



GRANDIOSE AND VULNERABLE NARCISSISM IN GENERATION Z'S SHARING OF SOCIAL MEDIA TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between Generation Z's personality traits and their behavior in sharing travel-related content on social media. Drawing on survey data from 314 Generation Z respondents, the research investigates the associations between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and subsequent patterns of content sharing. In line with previous findings, both forms of narcissism demonstrate similar correlations with the Big Five traits. Furthermore, conspicuous consumption and status-seeking behaviors are positively associated with both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, with the latter exhibiting a stronger relationship. Grandiose narcissism is significantly linked to a heightened tendency to share travel-related content and to post selfies, whereas vulnerable narcissism does not show such associations. However, individuals exhibiting both types of narcissism are inclined to seek inspiration from others' social media profiles. A particularly salient finding for both theoretical and practical considerations is that individuals with grandiose narcissistic traits report higher levels of satisfaction with their travel experiences compared to their vulnerable counterparts. Continuously updated knowledge of personality traits is crucial not only for advancing conceptual understandings of rapidly evolving behavioral patterns, but also for equipping tourism practitioners, destinations and policymakers with timely and actionable insights.

KEYWORDS

Generation Z, social media, narcissism, Big Five, conspicuous consumption

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become integral to contemporary travel experiences, serving both as tools for sharing personal travel practices and as resources for informed decision-making. The practice of engaging

with social media during travel is now widely recognized as normative behavior among tourists. Nevertheless, the ways in which individuals utilize and perceive these platforms vary considerably across demographic segments and personality profiles. This study seeks to explore the relationship between

self-reported personality traits among Generation Z and the generation's inclination to share travel-related content on social media. A nuanced understanding of these usage patterns is essential for critically examining the benefits and drawbacks of current and emerging digital trends (Cena et al., 2023; Mishra, 2022). Given the tourism sector's substantial dependence on social media visibility, broader insights into these dynamics may also inform industry practices and strategic communication efforts.

As the tourism industry increasingly relies on robust insights into the behaviors of emerging dominant tourist segments, so too do destination authorities and governance bodies, which seek to deliver relevant services, develop attractive offerings, and communicate effectively with both current and prospective visitors. This study contributes valuable findings to support these broader strategic objectives. For decades, deep psychological perspectives have played a pivotal role in shaping both systemic and micro-level transformations within the field of tourism (Kumar, 2024; Pearce & Stringer, 1991). As these theoretical foundations continue to develop, the need for their periodic reassessment remains pressing. Younger cohorts – often serving as early adopters of emerging attitudes and behaviors – frequently signal shifts that later diffuse more broadly. To capture these dynamics, the present study positions Generation Z as its primary analytical lens.

The study is situated within well-established psychological paradigms and seeks to demonstrate both their continued relevance and the theoretical constraints imposed by the contemporary social media landscape.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY APPLICATION

This literature review establishes the foundation of the study across three principal areas. First, it broadly examines the travel-related social media practices characteristic of Generation Z. Second, it introduces the concepts of personality traits, narcissism and conspicuous behavior, and analyzes how these constructs have been applied within tourism research. Finally, the review identifies the key gaps in existing scholarship that inform the development of the study's hypotheses, which are subsequently tested using survey data.

2.1. GENERATION Z AS TOURISTS

Generation Z, comprising individuals born between the late 1990s and 2010, is widely acknowledged as the most digitally proficient generation to date. This

cohort demonstrates a strong inclination to seek travel inspiration through online platforms (Popşa, 2024; Şchiopu et al., 2023). As an emerging and influential consumer segment, Generation Z represents the future of tourism. Although often characterized as relatively homogeneous compared to preceding generations, recent research reveals considerable internal diversity within this group, mirroring the complexity of the broader travel market (Kim & Cake, 2025; Nemec Rudež, 2023). Members of Generation Z differ significantly in terms of travel motivations (Kamenidou et al., 2021; Marquez et al., 2025), consumption behaviors and expenditure patterns (Bilińska et al., 2023; Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023), risk perceptions (Pascual-Fraile et al., 2024) and ethical considerations (D'Arco et al., 2025; Rana et al., 2025). Given their size and enduring presence in the tourism landscape, it is essential for marketers, destination managers and policymakers to cultivate a nuanced understanding of this segment – especially as their preferences and behaviors evolve over time. Recent scholarship has emphasized the importance of destination management organizations (DMOs) in engaging Generation Z. For instance, Mavragani and Dionysios (2022) explore the integration of augmented reality and gamification as strategies aligned with the expectations of this cohort, while Fong et al. (2025) investigate the most effective media channels for reaching them.

Generation Z is often characterized by its digital proficiency, which has become a defining trait. However, the widespread use of technology also plays a central role in the growing body of research focused on this cohort. This is particularly evident in tourism and travel-related studies (Mishra, 2022), which suggest that Generation Z is poised to transform the operational practices of tourism enterprises and attractions (Pompurová et al., 2025). Moreover, this generation is likely to drive significant changes in communication dynamics – both between service providers and customers, and among tourists themselves.

2.2. SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE SHARING OF TRAVEL INFORMATION

Tourists increasingly engage in the sharing of travel-related content on social media platforms before, during and after their journeys. This content typically includes textual posts, photographs and videos, which are disseminated within their social networks comprising friends, family and followers (Hjalager & Jensen, 2012; Hasan & Neela, 2021). Empirical studies suggest a marked preference for visual content – particularly photographs – over textual communication (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), with travel selfies and videos emerging as especially popular formats (Maharani & Effendi, 2025; Taylor, 2020). These trends align with

broader generational shifts and the evolving landscape of social media usage. Consequently, the modes of expression adopted by tourists have influenced the platforms they utilize, leading to a transition from traditional services such as Facebook to more visually oriented platforms like Instagram and TikTok (Martins et al., 2025).

The motivations for sharing travel experiences are multifaceted, including the desire to document personal memories, provide entertainment, connect with fellow travelers, engage in altruistic behavior, enhance social status and manage self-presentation (Arica et al., 2022; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Mulvey et al., 2020).

Moreover, previous research indicates that travel-related content sharing is more prevalent among women than men, and among younger individuals compared to older age groups. Men tend to be more attracted to entertainment and gaming elements, whereas women generally favor more traditional forms of marketing and communication (Liu et al., 2023). Individuals with extraverted personality traits are also significantly more active on social media platforms (Sorokowski et al., 2016; Taylor, 2020).

Prior research not only underscores the significance of social media as a source of travel information and communication for Generation Z but also reveals emerging nuances that reflect the distinctive characteristics of contemporary travel experiences and contexts. Moreover, existing studies suggest a growing shift toward more active and individualized decision-making among Generation Z. Their behavior appears to be moving away from a herd mentality and toward choices that reflect personal preferences and potentially deeper personality traits. Nonetheless, research in this area remains at an early stage.

2.3. PERSONALITY THEORY AS RESEARCH FOUNDATION

The present study integrates psychological insights derived from two well-established personality assessment frameworks: the Big Five personality model and narcissism-related constructs. These tools serve as critical instruments for analyzing travel-related social media behavior. The theoretical frameworks are characterized by their incorporation of multiple dimensions, a feature reflected in this study's formulation of sub-hypotheses that elaborate on the general assumption of a discernible relationship between personality traits and social media sharing behavior. Personality assessment frameworks are inherently complex, a characteristic that is fully acknowledged in this study. The description of the model's dimensions provides an initial foundation that links directly to the hypotheses examined later.

The Big Five personality model encompasses five core traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness,

neuroticism, and openness to experience/intellect (Zajenkowski & Szymaniak, 2021). Individuals high in extraversion are typically characterized by their sociability and verbal expressiveness (Engvik & Clausen, 2011). Given their tendency to engage in social interaction and self-expression, extraverted individuals are expected to share travel experiences more frequently and to use social media as a source of travel inspiration. Based on the theoretical arguments presented above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: Extraversion will be positively associated with the frequency of travel-related posts on social media.

H₂: Extraversion will be positively associated with selfie-sharing behavior on social media.

H₃: Extraverted individuals will be more likely than introverts to seek travel inspiration from friends and family members.

According to the Big Five personality framework, individuals high in agreeableness are characterized by warmth, empathy, and prosocial tendencies. Such characteristics are likely to encourage both engagement with and sharing of travel-related content on social media. Furthermore, their cooperative and positive disposition may enhance their evaluation of travel experiences. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₄: Agreeableness will be positively associated with sharing travel-related content on social media.

H₅: Agreeableness will be positively associated with consuming travel-related social media content for travel inspiration.

H₆: Agreeableness will be positively associated with travel satisfaction.

Conscientiousness reflects an individual's capacity for self-regulation, careful planning, and attention to detail. These characteristics suggest a more deliberate approach to travel planning and decision-making, potentially increasing both the search for travel-related information and the quality of travel experiences. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₇: Conscientiousness will be positively associated with seeking travel inspiration from others.

H₈: Conscientiousness will be positively associated with travel satisfaction.

Neuroticism is characterized by negative emotional tendencies such as anxiety, depression, and embarrassment. Individuals high in neuroticism may be more cautious in social interactions and therefore less willing to share personal travel experiences publicly. At the same time, concerns about social evaluation may increase their tendency toward conspicuous consumption as a means of status signaling. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₉: Neuroticism will be negatively associated with sharing travel experiences.

H₁₀: Neuroticism will be negatively associated with travel selfie-sharing behavior.

H₁₁: Neuroticism will be positively associated with conspicuous travel consumption.

H₁₂: Neuroticism will be positively associated with status-oriented self-presentation related to travel.

Openness/intellect is associated with creativity, curiosity, and a preference for novel experiences. Individuals high in openness are therefore expected to engage more actively with travel-related content, both as creators and consumers, and to derive greater satisfaction from travel experiences. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁₃: Openness/intellect will be positively associated with sharing travel experiences on social media.

H₁₄: Openness/intellect will be positively associated with seeking travel inspiration through social media content.

H₁₅: Openness/intellect will be positively associated with travel satisfaction.

2.4. NARCISSISM

Narcissism serves as a supplementary conceptual foundation for this study. Within tourism research, several motivational studies have explored narcissistic tendencies, including those by Irimiás (2023) and Taylor (2020). These contributions highlight specific attitudes and behaviors prevalent among younger generations, particularly the dual mechanisms of self-presentation and the cultivation of travel-related envy (Kim & Chung, 2023). The existing literature distinguishes between two primary forms of narcissism: grandiose and vulnerable, as outlined by Zajenkowski and Szymaniak (2021). Grandiose narcissism is characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance, a tendency toward exploitative behavior, and a strong need for admiration. In contrast, vulnerable narcissism is associated with low self-esteem, heightened defensiveness, and emotional hypersensitivity. Empirical findings suggest that individuals with grandiose narcissistic traits typically score higher on measures of extraversion, assertiveness, and openness, while scoring lower on neuroticism and agreeableness compared to their vulnerable counterparts. Given their desire for admiration and social recognition, individuals high in grandiose narcissism are expected to share travel experiences more actively and to use travel-related content as a means of enhancing their perceived social status. In contrast, vulnerable narcissists may rely more heavily on external cues while exhibiting greater reluctance to engage in public self-presentation. Based on the theoretical background presented above, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H₁₆: Grandiose narcissism will be positively associated with the posting of travel-related content on social media.

H₁₇: Grandiose narcissism will be positively associated with travel selfie-sharing behavior.

H₁₈: Individuals exhibiting grandiose narcissistic traits will be more likely to seek travel inspiration from others as a means of maintaining and enhancing their perceived travel status.

H₁₉: Individuals exhibiting vulnerable narcissistic tendencies will be more inclined to seek external inspiration to guide self-protective behaviors.

H₂₀: Vulnerable narcissism will be negatively associated with the posting of travel-related content on social media.

H₂₁: Vulnerable narcissism will be negatively associated with travel selfie-sharing behavior.

H₂₂: Grandiose narcissism will be positively associated with conspicuous consumption.

H₂₃: Grandiose narcissism will be positively associated with status-seeking behavior.

H₂₄: Vulnerable narcissism will be positively associated with conspicuous consumption.

H₂₅: Vulnerable narcissism will be positively associated with status-seeking behavior.

Prior research by Rohmann et al. (2019) indicates that grandiose narcissism is positively correlated with life satisfaction, whereas vulnerable narcissism shows a negative correlation. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H₂₆: Grandiose narcissism will be positively associated with satisfaction derived from travel experiences.

H₂₇: Grandiose narcissism will be positively associated with the perceived impact of travel-related posts.

H₂₈: Vulnerable narcissism will be negatively associated with satisfaction derived from travel experiences.

H₂₉: Vulnerable narcissism will be negatively associated with the perceived impact of travel-related posts.

Recent studies have identified distinct associations between the two forms of narcissism and core personality traits, particularly the Big Five dimensions (Zajenkowski & Szymaniak, 2021). Moreover, these dimensions of narcissism, along with the Big Five traits, have been found to be interrelated and to correlate with patterns of social media engagement (Casale & Banchi, 2020) as well as self-presentation behaviors in travel photography (Christou et al., 2020).

In line with the concept of narcissism, Thorstein Veblen (1899) introduced the notion of conspicuous consumption, arguing that individuals acquire and display goods and services to signal economic power and social status. Similarly, contemporary travelers frequently share their experiences on social media platforms, often as a strategy to assert social superiority or to mitigate feelings of inadequacy that arise from

social comparison. Siepmann et al. (2022) expand on this notion by suggesting that tourists may engage in conspicuous consumption driven by both internal motivations – such as the desire for self-expression – and external motivations, including the pursuit of social recognition and status among peers. Social media serve as a prominent vehicle for such status signaling. However, Yildiz and Kazoglu (2023) observe that Generation Z appears to be less preoccupied with status concerns than previous generations when engaging with social media content, whether posting or consuming it.

2.5. CONTRIBUTION TO AN EMERGING RESEARCH AGENDA

To conclude this literature review, recent intergenerational research increasingly incorporates psychological dimensions to better understand how individuals engage with social media in the context of tourism and travel. Nguyen et al. (2025), for example, identify a significant positive association between higher levels of narcissism and general social media addiction. This relationship appears to be particularly strong among members of Generation Z when examined within travel and tourism settings (Cena et al., 2023; Chakraborty et al., 2023). Nevertheless, it remains important to observe how personality traits – both beneficial and detrimental – shape these patterns of engagement. To support individual well-being as well as broader societal interests, there is a clear need to foster a critical and reflective approach to social media use.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. MEASUREMENT

The empirical data for this study were obtained via a structured online survey instrument. The questionnaire was informed by established research in the field (Dedeoğlu et al., 2019; Jani, 2014; Zająkowski & Szymaniak, 2021). It is organized into three main sections. The first captures respondents' demographic profiles, including gender, age and employment status. It also incorporates standardized items designed to facilitate the classification of respondents according to the Big Five personality traits. The second section consists of Likert-scale items aimed at assessing grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism and conspicuous consumption, specifically in the context of general travel behavior. The third section focuses on travel experiences during the period 2020–2024, detailing the frequency of trips taken and associated social media engagement, such as posting and searching activities related to those trips.

To ensure measurement accuracy, most constructs in this study were assessed using multi-item scales adapted from established research instruments. The Big Five personality traits were measured using items from Engvik and Clausen's (2011) Norwegian adaptation of the Big Five Inventory-20 (BIF-20), employing a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Grandiose narcissism was evaluated using four of the five items proposed by Taylor and Strutton (2016), while vulnerable narcissism was assessed with five items from the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale developed by Hendin and Cheek (1997). For both narcissism scales, items were contextualized to a travel-related setting (e.g. "When it comes to travel, I know that I am an extraordinary person" replaced the original "I know I am an extraordinary person"). Responses to the narcissism items were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Conspicuous consumption was measured using a four-item scale designed to assess travelers' inclination to share their travel experiences on social media, with particular emphasis on their intent to showcase the most favorable aspects of these experiences. Status motivation was evaluated using a three-item scale that captured the significance of status attainment as a driving factor behind the sharing of travel-related content. Both constructs were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

The extent to which individuals shared travel-related content on social media was assessed using three items that captured posts made before, during and after the trip, respectively. Exposure to travel-related inspiration on others' social media platforms was measured through two items, focusing on the search for ideas related to destination selection and activity planning. In both cases – content sharing and inspiration seeking – respondents were asked to indicate the number of trips taken between 2020 and 2024 during which they engaged in these practices on social media. The practice of posting selfies was evaluated using two items that measured the frequency of posting both traditional selfies and other photographs featuring the respondent in natural settings, tourist attractions or dining venues, where the individual appeared in the image, but the photo was not classified as a selfie.

Respondents' satisfaction was measured by asking them to rate their most recent travel experience using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). Following this, participants were asked to evaluate the influence of their social media activity on their travel experience, using a similar five-point scale from 1 (*entirely negative influence*) to 5 (*entirely positive influence*).

The exact phrasing of each item, along with the corresponding construct reliability metrics, is provided in Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 reports the measurement items and reliability for each construct representing the outcome variables. The reliability estimates for all constructs are either above or close to the threshold of 0.70, which is generally considered acceptable for internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). These results suggest that the constructs demonstrate satisfactory reliability.

Table 2 presents the reliability for all constructs and the associated measurement items, which represent the predictor variables. Five out of seven constructs exhibit reliability estimates above the 0.70 level, indicating satisfactory reliability for these constructs. The reliabilities for the scales measuring control and grandiose narcissism are 0.66 and 0.63, respectively, which also denote acceptable reliabilities for those two constructs (Hair et al., 2019; Tan & Yang, 2024).

Table 1. Reliability for outcome constructs and corresponding items

Constructs reliability	Scale items	Cronbach's α
Conspicuous/visible consumption (CO/VI) ^a	I like to share my travel experiences with others on social media	0.73
	I'm more likely to share my travel experiences with others on social media if I know they will provide me with likes/recognition	
	I always choose the most prestigious/positive images when sharing travel experiences on social media	
	What I share on social media probably portrays my holiday experiences a little better than they are	
Status (STAT) ^b	Probably also do it to 'brag' a little/make others a little envious	0.81
	I somehow feel that it gives me status	
	I share travel experiences to receive recognitions/likes	
Search for travel inspiration on social media (SEAR) ^c	Search for inspiration for choice of destination	0.87
	Search for inspiration for activities on the trip	
Posting travel-related content on social media (POST) ^c	Posted prior to the trip	0.65
	Posted/shared during the trip	
	Posted/shared after the trip	
Posting travel selfies and/or pictures including oneself (SELF) ^c	Posted travel selfies from the destination with nature, attractions etc. in the background	0.81
	Posted pictures from the destination with attractions, etc. in focus and yourself in background (not selfies)	
	Posting videos from the destination	
Overall satisfaction with the latest trip (SATI) ^d	How satisfied were you all in all with your latest trip	N/A for single-item variables
Effect of posting travel-related content on overall travel experience (EXPE) ^e	To what degree did your posting of travel-related content have a negative or positive effect on your overall travel experience	N/A

^aScale: 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

^bScale: 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*to a very high degree*).

^cScale: 1 – *none of the trips*, 2 – *1–2 trips*, 3 – *3–4 trips*, 4 – *5–6 trips*, 5 – *6+ trips*.

^dScale: 5-point scale from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*).

^eScale: 5-point scale from 1 (*entirely negative influence*) to 5 (*entirely positive influence*).

Source: authors.

Table 2. Reliability for predictor constructs and corresponding items

Measure	Construct	Scale items	Cronbach's α
Big Five ^{a, b}	Extraversion (EXT)	Is talkative in the company of others	0.87
		Tends to be quiet in the company of others ^b	
		Is outgoing and social	
		Can be a little shy and inhibited ^b	

	Agreeableness (AGR)	Can be cold and dismissive of others ^b	0.70
		Is sometimes rude to others ^b	
		Is considerate and friendly to almost everyone	
		Try to be understanding of others	
	Conscientiousness (CON)	Is thorough/diligent in work or study	0.66
		Is not always as conscientious as others ^b	
		Tends to be disorganized ^b	
		Makes plans and follows them up	
	Openness/intellect (OP/IN)	Is original, comes up with new ideas	0.77
		Wants to try/experience something new	
		Likes to reflect and play with new ideas	
		Is open to new experiences	
	Neuroticism (NEU)	Is sometimes depressed/depressed	0.71
		Is mostly relaxed, handles stress well ^b	
		Is easy to put off my cool	
		Rarely gets nervous ^b	
Narcissism ^c	Grandiose narcissism (GRN)	I consider myself an extraordinary person when it comes to travel experiences	0.63
		I see myself as a special person when it comes to travel and holiday experiences	
		I am better at choosing and planning trips than most people in my social circle	
		I know that I am good at choosing and planning travel experiences because other people tell me so	
	Vulnerable narcissism (VUN)	I often feel that other people's travel experiences are better than my own.	0.73
		I only share my holiday experiences when I am certain they will receive likes or recognition	
		I prefer to share my holiday experiences with people who are likely to give me likes or recognition	
		I sometimes regret sharing my holiday experiences on social media	

^a Scale: 5-point Likert Scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

^b Negatively worded items were reverse-scored before calculating Cronbach's α and composite scale scores. Higher scores indicate higher levels of the focal construct throughout.

^c Scale: 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*to a very high degree*).

Source: authors.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE

The data for this study were collected as part of a larger survey on green consumption. A convenience sampling approach was employed, with eligibility restricted to individuals born between 1995 and 2010 to ensure alignment with the Generation Z cohort. Participants were recruited by asking all undergraduate students enrolled in a quantitative data analysis course at the University of Southern Denmark to distribute a link to the online questionnaire via email and their personal social media

platforms. To increase sample heterogeneity, students were encouraged to share the link to as broad a response group as possible in relation to gender, age and occupation. After removing incomplete questionnaires and responses from individuals outside the specified age range, a final sample of 314 valid cases was retained for analysis.

Although convenience sampling has gained broader acceptance within scholarly research, it nonetheless presents limitations – particularly concerning representativeness. However, the approach can still offer

substantial value for conceptual exploration and preliminary empirical testing. The sample displayed a marked gender imbalance, with 80.3% of respondents identifying as female. A majority of participants were university students (63.1%) and fell within the 20–24 age range (65.6%), reflecting the recruitment strategy that primarily targeted student networks. Additionally, 27.7%, 76.8% and 61.8% of respondents reported sharing travel-related content on social media before, during and after their trips, respectively. These sampling characteristics and their implications are addressed in the study's conclusions and suggestions for future research.

3.3. DATA TREATMENT

The data were processed sequentially and explored using SPSS. Multiple rounds of testing were conducted to validate variables and their interdependencies. Due to the complexity of the theoretical constructs and the relatively high number of hypotheses, reducing the number of examined relationships led to a loss of insight into the interplay among narcissism, personality traits and social media posting during travel.

Given the exploratory aim of identifying bivariate associations, the analysis relies on zero-order correlations. More advanced techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM) or regression were not aligned with this purpose and were considered less suitable. In addition, two variables are measured as single items. Consequently, a parsimonious and abductive analytical approach was adopted (Philipsen & Hjalager, 2024).

4. RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESULTS SECTION

The results are presented across three subsections. The first subsection examines the associations between the two dimensions of narcissism and the Big Five personality traits. The second subsection explores how personality characteristics – including both facets of narcissism and the Big Five traits – relate to individuals' propensity to share travel-related content on social media.

4.2. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE TWO TYPES OF NARCISSISM AND THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS

Table 3 displays Pearson's correlations between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, as well as their respective associations with the Big Five personality traits.

The initial analysis explored the relationship between the two forms of narcissism. The findings indicate that the dimensions are statistically independent ($r = -0.048, p > 0.05$), implying that a high score on one dimension does not reliably predict a corresponding high or low score on the other. This suggests that the two constructs represent distinct and autonomous personality traits. Consequently, it is essential to assess both variants when examining the association between narcissism and the sharing of travel-related content.

Subsequently, we examined the associations between each form of narcissism and the Big Five personality traits. The observed correlations were largely consistent with prior findings (Zajenkowski & Szymaniak, 2021). Grandiose narcissism was positively associated with extraversion ($r = 0.157, p > 0.01$), control ($r = 0.106, p > 0.05$), and openness/intellect ($r = 0.299, p > 0.001$), and negatively associated with neuroticism ($r = -0.100, p > 0.05$). In contrast, vulnerable narcissism demonstrated negative correlations with extraversion ($r = -0.300, p > 0.001$) and openness/intellect ($r = -0.217, p > 0.001$), and a positive correlation with neuroticism ($r = 0.400, p < 0.001$). Neither dimension showed significant associations with agreeableness (grandiose: $r = -0.057, p > 0.05$; vulnerable: $r = 0.005, p > 0.05$).

These findings suggest that grandiose and vulnerable forms of narcissism are differentiated across four of the five domains of the Big Five personality traits. Individuals exhibiting grandiose narcissism, characterized by higher levels of extraversion, are more likely to share travel-related content on social media than their more introverted, vulnerable counterparts. Moreover, grandiose narcissists, who tend to display greater openness and a stronger sense of control, may be more inclined to pursue novel travel experiences and to provide positive evaluations of these experiences on online platforms. These intuitively logical findings align well with prior research (Sorokowski et al., 2021; Taylor, 2020).

Table 3. Relationship between the two types of narcissism and the Big Five personality traits (N = 314)

Variables	GRN	VUN	EXT	AGR	CON	NEU	OP/IN
GRN	1	-0.048**	0.157***	-0.057**	0.106**	-0.100***	0.299***
VUN	-0.048**	1	-0.300***	0.005**	-0.068**	0.400***	-0.217***

Note: GRN – grandiose narcissism, VUN – vulnerable narcissism, EXT – extraversion, AGR – agreeableness, CON – conscientiousness, NEU – neuroticism, OP/IN – openness/intellect; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: authors.

Table 4. Relationships between the personality traits and posting of travel-related content ($N = 314$)

Variables	EXT	AGR	CON	NEU	OP/IN	GRN	VUN
CO/VI	-0.052	0.120*	0.093	0.205***	0.007	0.163**	0.508***
STAT	-0.110*	0.028	0.010	0.103*	-0.068	0.206***	0.457***
SEAR	0.108*	-0.041	0.076	-0.012	0.099*	0.193***	0.158**
POST	0.155**	-0.019	0.087	-0.016	0.169***	0.267***	0.084
SELF	0.178***	-0.051	-0.002	-0.035	0.092	0.315***	0.043
SATI	0.102*	0.134**	0.048	-0.005	0.122*	0.106*	-0.127*
EXPE	0.043	-0.022	0.026	-0.032	0.037	-0.080	-0.204***

Note: CO/VI – conspicuous/visible consumption, STAT – status, SEAR – search for travel inspiration on social media, POST – posting travel-related content on social media, SELF – posting travel selfies and/or pictures including oneself, SATI – overall satisfaction with the latest trip, EXPE – effect of posting travel-related content on overall travel experience, EXT – extraversion, AGR – agreeableness, CON – conscientiousness, NEU – neuroticism, OP/IN – openness/intellect, GRN – grandiose narcissism, VUN – vulnerable narcissism; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: authors.

4.3. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND POSTING OF TRAVEL-RELATED CONTENT

Table 4 presents the zero-order correlations between the personality traits and various aspects of posting travel-related content.

Extraversion was found to be positively correlated with seeking inspiration ($r = 0.108$, $p < 0.05$), as well as with posting travel-related content and selfies ($r = 0.155$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = 0.178$, $p < 0.001$, respectively), thereby supporting hypotheses H_1 and H_2 . Interestingly, extraversion demonstrated a negative correlation with status-seeking behavior ($r = -0.110$, $p < 0.05$) and showed no significant associations with either conspicuous or visible consumption. These findings suggest that individuals with higher levels of extraversion are less likely to share travel content for the purpose of gaining status or attention. Consistent with hypothesis H_3 , extraversion was also positively associated with travel satisfaction ($r = 0.102$, $p < 0.05$).

The analysis did not reveal a significant correlation between agreeableness and the extent of searching for or posting travel-related content, thus failing to support hypotheses H_4 and H_5 . However, agreeableness was found to be positively correlated with satisfaction ($r = 0.134$, $p < 0.01$), thereby supporting hypothesis H_6 .

Conscientiousness showed no significant correlation with either searching for travel inspiration or trip satisfaction ($r = 0.076$, $p > 0.05$ and $r = 0.048$, $p > 0.05$, respectively), providing no support for hypotheses H_7 and H_8 .

Neuroticism did not exhibit a negative correlation with either travel posts ($r = -0.016$, $p > 0.05$) or travel selfies ($r = -0.035$, $p > 0.05$), thus failing to support hypotheses H_9 and H_{10} . On the contrary, neuroticism was positively correlated with conspicuous/visible consumption ($r = 0.205$, $p < 0.001$) and status seeking

($r = 0.103$, $p < 0.05$), thereby supporting hypotheses H_{11} and H_{12} .

Individuals with high scores in openness/intellect are more likely to post their travel experience ($r = 0.169$, $p < 0.001$), and to search for inspiration ($r = 0.099$, $p < 0.05$), thereby supporting hypotheses H_{13} and H_{14} . Additionally, openness/intellect showed a positive correlation with satisfaction ($r = 0.122$, $p < 0.05$), thereby supporting hypothesis H_{15} .

Individuals exhibiting grandiose narcissism demonstrated a significantly greater tendency to share travel-related content ($r = 0.267$, $p < 0.001$) and travel selfies ($r = 0.315$, $p < 0.001$), thereby providing empirical support for hypotheses H_{16} and H_{17} . Furthermore, these individuals showed an increased inclination to seek travel inspiration ($r = 0.193$, $p < 0.001$), lending support to hypothesis H_{18} . Positive correlations were also observed between grandiose narcissism and both conspicuous consumption ($r = 0.163$, $p < 0.01$) and status-seeking behaviors ($r = 0.206$, $p < 0.001$), thus validating hypotheses H_{22} and H_{23} . While grandiose narcissism was positively associated with trip satisfaction ($r = 0.106$, $p < 0.05$), it did not exhibit a significant relationship with the perceived impact of posting on the overall travel experience. Consequently, hypothesis H_{26} is supported, but not hypothesis H_{27} .

Vulnerable narcissism was positively associated with the search for inspiration ($r = 0.158$, $p < 0.01$), thereby providing support for hypothesis H_{19} . Furthermore, significant positive correlations were observed between vulnerable narcissism and both conspicuous consumption ($r = 0.508$, $p < 0.001$) and status-seeking behavior ($r = 0.457$, $p < 0.001$), confirming hypotheses H_{24} and H_{25} . Notably, these associations were substantially stronger than those found for grandiose narcissism. In contrast, vulnerable narcissism did not exhibit significant correlations with the posting

of travel-related content ($r = 0.084$, $p > 0.05$) or selfies ($r = 0.043$, $p > 0.05$), thus failing to support hypotheses H_{20} and H_{21} . Additionally, individuals scoring higher in vulnerable narcissism reported lower levels of travel satisfaction ($r = -0.127$, $p < 0.05$), and their engagement in posting travel-related content was more likely to negatively affect their travel experience ($r = -0.204$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting hypotheses H_{28} and H_{29} .

The findings largely support our hypothesized relationships between personality traits and various dimensions of tourists' sharing of travel experiences on social media (Zajenkowski & Szymaniak, 2021). However, the results also reveal several unexpected associations and the absence of some anticipated relationships.

Individuals scoring high on extraversion and openness/intellect are more inclined to seek out and share their travel experiences via social media. Tourists with these personality traits are less likely to engage in status-seeking behavior or conspicuous consumption, and they report higher levels of satisfaction with their travel experiences.

Contrary to our expectations, individuals with high levels of neuroticism were not less likely to post travel-related content or selfies. Nonetheless, they exhibited a stronger tendency toward status-seeking and conspicuous consumption.

The findings reveal distinct differences between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in relation to the sharing of travel experiences on social media. As anticipated, individuals with grandiose narcissistic traits are more inclined to seek out and share their travel experiences. They also report higher levels of satisfaction with their vacations. However, their social media sharing and the responses it elicits do not appear to significantly influence their overall travel experience.

Contrary to expectations, individuals with vulnerable narcissistic traits were not less likely to post travel-related content or selfies. Nevertheless, consistent with the hypothesis, they demonstrated a stronger tendency toward conspicuous consumption and status-seeking behaviors. As expected, these individuals also reported lower levels of satisfaction with their travel experiences.

5. DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the relationship between Generation Z's personality traits – specifically the Big Five dimensions and two forms of narcissism – and their inclination to share travel-related content on social media platforms. The findings contribute meaningfully to the tourism literature that is still somewhat limited

in this field (Tan & Yang, 2024). It offers valuable implications for tourism marketing strategies which will be explained.

This study focused on Generation Z, acknowledging them as a significant demographic and a pivotal future segment of the tourism market. The findings reveal that a considerable proportion of individuals within this cohort actively engage in sharing travel-related content on social media, particularly during and following their trips. For Generation Z, refraining from social media use while traveling appears largely impractical. Accordingly, a deeper understanding of this group offers valuable insights for both academic researchers and industry professionals. The implications are profound and widely acknowledged within the tourism industry and among tourism destinations, which already devote substantial portions of their communication efforts to social media (Pahor Zvanut & Zabukovec Baruca, 2026).

To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is among the first to simultaneously investigate the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and narcissism – both grandiose and vulnerable – in the context of sharing travel-related content on social media. Notably, it is the first to adapt established measures of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism specifically to a travel-related setting. The reliability analyses indicated that the adapted scales demonstrated acceptable reliability for grandiose narcissism and good reliability for vulnerable narcissism, thereby supporting the validity of these context-specific measures.

Furthermore, the two forms of narcissism demonstrated correlations with the Big Five personality traits that align with established findings, thereby supporting the criterion validity of the instruments used. Notably, individuals exhibiting traits associated with vulnerable narcissism also tended to score high on extraversion. Interestingly, the two narcissism constructs were not significantly correlated, suggesting that travelers characterized by grandiose narcissistic traits may also possess features of vulnerability, and vice versa.

The findings reveal several significant correlations – and notable absences of correlation – between personality traits and the sharing of travel-related content on social media. These insights offer valuable implications for tourism management and point to promising directions for future research. Interestingly, extraverted travelers were found to be less motivated by status-seeking behavior, yet they did not demonstrate a reduced tendency toward conspicuous consumption. This apparent paradox merits further investigation. As expected, agreeable travelers were more likely to report higher levels of trip satisfaction. In contrast, conspicuous travelers – who are typically assumed to engage in more thorough planning – did not exhibit greater

satisfaction with their trips. This inconsistency also warrants deeper exploration in subsequent studies.

Neurotic travelers did not demonstrate a significantly higher likelihood of posting travel-related content on social media. However, among those who did engage in such activity, the primary motivations appeared to be conspicuous consumption and status-seeking. This paradoxical finding merits further investigation to better understand the underlying psychological mechanisms. In contrast, individuals characterized by high levels of openness/intellect were more inclined to share travel-related content yet did not exhibit a stronger tendency to seek travel inspiration. This unexpected pattern also warrants further exploration, practically and in specific industry and destination context, as well as theoretically. Notably, travelers with elevated openness/intellect reported greater satisfaction with their travel experiences. Tourism managers may leverage this satisfaction by encouraging these individuals to act as ambassadors, thereby promoting destinations through authentic endorsements. Grandiose narcissists showed a pronounced tendency both to seek travel inspiration and to post travel-related content, primarily driven by motives of status enhancement and conspicuous consumption. These individuals also reported higher levels of trip satisfaction, suggesting that tourism marketers could effectively engage this segment in co-creating promotional content. The rising influence of travel content creators – and the increasing willingness of tourism organizations and destinations to collaborate with them – appears consistent with these findings (Hu & Shen, 2025). Overall, the communicative landscape has undergone a seemingly permanent transformation for Generation Z and for travelers more broadly. Nonetheless, individuals' psychological dispositions continue to shape their responses to this environment and, consequently, the benefits they are able to derive from it.

6. CONCLUSION

The use of social media in relation to travel has experienced a significant surge, and as this article suggests, it is highly improbable that individuals from Generation Z would refrain from sharing travel-related content at some stage – whether prior to, during or following their tourism experiences. The psychological profile emerging from the study aligns with anticipated hypotheses, indicating that social media activity reinforces certain personality traits. However, some of the study's findings appear paradoxical or at odds with commonly held assumptions and perceived linear trends in social media engagement. This raises the question: are we witnessing potential inflection points

in Generation Z's otherwise exponential reliance on social media? Is there evidence to suggest a shift in their propensity to share travel content? Has a tipping point been reached?

In their conceptual article, Liu et al. (2022) pose a critical question: to what extent do negative feedback, hostile commenting formats, and criticism of specific travel experiences and destinations deter individuals from sharing their travel content online? The findings of the present study suggest that Generation Z travelers may adopt a cautious approach – seeking to enhance their social status through curated content yet operating within perceived boundaries. These boundaries, however, are not explicitly confirmed in this study and warrant further investigation. For instance, movements such as *#MeToo* have heightened anxiety among certain demographic groups regarding the potential repercussions of expressing or displaying inappropriate content, despite the lack of clearly defined behavioral norms. Similarly, peer harassment on social media appears to be emerging in specific social contexts. Recent politically driven initiatives aimed at regulating private social media content may also contribute to increased self-censorship, potentially curbing overtly narcissistic expressions. It remains uncertain whether travel-related content on social media has become overly sanitized and excessively polite due to a “fear of algorithms” (Elliott, 2024). Such a shift may render the content less engaging and appealing, as it lacks the provocative or edgy elements that typically capture audience interest.

Another avenue for reflection prompted by this study concerns the emerging trend of “digital-free holidaymaking”, which is increasingly viewed as a response to technological fatigue and burnout. Among Generation Z, however, traveling without a smartphone remains a relatively marginal practice. As Hassan and Saleh (2024, p. 1) observe, “limited research has integrated how digital detox tools shape pre-trip planning, on-site activities and post-trip sharing of travel experiences”. This observation suggests that, in the near future, personality trait models commonly employed in tourism research – including those used in the present study – may need to be revisited and expanded to account for evolving behavioral patterns and preferences.

This study does not identify any clear or consistent shifts in trends regarding the use of social media in tourism and travel. However, it does indicate that certain personal vulnerabilities and broader societal concerns are linked to underlying psychological dispositions. Contrary to common assumptions, the youngest generation does not appear to be leading major behavioral changes in this area. If substantial transformations are deemed necessary to support public health and well-being, these may need to be

initiated by older generations or by relevant policy institutions. Within the tourism and travel context, the long-term and wider implications of social media use remain insufficiently addressed. Future research should incorporate all generational groups and adopt longitudinal designs to more thoroughly examine the psychological effects associated with social media.

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