The Influence of Social Media on Young People's Interest in Traveling Local Tourist Attractions in North Sumatra

Jessica Liony Manalu[1*], Sixson Roberto Simangunsong[2], Preddy Marpaung[3]
[1,2]Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Manajemen Sukma
[3]Universitas Mahkota Tricom Unggul
Corresponding Author: Jessica Liony Manalu avishaiexchel@gmail.com

A R T I C L E I N F O

Keywords: Media Social; Interest in traveling; Young People; Local Tourism, North Sumatra

A B S T R A K

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media on young people's interest in traveling to local tourist destinations in North Sumatra. In today's digital era, social media plays a significant role in shaping tourism perceptions and preferences, especially among the younger generation. The method used in this study was a quantitative survey by distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents aged 18–25 who actively use social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Data were analyzed using a quantitative descriptive approach and simple regression to determine the relationship between the intensity of exposure to tourism content on social media and travel interest. Preliminary results indicate a significant positive effect between social media exposure and increased interest among young people in visiting local tourist destinations in North Sumatra, especially those that go viral or are popular on digital platforms. Social media is an effective tool in tourism promotion that can increase awareness and interest of the younger generation in local riches.

INTRODUCTION

Touristis a travel activity undertaken by an individual or group of people to a place outside their daily environment, for the purposes of recreation, relaxation, adventure, education, or other interests for a temporary period. Tourism involves interactions between tourists, local communities, and the environment, and can have social, cultural, and economic impacts on an area. The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including the tourism sector. One prominent phenomenon is the role of social media as a source of information and a means of promoting tourist destinations. Younger generations, particularly those aged 18–25, are active social media users and tend to use platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube as primary resources when planning their travels.

ProvinceNorth SumatraIndonesia boasts a rich diversity of tourist destinations, ranging from natural and cultural attractions to historical and contemporary Instagrammable destinations. Some popular destinations include:

- Lake TobaAndSamosir Island, which offers natural beauty and Batak cultural heritage.
- Sipiso-piso Waterfallin Karo, which is one of the highest and most photogenic waterfalls in Indonesia.
- Beautiful Simarjarunjung Hill, a hilly tourist spot with a panoramic view of Lake Toba and interesting photo spots.
- Pandan Beachin Central Tapanuli which is suitable for marine tourism.
- Colorful Village in Medan and Merci Barn Tourist Park which is often visited by young people because of its viral photo spots on social media.
- TB Silalahi Center MuseumAndHuta Bolon Simanindoas an educational cultural destination.

However, the appeal of these destinations has not been fully utilized, particularly in attracting young local tourists. On the other hand, the phenomenon of viral content showcasing the beauty or uniqueness of a place has proven to attract attention and increase visits quickly. This demonstrates that social media can be a strategic tool in increasing interest in travel. Given this potential, it is important to examine the extent to which social media influences young people's interest in local tourism in North Sumatra. This research is expected to provide insight into the influence of social media on the tourism behavior of the younger generation and provide input for tourism practitioners and local governments in designing more effective, engaging, and relevant promotional strategies in line with current digital trends.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has become an effective marketing tool in the tourism industry, particularly in influencing the travel interests of younger generations. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram allow for the dissemination of engaging visual information, which can increase interest and decision to visit a destination. Research by Taufik (2024) shows that TikTok content significantly influences tourists' decisions to visit natural destinations in Bandung Regency, with a coefficient of determination of 83.5%. This confirms that social media can effectively shape tourists' perceptions and interests. In North Sumatra, Sitorus (2022) examined the influence of social media marketing on tourists' intention to visit natural tourism destinations. The results showed that the reliability and understanding of

social media content significantly influenced perceived enjoyment, which in turn influenced intention to visit. In addition, Sinaga and Siregar (2024) found that interest as a moderator variable strengthens the influence of social media on tourists' visiting decisions at The Kaldera Toba Nomadic Escape, indicating that interest influenced by social media can improve visiting decisions. Overall, existing theory and research support that social media plays a significant role in shaping travel interests and decisions, particularly among young people. Engaging and informative content on social media platforms can increase interest in traveling to local destinations, including North Sumatra.

METHODOLOGY

Types of Research

This research uses an approach quantitative with the method descriptive correlational. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to measure variables numerically and analyze data using statistics. The descriptive correlational method is used to describe existing conditions and determine the relationship or correlation between two variables, namely social media influence as an independent variable against interest in visiting local tourist destinations as a dependent variable. The aim of this approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which social media, such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and other digital platforms, can influence individuals' decisions—especially those of the younger generation—in selecting and visiting local tourist destinations. In other words, this study seeks not only to describe trends in social media usage but also to analyze the extent to which these influences a person's intention to visit. In addition, this approach also provides an overview of people's behavioral patterns in accessing tourism information via social media, as well as the extent to which digital content is visual (such as photos). and Instagrammable videos of tourist destinations) can increase interest in those destinations. The results of this study are expected to contribute to tourism and digital promotion strategies, particularly in efforts to increase tourist visits to local destinations.

Location and Number of Respondents

The research was conducted in the North Sumatra region with a total of respondents of 25 people. Respondents ranged from teenagers to young adults, ranging in age from 13 to 23 years.

Research Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a temporary assumption whose truth will be tested through data analysis in research. In this study, the hypothesis was formulated to determine whether there is a significant influence between exposure to tourism content on social media with interest in visiting local tourist destinations.

The hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows:

- H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant effect between exposure to tourism content on social media and interest in visiting local tourist destinations. In other words, the frequency of exposure to tourism content on social media does not significantly influence their desire to visit local tourist destinations.
- H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant influence between exposure to tourism content on social media and interest in visiting local tourist destinations. This means that the more frequently someone views or accesses tourism content on social media, the more likely they are to be interested in visiting local tourist destinations.

This hypothesis will be tested using statistical analysis, such as correlation or regression, to determine the level of significance of the relationship between variables. If the analysis results show a significance value lower than the specified level (e.g., $\alpha = 0.05$), then H_0 will be rejected and H_1 accepted. This indicates a significant effect between exposure to social media content and visiting intention.

Research Variables

- Variable X (Independent): Exposure of tourism content on social media
- Variable Y (Dependent): Interest in visiting local tourist destinations

Indicators in variable X include the intensity of viewing, saving, sharing, and trusting travel content. Variable Y includes interest, visit intention, and vacation planning behavior to local destinations.

Data Collection Techniques

The data in this study were collected through online questionnaire which is distributed using Google Form. This method was chosen because it is practical, efficient, and able to reach a wider number of respondents in a short time. The questionnaire was compiled using Likert scale with a range of scores1 to 5, Where:

1 = Strongly Disagree (STS)
2 = Disagree (TS)
3 = Neutral (N)
4 = Agree (S)
5 = Strongly Agree (SS)

This questionnaire instrument is designed to measure several important aspects in research, such as:

- Frequency of social media use, namely how often respondents access social media in their daily lives (daily, weekly, or only occasionally).
- The most frequently used types of social media, for example Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter/X, which are directly related to the consumption of visual content and tourism promotion.
- Response to statements regarding tourism content, such as interest in destination photos, the desire to visit a location after seeing content on social media, and the influence of reviews or recommendations from influencers, friends, or official tourism accounts.

The data obtained through this questionnaire was then analyzed quantitatively to determine the relationship between exposure to tourism content on social media with respondents' interest in visiting local tourist destinations. The Likert scale allows researchers to measure the level of respondents' attitudes or tendencies towards a statement in more detail and measurably.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment correlation using SPSS. Validity and reliability tests were conducted before hypothesis testing.

Framework of Thought

This research stems from the growing popularity of viral tourist destinations on social media. Social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become sources of information and inspiration for users when choosing a travel destination. The more frequently someone is exposed to travel content, the more likely they are to intend to visit that destination.

Data Distribution Table

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents' Gender

Gender	Amount	Percentage
Woman	18	72%
Man	7	28%

Table 2. Likert Scale Responses to the Statement "The tourism content makes me want to visit"

Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	1	4%
2	0	0%
3	6	24%
4	8	32%
5	10	40%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the influence of social media content on interest in visiting local tourist destinations in North Sumatra. Data were collected from 25 respondents using a Likert-type questionnaire, covering indicators from variable X (social media influence) and variable Y (intention to visit).

Variables Entered/Removed[a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	yb	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: x
b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	, 940a	, 884	, 880	2,717

a. Predictors: (Constant), y

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1523,911	1	1523,911	206,419	, 000b
	Residual	199,330	27	7,383		
Total		1723,241	28			

a. Dependent Variable: x
b. Predictors: (Constant), y

Coefficients[a]

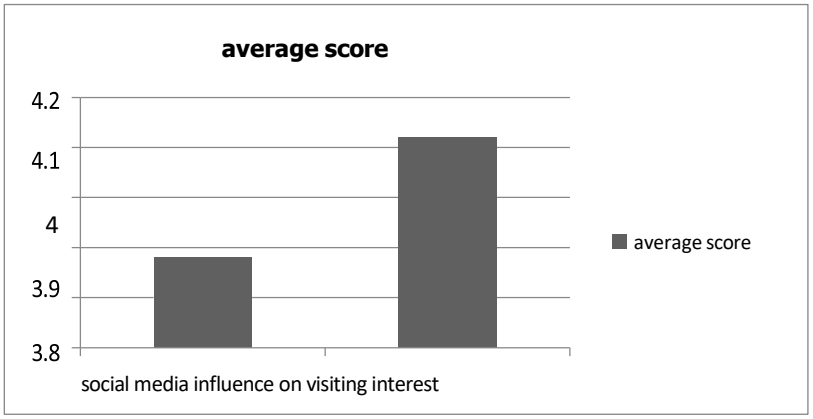
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1,817	2,738		,663	,513
	y	,949	,066	,940	14,367	,000

a. Dependent Variable: x

Table 3. Average Respondents' Answers per Variable

Variables	Average Score
X (Social Media Influence)	3.88
Y (Interest in Visiting)	4.12

Figure 1. Visualization of Statement Score Distribution



Correlation Analysis

To determine the relationship between the influence of social media (X) and interest in visiting (Y), a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results showed a positive correlation between the two variables, indicating that the greater the exposure to tourism content on social media, the greater the interest in visiting the destination.

Discussion

The results of this study support the hypothesis that social media content influences interest in visiting local tourist destinations. Respondents tended to give high scores to statements such as "I am interested in visiting tourist attractions that are trending on social media" and "I save travel content from social media for vacation planning." This finding aligns with previous research by Rahmawati & Putra (2022), which found that social media plays a significant role in shaping travel decisions, particularly among the younger generation. Furthermore, research by Nugroho (2021) also found that visuals and reviews on TikTok and Instagram significantly increase the appeal of previously unknown

destinations. It can be concluded that social media is not only an information medium, but also plays a role as a powerful persuasive tool in the behavior of modern tourists.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that social media has a significant influence on young people's interest in traveling to local destinations in North Sumatra. The findings indicate that engaging, informative, and viral tourism content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram can increase respondents' interest and desire to visit the featured destinations. This is reinforced by respondents' high scores on statements related to their interaction with tourism content on social media and its impact on their intention to visit. This study is limited by its relatively small sample size and only covering respondents within a specific age range, so the results cannot be generalized to a broader population. Therefore, future research is expected to involve more respondents with more diverse age and regional backgrounds, and consider additional variables such as income level or previous travel experience to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the influence of social media on local tourist behavior.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The author would like to express his gratitude to all parties who have provided support, input, and assistance in the process of implementing and completing this research, especially to the respondents who have participated enthusiastically, as well as the supervising lecturers who have provided constructive direction and corrections during the research process.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, M., & Hanafi, R. (2021).*The Impact of Instagram Reels on Tourism Intention Among Gen-Z Travelers*. Journal of Tourism Media Studies, 12(3), 145–159. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jtms.2021.123145

Fadhilah, N., et al. (2022).*The Role of Micro-Influencers in Promoting Ecotourism*. Tourism Development Journal, 11(4), 211–225.

Fitriani, S., & Hakim, T. (2020).*Social Media and Millennial Travel Behavior*. Journal of Tourism Communication Science, 5(1), 55–70.

Hidayat, R. (2021).*Visual Influence of Instagram in Tourism Decision-Making among Gen Z*. Asian Journal of Media and Tourism, 6(2), 132–146. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/ajmt.2021.06213

Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. (2021).*Indonesia Tourism Annual Report 2021*. Jakarta: Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.

Kompas.com. (2023, November 15).*Viral Tourist Attractions on TikTok Increase Visitor Countries*. Accessed from https://www.kompas.com/travel/read/2023/11/15/

Mahendra, D. (2023).*Post-Pandemic Local Tourism Trends and the Role of Social Media*. Indonesian Journal of Tourism Research, 7(2), 89–100.

Nugraha, R. (2023).*User Engagement and Travel Decisions in Generation Z*. Journal of Tourism Analytics, 10(1), 55–70. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jta.2023.10155

Pratama, A., & Dewi, M. (2018).*Social Media as a Local Destination Promotion Strategy*. Tourism Studies Journal, 3(1), 11–25.

Ramadhani, T., & Sari, A. (2020).*Instagram Destination Branding and Its Impact on Tourist Interest*. Journal of Visual Communication, 6(2), 120–130.

Sinaga, Y., & Siregar, D. (2024).*Interest as a Moderator of the Influence of Social Media on Visiting Decisions to the Toba Caldera*. Journal of Tourism Research, 9(1), 45–60. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jtr.2024.09104

Sitorus, M. (2022).*Social Media Marketing and Tourist Visit Intention in North Sumatra*. Journal of Tourism and Communication, 7(2), 98–110. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jtc.2022.07208

Sugiyono. (2018).*Quantitative, Qualitative, and R&D Research Methods*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Taufik, A. (2024).*The Influence of TikTok Content on Travel Decisions in Bandung Regency*. Journal of Digital Tourism, 8(1), 22–35. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jdt.2024.00801

Central Statistics Agency of North Sumatra. (2022).*North Sumatra Tourism Statistics 2022*. https://sumut.bps.go.id

Cheung, C. M. K., & Thadani, D. R. (2012). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. Decision Support Systems, 54(1), 461-470.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2012.06.008

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word of mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18(3), 38-52. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.10073

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Marketing Management (15th ed.). Pearson. This book is generally available in bookstores and libraries.

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. Journal of Marketing, 58(3), 20-38. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800302

Hafizah, N., & Simangunsong, S. R. (2024). The Effect Of Discount Prices And Brand Image On Purchasing Decisions At Sports Station Banda Aceh. *Jurnal Ekonomi*, *13*(02), 1493-1501.

Wahyuni, r., & simangunsong, s. (2024). Pengaruh kualitas pelayanan dan produk terhadap kepuasan pelanggan pada nominal cafe. *Journal of economic, bussines and accounting (costing) учредители: ipm2kpe*, *7*(5), 3507-3515.

Girard, T., Pinar, M., & Lysiak, L. (2020). Understanding student perceptions of their personal branding in higher education. Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 20(13), 136–146. https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v20i13.3839

Pamungkas, TF, Utomo, E., & Nursetyo, KI (2023). E-Portfolio Development in the Undergraduate Program in Educational Technology. 06(02), 51–60.

Szántó, P., Papp-Váry, Á., & Radácsi, L. (2025). Research Gap in Personal Branding: Understanding and Quantifying Personal Branding by Developing a Standardized Framework for Personal Brand Equity Measurement. Administrative Sciences, 15(4), 1–33. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15040148

Simangunsong, S. R., & Siahaan, S. D. N. (2022). Efektivitas Pembelajaran Daring Melalui Penerapan Model Pembelajaran Problem Based Learning Berbasis Online Pada Mata Kuliah Kewirausahaan.

Simangunsong, S. R. (2021). The Effect of Online Explaining Skills on Teacher Competence.