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Effect of Fear on the Interrelationships of the Domains of Destination Image

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Keywords:
Gen Z,
Covid-19 fear,
Cognitive image,
Affective image,
Conative image.

Abstract.
COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered fear, has affected the tourism industry globally, and Philippine tourism was not an exception. Gen Z travelers, an underexplored generation, are seen to play a key factor in tourism innovations. Further, destination image in the context of COVID-19 pandemic has not yet been widely explored. This study aims to investigate the effect of Filipino Gen Z's COVID-19 fear on their perception of cognitive, affective, and conative image. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) revealed that Gen Z's COVID-19 fear did not have a significant effect on destination image. Significant positive relationships among the destination image components were proven. Affective image mediated the relationship between cognitive and conative images. The study contributes to the limited studies on Gen Z's and their destination image perception during the pandemic. It encourages organizations and marketers to focus on Gen Z travelers to form positive destination image during the pandemic.

Kata Kunci:
Generasi Z,
Ketakutan akan Covid-19,
Gambar kognitif,
Citra afektif,
Gambar konatif.

Abstrak.
Pandemi COVID-19, yang memicu ketakutan, telah berdampak pada industri pariwisata secara global, termasuk pariwisata Filipina. Wisatawan Gen Z, generasi yang belum tereksplorasi, dipandang memainkan faktor kunci dalam inovasi pariwisata. Selain itu, gambaran destinasi dalam konteks pandemi COVID-19 belum banyak dieksplorasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh ketakutan generasi Z di Filipina terhadap COVID-19 terhadap persepsi mereka terhadap citra kognitif, afektif, dan konatif. Pemodelan persamaan struktural kuadrat terkecil parsial (PLS-SEM) mengungkapkan bahwa ketakutan Gen Z terhadap COVID-19 tidak berdampak signifikan terhadap citra destinasi. Hubungan positif yang signifikan antara komponen citra destinasi terbukti. Citra afektif memediasi hubungan antara citra kognitif dan konatif. Studi ini berkontribusi pada terbatasnya studi mengenai Generasi Z dan persepsi citra destinasi mereka selama pandemi. Hal ini mendorong organisasi dan pemasar untuk fokus pada wisatawan Gen Z untuk membentuk citra destinasi yang positif selama pandemi.

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1. Introduction

The Philippines has suffered a major upheaval in tourism revenues as the COVID-19 pandemic menaces the world (Dollanganger, 2020). From January to December 2021, the Department of Tourism (DOT) reported an 88.95 percent decline in international visitor arrivals, a total of 163,879 visitors from 2020 arrivals of 1,482,535, as the country's borders remain closed in 2021 (DOT, 2022). In terms of receipts, an 81.7 percent decline to USD1.8 billion was recorded in 2020, and another 66.5 percent decline to USD600 million in 2021 (Caynila et al., 2022). In terms of tourist arrivals, the Asia-Pacific region had the biggest blow of 64 percent decrease in the first quarter of 2020 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2020). Travel fear of people during the pandemic has been

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triggered by being affected by COVID-19 when travelling, and this led to avoidance of long travel even when travel bans have been removed (Zheng et al., 2021). It is studied whether the changes brought about by COVID-19 pandemic will persist afterward or if the travel sector will bounce back to the pre-pandemic scenario (Shamshiripour et al., 2020). It is also noted that understanding tourists' destination image has been studied widely before (Stylidis, 2020). In this light, this study takes on the challenge of exploring the effect of the pandemic on destination image.

Generation Z (Gen Z) travelers are known as risk takers (Southan, 2017). Among the travelling generational cohorts, Gen Z travelers are likely to transform tourism and destinations (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). In Bhattacharyya (2020), travel has always been a top aspiration for Gen Z's.

Destination image is a tool in increasing number of visitors in a place, thus, must be highlighted as it affects the choice of destination and individual tourist decisions. Destination image has been studied extensively in the recent years evident in the vast results and studies discussing its constructs and the relationships among other variables. Although widely documented, studies in understanding and investigating destination image and its effect on behavioral intentions may face contradictory conclusions making the results of destination image studies very heterogeneous (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

Destination image in the context of COVID-19 pandemic has not yet been widely explored. Gen Z travel behavior has yet to be investigated as well. Gen Z's are relatively new entrants into tourism market and studying their behavior is relevant and timely (Robinson and Schänzel, 2019). To bridge the gap, the study will focus on how Filipino Gen Z's form destination image during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will investigate the relationship among cognitive, affective, and conative components, and how fear of COVID-19 affects those components.

Meeting the objectives of this study will make a theoretical contribution to the literature on related topics. This study will provide framework for future academic research in the area and in the context of COVID-19 pandemic as well as to Gen Z's destination image as studies about this context are limited. National and local tourism organizations in the Philippines may gain understanding of Gen Z as an emerging tourist market and the result of this study may provide information in making a blue print for creation of an image for a certain destination as travel restrictions are being loosed. Private sector may also take advantage of the research discussion as to how to fully understand the three components of destination image which are involved in Gen Z's travel purchase behavior. Tourism marketers may also want to consider the result of this study in marketing a certain destination to Gen Z in the post pandemic era.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Fear

Fear is an emotion generally triggered by danger, pain or harm (De Hoog et al., 2008). COVID-19 viral outbreak caused human society to fear (Mamun & Griffiths, 2020; Yang et al., 2020). More than 130 million COVID-19 cases have been reported worldwide (World Health Organization, 2021), making people feel fear and anxiety easily (Ahorsu et al., 2020). Fear slowly turns into anxiety and maladaptive behaviors, but studies on identifying and measuring these behaviors remain limited (Mahoney et al., 2018). Risky consumer decision generates a certain level of anxiety which is defined as the fear of negative consequences (Dowling & Staelin, 1994; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988). Travelers evaluate risks and make decisions accordingly to avoid anxiety, as risk and anxiety are related to each other (Reisinger, 2005).

Perception of risk and travel behavior have been studied (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2017; Park & Tussyadiah, 2017). The significance of perceived travel risk to destination image may have not been extensively studied, but with the pandemic, more researches have been done to investigate the effect of COVID-19 pandemic to the travel behavior of people (Abdullah et al., 2020; De Vos, 2020; Irawan et al., 2021; Parady et al., 2020; Shakibaei et al, 2021; Shamshiripour et al, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented level of public fear which impacts the recovery of tourism industry and impedes travel even after the pandemic is over (Zheng et al, 2021). As people develop COVID-19 fear, investigating ways to overcome that fear and to return to normal life must be addressed (Gajić et al., 2021).

Fear of COVID-19 does not affect travel intention significantly, providing no evidence which points to the negative effect of fear to travel intentions (Luo & Lam, 2020). Applying the context of the pandemic on travel intention, the negative association of perceived severity of COVID-19 travel intention is proven not be significant among domestic travelers (Das & Tiwari, 2020). But in Gajić et al. (2021), COVID-19 fear significantly affects potential tourists' decision to travel. In a study among British and American consumers, 96 percent of Gen Z's expressed a level of concern due to the pandemic (Mander, 2020). Ironically, Global Web index (2020) highlighted that Gen Z's are the least supportive of preventive measures against COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2. Destination Image Model

In Woosnam et al. (2020), a model to explore destination image based on Gartner (1994) is utilized. Built on the concept of image by Boulding (1956), destination image is comprised of three distinct but hierarchically interrelated constructs: cognitive, affective and conative. Gartner's theoretical model has been confirmed in the confirmatory analysis of Agapito et al. (2013) and has been widely used in different studies on destination images (Basaran, 2016; Michael et al., 2017; Stylidis et al., 2020). The figure below illustrates the framework.

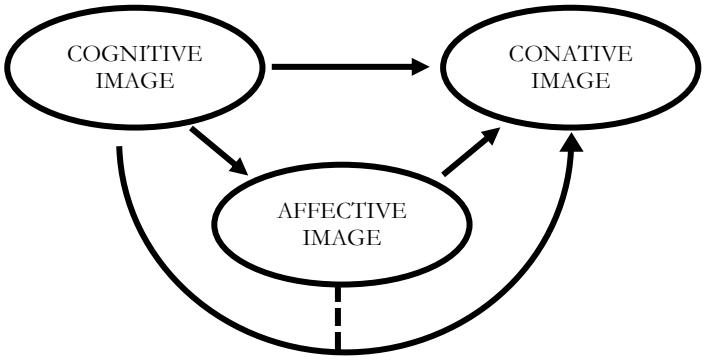

Figure 1. Cognitive-Affective-Conative Model based on the theoretical model of Gartner (1994)
Source: Gartner (1994)

2.3. Cognitive Image

The component of cognitive image refers to the evaluation of the perceived attributes of a certain destination even with prior visited places (Papadimitriou et al., 2018). This image component refers to a person's knowledge and beliefs about a specific destination and its attributes which help in forming the mental picture of the place (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pike & Ryan, 2004). Cognitive image attributes may include, among others, the scenery, climate, lodging facilities, foodservice

establishments, and attractions, which can motivate an individual to visit the destination (Stylidis et al., 2020). Destination image includes both cognitive and affective elements (Iordanova, 2016; Thanh et al., 2018). The relationship of cognitive and affective images are widely supported by studies with empirical evidences of the positive influence of cognitive image to affective image (Basaran, 2016; Hyun & O'Keefe, 2012; Kim et al., 2017; Suhartanto et al., 2018; Stylidis et al, 2017; Stylidis, et al, 2020; Woosnam et al, 2020).

The literature reveals a contradicting view in the relationship between cognitive and conative dimensions. Some studies suggest that cognitive image of a destination has a significant positive influence on conative image (Basaran, 2016; Kim et al, 2017; Lam et al, 2020; Suhartanto et al, 2018). However, others conclude that there is no significant relationship between the two constructs (Hyun & O'Keefe, 2012; Woosnam et al, 2020). Tourism literature suggests that conative component is largely related to tourist loyalty (Agapito et al, 2013). In Kasapi and Nurja (2019) and Stylidis et al. (2020), destination's cognitive image has a direct influence on tourist loyalty. But in Chiu et al (2016), the relationship between cognitive image and tourist loyalty was not significant.

2.4. Affective Image

In the past decade, studies in destination image have been limited to its perceptual or cognitive component, but more researchers are recently acknowledging the influence of affective component (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). The affective component of the destination image refers to the feelings and emotional responses toward the destination (Kim et al., 2019; Hallmann et al., 2015).

Affective image has a positive influence on tourist loyalty (Chiu et al., 2016). Potential repeat visitors in a destination have been reported to have different but positive overall images and intentional behaviors compared to first-time visitors (Iordanova & Stylidis, 2017). Visiting the place has been studied to have a positive effect on both the cognitive and the affective component of the destination (Kim et al., 2019). Affective image has been concluded to have a positive significant effect on conative image (Ahn & Back, 2017; Basaran, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Lam et al, 2020; Suhartanto et al.,2018; Woosnam et al., 2020;). In some instances, affective image displays a higher degree of effect to conative image than cognitive image does (Hyun & O'Keefe, 2012).

A cognitive-affective approach of destination image may be adapted when establishing the interrelationships between this construct and other variables (San Martín et al., 2018). It was proposed that affective image mediates the relationship between cognitive image and conative image (Basaran, 2016).

2.5. Conative Image

As people evaluate their beliefs and develop affective responses to a specific subject, they transition to conative stage, considered to be the last stage in the decision-making process (Hazel & Kang, 2018). This image is the action element which is said to be analogous to behavior (Stylidis et al, 2020). Researchers posited that conative destination image is synonymous to intention (King et al., 2015; Pike, 2004; Prayag, 2009). Conative aspect has been neglected as the third dimension of destination image (Stylos et al., 2016). Cognitive and affective components may have an effect a tourist's behaviour (Lam & Ariffin, 2019), yet action is the essence of the conative component (Woosnam et al., 2020). In the literature on destination image, conative component, as the action element, has a significant positive effect on tourists' revisit intention (Afshardoost & Eshagi, 2020; Loureiro & Jesus, 2019; Stylos et al., 2016; Taghipourian et al., 2019).

Synthesizing the gathered literature, a conceptual diagram based on Cognitive-Affirmative-Conative Model is devised. The framework illustrates the relationship among the three destination image components: cognitive, affective, and conative image. Further, the mediating effect of affective image on the relationship between cognitive image and conative image is explored. The effect of COVID-19 fear on the three components is also depicted. The framework will be used to address the research problems and atta in the research objectives by testing the proposed hypotheses. The framework is illustrated below.

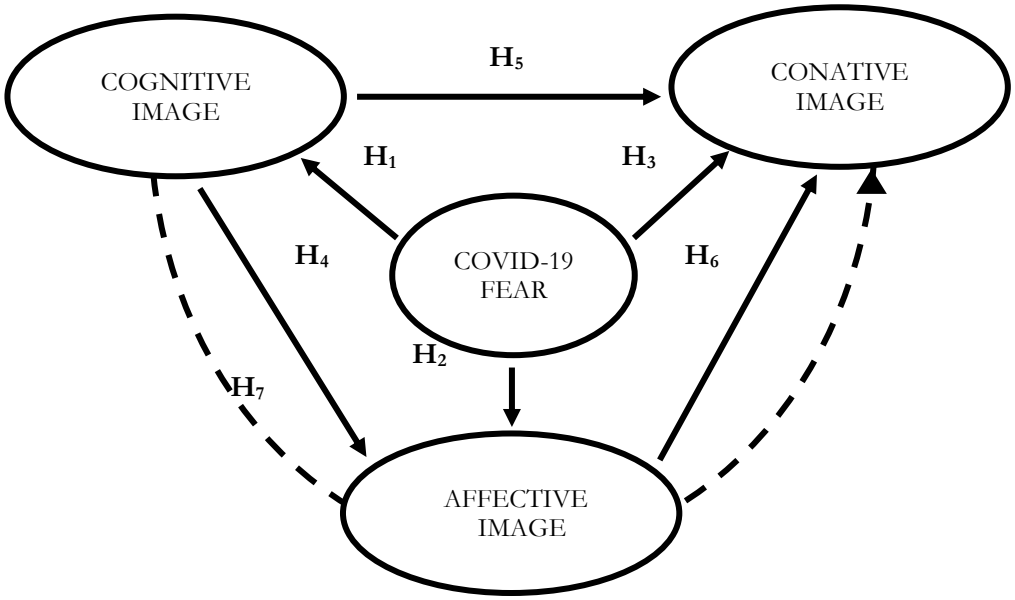

Figure 2. Conceptual Diagram of the Study

H1: COVID-19 fear has a significant negative effect on destination's cognitive image.
H2: COVID-19 fear has a significant negative effect on destination's affective image.
H3: COVID-19 fear has a significant negative effect on destination's conative image.
H4: Destination's cognitive image has a significant positive effect on affective image.
H5: Destination's cognitive image has a significant positive effect on conative image.
H6: Destination's affective image has a significant positive effct on conative image.
H7: Destination's affective image mediates the relationship between cognitive image and conative image.

3. Methodology

A causal-predictive research design was employed in the study. The participants of the study were 192 Filipino Gen Z's. Inverse square root and gamma-exponential methods determined that the sample size was sufficient. They must have visited at least one of the domestic destinations which were open for local travel during the pandemic during data collection period of August 2021. Due to physical restrictions brought about by the pandemic, data were collected through an online questionnaire. The study locale was limited to the Philippines since the domestic destinations involved were only open to local travelers. Majority of the Filipino Gen Z respondents were female (63.0%). Most of them were aged 21-23 years old (66.7%). More than half were high school diploma holders (62.5%) and were students (67.7%). Almost half (40.1%) either makes no income or receives no monthly allowance. The table below shows the demographic distribution of the respondents.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Measure	Item	N	%
Sex assigned at birth	Male	71	37.0
	Female	121	63.0
Age	18-20	36	18.8
	21-23	128	66.7
	24-25	28	14.6
Highest Educational Attainment	High school diploma holder	120	62.5
	College degree holder	70	36.5
	Master's degree holder	2	1.0
Occupation	Student	130	67.7
	Private employee	39	20.3
	Government employee	4	2.1
	Professional	2	1.0
	Self-employed/Freelance	9	4.7
	Business Owner (with employees)	4	2.1
	Unemployed	4	2.1
Average Monthly Income	Above PHP200,000	-	-
	PHP120,001-PHP200,000	4	2.1
	PHP65,001-PHP120,000	7	3.6
	PHP40,001-PHP65,000	9	4.7
	PHP20,001-PHP40,000	26	13.5
	PHP10,001-PHP20,000	33	17.2
	PHP10,000 below	36	18.8
	None	77	40.1

N=192

Domestic travel preferences of Filipino Gen Z respondents were also tallied. Almost half (45.8%) of them have gone to Baguio City and would wish to visit it again. For length of the domestic trip, 38.5 percent of the respondents preferred to spend 2-3 days while another 38.5 percent preferred to spend 4-5 days for the said trip. More than half (58.3%) preferred to travel with 2-3 companions in a domestic leisure trip. On average, Gen Z's would spend PHP1,000-2,000 (34.9%) or PHP2,001-3,500 (24.5%) a day for their domestic holidays. The Table 2 shows the full travel preference distribution.

The study utilized an online survey questionnaire to collect data. Cognitive image was measured using the twelve-item scale in Chen (2018). Affective image was measured using the four-item bipolar scale of affect in Basaran (2016) adopted from Russell and Pratt (1980). Conative image was measured using the three-item scale. COVID-19 fear was measured using the fear of COVID-19 scale developed and validated in Ahorsu et al (2020).

Partial least square - structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used for data analysis through WarpPLS 7.0. The first step confirmed the reliability and construct validity. The second step was path analysis. This involved structural model examination and hypotheses testing by looking at direct, indirect, and total effect of the structural relationship paths and their p-values. Mediation effect of affective image was confirmed by comparing the path coefficient values of models with and without the mediation variable.

An informed consent was distributed to the respondents prior to data collection to ensure their willingness to participate in the study. The purpose of the study, confidentiality agreement, and data disposal procedure were disclosed. The respondents were informed that there was no monetary benefit in participating in the study. They had the option to withdraw from the study at any point. They were not coerced. They were expected to observe non-negotiable honesty and fairness. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the information that they provided in the online survey.

Table 2: Filipino Gen Z's Travel Behavior Profile

Measure	Item	N	%
Preferred domestic destination	Baguio City	88	45.8
	Batangas	17	8.9
	Bohol	2	1.0
	Boracay	22	11.5
	Cebu	12	6.3
	Coron	11	5.7
	El Nido	13	6.8
	La Union	20	10.4
	Siargao	7	3.6
Length of trips	Day trip	3	1.6
	2-3 days	74	38.5
	4-5 days	74	38.5
	More than 5 days	41	21.4
Number of companions	None	1	0.5
	1	10	5.2
	2-5	112	58.3
	6-10	52	27.1
	More than 10	17	8.9
Budget per day	Less than PHP1,000	20	10.4
	PHP1,000-2,000	67	34.9
	PHP2,001-3,500	47	24.5
	PHP3,501-5,000	31	16.1
	Above PHP5,000	27	14.1

N=192

4. Findings, Analysis and Discussion

Table 3 indicates that Filipino Gen Z respondents agreed on their COVID-19 fear level (M=2.82) in general. The result is parallel to the study among British and American consumers where 96 percent of Gen Z's expressed concern due to the pandemic (Mander, 2020). Filipino Gen Z's highly agree that they are most afraid of COVID-19, makes them uncomfortable to think about COVID-19, and are afraid of losing their lives because of COVID-19. They agree that they become nervous or anxious when watching news and stories about COVID-19 on social media. However, they disagree that their hands become clammy, cannot sleep, and their hearts race or palpitate when thinking about contracting COVID-19. The study reveals that Filipino Gen Z's had a very favorable perception of all the domains of image of their preferred domestic destinations. In a travel survey, 77 percent of Filipinos are willing to travel in a local destination even without vaccination, while 48 percent intends to travel within six months from lifting travel restrictions (DOT, 2020). Filipino Gen Z's high level of conative image is supported in Southan (2017) which describes travelers belonging in the cohort as risk takers.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean Rating	SD	Descriptive Rating
COVID-19 Fear	2.82	0.674	Agree
Cognitive Image	3.59	0.367	Offers Very Much
Affective Image	3.64	0.435	Very Positive Affect
Conative Image	3.70	0.348	Very Likely

The model had good fit and quality as proven by the values provided in Table 4. Average path coefficient (APC=0.201, p=0.001), average R-squared (ARS=0.126, p=0.001), and average adjusted R-squared (AARS=0.118, p=0.024) were significant. Average block VIF (AVIF=1.071), and average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF=1.172), which measured the overall predictive and explanatory quality of the model, were both at the ideal level [≤3.3] (Kock, 2015). The model of this study has a medium explanatory power according to Tenenhaus goodness-of-fit index [0.262] (Kock, 2013). Sympson's Paradox Ratio (SPR) and R-squared Contribution Ratio (RSCR) reported ideal value (1.00). Statistical Suppresion Ratio (SSR) and Nonlinear Bivariate Causality Direction Ratio (NLBCDR) were above acceptable value [≥0.7] (Kock, 2017).

Table 4. Model Fit and Quality Indices

Index	Coefficient
Average Path Coefficient (APC)	0.201, p=0.001
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.126, p=0.001
Average Adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.118, p=0.024
Average Block VIF (AVIF)	1.071, acceptable if ≤5, ideally ≤3.3
Average Full Collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	1.172, acceptable if ≤5, ideally ≤3.3
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.262, small ≥0.1, medium ≥0.25, large ≥0.36
Sympson's Paradox Ratio (SPR)	1.000, acceptable if ≥0.7, ideally =1.0
R-squared Contribution Ratio (RSCR)	1.000, acceptable if ≥0.9, ideally =1.0
Statistical Suppresion Ratio (SSR)	1.000, acceptable if ≥0.7
Nonlinear Bivariate Causality Direction Ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000, acceptable if ≥0.7

Through confirmatory factor analysis, reliability and validity of constructs and measurement items were examined. COVID-19 fear, and cognitive, affective, and conative images of domestic tourist destinations reflected composite reliability of 0.901, 0.881, 0.863, and 0.815 respectively, which exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Kock, 2017), while Cronbach's alpha of 0.871, 0.856, 0.786, and 0.655 were reflected respectively, indicating an acceptable to a very good level of reliability (Ursachi et al., 2015).

To determine convergent validity, average variance extracted (AVE) and factor loadings were also computed as shown in Table 5. All measurement items reflected factor loading values from 0.511 to 0.892, which were all greater than the acceptable level of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2009). The constructs, COVID-19 fear (AVE=0.565), affective image (AVE=0.613), and conative image (AVE=0.607) exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, while value for cognitive image (AVE=0.400) still indicated adequate construct validity since CR was above 0.60 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

To determine discriminant validity, the square roots of AVEs, i.e. diagonal values, must be higher than the off-diagonal coefficients (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 6 shows that discriminant validity was observed. It was indicated by the constructs' square root of AVE which were higher than the other values per column. Measurement items for each of the model's construct were not confused with other constructs' items (Kock, 2017).

The SEM analysis revealed that COVID-19 fear did not have a significant effect on the three domains of destination image, thus H1, H2, and H3 are rejected. This general finding was similar with the results in Das and Tiwari (2020) and Luo and Lam (2020) where COVID-19 fear and its severity did not affect travel intention significantly. Evidence of negative effect of fear to travel intentions has not yet been substantiated, and the result of the study did not contribute to this identified gap. Furthermore, the result of this study proved that among generational cohorts, Gen Z's are the least supportive of preventive measures against COVID-19 as reported in Global Web index (2020).

Table 5. Reliability and Validity Statistics of Variables

Construct & Item	Factor Loading	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
COVID-19 Fear		0.565	0.901	0.871
COV1. I am most afraid of COVID-19.	0.709			
COV2. It makes me uncomfortable to think about COVID-19.	0.717			
COV3. My hands become clammy when I think about COVID-19.	0.736			
COV4. I am afraid of losing my life because of COVID-19.	0.706			
COV5. When watching news and stories about COVID-19 on social media, I become nervous or anxious.	0.843			
COV6. I cannot sleep because I'm worrying about getting COVID-19.	0.759			
COV7. My heart races or palpitates when I think about getting COVID-19.	0.784			
Cognitive Image		0.400	0.881	0.856
COG1. Quality of infrastructure	0.511			
COG2. Personal safety	0.547			
COG3. Good nightlife and entertainment	0.591			
COG4. Suitable accommodations	0.708			
COG5. Appealing local food	0.696			
COG6. Great beaches/terrains	0.613			
COG7. Interesting and friendly people	0.678			
COG8. Interesting cultural attractions	0.715			
COG9. Interesting historical attractions	0.636			
COG10. Beautiful scenery/natural attractions	0.617			
COG11. Unpolluted/unspoiled environment	0.533			
COG12. Good climate	0.604			
Affective Image		0.613	0.863	0.786
AFF1. Unpleasant-Pleasant	0.847			
AFF2. Gloomy-Exciting	0.774			
AFF3. Sleepy-Arousing	0.652			
AFF4. Distressing-Relaxing	0.844			
Conative Image		0.607	0.815	0.655
CON1. I will return to the preferred destination in the next 12 months	0.518			
CON2. I will recommend the preferred destination to my family and friends	0.892			
CON3. I will say positive things about the preferred destination to other people.	0.871			

Table 6. Square Roots of AVEs and Correlation Coefficients

	COG	AFF	CON	COV
COG	*0.624*			
AFF	0.345	*0.783*		
CON	0.349	0.356	*0.779*	
COV	0.067	0.107	0.067	*0.752*

Notes: COG=cognitive image, AFF=affective image, CON=conative image, COV=COVID-19 fear

For the chosen domestic destinations, cognitive image positively influences affective image (β=0.363, $p<0.001$), thus supporting H4, and has a positive effect on conative image (β=0.268, $p<0.001$), thus, H5 is supported. This suggests that, for Filipino Gen Z's, the better their perceived attributes of the domestic destination are, the more positive their emotions will be towards that destination. This result is consistent with the findings in Basaran (2016), Hyun and O'Keefe (2012), Kim et al. (2017),

Suhartanto et al. (2018), Stylidis et al. (2020), and Woosnam et al. (2020). With a good indication of positive influence of cognitive image on affective image, this study contradicts the partial influence on the former construct to the latter construct provided in Ahn and Back (2017), and Lam et al. (2020). Further, a highly constructive mental picture of a domestic destination open during the pandemic may influence Filipino Gen Z's to return to their preferred destinations, recommend the place to others, and spread positive words about it to other people. This significant relationship is supported by the findings in Basaran (2016), Kim et al. (2017), Lam et al. (2020), Suhartanto et al. (2018). As the literature suggests that conative component leads to tourist loyalty (Agapito et al, 2013), the result of the study is further supported (Kasapi & Nurja, 2019; Stylidis et al, 2020). As there is a contradicting view in the relationship between cognitive and conative images, the study refutes the findings in Hyun and O'Keefe (2012), and Woosnam et al. (2020), where the relationship between the two constructs is not significant.

Affective image was also proven to have a positive effect on conative image of the chosen domestic destination (β=0.277, $p<0.001$), supporting H6. This suggests that when Filipino Gen Z's have positive emotional responses towards a domestic destination, it will be very likely for them to have the intention to return, recommend, and spread good words about the place. This significant relationship is consistent with the results in Ahn and Back (2017), Basaran (2016), Kim et al. (2017), Lam et al. (2020), Suhartanto et al. (2018), and Woosnam et al. (2020). Overall, in the interrelationships of the domains of destination image, the study updates the findings in Hyun & O'Keefe (2012) where affective image displayed a higher degree of influence on conative image (β=0.277, $p<0.001$) compared to the effect of cognitive image (β=0.268, $p<0.001$). The model with path coefficients is presented in Figure 3 below.

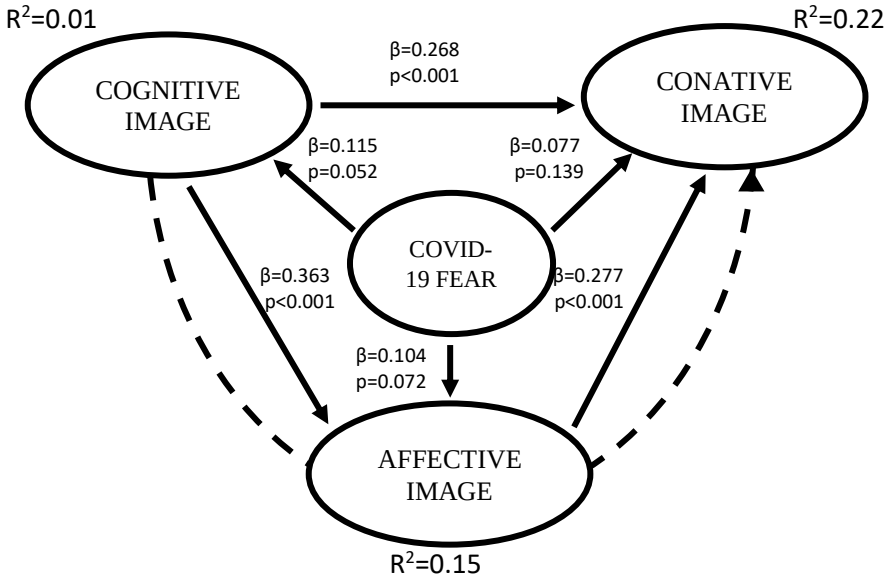

Figure 3. PLS-SEM Path Model with Path Coefficients

The analysis tested the mediating effect of affective image on the influence of cognitive image on conative image. It is revealed that affective image has a significant mediating effect (β = 0.101, p=0.023) on the said relationship (total effect=0.369), thus, H7 is supported. This means that in order to translate Filipino Gen Z's positive perceptions of domestic destinations' attributes, i.e. cognitive image, into their intention to revisit, recommend, and spread positive word of mouth about the domestic destinations, i.e. conative image, an effort must be exerted to stimulate positive emotions and feelings towards those destinations, i.e. affective image. The path analysis of the model points

out that cognitive image influenced conative image more effectively if cognitive image translated into affective image which translates into conative image. This led to a higher likeliness for Filipino Gen Z's to revisit, recommend, and spread positive word of mouth about these domestic destinations open during the pandemic. For this mediating effect, the finding of the study agrees with the result in Basaran (2016) that affective image mediates the influence of cognitive image on conative image. The direct and indirect effects of the model are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Direct and Indirect Effects of the Model

	β	SE	Decision
Direct Effects			
H_1 COVID-19 Fear → Cognitive Image	0.115	0.071	Rejected
H_2 COVID-19 Fear → Affective Image	0.104	0.071	Rejected
H_3 COVID-19 Fear → Conative Image	0.077	0.071	Rejected
H_4 Cognitive Image → Affective Image	0.363**	0.067	Supported
H_5 Cognitive Image → Conative Image	0.268**	0.068	Supported
H_6 Affective Image → Conative Image	0.277**	0.068	Supported
Indirect Effect			
H_7 Cognitive → Affective → Conative	0.101*	0.050	Supported

Note: β=path coefficient; SE=standard error
*=p<0.05; **=p<0.001

The importance of investigating travel fears in the context of COVID-19 pandemic lies in the reason that the results of such studies may aid policy makers in drafting and implementing strategies aimed towards boosting the post-pandemic recovery of the tourism industry (Zheng et al., 2021). In the Philippines, tourism is one of the key boosters of economic performance by contributing to its GDP (Riñen, 2019). As the tourism revenues of the country has been badly affected by the ongoing pandemic (Dollanganger, 2020), travel intentions of Filipinos during the pandemic seem to be promising according to the Philippine Travel Survey Report (DOT, 2020). However, Gen Z's are the least supportive of preventive measures against COVID-19 as reported in Global Web index (2020), which is manifested in the result of the study. The government must address this concern through selecting proper channels for information drive. Further, travel behavior of Filipino Gen Z's may be affected by the vaccination rollout, as the younger age bracket of this cohort does not belong to the priority group, except for those with comorbidities. Gen Z's are willing to get vaccinated and express their interest to travel again (Rosenfeld, 2021). By that time, the negative effect of fear to travel intentions may be studied and substantiated. In Gursoy et al. (2021), vaccination intentions negatively influences travel intentions. Although it suggests that those who are willing to get vaccinated postpone their travels, and those who do not plan to get the vaccine may not have changed their travel plans, the negative impact was minimized as more individuals are vaccinated which closed the gap between the said groups.

5. Conclusion

For Filipino Gen Z's, COVID-19 fear does not significantly influence their travel perceptions and intention. This may warrant further investigation to provide evidence of the effect of Gen Z's fear to travel intentions. Evaluating Gen Z's travel perceptions is necessary as, in Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020), literature on destination image and the interrelationships of its domains are heterogenous. Further empirical evidences may result to conclusive recommendations to address Gen Z's travel behavior, which is underexplored (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). It must be noted that among generational cohorts, Gen-Z's are reported to have the least positive perception of destination image (Karakaş et al., 2021), considering that Gen Z travelers are seen to be a key factor in transforming tourism and destinations (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). As new entrants to the tourism market, understanding the behavior of Gen Z travelers is relevant and timely.

The Philippines must seek ways to gradually reopen its tourism industry towards gradual recovery (Dollanganger, 2020). One way may be through improving its destination image which aids in increasing number of visitors in a place. Destination image affects tourists' decisions and choices. The interrelationships of the domains of destination image are significantly positive according to the perceptions of Filipino Gen Z's on the domestic destinations open to local tourists during the pandemic. COVID-19 fear may not be a factor affecting their travel decisions, as discussed in this study.

This study offers theoretical contribution in evaluating Gen Z's travel perceptions which is deemed necessary as stated in Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020). Further, it contributes to the literature on destination image and the interrelationships of its domains which remain heterogenous. The travel behavior of the identified generational cohort is also underexplored, yet their defining characteristics have been identified. As new entrants to the tourism market, understanding the behavior of Gen Z travelers is relevant and timely (Robinson and Schänzel, 2019). This study serves as one of the springboards.

The study also has practical implications. Gen Z's are true digital natives and they are not bound to the limitations of technology. They are described as a hyper-connected and over-mobile generation and they are seen to lead innovations in the tourism industry. Tourism organizations and tourism planners may take note of these characteristics. The rise of social media has allowed faster sharing of knowledge, emotions, and experiences from travels (Salmon et al., 2020). The role of social media in the COVID-19 outbreak has been recognized (Depoux et al.,2020, Kadam & Atre, 2020). It has been used by professionals to promote preventative health behaviors (Breza et al., 2021). Social media has been proven to have a significant effect on customer brand engagement, which then impacts revisit intention in the context of COVID-19 pandemic (Rather, 2021). Using social media may serve as an avenue to strengthen destination image for tourists and business clientele, and may be used so gather positive, and even negative, destination imagery. Further, with the increase of their screen time during the pandemic, vlogs and online content may be shared through social media. Vlogs create vivid destination images necessary and fundamental for destinatio marketing which public and private tourism agencies can take advantage of to meet marketing goals for destinations (Peralta, 2019).

By understanding Gen Z traveler behavior, changes brought about by COVID-19 pandemic may be suitable to these risky takers while the sector is bouncing back to its pre-pandemic scenario. It is recommended that national and local tourism organizations in the Philippines should give more focus on affective image of local destinations because of its mediating effect as discussed in the study, especially if Gen Z's are to be seen as an emerging tourist market. Private sector may have a positive outlook for the tourism industry as the study suggests positive interrelationships among the domains of local destination images, at least in the lens of Filipino Gen Z's as potential domestic travelers. Tourism marketers may be assured by the results of the study that marketing a certain destination to Gen Z's in the post pandemic era is also worthwhile given their high chances of revisiting domestic destinations without being affected by their fear of COVID-19.

There are certain drawbacks in this study that may be addressed by future investigations. The respondents are limited to the investigator's network of Filipino Gen Z's which may limit the ability of the study to generalize results. The model of the study may be applied in other regions to address this. Increasing the size of the sampling unit may also lead to different results, specifically on the effect of COVID-19 on destination image. Actual revisit may also be included in the study. The effect of other constructs such as travel fear and anxiety may also be included alongside COVID-19 fear to further develop a more encompassing model for Filipino Gen Z's and their travel preferences, perceptions, intentions, and behavior. Gen Z's characteristic as risky takers may also be included by testing the influence of risk perception, risk attitude, and vaccination intention in the domains of

destination image as an extended model. Adding independent variables which related to the dependent variables, i.e. cognitive, affective, and conative images, may further improve the explanatory power of the model of this study. Other theoretical models aside from destination image model may also be used to investigate Gen Z's travel intentions during the pandemic.

The framework of the study may also be applied on the study of travel behavior of millennial cohort during the COVID-19 pandemic. Aside from Gen Z's, it is said that millennials are also key to the recovery of travel industry, given that the cohort is also the largest living adult generation, making them a key consumer marketing target (Baratti, 2020). Travel is also said to be more affordable and more accessible to millennials than for any other generations, and their need to travel has not been changed by the pandemic (Hudson, 2021). Given these, studies may be conducted on the feasibility of governments, including the Philippines', to market domestic destinations to this cohort.

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