

Creating Notable Pop-Up Photobooth Experiences: An Analysis of Gen Z's Sensory Preferences in Davao City

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Generation Z's sensory preferences regarding pop-up photobooths in Davao City flea markets. Using the Multi-Attribute Utility Theory and the Multi-Sensory Marketing Model, a conjoint analysis evaluated six core experience attributes: prints, backdrops, props, lighting, physical setup, and voice instructions. Data were gathered from 216 valid Gen Z respondents aged 18–28 via the 1000minds platform using the PAPRIKA method between August and September 2025. Results indicate that visual attributes heavily dictate preferences: custom-printed backdrops (22.5%), full-color prints (20.3%), and spotlight lighting (19.9%) emerged as key operational priorities. Conversely, props (15.3%), physical setups (11.8%), and voice instructions (10.2%) were less prioritized, supported by high structural consistency ($W=0.765$). These findings provide data-driven strategic baselines for experiential micro-entrepreneurs and event planners targeting youth cohorts.

INTRODUCTION

Photoboosts have evolved significantly from automated, enclosed spaces into dynamic event mainstays that capture personal interactions, liven up atmospheres, and serve as creative physical keepsakes (Moya, 2024). In modern experiential landscapes, this medium eliminates individual mobile photography burdens while providing physical mementos that consumers view as stable tokens of time (Dooley, 2022). Globally, marketing professionals face shifting consumer parameters driven by Generation Z – digital natives born between 1997 and 2012 who actively demand unique, interactive, and highly customized sensory experiences (Jayatissa, 2023; McKinsey & Company, 2024). Although deeply embedded in smartphone and social media usage, this cohort drives a distinct cultural resurgence in localized, physical photography services due to its interactive novelty, nostalgic elements, and capacity for self-expression (Agus, 2024; Koh, 2025).

In the East Asian region, automated photography hubs emerged rapidly during the post-pandemic period (Christiansen, 2024). This behavior mirrors historical subcultural movements like Japanese purikura (print clubs), where instant customization and physical sticker prints became structural foundations for youth peer socialization (Hassel, 2023). Locally, the Philippine retail landscape displays a parallel surge in personalized studio configurations, led by commercial ventures such as ATOMM Studios (Convento, 2024). Within Davao City, temporary installations and pop-up micro-businesses—including mobile setups like Litrato by AM and AA Studio—frequently service youth-dominated flea markets and regional cultural bazaars (Lu, 2024; Mangahas & Lagon, 2025). These micro-enterprise structures heavily rely on continuous consumer engagement to drive local foot traffic and digital word-of-mouth recommendations across social platforms (Gabato et al., 2025).

Despite this rapid operational expansion, localized empirical material analyzing the specific design configurations that optimize consumer satisfaction remains highly limited. Existing documentation largely covers general digital media consumption trends, global demographic profiles, or descriptive retail environments. This creates an empirical gap regarding how specific multisensory attributes function during real-world consumer trade-offs. Prior conjoint analysis applications within identical geographic clusters have assessed consumer parameters for regional beach resort attributes (Sumatra, 2025a) and digital platform functionalities (Sumatra, 2025b), but have completely overlooked the multi-sensory service features driving temporary experiential pop-up business architectures.

This study addresses these empirical gaps by establishing a quantitative framework to analyze and rank the multi-sensory features that drive Gen Z service choices. Specifically, this investigation seeks to profile regional youth consumers, isolate individual sensory attribute importance scores, identify the most preferred combinations of service features, and simulate structural market share choices under competitive resource configurations.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT)

The Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT) serves as a baseline foundational architecture for modeling complex consumer evaluation patterns across multifaceted choices (Jansen, 2011). Originally structured by Fishburn and advanced systematically by Keeney and Raiffa (1993), MAUT breaks down a consumer's holistic selection into individual constituent features, calculating discrete part-worth mathematical values for separate design levels (Ahmad et al., 2022; Collins et al., 2006). This theoretical framing asserts that a consumer's choice behavior does not depend on a single standalone feature; instead, consumers treat products as bundles of attributes that require systematic compromises. Within this study's framework, MAUT guides the analytical modeling of how distinct pop-up features—ranging across lighting setups, backdrops, and physical layouts—are internally weighed and integrated by youth consumers.

Multi-Sensory Marketing Model

The Multi-Sensory Marketing Model complements MAUT by explaining how sensory inputs affect consumer judgments and behaviors (Torabi et al., 2021). Rooted in experiential design frameworks, this model states that consumer satisfaction stems from affective impulses triggered by sight, sound, taste, smell, and taste (Sagha et al., 2022; Savić et al., 2020). For temporary event operations, experiential engagement relies heavily on sight (prints, backgrounds, and illumination profiles), sound (vocal guidance), and touch (structural booth footprints) to establish deep behavioral connections (Thi et al., 2021; Wiedmann et al., 2019). By connecting these sensory inputs into multi-attribute configurations, researchers can quantify how qualitative sensory signals turn into structural consumer choices (Hussain, 2018). To visualize how these foundational theories interact to drive behavioral selections, see Figure 1 for the conceptual framework of the study.

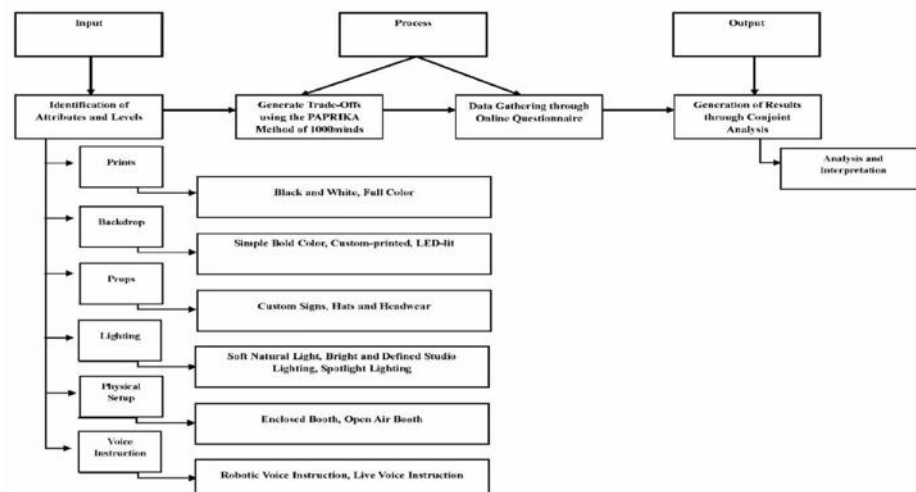


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This investigation utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to isolate, measure, and analyze regional consumer preferences (Bhandari, 2020;

McCombes, 2023). The target population focused strictly on Generation Z consumers aged 18 to 28 residing within Davao City who possessed prior interaction history with temporary pop-up photobooth systems. Minors under 18 were excluded to maintain legal data standards and remove multi-tiered consent constraints.

To determine the baseline sample size for an undefined population size, Cochran's mathematical formula was used. Using a 90% confidence threshold ($Z=1.645$), a maximum population variability parameter ($p=0.50$), and a 5% margin of error ($e=0.05$), the structural baseline calculation yielded a minimum requirement of 271 respondents. Field operations captured 216 valid individual profiles across consecutive regional market deployments. Readjustment calculations using Raosoft parameters confirmed that a sample size of 216 retains strong statistical validity, yielding a 95% confidence parameter with a 7% margin of error, which aligns with experiential research sample limits (Hoppert et al., 2012; Mahadevia et al., 2004; Mongi & Gomezulu, 2022).

The sampling design executed a purposive non-probability mechanism across two local events: Sunset Socials (Café Verdania) and 365: Common Ground Pop-Up Market (Paramount Garden Complex, Crocodile Park). The researchers established a live open-air photobooth configuration to serve as an intercept platform, inviting qualified consumers to complete digital surveys via the 1000minds platform.

Initial design parameters were established using qualitative Key Informant Interviews (KII) featuring 20 youth consumers and 10 field operators (Kibuacha, 2024). This initial phase identified nine service features comprising 9,072 structural profile variations. To minimize respondent fatigue and optimize estimation accuracy, attributes yielding low frequency scores—specifically background music genres, ambient noise volume settings, and interface touch features—were removed (Chen et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2019). This process reduced the final conjoint design to six core attributes yielding 144 unique profile combinations.

The 1000minds platform executed the Potentially All Pairwise Ranking of all Possible Alternatives (PAPRIKA) method. This method utilizes a series of pairwise trade-offs regarding overlapping double-attribute options (e.g., choosing between an enclosed booth featuring custom prints versus an open-air booth featuring basic monochrome outputs), asking participants which choice they prefer and by how much (Hansen & Ombler, 2008). The system applies transitivity rules to logically infer broader ranking configurations, minimizing respondent fatigue while maintaining strict data consistency checks.

RESULTS

Demographic and Familiarity Profiles

The final verified dataset comprised 216 completely validated individual consumer profiles. The age distribution clustered heavily within the traditional undergraduate and early professional brackets, specifically centering on individuals aged 21 (23.1%) and 22 (20.8%) as revealed in Table 1. Biological sex distributions revealed a clear gender asymmetry, with female respondents accounting for 65.3% of the active sample compared to male respondents at

34.7%. Behavioral familiarity assessments indicated strong market penetration within the local ecosystem: 43.5% of respondents reported being highly familiar with pop-up formats, 43.1% maintained moderate familiarity, and only 13.4% noted slight concept familiarity.

Table 1. Profile of Valid Respondents

Demographic Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18	18	8.3%
	19	7	3.2%
	20	16	7.4%
	21	50	23.1%
	22	45	20.8%
	23	24	11.1%
	24	25	7.4%
	25	26	5.1%
	26	9	4.2%
	27	8	3.7%
	28	12	5.6%
Sex Assigned at Birth	Male	75	34.7%
	Female	141	65.3%
	Intersex	0	0.0%
How familiar are you with pop-up photoboosts in Davao City?	Very Familiar	94	43.5%
	Moderately Familiar	93	43.1%
	Slightly Familiar	29	13.4%

Relative Importance and Part-Worth Utility Estimations

The multi-attribute mathematical estimation revealed a distinct hierarchy among sensory feature categories. As shown in Table 2, Visual elements dominated consumer choice parameters: background design configuration emerged as the highest priority layer, yielding an importance weight of 22.5%. Print medium characteristics followed closely at 20.3%, with illumination profiles completing the top visual tier at 19.9%. Functional and structural features sat lower in the priority structure: accessory components scored 15.3%, structural spatial layout scored 11.8%, and vocal guidance models registered the lowest baseline importance score at 10.2%.

Table 2. Global Part-Worth Utility Allocations

Attribute Category	Relative Importance (%)	Level Condition	Part-Worth Utility
Backdrop	22.5%	Custom-Printed	0.225
		LED-Lit	0.099
		Simple Bold Color	0.000

Prints	20.3%	Full Color	0.203
		Black and White	0.000
Lighting	19.9%	Spotlight Lighting	0.199
		Bright Studio Lighting	0.105
		Soft Natural Light	0.000
Props	15.3%	Custom Signs	0.153
		Hats and Headwear	0.000
Physical Setup	11.8%	Open-Air Booth	0.118
		Enclosed Booth	0.000
Voice Instruction	10.2%	Robotic Voice Prompt	0.102
		Live Voice Prompt	0.000

The aggregate preference data displayed high internal consistency and structural consensus. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance reached a high agreement metric ($W=0.765$), showing strong alignment across individual consumer assessments (Moslem et al., 2019). Similarly, the calculated Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient ($r_s=0.763$) confirmed a stable positive association across localized demographic clusters and structural utility evaluations (Al-Hameed, 2022).

Simulated Market Share Modeling

Using the computed baseline consumer utilities, market share simulation models mapped expected choice distributions across nine distinct operational configurations as shown in Table 3.

Under a simultaneous multi-option scenario, Photobooth 1 captured 100% of all primary choice allocations, scoring a perfect composite utility value of 1.000. This optimized service bundle integrated full-color prints, custom-printed backdrops, thematic handheld signs, spotlight illumination, open-air physical staging, and automated robotic vocal commands.

Secondary selection simulations removed Photobooth 1 to model competitive substitutions. Under these conditions, Photobooth 4 secured 29.6% of second-choice preferences, retaining the core visual assets but shifting to a human-guided vocal prompt. Photobooth 5 followed very closely at 29.5% for second-choice votes, replacing the open spatial format with an enclosed

footprint. Third-tier substitution modeling shifted interest toward Photobooth 2 (24.0%), which preserved all primary components but replaced spotlight illumination with a bright studio lighting profile.

Table 3. Simulated Market Share Distributions

Option Model	Backdrop	Print Profile	Lighting	Props	Setup	Voice	Utility Score	First Choice %
Photobooth 1	Custom	Full Color	Spotlight	Signs	Open-Air	Robotic	100.0%	100.0%
Photobooth 4	Custom	Full Color	Spotlight	Signs	Open-Air	Live	52.6%	0.0%
Photobooth 5	Custom	Full Color	Spotlight	Signs	Enclosed	Robotic	42.8%	0.0%
Photobooth 2	Custom	Full Color	Bright Studio	Signs	Open-Air	Robotic	40.8%	0.0%
Photobooth 6	Custom	Full Color	Spotlight	Hats	Open-Air	Robotic	23.5%	0.0%
Photobooth 7	Custom	Mono	Spotlight	Signs	Open-Air	Robotic	15.8%	0.0%
Photobooth 3	LED-Lit	Full Color	Spotlight	Signs	Open-Air	Robotic	19.6%	0.0%
Photobooth 8	Custom	Full Color	Natural	Signs	Open-Air	Robotic	3.9%	0.0%
Photobooth 9	Bold Color	Full Color	Spotlight	Signs	Open-Air	Robotic	0.9%	0.0%

DISCUSSION

The mathematical findings clearly show that visual sensory layers dominate Generation Z choice architectures during short-term retail event experiences. This intense concentration of utility points across the backdrop (22.5%), printing type (20.3%), and lighting source (19.9%) categories highlights how this youth segment views temporary photography setups primarily through an aesthetic lens. This behavior aligns with contemporary research regarding youth identity patterns within digital ecosystems, where visual self-presentation and online narrative curation function as foundational tools for social communication and personal expression (Al-aqab, 2025; Putra & Afrilian, 2025).

The strong preference for custom-printed backdrops and full-color outputs over basic monochromatic configurations indicates that youth consumers reject generic minimalist design layouts in favor of thematic, visually dense environments (Event Factor Inc., 2024; Goneau, 2023). This finding matches international documentation regarding print-media value perceptions among younger groups, where physical objects must offer vibrant, rich tactile qualities to compete against digital channels (Scott, 2023; Sondaal, 2025).

A key behavioral insight from the study is the low value placed on live staff guidance (0.0% utility) compared to automated, robotic vocal prompts (10.2% utility). While Gen Z shows collaborative, socially conscious tendencies across macro-demographic profiles, their retail transactional preferences favor automated, self-directed systems that minimize human friction (De Witte, 2022). Automated voice prompts offer a low-pressure environment where users exercise

total control over creative staging and speed without direct face-to-face oversight (Barcelos et al., 2017; Drenik, 2025; Im et al., 2023).

This demand for personal control matches their preference for open-air structural staging over enclosed formats. Open environments support social group photography, allowing large groups of friends to interact simultaneously within the space, which matches current social media sharing behaviors (Anthem Branding, 2018; Rizvi, 2025).

These preference distributions differ significantly from historical choice profiles documented across older demographics, who typically prioritize functional parameters like privacy, speed, and standard utility pricing over multi-sensory environmental attributes. Local comparison profiles reveal a shared pattern with current regional lifestyle studies: when evaluating experiential environments, Gen Z places visual aesthetic quality ahead of basic functional utility (Gabato et al., 2025).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that pop-up photobooth choices among Generation Z consumers in Davao City are heavily driven by visual features rather than functional or structural mechanics. Backdrops, physical prints, and lighting configurations collectively capture nearly two-thirds of all choice utility points, showing that creative flexibility and premium output quality are mandatory baseline parameters for this market segment. The ideal operational combination pairs custom thematic backdrops with full-color prints, spotlight illumination, open-air footprints, handheld signs, and automated voice systems. These insights show that temporary service setups must prioritize visual optimization to attract and maintain engagement among experience-driven youth cohorts.

Recommendations

For Pop-up Photobooth Operators

Operators should reallocate capital expenditure budgets away from complex manual service models toward high-quality visual components. Equipment configurations must prioritize high-output spotlight systems and thick matte color media. Software functions should integrate automated digital distribution loops, such as instant QR code extraction tools, while replacing in-person management with automated, low-pressure vocal countdown modules.

For Event Planners

Planners should design custom background environments that align directly with specific event themes rather than relying on standard curtain walls. Because consumers favor large open-air layouts, event footprints must allocate spacious peripheral zones to handle large peer group interactions comfortably.

For Marketing and Branding Professionals

Brand managers should design highly visual marketing campaigns that showcase the creative, sensory-rich assets of the physical experience. Marketing initiatives should focus on eye-catching posters and video content across platforms like TikTok and Instagram to leverage the visual culture of this demographic.

FURTHER STUDY

Subsequent investigations should expand this geographical footprint to look at cultural variations across multiple urban centers. Future designs should integrate sensory features removed from this model—including ambient music tempos and interactive control tools—while exploring how implicit emotional drivers like nostalgia influence selection consistency over longer periods (Raja et al., 2024; Susino & Schubert, 2018).

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