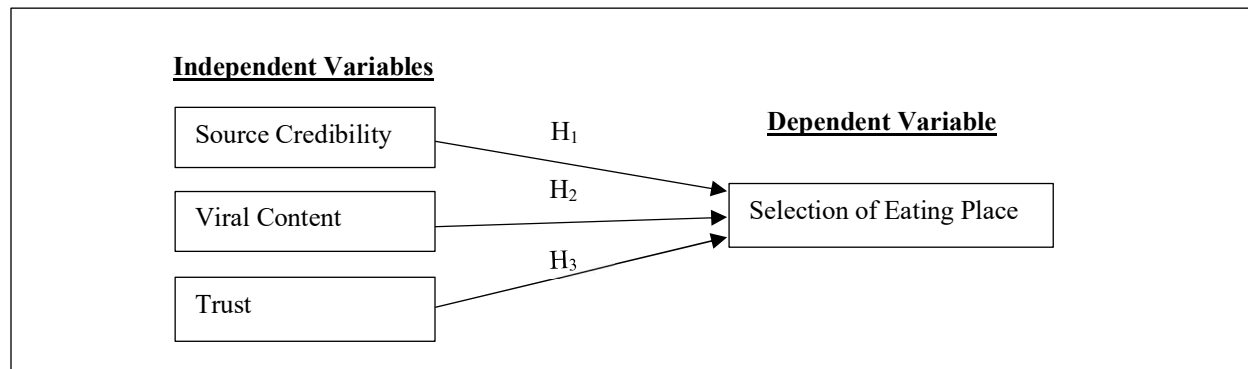


Figure 21: Research Framework

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The researchers applied a quantitative research approach. The responses in this study are obtained using a questionnaire. Generation Z was chosen as the representative group of people that gives opinion on the role of User Generated Content (UGC) in the selection of eating places. They were selected because they rely on social media as their primary source in the selection of eating places

The questionnaire gathered all general information about the role of UGC in selecting an eating place among Generation Z. The three sections designed for the questionnaires in this research are Sections A, B and C. The first component of the questionnaire, Section A, contains the respondent's demographic information. Section B was about the independent variables, which is the role of UGC. These include source credibility, viral content and trust. Section C, on the other hand, focuses on the dependent variable, which is the selection of eating place.

### Data Collection

Data collection that the researcher used in this research is primary data. Data collection for this research was through an online questionnaire. The complete questionnaire was distributed via social media such as Google Form, WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. The questionnaire was distributed in March 2022.

Respondents were suitable for the research criteria were randomly selected to answer the online questionnaires. The main criteria for getting the respondent are those Generation Z, who use or refer to UGC in selecting an eating place. Therefore, filter questions were provided in section B. Only qualified and meet the study's criteria are allowed to complete the questionnaire.

## Sampling

The sampling method that has been chosen is non-probability sampling using a Convenience Sampling Technique. The convenience sampling technique should be used in this study since it may save the researchers time collecting the data. Convenience sampling is the easiest method because participants are selected based on availability and willingness to participate.

## Data Analysis

The tool that is used in this study to analyse the data collected is known as Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). SPSS is a software that can explain the relationship between independent and dependent variables in terms of descriptive analysis and correlation. The software processes large dataset efficiently and helps researchers to perform complex statistical analysis. Therefore, the data analysis techniques, such as frequency, descriptive, reliability, and correlation, are presented in the next section.

## FINDINGS

### Result of Frequency Analysis

Table 1 below shows the Frequency Analysis of this study

Table 63: Frequency Analysis

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	149	38.8
Female	235	61.2
<b>Age</b>		
10 – 15 years old	17	4.4
16 – 20 years old	86	22.4
21 – 25 years old	281	73.2
<b>Races</b>		
Malay	353	91.9
Chinese	15	3.9
Indian	15	3.9
Others	1	0.3
<b>Occupation</b>		
Primary school student	14	3.6
High school student	54	14.1
University student	233	60.7
Employee	80	20.8
Unemployed	3	0.8
<b>Does UGC influence your choice in selection of eating place?</b>		
Yes	353	91.9
No	31	8.1
<b>Do you have experience in using UGC in selection of eating place?</b>		
Yes	309	80.5
No	75	19.5



**I like to select the eating place that UGC has recommended.**

Strongly disagree	1	0.3
Disagree	1	0.3
Somewhat disagree	4	1.0
Neutral	29	7.6
Somewhat agree	58	15.1
Agree	115	29.9
Strongly agree	176	45.8

Table 1 above shows the gender distribution where most respondents were female 61.2% (n = 235) while the rest were male with 38.8% (n = 149). Besides that, the highest number of respondents were from 21 to 25, with 73.2% (n = 281). The second highest number of respondents are from 16 to 20 years old, with 22.4% (n = 86). At the same time, the lowest number of respondents are from 10 to 15 years old, with 4.4% (n = 17). Most of the respondents were Malay, with 91.9% (n = 353). The remaining respondents were Indian and Chinese, which consist of the same number of respondents, which is 3.9% (n = 15), respectively. Followed by Other with 0.3% (n = 1). Moreover, the majority of the respondents were university students, which consists of 60.7% (n = 233), while the second highest of the respondents were an employee, with 20.8% (n = 80). After that, 14.1% (n= 54) and 3.6% (n=14) were high school and primary school students respectively. Lastly, the percentage coverage for unemployed respondents was 0.8% (n = 3).

The above results showed that all respondents answered Yes which is 353 respondents (91.9%). While, the remaining total of respondents are 31 (8.1%) were reported No at the time of survey. Table 1 also showed the does User Generated Content (UGC) influenced your choice in selection of eating place.

Table 1 above also showed the distribution of do you have experience using User Generated Content (UGC) in selecting an eating place. The results showed that all respondents answered Yes, which is 309 respondents (80.5%). While the remaining total respondents ,75 (19.5%) reported No at the time of the survey.

Lastly, Table 1 shows the selection of eating places recommended by User Generated Content (UGC). The above results showed that all respondents answered strongly agree, which is 45.8% (n = 176). The second highest answered by the respondents was agree, which is 29.9% (n = 115). After that, somewhat agreed to select the eating place that User Generated Content (UGC) has recommended were 15.1% (n = 58). Next, 7.6% (n = 29) answered was neutral and 1.0% (n = 4) was somewhat disagree. The percentage of strongly disagree and disagree were the same 0.3% ( n = 1) respectively.

**Result of Descriptive Analysis**

Table 64: Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Source Credibility	I believe popular User Generated Content (UGC) sites provide me with helpful information in selection of eating place.	6.16	0.949

	I believe the number of User Generated Content (UGC) represents the knowledge in evaluating the eating place.	6.13	0.993
	I believe the longer a User Generated Content (UGC) has registered on a review about the eating place.	6.14	0.996
	I rely on the User Generated Content (UGC) which other readers believe useful in selection of eating place	6.08	1.070
<b>Viral Content</b>	I believe a high perceive value of viral content has a positive effect on User Generated Content in selection of eating place	6.15	0.985
	I believe viral content can be an interesting attention of User Generated Content (UGC) in selection eating place.	6.20	0.945
	I believe viral content gives me positive influence in selection of eating place	6.17	1.014
<b>Trust</b>	I think that Use Generated Content (UGC) I frequently read is trustworthy and safe in selection of eating place.	6.14	1.016
	I consider that User Generated Content (UGC) is guarantee in selection of eating place	6.11	1.083
	I believe that User Generated Content (UGC) I frequently read is honest to its customers in selection of eating place.	6.12	1.034
	Overall, User Generated Content (UGC) I visited can be trusted in selection of eating place.	6.13	1.024
<b>Selection of Eating Place</b>	I like to dine at eating place for the novelty of experiences from User Generated Content (UGC).	6.14	1.013
	I like to visit eating place recommended by User Generated content (UGC) to impress people.	6.11	1.075
	I like to know eating place from User Generated Content (UGC) that make good impression on others.	6.15	0.991

Table 2 shows the frequency, mean and standard deviation for the items used to measure the source credibility. Four questions were measured, with the highest mean of 6.16 for item SC1 on the statement “I believe popular User Generated Content (UGC) sites provide me with the helpful information in the selection of eating place”. There are of 363 respondents who somewhat agree, agree and strongly agree on item SC1. Otherwise, the lowest mean, 6.08 was for item SC4. There are of 34 respondents who neutral, somewhat disagree, disagree and

strongly disagree with the statement “I rely on the User Generated Content (UGC) which other readers believe useful in the selection of eating place”. The mean values for the other two items for SC2 and SC3 were 6.13 and 6.14, respectively.

Table 2 also shows the frequency, mean and standard deviation for the items used to measure the viral content. Three questions were measured with the highest mean of 6.20 for item VC2 on the statement “I believe viral content can be an interesting attention of User Generated Content (UGC) in the selection of eating place”. There were a total of 360 respondents who somewhat agreed, agreed and strongly agreed, on item VC2. Otherwise, the lowest mean, 6.15 was for item VC1. There are of 30 respondents who neutral, somewhat disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. The mean for VC3, “I believe viral content gives me positive influence in the selection of eating place” were 6.17.

Moreover, Table 2 shows the frequency, mean and standard deviation for the items used to measure trust. is a total of 353 respondents who somewhat agree, agree and strongly agree on the items T1. There were four questions Four questions were measured with the highest mean of 6.14 for the item T1 on the statement “I think that User Generated Content (UGC) I frequently read is trustworthy and safe in the selection of eating place”. Otherwise, the lowest mean, with 6.11, was for T2. There were 39 respondents who neutral, somewhat disagreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement that “I consider that User Generated Content (UGC) is a guarantee in the selection of eating place”. The mean values for the other two items for T3 and T4 were 6.12 and 6.13, respectively.

Lastly, the frequency, mean and standard deviation for the items were used to measure the selection of eating places. Three questions were measured with the highest mean of 6.15 for the item SEP3 on the statement “I like to know eating place from User Generated Content (UGC) that make a good impression on others.” There are a total of 356 respondents who are somewhat agree, agree and strongly agree on the items SEP3. Otherwise, the lowest mean with 6.11 was for SEP2. There were 35 respondents who neutral, somewhat disagreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement “I like to visit eating recommended by User Generated Content (UGC).” The mean for SEP1, “I like to dine at eating place for the novelty of experience from User Generated Content (UGC)” were 6.14.

### Result of Reliability Analysis

Table 3 below shows the result of the reliability analysis.

Table 65: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Source Credibility	4	0.934
Viral Content	3	0.911
Trust	4	0.955
Selection of Eating Place	3	0.921

Table 3 shows that Cronbach’s alpha values of the questionnaire were above the excellent reliability level of 0.90, with values in the range from 0.934 to 0.955. Source credibility has been shown to have n excellent reliability with four items ( $\alpha = 0.934$ ). Viral content similarly showed very good reliability with 3 items and the Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.911. After that, trust also showed very good reliability with 4 items ( $\alpha = 0.955$ ). Next, the dependent variable, which is a selection of eating place results, was shown to be very good reliability with 3 items, and the Cronbach’s Alpha value was 0.921. To summarise, all of the variables included in the study have very good reliability and are acceptable. Thus, the data were considered suitable for further analysis.

## Result of Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 4 below shows the Pearson Correlation Analysis.

Table 66: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis	P-Value	Result (Supported/ Not Supported)
H <sub>1</sub> : Source credibility has a positive relationship with selection of eating place.	0.824	H <sub>1</sub> is supported.
H <sub>2</sub> : Viral content has a positive relationship with selection of eating place.	0.843	H <sub>2</sub> is supported.
H <sub>3</sub> : Trust has a positive relationship with selection of eating place.	0.869	H <sub>3</sub> is supported.

Table 4 shows that source credibility and selection of eating places were significantly correlated at  $r = 0.824$ ,  $p > 0.01$ . Similarly, the result shows a statistically significant correlation between viral content and selection of eating place with  $r = 0.843$ ,  $p > 0.01$ . The third correlation is between trust and selection of eating places. The result also shows a statistically significant correlation between trust and selection of eating places with  $r = 0.869$ ,  $p > 0.01$ . According to the results, all the hypotheses were supported at a 0.01 significance level.

## DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATION

In general, this study has extensively researched the role of user-generated content (UGC) in the selection of eating places. The study has figured out the relationship between three variables: source credibility, viral content and trust with the selection of eating place.

The research findings are also essential for future research continuation. Thus, it is recommended that future researchers can use many platforms to influence the role of User Generated Content (UGC) in the selection of eating place among Generation Z. For examples, social media; Instagram and You Tube platforms since those platforms provides a positive feedbacks or review from previous customer experiences. Besides, future researchers should carry out this research topic in the selection of eating places among Generation Z by applying or focusing on various variables that may have a high impact or effect on the role of UGC's intention, which could lead to the selection of eating place. Future researchers should conduct the research topic focusing on the role of UGC in the selection of eating places among Generation Z.

## CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between source credibility, viral content and trust in the selection of eating places. Generation Z was selected as the respondents of this study. The data from the survey was analysed using the SPSS and frequency analysis, descriptive analysis, reliability analysis and Pearson Correlation analysis. According to the results, all independent variables, source credibility, viral content and trust, significantly and positively influence the selection of eating place. Thus, all the hypothesis such as H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>3</sub> stated are accepted.

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