

TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

Where journeys begin, travel habits take shape, and the brands chosen at university move with students for life

An Eighteen24 White Paper · 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A preview of how UK Gen Z students travel, what drives every choice, and how transport brands turn a first journey into lifelong preference.

Students are among the UK's most active travellers, commuting to campus, heading home, planning weekends away and booking bucket-list trips. The full paper unpacks how they decide, where value and values collide, and why the brand present at the first journey often wins the next decade.

FOR THE FULL PAPER

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A complete guide to travel, transport and the UK Gen Z student audience

Drawn from 20 industry and student-behaviour sources including TravelPerk, the European Travel Commission, the UK Government National Travel Survey, JCDecaux, Kantar and American Express.

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This summary covers six headline insights. The full paper goes deeper: the academic-calendar rhythms that drive journey demand, the value-versus tension in green travel, and the campus activation formula for reaching 70% of UK students where their travel habits form.

What the data tells us.

INSIGHT 01 • THE MOST ACTIVE TRAVELLERS

Few audiences travel more, or are more open to forming new habits.

63% of Gen Z have booked travel in the past year, 65% expect to spend more on leisure travel year on year, and 76% are more interested in travel than they used to be. They take around three leisure trips a year and treat travel as essential, not optional. For transport brands, this is a high-frequency audience still choosing its defaults.

76%

of Gen Z are more interested in travel than they used to be

Source: European Travel Commission

INSIGHT 02 • TRANSPORT IS DAILY LIFE

Nearly half of students now commute, making transport a core student cost.

46% of students commute to campus rather than living there, driven by accommodation costs, making transport one of their largest regular expenses after rent and food. At around £65 a month it's a recurring considered purchase, and recurring chance to be chosen, or switched away from.

46%

of students commute to campus rather than living there

Source: The Guardian 2024

INSIGHT 03 • VALUE AND FLEXIBILITY WIN

Students mix modes, chase value, and decide late.

Half of public-transport trips involve more than one mode as students combine bus, rail, coach and ride-share by cost and context. Value for money is the top-driver, and 35% finalise travel plans less than a month before departure. Brands that pair genuine value with flexibility, and show up at the point of decision, win the booking.

35%

of Gen Z travellers finalise their plans less than a month before departure

Source: Mighty Travels, 2024

INSIGHT 04 • DIGITAL DISCOVERY, REAL-WORLD DECISIONS

Inspiration starts in the feed, but decisions land in the real world.

Most students discover destinations on social, yet attention there is fleeting, with 57% taking a social-media detox in 2023, more than any other generation. Meanwhile 84% notice OOH advertising. A railcard promotion seen on campus or a coach deal spotted between lectures is what brings a travel decision into focus.

84%

of Gen Z notice OOH advertising, giving campus screens real power

Source: JCDecaux, Gen Z & OOH

INSIGHT 05 • VALUES, THEN VALUE

Students want to travel green, until price gets in the way.

Six in ten look for greener transport at their destination, 56% prefer eco-friendly stays, and most would consider a sustainable travel agent. But financial constraints regularly override green intentions. The opportunity is for brands that deliver both value and values: sustainable options that don't carry a premium.

60%

of Gen Z seek out more environmentally friendly transport when they travel

Source: Global Sustainable Tourism Council

INSIGHT 06 • FIRST JOURNEY, LASTING LOYALTY

The brand present at the first journey often wins the next decade.

Early positive experiences set long-term preference, and 66% say once they find a brand they like, they'll keep buying it for a long time. Travel is also social: students coordinate group trips and 57% always post pictures from them. Consistent presence in Students' Unions, where journeys are planned and discussed, turns a single good trip into a habit, and a habit into advocacy.

66%

say once they find a brand they like, they stay loyal for a long time.

Source: Student Beans / Pion

GET THE FULL PAPER

Ready for the full picture?

We share the full white paper directly with brands, agencies and media planners working in this category. It's a short conversation and we'll send the complete report straight back to you.

Email us for the full paper.

Tell us a bit about your brand or planning brief and we'll send the complete Travel & Transport white paper, plus answer any questions you have about reaching the UK student audience.

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Already chatting with someone at Eighteen24?
Reply to their last email and ask for the full Travel & Transport paper.

Curated research

Sourced from 20 verified industry and student behaviour sources including TravelPerk, the European Travel Commission, the UK Government National Travel Survey, JCDecaux and Kantar.

Built for planners

Behavioural frameworks, brand case studies including GWR and National Express, and the academic-year travel calendar.

Calendar-aligned

Maps the journey peaks across the year, from Freshers arrivals and reading-week exodus to end-of-term travel, to student mindsets.

Eighteen²⁴

The UK's largest student DOOH network

Over 400 premium full-motion D6 screens placed inside Students' Unions across 130+ campuses and 90+ universities, including 21 of the top 25. Positioned in cafés, study areas, gyms, social spaces and walkways where dwell time is highest.

400+

SCREENS

90+

UNIVERSITIES

2M

STUDENTS
REACHED

116M

IMPRESSIONS
PER FORTNIGHT

Our formula for effective Gen Z engagement

Be where they
are

Be where they
care

Be where they
share

Be where they
see you

**Be the brand they
journey with.**

From first-year commutes to final-year travel plans, university is when travel preferences form and loyalties begin. Show up where journeys are planned and shared, and your brand moves with them.

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