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Research Paper

Navigating Faith in the Digital Age: A Behavioural Model of Religious Pilgrimage Among Urban Muslim Gen Z in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Religious pilgrimage among Indonesia's urban Muslim Generation Z is undergoing a notable transformation, shaped by their digital fluency, heightened historical awareness, and evolving religious consciousness. This study explores these dynamics by extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with six contextual variables: religious commitment, historical literacy, scientific skepticism, perceived relevance, destination attractiveness, and digital social norms. Using a structured online survey conducted over six weeks in August-September 2025, data were gathered from 400 respondents. We applied Structural Equation Modeling (Partial Least Squares) to analyze the model. Results reveal that religious commitment, historical literacy, and perceived relevance are key drivers of favorable attitudes toward pilgrimage, while scientific skepticism introduces a countercurrent—highlighting this generation's demand for authenticity and intellectual engagement in spiritual practice. Notably, digitally embedded social norms strongly influence intention, reflecting the performative nature of religious expression in online networks. Attitude and intention were found to significantly shape actual travel behavior, aligning with TPB while revealing impulsive tendencies rooted in strong ideological beliefs. These findings offer fresh perspectives on youth religiosity, digital spirituality, and the socio-cultural fabric of Islamic tourism. For practitioners, the study provides actionable insights into designing experiences that are historically grounded, culturally resonant, and digitally relevant for Indonesia's emerging cohort of Muslim travelers.

Keywords: *Religious Tour, Generation Z Muslims, Theory of Planned Behavior, Digital Religiosity.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Religious pilgrimage among Indonesia's urban Muslim Generation Z is undergoing a profound shift, reflecting broader changes in how faith is practiced, interpreted, and mediated in a digital era. Unlike previous generations, who often approached pilgrimage as a rigid ritual tradition, Gen Z Muslims perceive it as a layered experience that merges spiritual reflection, historical curiosity, and cultural exploration. Sites such as the graves of wali, the tombs of revered ulama, and places tied to Islamic kingdoms are no longer viewed solely as religious obligations, but also as spaces for identity construction and personal meaning-making (Fauzia & Mojopahit, 2023; Kusumaningtyas, 2023; Roifah, 2023). This reorientation is deeply shaped by social media, which has transformed pilgrimage into a visually-driven, socially validated endeavor. On platforms like Instagram and TikTok, religious journeys become not just acts of devotion, but also performances of belief curated and shared for visibility and resonance within peer networks (Triantoro et al., 2023; Yazid et al., 2023). In this digital ecology, religious authenticity is increasingly judged through lenses of aesthetics, emotional resonance, and critical reflection.

Generation Z Muslims are not passive inheritors of tradition. They are active agents questioning, filtering, and reinterpreting sacred narratives through a complex interplay of belief and skepticism. Their pilgrimage choices often reflect this dual stance: a respect for spiritual heritage tempered by demands for historical legitimacy and personal relevance (Saefulloh & Khasanah, 2024; Wahid & Wardatun, 2023). In this context, pilgrimage becomes more than a ritual act, it becomes an individualized quest for coherence, situated within broader conversations about identity, memory, and knowledge. This critically engaged mindset is further shaped by scientific rationalism and exposure to revisionist histories. While some Gen Z Muslims remain wary of mythologized religious accounts, this skepticism rarely leads to rejection. Instead, it acts as a filter informing which sites are visited, what meanings are ascribed, and how those experiences are shared (Baek et al., 2022; Han et al., 2024). Thus, pilgrimage becomes an epistemological undertaking: a process in which faith and reason are not opposed but interwoven. Importantly, social validation also plays a central role. Within digital networks, performativity and peer approval significantly influence religious engagement. Pilgrimage gains social currency when portrayed as enlightening, visually compelling, or culturally enriching (Bhattacharya, 2024; Mayvita & Rifani, 2024). In contrast, depictions lacking emotional depth or cultural resonance may reduce enthusiasm, even among religiously inclined individuals (Parker et al., 2024). This dynamic illustrates how internal convictions intersect with external pressures, especially in online spaces that both shape and mirror spiritual behavior.

Understanding this behavioral shift is not merely of sociological interest; it is an urgent economic imperative for the Indonesian pilgrimage and halal tourism industries. As Generation Z matures into a primary consumer base with increasing purchasing power, their unique preferences are redefining market demands. Destinations and travel operators that fail to adapt to this demographic's demand for authenticity, digital integration, and experiential depth risk becoming obsolete in a highly competitive niche market. This study proposes a holistic model of pilgrimage decision-making that reflects these complex interactions. By integrating cognitive variables (e.g., religious commitment, historical literacy, and scientific skepticism) with external influences (e.g., destination appeal and digital social norms), the model offers a nuanced lens for understanding how Indonesia's Muslim Gen Z navigates spiritual practice in an age of information overload and mediated authenticity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Religious Commitment and Attitude Toward Pilgrimage

Studies have emphasized the role of religious commitment as a key driver of spiritual behavior and identity among Generation Z (Adelman et al., 2022; Park et al., 2023). Within Indonesia's urban Muslim context, this commitment influences how pilgrimage is perceived not merely as a duty, but as a meaningful form of self-expression and moral alignment. For many, pilgrimage offers a way to deepen their spiritual identity and reinforce their connection with the global Muslim community (ummah),

transforming it into an intentional and personal journey. While previous research has explored Gen Z's relationship with spirituality and community, little research has examined how this translates specifically into pilgrimage behavior within Islamic frameworks. Studies on youth ethics, sustainability, or mental well-being (Areola et al., 2022; Shukor & Kattiyapornpong, 2024) often neglect the spiritual motivations embedded in religious travel. This study responds to that gap by proposing that religious commitment rooted in belief, values, and identity shapes positive attitudes toward pilgrimage among urban Muslim youth.

Pilgrimage is increasingly approached not only as a ritual but as a reflective act that resonates with personal values and identity (Alzeer & Abuzinadah, 2024; Triantoro et al., 2023). Young Indonesian Muslims see it as a chance to internalize faith, connect with religious history, and participate in the evolving narrative of Islamic culture. Digital platforms further reinforce this by providing avenues for sharing, documenting, and interpreting pilgrimage experiences within broader communities (Hussain & Wang, 2024). Although attention to Gen Z's religiosity is growing, studies rarely address how religious commitment influences specific behavioral attitudes toward sacred travel (Hamsah et al., 2022). This paper positions religious commitment as a foundational construct, one that not only motivates engagement with pilgrimage but also reflects the ethical and cognitive frameworks guiding contemporary spiritual practice.

H1: Religious commitment positively influences attitude toward religious pilgrimage.

2.2. Historical Literacy and Scientific Skepticism

Historical awareness is increasingly shaping how Indonesia's urban Muslim Gen Z approaches pilgrimage. Studies show that young Muslims increasingly evaluate religious destinations based on historical validity and cultural relevance (Adeniji & Ogubuike, 2024; Mu'ammam et al., 2023). Rather than relying solely on inherited religious traditions, they seek sacred experiences that are grounded in verifiable narratives and tangible heritage. This historical literacy does not weaken spiritual engagement instead, it deepens it by placing faith within a framework of collective memory and intellectual trust.

Gen Z's opinions on pilgrimage change fundamentally because they are the first generation to be fully immersed in a globalized, digital information ecosystem. This constant exposure to diverse viewpoints, combined with critical thinking skills fostered by secular education, explains why they no longer accept religious narratives at face value. The mechanism of how their opinions change is highly mediated: they cross-reference religious claims with digital resources, debate in peer networks, and ultimately shift their preferences away from mythologized sites toward those offering verifiable historical narratives.

At the same time, scientific skepticism acts as a moderating filter. Influenced by secular education, media exposure, and historical criticism, Gen Z tends to question religious claims that lack empirical support (Fahad et al., 2023; Yao et al., 2022). This does not necessarily lead to disengagement; instead, it encourages critical selection. Young Muslims prefer sites that align with both their spiritual values and rational expectations, reinforcing a version of religiosity that integrates belief with inquiry. This dual perspective reflects a broader generational shift: religious authenticity is no longer accepted without scrutiny but is evaluated through the coherence between faith, reason, and historical context. Pilgrimage becomes a space where spiritual meaning and critical thinking meet guided by both historical literacy and measured skepticism.

H2: Historical literacy has a positive influence on attitudes toward religious pilgrimage.

H3: Scientific skepticism negatively influences attitude toward religious pilgrimage.

2.3. Perceived Relevance and Destination Attractiveness

Recent studies have highlighted perceived relevance as a key factor influencing religious engagement among urban Muslim Gen Z (Aprilianto et al., 2025; Carvache-Franco et al., 2024; T. Hassan et al., 2022). For this generation, pilgrimage is not only about fulfilling an obligation but also about finding meaning that resonates with their personal values, identities, and social concerns. Sacred sites that offer space for introspection, connect to present-day issues, or align with spiritual aspirations are more likely to be embraced. In this context, pilgrimage becomes a vehicle for self-actualization and cultural expression

filtered through the lens of personal relevance. In parallel, destination attractiveness adds another layer to Gen Z's decision-making process. Visual appeal, accessibility, and comfort are increasingly seen as essential rather than secondary (Fauzia & Mojopahit, 2023; Hendrik et al., 2024). For a digitally immersed generation, shareability and aesthetic value shape the perception of sacred experiences. Social media platforms frame pilgrimage as a narrative experience blending faith with visual storytelling. This reinforces the desire for destinations that are not only spiritually meaningful but also visually and experientially satisfying.

Together, perceived relevance and destination attractiveness signal a shift in how pilgrimage is understood less as a fixed ritual, and more as a dynamic encounter shaped by individual context and media culture (Seyfi et al., 2024). For Gen Z, meaningful engagement arises from places that offer spiritual depth, cultural resonance, and immersive experience. These evolving expectations suggest that attitudes toward pilgrimage are formed through a combination of personal alignment, emotional connection, and experiential value.

H4: Perceived relevance positively influences attitude toward religious pilgrimage.

H5: The attractiveness of pilgrimage destinations positively influences attitudes toward religious pilgrimage.

2.4. Attitude, Intention, and Decision-Making

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) consistently identifies attitude as a key predictor of behavioral intention (Warintarawej et al., 2024). In the context of Indonesia's urban Muslim Gen Z, positive attitudes toward pilgrimage formed through personal reflection, religious exposure, and social validation serve as the foundation for intention. When pilgrimage is perceived as meaningful, relevant, and spiritually rewarding, it creates a psychological readiness to act. These attitudes are both cognitive and emotional, shaping intention through a stable evaluative process (Ma et al., 2024; Qulub & Putri, 2024).

Emerging research suggests that, for Gen Z, favorable attitudes can also directly lead to behavior, bypassing intention altogether (Bhandari et al., 2024; Kasber et al., 2022). In moments of strong emotional alignment or moral urgency, pilgrimage decisions may occur spontaneously—motivated by deeply held beliefs rather than deliberate planning. This kind of intuitive religiosity reflects an alignment between internal values and outward action, especially among youth for whom faith is integrated into identity. Recognizing this dual pathway—both through intention and direct action—has practical implications for religious tourism. Efforts to shape positive attitudes, whether through immersive spiritual experiences, peer influence, or value-based narratives, can result in both long-term planning and immediate decisions. For stakeholders, this means that cultivating meaningful engagement may prompt both rational and affectively driven behavioral responses.

H6: Attitude toward religious pilgrimage positively influences intention to perform religious pilgrimage.

H9: Attitude toward religious pilgrimage directly and positively influences a decision to undertake pilgrimage.

2.5. Perceived Social Norms and Behavioral Intention

Social norms especially those shaped within digital peer communities play a significant role in forming behavioral intentions among Indonesia's urban Muslim Gen Z (Kabbaro et al., 2025; Kara & Min, 2023). In this context, religiosity is not only a personal commitment but also a social expression, influenced by visual representation and community validation. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have reframed pilgrimage as a socially endorsed activity, blending spiritual significance with aesthetic and cultural appeal. These digital narratives act as informal norms, making pilgrimage appear desirable and culturally aligned with youth identity.

This performative dynamic is amplified by Gen Z's responsiveness to peer influence. When religious travel is portrayed positively through visual storytelling, emotional content, or influencer endorsement, it generates social legitimacy that motivates participation, even among those with moderate religiosity (Sumartono, 2023). The visibility of peers' experiences reinforces intention by shaping what is seen as

acceptable, aspirational, or expected. In such environments, behavioral intention is not only a result of internal conviction but is co-constructed through digital social interaction.

Moreover, social norms can mediate between competing influences such as secularism or skepticism and religious engagement. They function as active drivers, converting uncertainty into action, particularly when religious participation becomes normalized within one's reference group (Awliya et al., 2024; Pradhan et al., 2022). In this sense, perceived norms are not passive reflections of culture, but psychological mechanisms that connect individual intention with collective belonging.

H7: Perceived social norms positively influence the intention to perform religious pilgrimage.

2.6. Intention as a Predictor of Behavior

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), behavioral intention is the most immediate predictor of actual behavior (Drăguleasa et al., 2024; Kusumaningtyas, 2023). In the context of religious pilgrimage among Indonesia's Muslim Gen Z, intention reflects not only cognitive planning but also emotional commitment and motivational readiness. Prior beliefs, personal values, and external social influences shape this intention. When pilgrimage is perceived as relevant and enriching, intention becomes a meaningful step toward action especially when supported by enabling conditions such as peer support, accessible infrastructure, and digital exposure. Studies further show that young Muslims who view pilgrimage as emotionally fulfilling and culturally resonant are more likely to see it as a desirable and attainable goal (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024; Hassan et al., 2022). In digital environments, this intention is reinforced by social media content that portrays pilgrimage as both aspirational and authentic. Peer stories, influencer posts, and visual narratives normalize participation and validate the desire to engage. For Gen Z, this intersection of inner motivation and social validation strengthens the predictive power of intention.

Moreover, the link between intention and behavior is especially strong when aligned with core values of faith and identity (Avdia et al., 2024; Jesenský et al., 2024). In such cases, intention does not remain a passive mental state but becomes an actionable commitment often followed through with immediacy and conviction. Understanding intention as both a rational plan and a socially mediated decision-making process helps explain why pilgrimage becomes a lived religious practice for many young Indonesian Muslims.

H8: The intention to perform a religious pilgrimage has a positive influence on the decision to undertake a pilgrimage.

Based on the hypotheses development, the proposed framework is depicted in Figure 1.

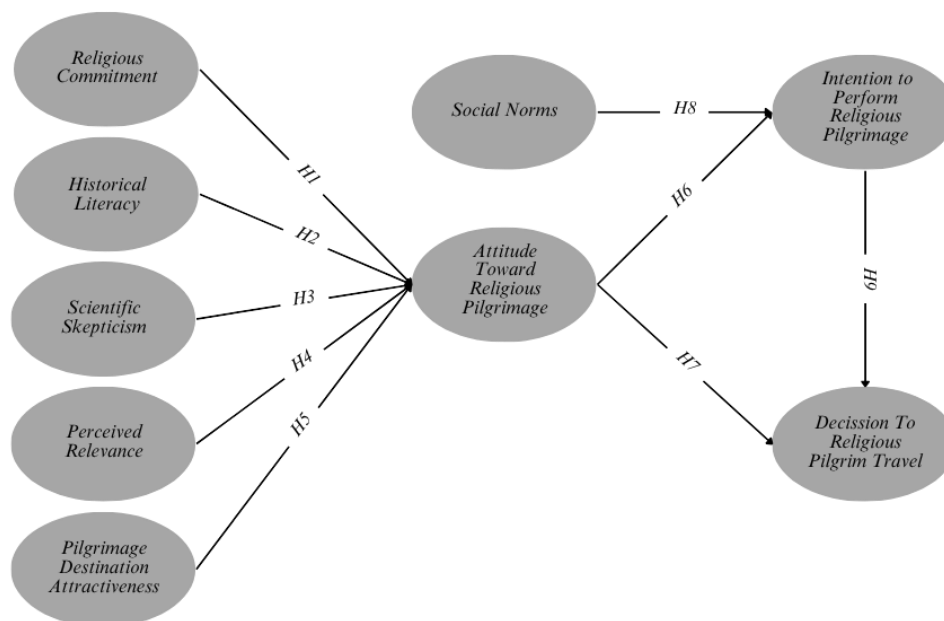


Figure 1. Proposed Model Framework
Source: Research data, 2025

3. RESULT

3.1. Research design

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the cognitive and social factors influencing religious pilgrimage decisions among Indonesia's urban Muslim Generation Z. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the proposed model integrated nine latent variables which are religious commitment, historical literacy, scientific skepticism, perceived relevance, destination attractiveness, perceived social norms, attitude, intention, and behavioral decision.

3.2. Population and sample

The target population included Muslim individuals aged 18–26 residing in Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya. Urban centers selected for their high digital engagement and cultural diversity. Data were gathered over six weeks from August to September 2025. Using purposive sampling, 400 valid responses were collected from participants who self-identified as Gen Z Muslims and had shown interest in religious or cultural travel. This sample size met the minimum criteria for complex SEM analysis as recommended by (Hair et al., 2019).

3.3. Measurement and instruments

The instrument comprised multiple established scales, each using a five-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Measurement items were adapted from prior studies: religious commitment from (Robbins et al., 1966); historical literacy and scientific scepticism were measured using contextually adapted indicators from (Fahad et al., 2023; Mu'ammam et al., 2023), respectively; perceived relevance and destination attractiveness were measured based on constructs from (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024; Seyfi et al., 2024); while social norms, attitude, intention, and decision were operationalized using items rooted in (Ajzen, 1985) operationalization, with adjustments for the religious tourism context.

3.4. Data collection procedure

Data were gathered through an online questionnaire disseminated over six weeks via Instagram and WhatsApp, with targeted outreach and participation in digital community groups.

3.5 Data analysis techniques

A pilot test with 30 respondents confirmed clarity and cultural appropriateness, and all constructs showed strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70). Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modelling with SmartPLS 3.0, enabling simultaneous testing of measurement and structural components. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was first performed to assess construct validity, followed by path analysis to evaluate hypothesized relationships. Model fit was assessed using common indices, including the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the coefficient of determination (R^2), to ensure the robustness of the structural relationships across endogenous constructs.

4. RESULT

4.1. Respondent Profiles

A total of 400 valid responses were obtained from Muslim Gen Z participants across three major Indonesian urban centres: Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarised in Table 1. The sample was relatively balanced in gender, with 53.5% female and 46.5% male participants. The age distribution was concentrated in the 21–23 year age range (45.3%), followed by those aged 18–20 years (32.7%), with the remaining 22% falling between 24 and

26 years. This reflects the typical age distribution of Gen Z in early adulthood, when higher education and early career development often intersect with the exploration of values and an interest in travel. In terms of education, 61% of respondents were currently enrolled in or had completed undergraduate studies, 32.5% were high school graduates, and 6.5% had reached postgraduate education. This educational profile aligns with the study's emphasis on literate, critically engaged young Muslims who are exposed to digital and historical discourses relevant to religious tourism.

Furthermore, 67.8% of participants reported having prior exposure to religious travel, either through formal school programs, family trips, or community-organized visits to Islamic heritage sites. Meanwhile, 72.1% reported encountering digital content (e.g., social media posts, YouTube videos, blog articles) related to Islamic Pilgrimage or religious heritage travel. This indicates a strong digital-cultural engagement, reinforcing the need to examine how social media and digital norms intersect with religious decision-making behaviours in this cohort.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Profile

Category	Sub-category	n	(%)
Gender	Male	186	46.5
	Female	214	53.5
Age	18-20	131	32.7
	21-23	181	45.3
	24-26	88	22.0
Education Level	High School	130	32.5
	Undergraduate	244	61.0
	Postgraduate	26	6.5
Prior Pilgrimage Experience	Yes	271	67.8
	No	129	32.2
Exposure to Religious Content Online	Yes	288	72.1
	No	112	27.9

Source: Research data, 2025

4.2. Measurement Model

Before testing the structural relationships among constructs, the measurement model's reliability and validity were assessed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach. Reliability was assessed using both Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). As shown in Table 2, all constructs demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency, with CA values ranging from 0.78 to 0.89 and CR values between 0.81 and 0.91, thereby exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. These results confirm that the indicators used to measure each latent variable were consistent and reliable. Convergent validity was evaluated through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All constructs showed AVE values above 0.50, ranging from 0.56 to 0.74 (Table 2), indicating that each construct explained the majority of the variance in the observed variables.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Religious Commitment	0.86	0.89	0.68
Historical Literacy	0.81	0.86	0.61
Scientific Skepticism	0.83	0.87	0.64
Perceived Relevance	0.85	0.89	0.70
Destination Attractiveness	0.82	0.87	0.66
Perceived Social Norms	0.84	0.88	0.65
Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	0.88	0.91	0.74
Intention to Perform	0.87	0.90	0.72
Decision to Undertake	0.79	0.84	0.62

Source: Research data, 2025

Additionally, the external loadings of individual indicators on their corresponding constructs were examined to support convergent validity further. As reported in Table 3, all standardized item loadings were greater than 0.70, except for two items, which were retained based on theoretical relevance and acceptable CR values.

Table 3. Outer Loadings of Indicators and Item Statements

Construct	Code	Item Statement	Loading
Religious Commitment	RC1	I strive to apply religious teachings consistently.	0.81
	RC2	Religion is central to my life decisions.	0.84
	RC3	I feel spiritually connected when I practice religious rituals.	0.85
Historical Literacy	HL1	I understand the historical significance of Islamic pilgrimage sites.	0.76
	HL2	I value religious sites with clear historical narratives.	0.81
	HL3	I am interested in the documented history of religious figures.	0.80
Scientific Skepticism	SS1	I question religious claims that lack historical or scientific evidence.	0.83
	SS2	I tend to verify pilgrimage-related stories using credible sources.	0.85
	SS3	I avoid visiting religious sites that seem mythologized.	0.77
Perceived Relevance	PR1	Pilgrimage aligns with my values.	0.88
	PR2	I view pilgrimage as a profoundly meaningful spiritual experience that is relevant to my life.	0.82
Destination Attractiveness	DA1	I prefer aesthetically pleasing pilgrimage sites.	0.79
	DA2	Accessibility and comfort influence my choice of pilgrimage destinations.	0.84
	DA3	I like visiting sites that offer both spiritual and enjoyable experiences.	0.82
Perceived Social Norms	SN1	My peers encourage me to participate in a religious pilgrimage.	0.80
	SN2	People close to me think I should go on a pilgrimage.	0.85
Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	AT1	I believe going on a pilgrimage is a valuable experience.	0.87
	AT2	I have a positive attitude toward participating in a pilgrimage.	0.89
Intention to Perform	IN1	I plan to embark on a pilgrimage soon.	0.88
	IN2	I am likely to take part in pilgrimage activities soon.	0.86
Decision to Undertake	DC1	I have decided to join a pilgrimage program.	0.78
	DC2	I have taken real steps to participate in religious travel.	0.79

Source: Research data, 2025

These findings reinforce that the constructs are adequately measured by their respective observed variables. Discriminant validity was tested using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. HTMT values reported in Table 4 were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, with the highest HTMT ratio at 0.79, further validating that the constructs were empirically distinct.

Table 4. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Historical Literacy	0.574	–						
Scientific Skepticism	0.271	0.313	–					
Perceived Relevance	0.611	0.498	0.281	–				
Destination Attractiveness	0.482	0.449	0.252	0.587	–			
Perceived Social Norms	0.457	0.365	0.199	0.511	0.544	–		
Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	0.637	0.582	0.319	0.661	0.617	0.548	–	
Intention to Perform	0.523	0.438	0.241	0.591	0.523	0.634	0.677	–
Decision to Undertake	0.487	0.404	0.248	0.552	0.538	0.525	0.658	0.751

Source: Research data, 2025

To assess the potential for common method bias (CMB), this study employed both Harman's single-factor test and collinearity diagnostics using inner VIF values. Results from the unrotated principal component analysis showed that no single factor accounted for more than 40% of the total variance, suggesting that common variance was not dominant. Additionally, all inner VIF values were below the recommended threshold of 3.3, indicating the absence of multicollinearity among the constructs. Taken together, these findings provide reasonable assurance that CMB is not a major concern and that the

measurement model satisfies psychometric standards for validity and reliability. As such, the model is deemed appropriate for further structural analysis.

4.3. Structural Model

The structural model was evaluated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), employing a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples to test the significance and stability of the path coefficients. Key assessment criteria included the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), variance inflation factor (VIF), and model fit as measured by the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). As summarized in Table 5 and illustrated in Figure 2, all hypothesized relationships were found to be statistically significant. The model accounted for 62% of the variance in attitudes toward pilgrimage, 57% in behavioral intention, and 49% in the actual decision to perform pilgrimage indicating strong explanatory power across the core constructs.

Table 5. Structural Model Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

No.	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Religious commitment → Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	0.34	4.12	<0.001	Supported
H2	Historical literacy → Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	0.29	3.75	<0.001	Supported
H3	Scientific Skepticism → Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	-0.18	2.65	<0.01	Supported
H4	Perceived Relevance → Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	0.42	5.20	<0.001	Supported
H5	Destination attractiveness → Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	0.25	3.98	<0.001	Supported
H6	Attitude Toward pilgrimage → Intention to Perform	0.41	4.46	<0.001	Supported
H7	Attitude Toward Pilgrimage → Decision to Undertake Pilgrimage	0.23	2.91	<0.01	Supported
H8	Perceived Social Norms → Intention to Perform	0.36	4.00	<0.001	Supported
H9	Intention to Perform → Decision to Undertake Pilgrimage	0.52	6.30	<0.001	Supported

Source: Research data, 2025

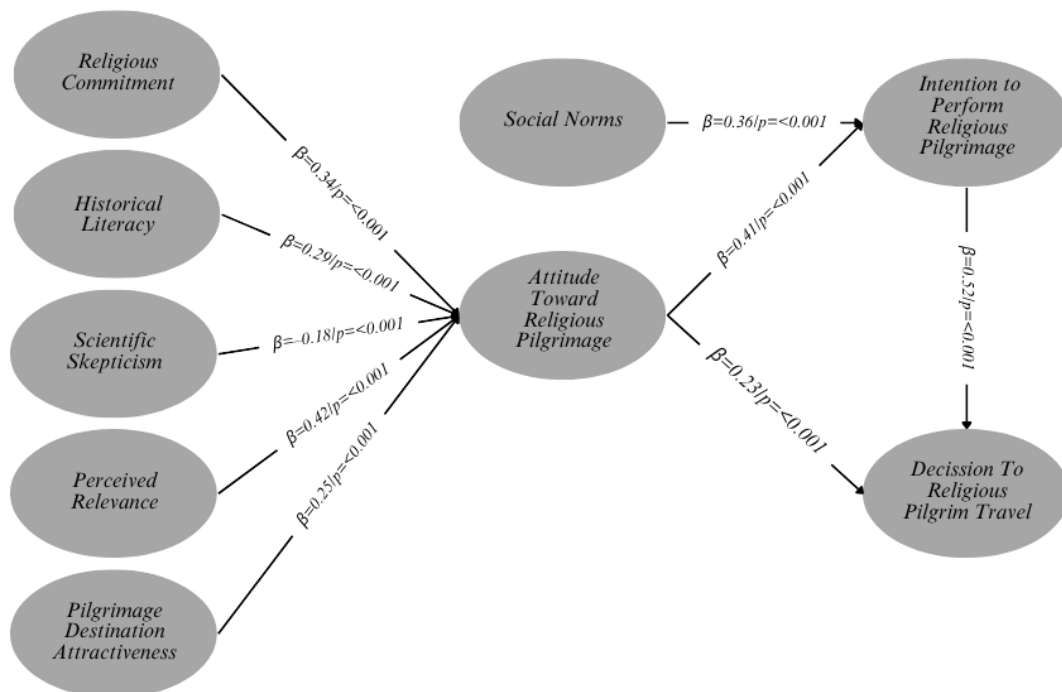


Figure 2. Tested Structural Model

Source: Research data, 2025

To assess the model's predictive quality, R^2 and Q^2 values were calculated for each endogenous construct (see Table 6), along with f^2 effect sizes and VIF statistics to assess multicollinearity.

Table 6. Model Quality Metrics: R², Q², and f²

Endogenous Variable	R ²	Q ²	Key Predictors	f ² Effect Sizes
Attitude Toward Pilgrimage	0.62	0.45	Religious Commitment, Historical Literacy, and Other Factors	Perceived Relevance (0.15), Commitment (0.08)
Intention to Perform Pilgrimage	0.57	0.42	Attitude, Perceived Social Norms	Attitude (0.11), Norms (0.10)
Decision to Undertake Pilgrimage	0.49	0.38	Intention, Attitude	Intention (0.20), Attitude (0.05)

Source: Research data, 2025

The model explains 62% of the variance in attitude, 57% in intention, and 49% in the decision to perform pilgrimage, with Q² values above 0.38 for all. Moderate-to-strong effect sizes were observed for intention (f² = 0.20) and perceived relevance on attitude (f² = 0.15). The SRMR value was 0.067, below the accepted threshold of 0.08, indicating a good overall model fit. These results confirm that attitude, intention, and perceived social norms are key predictors of pilgrimage behavior among Muslim Gen Z in urban Indonesia. The model supports a dual-path structure, in which behavior is influenced both directly by attitude and indirectly through intention, emphasizing the roles of digital peer influence and cognitive evaluations in shaping contemporary religious travel decisions.

5. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to develop and test an integrative behavioral model explaining religious pilgrimage among urban Muslim Gen Z in Indonesia, situating attitude, intention, and decision-making within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), enriched by constructs such as religious commitment, historical literacy, scientific skepticism, perceived relevance, destination attractiveness, and perceived social norms. The structural model yielded robust explanatory power, accounting for 62% of the variance in attitude, 57% in intention, and nearly 49% in pilgrimage decision-making confirming that these constructs are both individually and collectively influential in shaping Gen Z's religious tourism behaviour. First, as hypothesized (H1–H5), attitude toward pilgrimage emerged as a central mediator. Religious commitment ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.001$) and perceived relevance ($\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$) were the strongest positive contributors to attitude. These results reinforce previous findings that internalised belief systems and individual value alignment are critical in motivating spiritual journeys. This finding aligns with earlier work by (Qulub & Putri, 2024), who noted that a deep religious identity strengthens pilgrimage intentions. Meanwhile, the strong influence of perceived relevance aligns with (Aprilianto et al., 2025; Carvache-Franco et al., 2024), emphasising that Gen Z Methodist engagement emerges when pilgrimage resonates with personal values, social awareness, and spiritual aspirations. Notably, destination attractiveness also contributed positively ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.001$), underscoring the experiential aspect of pilgrimage and reinforcing the role of digital visual culture in shaping youth expectations (Fauzia & Mojopahit, 2023; Hendrik et al., 2024).

Historical literacy ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.001$) demonstrated a significant effect, supporting H2. This affirms the argument that Gen Z seeks authenticity and epistemic trust in sacred spaces, aligning with Adeniji and Ogubuike, (2024 and Mu'ammam et al., (2023), who emphasise that fact-based heritage narratives enrich spiritual engagement. Simultaneously, scientific scepticism had a negative impact ($\beta = -0.18, p < 0.01$), consistent with the hypothesis (H3). Rather than deterring engagement, scepticism served as a selective filter, directing youth toward sites deemed credible and historically grounded aligning with Fahad et al., (2023) and Yao et al., (2022). Together, these findings mark a shift from traditional pilgrimage as passive observance to a more discerning, knowledge-driven practice. The transition from attitude to intention (H6) and intention to action (H8) was likewise significant. Attitude strongly predicted intention ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$), reinforcing the TPB's postulate that cognitive and affective

evaluations drive behavioral readiness, findings consistent with (Ma et al., 2024; Warintarawej et al., 2024). Intention, in turn, strongly predicted actual decision-making ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$), echoing arguments from (Drăguleasa et al., 2024; Kusumaningtyas, 2023) that intention is the proximate trigger for behaviour.

However, the study revealed a parallel direct path from attitude to decision ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$, H9), demonstrating partial mediation. This dual-path model suggests that reflective decision-making occurs through the intention and spontaneous enactment of pilgrimage when attitudes are particularly strong or congruent with personal identity. This insight aligns with Bhandari et al., (2024) and Kasber et al., (2022), who observed similar instances of attitude spill-over into behaviour in religious-spiritual contexts, where intention may be momentarily bypassed due to moral urgency or affective resonance. Perceived social norms also played a substantial role in forming the intention ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$, H7). This finding aligns with those of Kabbaro et al., (2025); Kara and Min, (2023); and Sumartono, (2023), confirming that digital peer communities significantly influence travel intentions. Visual content shared on Instagram and TikTok can normalise and glamorise pilgrimage, fostering a sense of belonging and validation from a reference group. Moreover, the presence of norms helps tip those with moderate attitudes toward action when normative pressure aligns with affective dispositions.

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study advances behavioral and tourism scholarship by extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) through the integration of historical literacy and scientific skepticism with two constructs rarely explored together. Unlike traditional TPB models that treat such factors as background influences, this study positions them as direct antecedents of attitude, enriching the explanatory power of the framework. By including perceived relevance and destination attractiveness, the model also bridges instrumental and experiential motivations for religious travel. Furthermore, the identification of a dual-path mechanism where attitude influences behavior both directly and through intention offers a nuanced perspective on how reflective and spontaneous motivations coexist, particularly in the context of faith-based decision-making.

For practitioners in religious tourism, several actionable insights emerge. Pilgrimage destinations should emphasize historically grounded narratives and tangible heritage elements that appeal to Gen Z's demand for authenticity and credibility. Digital engagement should be designed to blend spiritual depth with visual storytelling, presenting pilgrimage as both personally meaningful and aesthetically compelling. Encouraging digital peer influence through collaborations with trusted influencers or user-generated storytelling can help shape social norms that support participation. Religious communicators and policymakers should recognize that rituals framed within personal relevance and community resonance may be more effective than traditional top-down messaging.

5.2. Limitation and Further Study

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causal relationships, as temporal dynamics between constructs cannot be observed. The sample was also geographically and demographically constrained, focusing solely on urban Gen Z respondents from Java. This limits the generalizability of the findings to other generational groups, rural populations, or broader cultural contexts within Indonesia. Although the model demonstrated strong explanatory power, it did not include potentially relevant constructs such as spiritual well-being, digital literacy, or perceptions of religious authority, which could add further depth.

Future studies could adopt longitudinal or experimental approaches to explore how attitudes and intentions evolve, especially across different phases of the pilgrimage experience. Expanding the sample to include rural populations, other age cohorts, or cross-national comparisons would enhance the external validity of the model. Researchers may also explore moderating or mediating roles of demographic factors such as gender, religiosity level, or digital engagement. Additionally, integrating

qualitative insights could offer richer, context-driven understandings of how Gen Z navigates religious travel within the interplay of belief, identity, and media culture.

6. CONCLUSION

This study offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how Indonesia's urban Muslim Gen Z approaches religious pilgrimage in a context shaped by digital culture, historical awareness, and pluralistic values. By extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with constructs such as historical literacy, scientific skepticism, and digital social norms, the model reveals a dynamic interplay between cognitive evaluation, spiritual intention, and social influence. The findings highlight that religious commitment and historically grounded perceptions are key drivers of positive attitudes, while scientific skepticism acts as a selective filter. Digital peer validation further reinforces intention, shaping how young Muslims align their beliefs with action.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the evolving discourse on youth religiosity by framing pilgrimage as a flexible, identity-driven process mediated by critical reflection and mediated engagement. Practically, the results hold value for religious tourism stakeholders, Islamic educators, and cultural policymakers aiming to reach Gen Z audiences. Pilgrimage destinations must be positioned not only as devotional spaces but as culturally relevant and visually compelling experiences. Digital storytelling, heritage credibility, and community-based narratives can foster deeper engagement, resonating with the intellectual and emotional sensibilities of a generation seeking meaning at the intersection of faith, culture, and media.

Nonetheless, this study is constrained by its cross-sectional design and focus on urban populations, which limits its generalizability across broader geographic or longitudinal contexts. Future research may employ longitudinal methods, comparative generational analyses, or mixed-methods approaches to capture more nuanced cultural shifts in religious behaviour. Moreover, expanding the model to include constructs such as media literacy, religio-political awareness, or interfaith influences could offer richer insight into the evolving landscape of spiritual engagement among young Muslims. Pilgrimage for Gen Z Muslims in Indonesia is a multidimensional practice shaped by the intersection of belief, knowledge, and sociality. Recognising this complexity is essential for both scholars and practitioners who aim to sustain the relevance of Islamic heritage and spirituality in an era increasingly defined by digital mediation, historical scrutiny, and the generational redefinition of faith.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Chandra Budhi Septyandi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft, and Project Administration.

Eko Susanto: Supervision, Formal Analysis, Software, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, and Corresponding Author.

Sherly Raka Siwi Putri Utomo: Resources, Data Curation, and Visualization.

Mega Fitriani Adiwarna Prawira: Formal Analysis, and Writing – Review & Editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest with their current organizations or any third parties regarding the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. We further affirm that no unethical practices, including plagiarism, were followed during the course of this study. As this research did not involve medical reports, clinical analysis, animal testing, or invasive human testing, no clinical consent letters were required. All authors listed in this manuscript Chandra Budhi Septyandi, Eko Susanto, Sherly Raka Siwi Putri Utomo, and Mega Fitriani Adiwarna Prawira have made significant contributions to the research and have agreed to be included in this publication. Individuals who provided support but did not meet the criteria for authorship have been appropriately recognized in the acknowledgement section.

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