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LIKE, SHARES, AND TOURIST SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR: THE POWER OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT IN GREEN TRAVEL

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Abstract:

The emergence of new technologies has led to the rise of a new phase of social media with special interactivity features. Today, social media has become an important resource for individuals to gain information, communicate and create engage with others. User-generated content (UGC) is one of the methods of communication on social media platforms where users can interact with each other using various interactivity features provided by social media. Literature review indicates that UGC plays an important role in shaping individual behaviour decisions. Nevertheless, in the case of sustainability behaviour, research about the influence of UGC on tourists' responsible environmental behaviour is relatively new, insufficient, and requires further attention. Hence, this study was conducted to examine how UGC can influence tourists' environmental concerns, environmental attitudes and responsible behaviour. Based on a cross-sectional design, this study was conducted among local tourists in the area of Klang Valley. Through a self-administered survey, a total of 259 responses were collected from individuals who are actively involved in nature-based activities. The Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyse the research model and test the hypothesis. The research findings discovered that UGC is significant as a predictor of tourists' environmental concerns, environmental attitudes and environmentally responsible behaviour. Significantly, the results provide valuable insights for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), tourism marketers, and policymakers about the need for strategic integration of social media and UGC in sustainability campaigns that could contribute to the SDG 11 sustainability cities and communities. In conclusion, this study indicates the importance of social media integration in promoting sustainable behaviour among tourists.

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Introduction

Nowadays, that the main challenge faced by sustainable tourism is irresponsible behaviour at cultural and natural destinations, among both citizens and tourists (Sultan et al., 2021). Due to this concern, the tourism authority, including Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), are encouraged to have better understanding about the motivation factors that can increase responsible behaviour among tourists. Basically, environmental responsible behaviour can be explained as individuals' actions to support sustainability practices such as recycling, replanting, avoiding single-use plastic, supporting local businesses, raising awareness, and educating others to practice sustainability. When it comes to sustainability education, in this digital era, it is carried out through various social media platforms where tourists can share their travel experiences through text, photos, or videos by utilising various social media's interactive features. By sharing and uploading experiences on social media platforms, particularly associated to sustainability practices, it can help to create awareness among other internet users. Nevertheless, consistent synergized collaboration between the stakeholders, including the authority, tourism operators, associations, DMOs, and communities is essential in examining the awareness of environmental issues among tourists. For example, the application of new technologies to monitor visitors' behaviour at tourism destinations, employment of digital media for effective marketing and promotion of sustainability, enforcement of rules and regulations, encouragement of social influences, increasing the public campaigns, and many others. In essence, the more tourists have a strong sense of sustainability, the more likely they are to adopt responsible behaviour and prefer to choose eco-friendly destinations for their vacations (Mohamad et al., 2025).

It can be said that studies on tourists' green travel behaviour have become increasingly significant, as they continue attract attention from scholars across various fields, particularly in tourism and environmental sustainability. There are several terms of responsible behaviour that are also regularly used interchangeably including sustainable behaviour, eco-friendly, pro-environmental behaviour, green tourism, green holiday, and green behaviour (Khan, 2024; Nowacki et al., 2023; Prayag et al., 2025; Sadiq et al., 2022). Nevertheless, discussion on factors that can influence tourists towards environmental responsible behaviour remain limited and needs extensive evaluation from various perspectives (Nowacki et al., 2023). Todays, due to its interactive features, social media has become significant platform in promoting sustainable tourism and encouraging responsible behaviour. It has transformed traditional communication known as word-of-mouth (WOM) into modern form of communication namely as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Gulati, 2021; Horng et al., 2024). In tourism, eWOM

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is associated with tourists' attitude and behaviour to share information and their travel experiences via social media platforms, whether in the form of text, images, or videos (Mohamad et al., 2022; Pourfakhimi et al., 2019). Basically, eWOM refers to interpersonal and non-commercial communication that generated and shared among internet users regarding their experiences with a service, brand, destination, or organization (Alam et al., 2024). Since tourism is intangible in nature, eWOM is essential for publicity and usually known as a common strategy for influencing tourists' attitudes and behaviours (Kumar et al., 2025).

Previous literature has discussed the influence of eWOM and user-generated content (UGC) interchangeably (Maha & Redouane, 2024). Generally, both eWOM and UGC involve activities such as sharing information, viewpoints, and perspectives through digital platforms (Mahat & Hanafiah, 2020; Mohamad et al., 2025). The content of eWOM includes information and individual experience, whether positive or negative (Mohamad et al., 2025). From tourism perspectives, information shared usually related to tourism products, services, amenities, attractions or facilities provided in a destination or tourist attraction. It is widely accessible to users across various internet platforms. Meanwhile, UGC refers to content published online, including creative material such as written or visual media. Notably, UGC must be created by internet users who are not acting in any professional position (Maha & Redouane, 2024). Commonly, the information gathered through UGC can easily shape tourist's perceptions and behaviours toward tourism destinations, and attractions (Maha & Redouane, 2024). This is because peers' recommendations and experiences are found more convincing than information provided by tourism operators (Mohamad et al., 2022).

Even though UGC has been widely recognized as a predictor of tourists' decision-making, its influence on tourists' environmental concern, environmental attitudes, and environmentally responsible behaviour remains inadequately studied. Recent studies emphasize that research on UGC and tourism sustainability often focuses on marketing effectiveness, destination image, travel choice, and visit intention, rather than examining the psychological mechanisms that lead to pro-environmental behaviour (Janik & Ryszko, 2026; Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2018). There are also limited empirical studies on how UGC triggers to individuals' ecological awareness and responsible behaviour (Eminov et al., 2026). Although earlier study in tourism highlights that UGC has strong relationship with environmental concerns and attitudes, more specific studies are required to examine these relationships across different cultural and geographic settings (Sultan et al., 2021). Hence, it is necessary to analyse how UGC through social media can attract tourist's intention on sustainability issues and ultimately influence their attitudes and responsible behaviour. In a nutshell, the aim of this study is to determine the influence of UGC on environmental concern and environmental attitude, and how these, in turn, inspire environmentally responsible behaviour among Malaysian tourists in Klang Valley who are actively involved in nature activities.

Literature Review

Social Influence Theory

Social Influence Theory (SIT) explains how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours can be changed or influenced when they interact with others or respond to social pressures, including compliance, social norms, and conformity (Davlembayeva & Papagiannidis, 2026). Originally, formulated by Kelman (1953), SIT provides a framework to explain the conditions under which social influence can change individual's attitudes and behaviours. The theory proposes three

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main processes through which social influence is accepted by individuals, namely compliance, identification, and internalisation. From a tourism perspective, UGC is often recognized as one of most powerful tools of social influence, as tourists perceive content shared by peers on social media to be more credible and trustworthy than commercial content (Mohamad et al., 2022; Nawawi et al., 2024). Typically, UGC is disseminated through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. When tourists engage with peers' recommendation such as staying at green accommodations, using eco-friendly transportation, or promoting preservation activities, these behaviours become socially reinforced, increasing the likelihood that tourists will adopt the similar attitudes and environmentally responsible behaviours (Khan, 2024; Prayag et al., 2025).

In the context of this study, SIT is adapted to explains how UGC affects tourists' psychologically. First, UGC enhance awareness of environmental issues through peer communication which in turn enhances environmental concern. Second, UGC develop tourists' environmental attitudes by framing sustainability as a socially valued practice. Finally, UGC encourages tourists' environmentally responsible behaviour, as tourists conform to perceived social norms and connect their behaviour with the sustainable practices recognized by their online communities.

Responsible Environmental Behaviour (REB)

Responsible tourism is one of the tourism segments that has emerged from the sustainability concept. Align with the principals of sustainability, the aim of responsible environmental behaviour (REB) is to conserve the environment at the tourism destination by fostering responsible behaviour among tourists while engaging in tourism activities (Gonda and Rátz, 2023). Beside environmental purposes, the main purpose of REB is also to support the economic ecosystem of the local community and protect the authenticity of their culture as a unique identity (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2024). Truthly, the development of responsible environmental behaviour is a complex process. It requires commitment from all parties, including the authorities, operators, tourists, and the community consistently. Though, the most challenging is to educate and create awareness among individual tourists to practice responsible behaviour continuously. It is worth noting that practicing REB can provide valuable experiences for tourists, enhance the livelihood of residents and benefit the nation in the long run.

Common REB practiced by tourists include choosing eco-friendly transportation, stay at green accommodation, avoiding wastage, and support recycling program at the destination. However, there are also issues from a management perspective, where many tourism operators today do not fully implement the principles of sustainability in their operations (Aytekin et al., 2023; Mihalic, 2016; Mohd Rasdi et al., 2022). This includes the lack of application of green concepts in hotel operations and insufficient waste management practices in the food and beverages industry. This may be due to a lack of knowledge and awareness, limited in-house expertise, low interest in sustainability, low enforcement, insufficient budget, and many others (Hussain et al., 2024). Empirical studies consistently emphasize that REB is influenced by environmental attitude and environmental concern, with UGC on social media being the main driving factor (Jie & Xueli, 2024; Kaur et al., 2022; Sultan et al., 2021). This aligns with previous findings, which indicate that Generation Z shows more interest in sustainable practices and environmental preservation than other generations (Nowacki et al., 2023; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2024).

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Notably, educating people about REB through the enforcement of rules and regulations will lead to a better future. This ensures that tourists take responsibility to protect the natural values of tourism destinations and minimizing the negative impacts during their trips (Gonda & Rátz, 2023). Since the concept of sustainability and REB is broad and diverse, it is necessary to emphasize the motivation factors that can encourage REB among tourists (Nowacki et al., 2023). Moreover, different cultural backgrounds and generations demonstrate the different levels of perceptions and acceptance towards REB (Nowacki et al., 2023; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2024). Therefore, tourism operators, marketers, and relevant authorities are expected to develop appropriate policies and marketing strategies to promote REB among tourists and local communities in support of long-term sustainability practices.

Social Media

In this digital era, social media serves as a significant platform for users to share opinions, information, experiences, and recommendations (Aboalganam et al., 2025; Sultan et al., 2021; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Commonly, tourists tend to express their perceptions and experiences regarding tourism services, attractions, accommodations, and destinations through various social media platforms whether in the form of text, photos, or video. This sharing, in turn, will influence the decision of future tourists whether either positively or negatively (Wibisono & Lale, 2024; Yuan et al., 2025). Traditionally, social media is defined as 'a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content' (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In addition, Cohen (2019) explained social media according to its nature and characteristics. First, social media incorporates a variety of formats such as photos, videos, text, and audio. Second, social media users are allowed to have cross-interactions between different platforms through activities such as messaging, sharing, and commenting. Third, social media provides different levels of communication, such as one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many. Fourth, social media able extend user meetings by creating real-time online events, expanding online interactions to offline interactions, and supplementing live events online. Hence, this study defines social media as a group of Internet-based applications that are developed based on the ideology and technology that allow users to interact, communicate, share ideas and experiences freely and globally (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

User-Generated Content (UGC)

User-Generated Content (UGC) refers to a type of multimedia content, including videos, images, reviews, hashtags, ratings, and comments that are voluntarily posted by individual across various social media platforms, such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and TikTok (Aboalganam et al., 2025; Musto & Dahanayake, 2022; Sigala, 2024). From tourism perspective, UGC helps minimize mistakes in tourists' decision-making before they engage in the hedonic experiences. This is due to tourism sector that is intangible in nature. Due to that, tourists have a high level of dependence on social media content posted by previous tourists as they prefer to review others' experiences regarding a particular tourism destination or attraction (Croy et al., 2019; Nawawi et al., 2024; Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2018). Moreover, tourist perceive that information shared by fellow tourists on social media is more honest and trustworthy than information provided by marketers (Mohamad et al., 2022).

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Through UGC on social media, environmental awareness campaigns can now be circulated creatively in interactive mode and reached to the right segment. Tourists can share their experiences, information, and encourages others through various formats on social media, such as videos, photos, and live session (Yan et al., 2024; Shetu, 2024). Generally, high engagement on social media can enhance individual's concern on environmental issues and thus influence their REB (Sultan et al., 2021; Yaling et al., 2025). Moreover, UGC is usually associated with authentic and trusted information than company advertisements since the information shared comes from individuals' real-life experiences (Azhar et al., 2022; Nawawi et al., 2024; Sinh & Thai, 2024). Previous studies have discussed that social media content including UGC can significantly influence individual's attitude and behaviour towards environmental (Jie & Xueli, 2024; Maia et al., 2024; Lacárcel et al., 2024; Sultan et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: UGC has a significant influence on environmental concern (P_{21})
H2: UGC has a significant influence on environmental attitude (P_{23})
H3: UGC has a significant influence on responsible environmental behaviour (P_{24})

Environmental Concern (EC), Environmental Attitude (EA) and Responsible Environmental Behaviour (REB)

In developing responsible environmental behaviour (REB), individual emotional attachment to the environment plays an important role. Basically, environmental concern (EC) is a part of humane values in individuals especially when they tend to adopt REB (Sadiq et al., 2022). It explained as how individuals are aware of environmental problems occurring and their willingness to put effort and supporting the solution. Previous literature indicates that tourists will demonstrate their commitment to the environment including respecting local culture, protecting the habitat, and support local businesses when they have a high level of environmental concern (Jie & Xueli, 2024; Kaur et al., 2022; Sultan et al., 2021). Next, environmental attitude (EA) refers to an individual's perception or judgement toward environmental whether positive or negative which ultimately influences their REB (Kaur et al., 2022; Milfont & Duckitt, 2010). Empirical evidence clearly states that tourists with EC and EA will have a positive attitude and responsible behaviour towards the environmental (Khan, 2024; Nowacki et al., 2023; Sadiq et al., 2022; Sultan et al., 2021).

Previous literature suggests that EC and EA is important in determining tourists' eco-friendly behaviour, whereby tourists with higher levels of EC and EA prefer to practise REB, such as choosing eco-friendly transportation, staying at green accommodation, and practising green tourism during their visit (Kaur et al., 2022; Khan, 2024; Prayag et al., 2025; Sultan et al., 2021). On top of that, generation Z is found more conscious on environmental preservation than other generations (Khan, 2024; Prayag et al., 2025; Sadiq et al., 2022). Nevertheless, studies on tourist's concern and attitudes towards the environment and its connection with sustainable behaviour remain limited and need thorough analysis from future studies (Nowacki et al., 2023). Hence, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

H4: EC has a significant influence on tourist's REB (P_{14})
H5: EA has a significant influence on tourist's REB (P_{34})

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Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below exhibits the conceptual framework of this study which indicates the connection between EC, UGC, EA and REB.

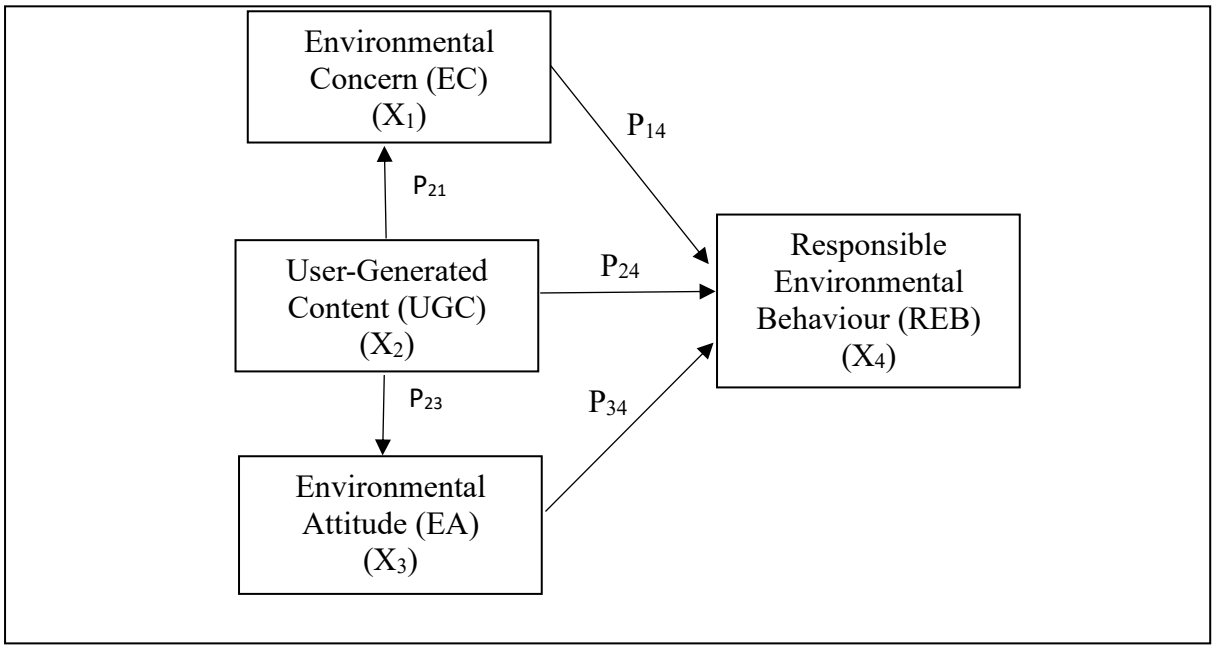


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Jie and Xueli (2024)

Research Methodology

Research Design and Sampling

To conduct this study, a cross-sectional design was employed where respondents' perception and behaviour towards green tourism were assessed once. The respondents for this study consisted of local tourists in Klang Valley, focusing those who are actively involved in nature tourism activities. Convenience sampling technique was employed since the target sample for this study was temporary, mobile, and lacked a formal sampling frame. Probability sampling techniques were considered impractical as the group of tourists could not be identified in advance. By applying convenience sampling technique, respondents were directly approached at the study sites, which enabled the study to get authentic experiences from those actively engaged in nature tourism activities. A total of 259 respondents with the selection determined by their accessibility and willingness to participate in the study during the data collection period.

In terms of sampling technique, a non-probability convenience sampling technique is applied whereby respondents were approached directly at the

This number reflects the actual respondents successfully recruited in the field and was not randomly chosen or based on personal preference. Additionally, this figure is considered valid for further analysis as it meets several procedures suggested by previous scholars. First, based on the G* Power procedure, 80% needs to be attained to detect R-squared (R^2) values at least

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0.25 at the significant level 0.05 (Hair et al., 2014; Kang, 2021). Thus, this study needs to collect at least 80 respondents. Next, based on the PLS-SEM procedure, every structural path appeared on the research model has to be multiplied by 10 (Hair et al., 2011). It indicates that, this study needs to access at least 50 respondents (5 structural paths x 10). Then, sample size between 100 to 200 respondents is appropriate for study with unknown and large numbers of population (Roscoe, 1975; Hair et al., 2010). Lastly, a sample size of 200 to 500 respondents is accepted for the management research category (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Research Instrument-Survey Questionnaire

The research instrument consists of two sections. Section A focused on questions about the profile demographic of respondents and other questions related to social media usage and sustainable behaviour. While section B concentrates on UGC activities, respondent's EC, EA, and REB. All items in this section were adapted from several previous studies. For construct UGC, six items were adapted from Aboalganam et al. (2025). Then, three items from Sultan et al. (2021) were used to measured construct EC. To measure construct EA and REB, four and five items were used respectively. All items for both constructs were adapted from Jie and Xueli (2024) and Sultan et al. (2021). A five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) were employed to measure all items involved.

Data Analysis

The IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to record data provided by the respondents. All data collected were analysed descriptively and inferentially. The Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed for inferential analysis. Based on PLS-SEM, this study generated the reflective measurement model and the structural model systematically.

Evaluation of Reflective Measurement Model

In the evaluation of the reflective measurement model, the four main criteria required to fulfils by this study (Hair et al., 2014). First, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) value must above 0.7. Next, the factor loadings value should above 0.708. Then, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value must be greater than 0.5 (AVE>0.5) in achieving convergent validity. Lastly, for discriminant validity, the assessment involves the evaluation of cross-loading values, the Fornell-Larcker criterion ($\sqrt{AVE} > r$), and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (HTMT< .90).

Evaluation of Structural Model

In the evaluation of the structural model, several thresholds are required to be met (Hair et al., 2014). This is including the variance inflation factor (VIF<5), the path coefficient (β) value, the t-value (t>1.96), the p-value (p<0.05), the standard error (SE), and the confidence interval at 95%. In addition, this study also assesses the value of coefficient of determination, that explains the total variance contributed by the exogenous constructs to the endogenous constructs. It is commonly known as R-squared (R^2) value. This assessment evaluates the total variance explained by exogenous constructs on the endogenous construct. The value of R^2 whether of 0.25, 0.5, and 0.7 indicates weak, moderate, and strong contributions.

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Results

Profile Demographics of Respondents

A total of 259 responses were collected from the local tourists in the Klang Valley who are actively involved in nature tourism activities. Out of the total respondents, 144 (55.6%) were female and 114 (44.4%) were male. The average age of the respondents was 24.3 years old. Analysis on education background indicate that 48.6% sample held on to a bachelor's degree, 30.1% Diploma, 10.4% Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), and 10.8% postgraduate. Besides, the majority of the respondents are Malay (65.6%), followed by Indian (13.1%), Chinese (11.2%), and Bumiputera Sabah and Sarawak (2.0%). An analysis of social media usage specifies that the most of them prefer to search for information and share travel experiences on TikTok (84.2%), followed by Instagram (78%), YouTube (53.3%), Facebook (22.4%), platform X (10.4%), and travel review forum (5%). Moreover, 88% of the respondents are found to have high trustworthiness in content shared by other internet users on social media, while 12% do not. The analysis also exposed that 93.4% of the respondents' REB was influenced by content shared on social media. Moreover, 79.2% of the respondents were willing to promote green tourism and encourage others to practice sustainable behaviour while visiting a destination through social media platforms.

Assessment of Reflective Measurement Model

The evaluation indicates that this study met all the criteria for reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity with all values are above the required thresholds. The findings found that no issues were identified, whether on factor loading (λ), Cronbach Alpha (α), CR, and AVE for all constructs involved. It is indicated by factor loading values for all constructs exceeding the threshold value of 0.708 ($\lambda > 0.708$), indicator reliability values greater than 0.50 (IR > 0.50), a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 ($\alpha > 0.7$), and CR greater values exceeding 0.7 (CR > 0.7). In a nutshell, these results exhibit that all items measured in this study are reliable, have good internal consistency, and belong to their respective constructs. Moreover, this study met the requirement of convergent validity when the AVE value is greater than 0.5, indicating that the items measured have a strong relationship with their construct. Table 1 illustrated the evaluation of the reflective measurement model.

Table 1: Reflective Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	λ (>.708)	IR (>.501)	(α)	CR	AVE
Environmental Responsible Behaviour	Behaviour_1	0.881	0.777	0.927	0.930	0.774
	Behaviour_2	0.895	0.801			
	Behaviour_3	0.863	0.745			
	Behaviour_4	0.921	0.848			
	Behaviour_5	0.835	0.697			
Environmental Attitude	Env_Att1	0.928	0.861	0.941	0.942	0.850
	Env_Att2	0.937	0.877			
	Env_Att3	0.928	0.861			
	Env_Att4	0.895	0.801			

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Environmental Concern	Env_Concern1	0.926	0.857	0.931	0.932	0.880
	Env_Concern2	0.951	0.905			
	Env_Concern3	0.936	0.876			
User-Generated Content	UGC_1	0.848	0.719	0.921	0.923	0.718
	UGC_2	0.848	0.720			
	UGC_3	0.858	0.736			
	UGC_4	0.868	0.754			
	UGC_5	0.863	0.745			
	UGC_6	0.797	0.634			

Table 2 and Table 3 demonstrate the evaluation of discriminant validity based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The results verify that each construct in this study is unique and different from the other when the square root of the AVE value is greater than the correlation value between constructs (√AVE > r) and the correlation value between constructs is less than 0.9 (HTMT.90 <0.90) (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 2: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Constructs	1	2	3	4
Environmental Attitude (1)	**0.922**			
Environmental Concern (2)	0.875	**0.938**		
Responsible Behaviour (3)	0.839	0.821	**0.880**	
User-Generated Content (4)	0.659	0.673	0.674	**0.847**

Notes: The values in bold are AVE square root values

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

Constructs	1	2	3	4
Environmental Attitude (1)				
Environmental Concern (2)	0.835			
Responsible Behaviour (3)	0.795	0.880		
User-Generated Content (4)	0.605	0.724	0.730	

Notes: HTMT <0.9

Assessment of Structural Model

The evaluation of the structural model indicates that constructs of UGC, environmental concern, and environmental attitude have Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values less than 5 (VIF<5). The highest value is shown in the relationship between EC and REB (VIF=4.602). This finding shows that no collinearity exists among all the constructs involved in explaining REB. The analysis on coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that 75% (R^2=0.750) of the variance in the endogenous construct (REB) is explained by the exogenous constructs, EC and EA, while UGC alone contributes a total variance of 45.2% (R^2=0.452) to EC and 43.4% (R^2=0.434) to the EA. This result summarized that the level of strength of UGC to EC and EA is moderate while the combination of UGC, EC and EA show strong contribution in explaining REB.

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Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesis, a bootstrapping procedure using the PLS-SEM technique with 5,000 samples was employed. The analysis indicates that all the exogenous constructs were found to have a significant influence on the endogenous construct. First, UGC found has a significant impact on EC (β = 0.673, t=12.65, p<0.005, CI[0.558,0.765]). Similarly, UGC is also found has a significant impact on EA (β = 0.659, t=12.30 p<0.005, CI[0.543,0.752]). These results are supported by previous studies that also discovered that social media content posted by internet users can influence tourists' concern and attitude on environmental issues (Shetu, 2024; Sultan et al., 2021; Yaling et al., 2025). Thus, Hypothesis 1 (P_{21}) and Hypothesis 2 (P_{23}) are accepted.

In addition, the analysis proves that UGC is also significant in determining tourist's REB (β = 0.163, t=3.73, p<0.005, CI[0.078, 0.250]). In this digital era, individual perceived UGC as credible, trustworthy, and relatable marketing tool rather than traditional marketing as it provides authentic and trusted information which can form tourists' awareness, attitude, and behavioural intentions. Thereby UGC can influence individual in decision-making and green tourism practices. A study by Liao (2024) found that consumers' trust and behavioural intentions significantly influenced by UGC due to its information is authentic and reliable. Moreover, previous studies have revealed that information shared on social media related to sustainable practice can influence tourists' behavioural intention to engage in similar behaviour and motivate them to adopt REB (Confente & Vigolo, 2018; Nguyen & Tong, 2022; Yuan et al., 2025). Hence, Hypothesis 3 (P_{24}) is accepted.

Next, EC has a significant impact on REB (β = 0.301, t=3.39, p<0.005, CI[0.125,0.478]). Consistent with this result is studies by Jie and Xuely (2024) and Sultan et al. (2021), which have also found that individuals' responsible environmental behaviour would increase with the increment of their consciousness and attitude towards the environment. Similarly, a study by Sadiq et al. (2022) also revealed that tourists with a high level of environmental concern would show a positive attitude toward the environment and tend to choose an eco-friendly hotel during their visit. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 (P_{14}) proposed in this study is accepted. Lastly, this study discovered that EA has a significant influence on tourists' REB (β = 0.468, t=4.95, p<0.005, CI[0.280, 0.653]). Related to this finding is the result from Sadiq et al. (2022), which indicates that tourists with a high environmental attitude would exhibit a positive eco-friendly behaviour. Moreover, result of this study also concurs with the study by Prayag et al. (2025), which found that tourists among Generation Z are more likely to engage with the environment and perform sustainable practices. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 (P_{34}) is accepted. Table 4 below summarize the results of hypothesis testing using path analysis. While Figure 2 illustrates the structural model generated by the SmartPLS.

Table 4: Summary of Results Hypothesis Testing

H	Path	Relationship	β	t	p	*95% CI*	Results
H1	P_{21}	UGC -> EC	0.673	12.65	0.00*	[0.558,0.765]	Accepted
H2	P_{23}	UGC -> EA	0.659	12.30	0.00*	[0.543,0.752]	Accepted
H3	P_{24}	UGC -> REB	0.163	3.73	0.00*	[0.078,0.250]	Accepted
H4	P_{14}	EC -> REB	0.301	3.39	0.00*	[0.125,0.478]	Accepted
H5	P_{34}	EA -> REB	0.468	4.95	0.00*	[0.280, 0.653]	Accepted

*Significant at level 0.05 (p<0.05)

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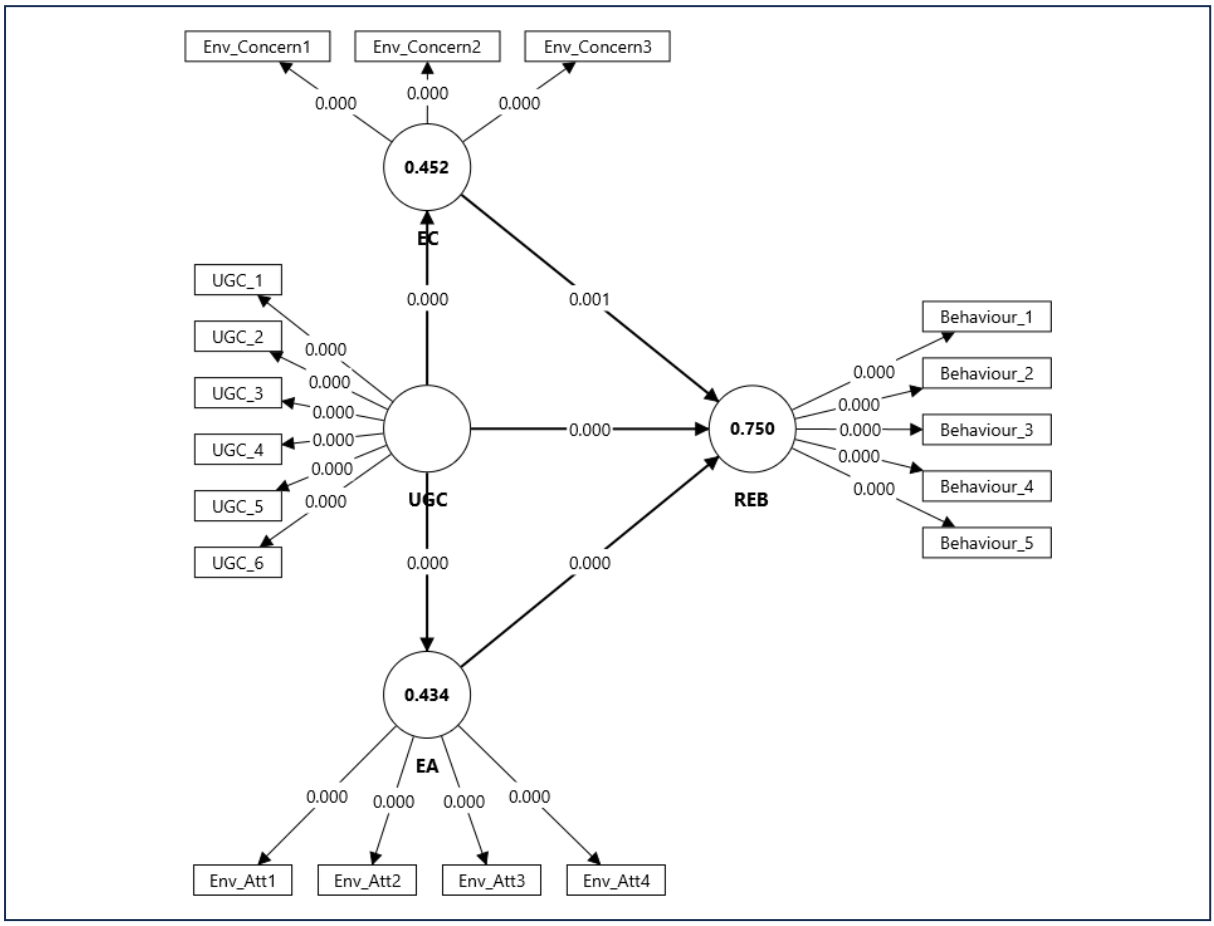


Figure2: Structural Model

Discussion

Generally, the aim of this study is to examine factors that can influence tourists to practice responsible environmental behaviour during their visit or engage in nature-based tourism activities. Specifically, this study analyses the influence of UGC in shaping tourists' environmental concern and environmental attitude, and how the integration of these factors can ultimately develop tourists' responsible environmental behaviour. To measure the connection between variables studied, this study has proposed five hypotheses. By employing the convenience sampling technique, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the target sample for data collection purposes. The analysis of 259 responses indicates that all the predictors that consist of UGC, EC and EA play a significant role in developing REB. It is important to note that UGC through social media platforms has become a valuable source for individuals to gain insight into REB whether before, during, and after visiting a destination. Nevertheless, sustainable practices among tourists remain a challenge, particularly in choosing green accommodation, using eco-friendly transportation, preserving the environment, respecting local culture, and supporting local businesses. Today, with the advancement of information and communication technologies, social media has transformed into a significant educational platform. The research findings indicate that social media has become an essential platform for tourists to gain knowledge and understanding about green tourism and REB. This is consistent with previous literature that indicates social media as a significant tool in influencing individuals' attitudes and behaviour towards the environment, including educating

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the importance of environmental preservation, increasing awareness of social protection, and encouraging sustainable practices (Jie & Xuely, 2024; Shetu, 2024; Sultan et al., 2021).

In line with previous studies, this study indicates that tourists' responsible behaviour is significantly influenced by their environmental concerns and attitudes (Prayag et al., 2025; Sadiq et al., 2022; Sultan et al., 2021). As majority of respondents in this study fall under the age group of 18-30 years old which can be categorized as Generation Z, the research findings indicate that this generation has a strong sense of the environment awareness and responsible behaviour. This is consistent with the literature which suggests that younger generations are more sensitive to social issues, and therefore, they are more sustainability oriented, tend to respond to the environmental issues positively, prefer to avoid waste during holidays, and more likely to respect local culture (Prayag et al., 2025; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2024). Moreover, consistent with suggestion from previous studies, social influence particularly through social networking sites such as social media plays an important role in influencing individual's environmental responsible behaviour (Jie & Xuely, 2024; Musto & Dahanayake, 2022; Wijaya et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2021). This may be attributed to the interactive features of social media, which facilitate the widespread sharing of information among users globally. This is including commenting, liking, reposting, live streaming, and sharing. Ultimately, these virtual interactions positively can increase public awareness of sustainability issues and influence individuals' intentions and behaviours to preserve the environment for the benefit of future generations. In a nutshell, this study explored the roles of communication on social media and its potential in shaping tourists' psychological transformation to responsible environmental behaviour.

Additionally, this study contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11), Sustainable Cities and Communities by identifying how UGC fosters environmental concern, environmental attitude, and environmentally responsible behaviour among urban local tourists in Klang Valley. By supporting sustainable engagement with nature-based activities, this study encourages the development of resilient, inclusive, and environmentally conscious communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides new insight into the field of UGC and REB at a tourism destination. The research findings exhibit that UGC is useful as a valuable tool in examining tourists' responsible environmental behaviour. By understanding the potential features of social media and how they can be fully utilized for environmental sustainability marketing, authorities, marketers, and DMOs can develop more effective strategic plans, such as selecting appropriate platforms, targeting niche markets, and creating content aligned with sustainability objectives. This strategy is essential to ensure that each post can reaches the target audience and that the objectives of environmental sustainability are achieved. Apart from the practical implications, this study has several limitations. This study investigates the role of UGC, EC and EA as direct predictors for tourists' REB. Based on the conceptual framework, future studies are suggested to analyse EC and EA as mediating constructs in the relationship between UGC and REB. This is important to determine whether UGC functions as an external factor to develop REB, while EC and EA can play indirect roles in the same relationship. Moreover, as this study focuses solely on UGC, EC and EA as predictors of REB, future studies are recommended to explore the roles of other predictors such as national policies, social media influencers, social pressure, health concern, as well as cognitive and affective attitudinal

perspective. Lastly, as this study involves small sample size, the generalizability of the research findings is limited. Hence, future studies are encouraged to target respondents from diverse generations groups of tourists. Through this, the research findings can be generalized, facilitate comparative analysis across different groups of age, and produce more robust and comprehensive findings.

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