Available online at: https://journal.stp-bandung.ac.id/index.php/ijscot
International Journal of Sustainable Competitiveness in Tourism
Volume 3 Number 1, 2024:49-53
DOI: 10.34013/ijscot.v3i02.1484

EXPLORING ATTITUDES OF GEN Z TOWARDS METAVERSE IN EVENTS INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The "Metaverse" is an emerging network of 3D virtual realms that leverage technological advancements to create immersive, interconnected online environments mirroring the real world. This digital landscape has garnered significant attention, particularly from Generation Z (Gen Z), the next-generation cohort. Despite its prominence in various industries like online gaming, tourism, and hospitality, the metaverse's impact on the events industry remains relatively unexplored. This research aims to bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the variables influencing Gen Z's attitude (AT) towards the metaverse in the events industry. Specifically, it focuses on the factors of (I) perceived curiosity (PC), (II) perceived ease of use (PE), (III) social norms (SN), and (IV) perceived usefulness (PU). To accomplish this, a quantitative approach employing non-probability convenience sampling will be employed to survey 400 Gen Z individuals in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Preliminary findings indicate that PC, PE, and PU significantly shape Gen Z's attitudes towards metaverse vents. However, the study reveals that the relationship between SN and Gen Z's attitudes is both insignificant and negative. This research extends the current understanding of the metaverse's implications in the events industry and contributes to the burgeoning body of knowledge in this emerging field. It offers valuable insights for event organisers, marketers, and technologists seeking to engage with Gen Z within the metaverse landscape. Ultimately, this study enhances our comprehension of the evolving dynamics between Gen Z and the metaverse within the context of event planning and execution.

Keywords: Metaverse, Gen Z, Attitudes, Technology Adoption, Event Industry

A. INTRODUCTION

Metaverse is a post-reality universe environment that combines both digital virtuality and physical reality and enables users to communicate and interact seamlessly in real-time in the virtual world, (Mystakidis, 2022). Some enterprises started to experience the metaverse applications of remote work and workplace training, especially during the pandemic. Interactions are free to occur wherever and whenever, whether at work, in an office, or attending a concert or sports event, as they allow digital representations of people (Julian, 2023). The metaverse in Malaysia does have its platform, and it is seen as the new big thing for the events industry to amplify event activities to greater heights (Noor, 2022).

Despite being seen as the new big thing, however, the majority of previous Metaverse research has been on technical and design elements of the virtual environment, such as user interfaces, software structures, and network protocols. In addition, nine out of 10 studies conducted emphasise explaining and defining what the metaverse is and how it is important to the economic growth of a country (Kaharuddin et al., 2021). Apart from this, limited studies can be found to explore the acceptance level of the public or society in Malaysia towards the presence of the metaverse. It can be said that most of the studies mainly focus on metaverse development in technology-emerging countries such as China (Zhang, 2022). Moreover, other studies have looked at older generations' attitudes towards this growing

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Received: March 19, 2024; Revised: April 15, 2024; Accepted: 27 April, 2024

technological device, which may not be composed of the youngest generation's ideas and preferences (Faverio, 2022). Therefore, there is a dearth of understanding of how the youngest generation, particularly Gen Z in Malaysia, perceives and engages with metaverse events.

To address these challenges, the researchers propose assessing Gen Z's attitudes by measuring factors that influence PC, PE, SN, and PU. Attitude intention, as defined by (Mostafa, 2022), gauges individuals' willingness to embrace a specific attitude. Notably, curiosity often motivates the exploration of new topics and technologies, such as the metaverse (Nuno, 2013). Furthermore, research conducted by (Jinge, Y., Qiwei, P., Binyuan, Z., Lu, W. and Yiling, H., 2021) suggests that attendees are more likely to embrace technology at events when it effectively replicates face-to-face interaction and enhances event intelligence. Moreover, social norms, shaped by group dynamics, significantly influence participants' receptiveness to metaverse activities (Lee, 2019). Importantly, real-time avatar interactions create a sense of presence and immersion, thereby offering users access to otherwise challenging experiences (Choi et al., 2022).

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopted the quantitative method, aiming to understand the variables affecting Gen Z attitudes towards metaverse events. Quantitative research tends to be more fixed and deductive, focuses on collecting numerical data, and is generalised across groups of respondents on the research topic discussed. According to (*Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS. The Practice of Social Research*, 2020), the quantitative method is used to determine the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables within a population. The data collection method will be supported by primary and secondary data. Primary data is a self-administrated survey questionnaire that will be created and distributed to the respondents to collect first-hand data about their opinions and thoughts. Secondary data for this research would come from the datasets collected by other researchers in previous studies.

According to various researchers (Beresford, 2023; Dimock, 2019; Stephen 2021), Gen Z is the youngest generation that comes after the millennials and was born roughly between 1997 and 2012. Data from the Department of Statistics shows that Gen-Z made up 26% of Malaysia's population of 32.6 million people in 2019, which is around 8.476 million Gen-Z in Malaysia alone. The sample size for most of the researchers, such as (Majdi Owda, 2022) and (Fulya Acikgoz, 2023), is between 300 and 400 respondents; hence, the target sample size for our research topic is also set at 400 respondents. Convenient sampling is one of the most common forms of non-probability sampling, and it is considered preferable because it focuses on gaining information and data from the inclusion of members that are "convenient" for researchers to access.

The questionnaire for this study consists of three sections and 28 questions in total. Section A collected respondents' demographics, including gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, education level, and other relevant information. Section B consists of 4 questions measuring the dependent variable, which is the attitude of Gen Z towards the metaverse. Section C consists of 20 questions to measure the independent variables, with 4 questions each for PC, PE, SN, and PU. All items in the survey questionnaire were evaluated using a five-point Likert

scale, which ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The analysis used SPSS 29 edition to test descriptive, reliability, correlation, and regression.

C. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Out of the total 400 respondents, the majority, 70.5% (282), were female, while 29.5% (118) were male. In terms of age distribution, 45% (180) fell within the 20 to 21 age range, followed by 31% (124) in the 22 to 23 age bracket, 14.5% (58) in the 24 to 25 range, and the smallest group was the 18 to 19 age range, comprising only 9.5% (38) of the total. Concerning ethnicity, approximately 63.5% (254) of the respondents were Chinese, 19.0% (76) were Indian, 16% (64) were Malay, and a minor 1.5% (6) belonged to other ethnicities. In terms of educational background, the largest portion of respondents, 55.3% (221), held a bachelor's degree or diploma, while the remainder had educational backgrounds ranging from SPM, foundation, Form 6, or A Levels. In terms of occupation, 68.7% (274) were students, 28.1% (113) were employed, and only 3.3% (13) were self-employed.

Given that most respondents were students, 67.3% (269) reported an income level below RM2,500. Additionally, 13% (52) reported an income range between RM2,501 and RM3,170. 7.2% (29) fell within the range of RM3,171 to RM3,970. 10.8% (43) reported an income range between RM3,971 and RM4,850. 1.5% (6) reported an income range between RM4,851 and RM5,880, and only 0.3% (1) reported an income range between RM5,881 and RM7,100. Regarding past Metaverse event experiences, 74.8% (299) had never participated in Metaverse events, while 25.3% (101) had some prior experience. Lastly, when it came to daily IT gadget usage, 40.5% (162) used IT gadgets for five to seven hours, 26.8% (107) for more than seven hours, and 25.8% (103) for three to five hours.

The reliability analysis of a research study helps in evaluating internal consistency and enhancing the validity of the study. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha between the items in the scale variables to evaluate the study's reliability (Jiang, 2015). According to Romijn (2014), he discovered that if Cronbach's alpha values were greater than 0.7, it indicated that all the scale measures were reliable. In this study, all achieved high reliability with the Cronbach Alpha value exceeding 0.7: AT (0.773), PC (0.808), PE (0.841), SN (.0813), and PU (0.8). Correlation analysis was used to determine the degree of linearity between the two variables and estimate the strength of the association between the two datasets. The AT between PC (.629) and PE (.628) indicated a strong correlation; however,the AT between SN (.578) and PU (.621) indicated a moderate correlation.

Regression analysis is the most common form used to describe the data and explain the relationship between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables. The value of R was 0.708, which indicated that the degree of prediction was strong. The F-value is 98.996 and the corresponding P-value is <0.01, far below the 0.05 threshold. Hence, this indicates that the regression model was statistically significant. PC, PE, and PU statistically significantly to the prediction p<.05 while SN (.276) insignificance.

D. CONCLUSION

In this study, the researchers aimed to investigate Gen Z attitudes towards metaverse events by examining the impact of various factors, including PC, PE, SN, and PU. The findings shed light on the relationship between Gen Z's daily IT gadget usage and their attitudes towards Metaverse events. The research discovered several key insights. Firstly, there is a significant positive relationship between PC and Gen Z's attitudes towards metaverse events. Gen Z individuals who display higher levels of curiosity tend to have more favourable attitudes towards metaverse events. PC serves as a motivating factor, encouraging Gen Z to explore and seek new experiences within the metaverse.

Secondly, the study revealed a significant positive relationship between PE and Gen Z's attitudes towards metaverse events. Gen Z participants who perceive the metaverse as user-friendly and easy to navigate tend to exhibit more positive attitudes. This highlights the critical role of perceived ease of use in shaping Gen Z's acceptance of metaverse events. Thirdly, the study identified a significant positive relationship between PU and Gen Z's attitudes towards metaverse events. Gen Z individuals who believe that Metaverse technology is useful for achieving their goals, even in adverse circumstances, are more likely to engage in Metaverse events. PU emerges as a pivotal factor driving Gen Z's involvement in metaverse events. However, the research unveiled an insignificant relationship between SN and Gen Z's attitudes towards metaverse events. Gen Z prioritises individuality over conformity to social norms, indicating that they are less influenced by others' opinions and more inclined to pursue their unique interests and preferences.

These findings hold substantial implications for both theory and practice. They contribute to existing knowledge by offering a deeper understanding of Gen Z's attitudes towards metaverse events, a topic previously underexplored. Event organisers, marketers, and software engineers can leverage these insights to create immersive and engaging Metaverse experiences that align with Gen Z's preferences and expectations. Nonetheless, the study has its limitations. The sample size of 400 respondents may limit the generalizability of the findings. The research's geographical focus on Malaysia may not fully represent Gen Z's attitudes in diverse regions. The short data collection period may not capture long-term trends, especially in the discussion of technology. In the future, research in this emerging field should consider expanding sample sizes, exploring diverse geographic areas, and employing various data collection methods. Addressing these limitations will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Gen Z's attitudes towards Metaverse events and their implications for Metaverse developers and designers.

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