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Social Media Influencers and Destination Choice: Evidence from Indonesian Tourists' Intention to Visit Switzerland

Zalfa Meysha Adrelina¹, Rita Komaladewi²

¹Universitas Padjadjaran, Sumedang, Indonesia, zalfa22003@mail.unpad.ac.id

²Universitas Padjadjaran, Sumedang, Indonesia, rita.komaladewi@unpad.ac.id

Corresponding Author: zalfa22003@mail.unpad.ac.id¹

Abstract: Social media has transformed how tourists search for information and evaluate destinations, making influencer marketing an important promotional strategy. However, limited empirical evidence explains how influencer-generated content shapes Indonesian tourists' intention to visit long-haul destinations such as Switzerland. This study examines the effects of Source Credibility, Content Quality, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) on visit intention. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using purposive sampling. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 397 Indonesian social media users who had been exposed to influencer content about Switzerland. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. The results show that all three variables positively and significantly influence visit intention. Source Credibility is the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.477$), followed by Content Quality ($\beta = 0.388$) and e-WOM ($\beta = 0.307$). Together, these variables explain 56.5% of the variance in visit intention ($R^2 = 0.565$). The findings indicate that while engaging content attracts attention, influencer credibility is more influential in converting attention into travel intention. This study contributes to influencer marketing and tourism literature and offers practical insights for destination marketing organizations when selecting and managing social media influencers.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer, Source Credibility, Content Quality, Electronic Word-Of-Mouth, Visit Intention.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed how tourists search for information, evaluate destinations, and make travel decisions. Social media has become one of the primary sources of travel information because it enables users to access destination-related content instantly through visual storytelling, personal experiences, and interactive communication (Shankar et al., 2023; Kemp, 2025). Unlike traditional advertising, social media allows potential tourists to obtain authentic travel experiences shared by other users, reducing uncertainty before making travel decisions. Consequently, social media has become an essential marketing channel for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) seeking to increase destination awareness and encourage travel intention.

Among various forms of digital marketing, social media influencers have emerged as influential opinion leaders capable of shaping tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions.

Through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, influencers present destinations using attractive visuals combined with personal narratives that are often perceived as more relatable and trustworthy than conventional promotional messages. Previous studies have consistently shown that influencer marketing positively affects destination image, travel attitude, and visit intention by enhancing tourists' confidence in a destination and reducing perceived travel risk (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Baber & Baber, 2023; Omeish et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends not only on visual appeal but also on the characteristics of the influencer and the quality of the information delivered.

Three dimensions are frequently highlighted in influencer marketing literature. First, **Source Credibility** reflects the extent to which an influencer is perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and authentic (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990; Chekima et al., 2020). Second, **Content Quality** represents the usefulness, attractiveness, and accuracy of the information communicated through influencer-generated content (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sharafuddin et al., 2024). Third, **Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)** refers to online opinions, reviews, and recommendations shared among social media users that may strengthen or weaken consumers' travel decisions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jalilvand et al., 2012). These three dimensions are considered complementary because they collectively shape how audiences process information and evaluate travel destinations.

Switzerland provides an appropriate context for examining influencer marketing because it is recognized as one of Europe's leading tourism destinations while also representing a long-haul destination for Indonesian travelers (Switzerland Tourism, 2024; Khoiri, 2023). Compared with regional destinations in Southeast Asia, travelling to Switzerland requires substantially higher financial commitment, longer travel time, and greater planning. These characteristics increase tourists' perceived risk and information needs, making reliable digital information an important determinant of travel intention. In response, Switzerland Tourism has actively collaborated with international and Indonesian social media influencers to promote the country's natural landscapes, cultural attractions, and premium travel experiences through digital campaigns targeting international markets.

Although influencer marketing has attracted considerable academic attention, several research gaps remain (Pop et al., 2021; Omeish et al., 2024). First, most previous studies have focused on domestic tourism or short-haul destinations, whereas empirical evidence regarding long-haul European destinations remains limited. Second, existing studies have often examined influencer marketing as a single construct or have investigated only one or two influencer attributes, making the relative contribution of Source Credibility, Content Quality, and e-WOM insufficiently understood. Third, research examining Indonesian outbound tourists remains scarce despite Indonesia representing one of the fastest-growing digital consumer markets with high social media penetration and increasing interest in international travel.

This study addresses these gaps by simultaneously examining the effects of Source Credibility, Content Quality, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Indonesian tourists' intention to visit Switzerland. Unlike previous studies that primarily evaluated the overall effectiveness of influencer marketing, this research compares the relative influence of these three dimensions within a single empirical model. Such an approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of which aspects of influencer marketing are most influential in encouraging travel intention toward a premium long-haul destination.

The findings contribute to tourism marketing literature by extending influencer marketing research to the context of Indonesian outbound tourism and by providing empirical evidence regarding the relative importance of Source Credibility, Content Quality, and e-WOM in influencing visit intention. From a practical perspective, the study offers evidence-based insights for destination marketing organizations, particularly Switzerland Tourism, in designing influencer marketing strategies that prioritize credibility alongside engaging content and positive online communication. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the influence of

Source Credibility, Content Quality, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Indonesian tourists' intention to visit Switzerland and to identify the most influential predictor among these variables.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the influence of Source Credibility, Content Quality, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) on Indonesian tourists' intention to visit Switzerland. The study targeted Indonesian citizens aged 18 years or older who actively use social media and have previously been exposed to travel influencer content about Switzerland.

The population was considered infinite because the exact number of Indonesian social media users meeting the research criteria could not be determined. Therefore, purposive sampling was applied. Based on the Lemeshow formula (Lemeshow et al., 1990), with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size was 385 respondents. A total of 427 responses were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. After excluding 30 responses used for the pilot test, 397 valid responses were included in the final analysis.

The questionnaire consisted of five-point Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Source Credibility was measured through expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity. Content Quality comprised information accuracy, visual attractiveness, and entertainment value, while e-WOM included volume, valence, and reliability. Visit intention was measured using indicators reflecting respondents' willingness to seek travel information, consider visiting, and plan future travel to Switzerland.

A pilot test involving 30 respondents confirmed that all measurement items were valid and reliable. The main data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 (Hair et al., 2019; Ghazali, 2018). Descriptive statistics were used to describe respondents' characteristics and variable distributions. Prior to hypothesis testing, validity, reliability, normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests were conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions of multiple linear regression. The hypotheses were subsequently tested using t-tests, F-tests, and standardized beta coefficients to evaluate both the significance and relative influence of each independent variable on visit intention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To provide an overview of the respondents involved in this study, the demographic characteristics of the 397 valid respondents are presented in Table 1. The profile includes gender, age, occupation, monthly income, and social media usage. Understanding these characteristics is important because they provide context for interpreting the findings and demonstrate that the respondents meet the research criteria.

Table 1. Respondents Profile

Characteristics	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	207	52.1
Male	183	46.1
Prefer not to say	7	1.8
Age		
18 - 24	95	23.9

25 - 34	188	47.4
35 - 44	75	18.9
45 and above	39	9.8
Occupation		
Student	76	19.1
Full-time Job	188	47.4
Part-time Job	37	9.3
Entrepreneur	87	20.9
Pension	11	2.8
Unemployed	2	0.5
Income		
Below Rp5,000,000	101	25.4
Rp5,000,000 - Rp10,000,000	150	37.8
Rp10,000,000 - Rp20,000,000	93	23.4
Rp20,000,000 - Rp30,000,000	36	9.1
Rp30,000,000 - Rp40,000,000	10	2.5
Above Rp40,000,000	7	1.8
How often do you use social media?		
Daily	229	57.7
Several time a week	106	26.7
Once a week	45	11.3
Once in two weeks	17	4.3

Source: Survey Data Processed (2026)

As presented in Table 1, a total of 397 valid responses were analysed in this study. Female respondents accounted for the largest proportion of the sample (52.1%), while male respondents represented 46.1%. The majority of respondents were between 25 and 34 years old (47.4%), followed by those aged 18–24 years (23.9%), indicating that most participants belonged to the productive age group with high levels of digital engagement. Regarding occupation, full-time employees constituted the largest group (46.1%), followed by students (21.3%) and entrepreneurs (20.4%). In addition, most respondents reported using social media daily (58.1%), suggesting frequent exposure to influencer-generated travel content. Overall, these characteristics indicate that the respondents are relevant to the objectives of this study and provide an appropriate basis for examining the influence of social media influencers on visit intention.

To examine respondents' perceptions of the research variables and evaluate the consistency of the measurement instrument, descriptive statistics and reliability analysis were conducted. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Test

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation (range)	Interpretation
Credibility of Source	4.03	0.768 – 0.821	High
Content Quality	4.05	0.757 – 0.810	High
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	4.00	0.779 – 0.824	High
Intention to Visit	4.04	0.694 – 0.748	High

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

As presented in Table 2, all research variables achieved mean scores above 4.00, indicating that respondents generally held favorable perceptions of influencer-generated content about Switzerland. Among the variables, Content Quality recorded the highest mean score (4.05), followed by Intention to Visit (4.04), Credibility of Source (4.03), and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (4.00). These findings suggest that respondents perceived the influencer-generated content as informative, visually appealing, and credible while also expressing a high intention to visit Switzerland. Furthermore, the standard deviation values ranged from 0.694 to 0.824, indicating relatively low variability in respondents' answers. This suggests that respondents' perceptions were generally consistent across all research variables.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the assumptions required for multiple linear regression analysis were examined through normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Classical Assumption Test Results

Assumption Test	Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Normality	Kolmogorov–Smirnov Sig.	0.200	Normally distributed
Multicollinearity	Tolerance	0.972 – 0.987	Acceptable
	VIF	1.014 – 1.029	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity	Glejser Sig.	0.314 – 0.573	No heteroscedasticity

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

Table 3 indicates that the regression model satisfied all classical assumptions. The normality test produced a significance value of 0.200, confirming that the residuals were normally distributed. The tolerance values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.10, while all VIF values were substantially below 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not present among the independent variables. Furthermore, the significance values obtained from the Glejser test were all greater than 0.05, confirming the absence of heteroscedasticity. These results indicate that the dataset was appropriate for multiple linear regression analysis.

Multiple linear regression analysis was subsequently conducted to examine the influence of Source Credibility, Content Quality, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Indonesian tourists' intention to visit Switzerland. The regression coefficients and overall model fit are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Independent Variable	Standardized β	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Source Credibility	0.477	14.197	<0.001	Accepted
Content Quality	0.388	11.49	<0.001	Accepted
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	0.307	9.152	<0.001	Accepted
Model Summary			Value	
R ²			0.565	
F-value			170.185	
Sig.			<0.001	

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 170.185$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 56.5% of the variance in Indonesian tourists' intention to visit Switzerland ($R^2 = 0.565$). All three independent variables positively and significantly influenced visit intention, indicating that the proposed hypotheses were supported. Among the three predictors, Credibility of Source demonstrated the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.477$), followed by Content Quality ($\beta = 0.388$) and Electronic Word-of-Mouth ($\beta = 0.307$). These findings suggest that influencer credibility plays a more important role than content characteristics or online recommendations in encouraging Indonesian tourists to consider visiting Switzerland.

This finding supports Source Credibility Theory, which argues that messages delivered by communicators perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable are more persuasive (Hovland et al., 1953). In the context of international tourism, particularly for a premium long-haul destination such as Switzerland, credible influencers may reduce perceived travel risk and strengthen tourists' confidence in their travel decisions. This result is also consistent with previous studies that identified source credibility as a significant determinant of behavioral intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sharafuddin et al., 2024).

Although Content Quality obtained the highest mean score in the descriptive analysis, its influence on visit intention was lower than that of Credibility of Source. This indicates that respondents generally appreciated visually attractive and informative content, but credibility remained the key factor in transforming positive perceptions into behavioral intention. Therefore, attractive content alone may not be sufficient to encourage travel decisions without being supported by a credible source.

Similarly, Electronic Word-of-Mouth positively influenced visit intention, although its standardized coefficient was the lowest among the three independent variables. This finding suggests that online reviews and recommendations provide additional information that supports travel decision-making. However, respondents appeared to rely more heavily on information delivered directly by trusted influencers than on general online opinions when evaluating Switzerland as a travel destination.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the three dimensions of influencer marketing jointly contribute to Indonesian tourists' intention to visit Switzerland. An important contribution of this study is the finding that Credibility of Source is the strongest determinant of visit intention, despite Content Quality receiving the highest average evaluation from respondents (Pop et al., 2021; Omeish et al., 2024). This result suggests that while high-quality content is effective in attracting attention, influencer credibility is more influential in converting that attention into an intention to visit. Therefore, destination marketing organizations should prioritize collaborations with influencers who possess strong expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity while continuing to produce engaging content and encouraging positive electronic word-of-mouth.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of Credibility of Source, Content Quality, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) on Indonesian tourists' intention to visit Switzerland. The findings demonstrate that all three dimensions significantly influence visit intention, with Credibility of Source emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by Content Quality and Electronic Word-of-Mouth. These results indicate that while high-quality content and positive online recommendations contribute to shaping travel intention, the credibility of the influencer plays the most important role in encouraging Indonesian tourists to consider visiting a premium long-haul destination such as Switzerland.

This study contributes to the tourism marketing literature by providing empirical evidence on the relative influence of different influencer marketing dimensions within a single research model. The findings extend the application of Source Credibility Theory in the context of Indonesian outbound tourism and offer practical insights for destination marketing organizations. Rather than prioritizing influencers solely based on popularity or visual content, tourism marketers should place greater emphasis on expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity to enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the respondents were limited to Indonesian social media users who had previously been exposed to influencer-generated content about Switzerland, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other destinations or populations. Second, the study examined only three influencer marketing dimensions which are Credibility of Source, Content Quality, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth while other factors, such as destination image, perceived risk, travel motivation, or travel cost, may also influence tourists' intention to visit. Third, the cross-sectional design captured respondents' perceptions at a single point in time and therefore could not assess changes in travel intention over time.

Recommendations

Future research is encouraged to investigate additional variables that may further explain tourists' intention to visit international destinations, such as destination image, perceived risk, travel motivation, perceived value, or cultural distance. Expanding the study to different destinations or comparing multiple countries would also improve the generalizability of the findings. In addition, future studies may employ more advanced analytical techniques, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to examine more complex relationships, including mediating or moderating effects among influencer marketing variables.

Author Contributions

The author was responsible for the conceptualization and design of the study, development of the theoretical framework, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, manuscript preparation, and revision of the final manuscript. The author has read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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