

## Influencer Credibility as A Source of Travel Information for Generation Z to Bali

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### A B S T R A C T

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The fast-paced advancement of technology requires tourism business managers to stay informed, particularly about platforms like Instagram, which is especially popular among Generation Z. Many users primarily turn to Instagram for entertainment and information, raising concerns about the reliability of the tourist information shared. This points to a need for better filtering of credible influencers to provide trustworthy tourism insights. This study explores how Generation Z evaluates the credibility of influencers as sources of information about tourism in Bali. Using a quantitative approach and the Multivariate Analysis of Variance Test (MANOVA), the research involved 110 respondents from various tourist categories, utilizing a purposive non-probability sampling method. The findings reveal that both domestic and foreign tourists assess influencers based on their attractiveness, which helps build trust in the content shared. Additionally, both male and female respondents have similar views on influencer credibility. This underscores the importance of establishing stricter criteria for influencer selection to ensure the accuracy of tourism-related information, benefiting both consumers and the tourism sector.

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## INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has profoundly transformed the global tourism industry by reshaping paradigms, industry structures, and introducing new potentials and challenges (Buhalis & O'Connor, 2005). The rise of the internet and new social media platforms has shifted communication from a one-way model to a more interactive, two-way format. Popular video content on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat allows travelers to easily access short video clips, aligning with their contemporary lifestyles (Choi & Lee, 2019). A significant portion of travel decisions is now influenced by information gathered from social media and digital marketing (Islam, 2021). According to data from We Are Social (2024), as of January 2024, there are approximately 5.04 billion social media users globally, who spend an average of 2 hours and 23 minutes on these platforms, with one of their primary purposes being content discovery. Instagram remains a particularly favored platform among Generation Z, aligning with Prihatiningsih's (2017) assertion that it is the social media most capable of meeting various needs, especially among teenagers.

Generation Z is poised to transform the dynamics of the tourism sector, particularly in the way recommendations are made. Growing up in a technology-rich environment, social media plays a pivotal role in influencing their decisions (Walia & Jasrotia, 2021). This generation frequently uses social media to gather information and make purchasing decisions about products and services, while also sharing their travel experiences online (Williams & Robert A. Page, 2011). This underscores the importance of social media marketing, especially for disseminating tourist information before Generation Z embarks on their travels. The research specifically targets Generation Z to explore their information-seeking behaviors and the differences in mindsets across genders. While this generation often turns to social media for tourism-related information, they frequently encounter untrustworthy sources. In today's technological landscape, issues of trust in online information sources have emerged, largely due to some violating professional ethics under the pressure to quickly meet public information demands. Online media often prioritize speed in news delivery, which does not necessarily ensure high-quality information (Chandrabuwono et al., 2022). The effectiveness of information retrieval is not solely dependent on the source—whether from the internet or social media platforms like Instagram—but also on the credibility of those sources. Consumers often rely on online travel intermediary platforms to identify trustworthy service providers. Research indicates that personal information such as name, address, and date of stay can enhance trust in traveler reviews, subsequently impacting their popularity online. Additionally, travel brokerage sites can reinforce visual credibility through varied typefaces, colors, and formatting techniques such as underlining, highlighting, and bolding (Jimmy Xie et al., 2011).

In the context of tourism in Bali, the authenticity of photos and content is a significant concern in today's digital landscape. Social media platforms that facilitate image sharing have led to widespread issues, such as the manipulation of photos and content. Some individuals may employ editing techniques or filters

to enhance the appearance of destinations, making beaches appear cleaner or clearer than they actually are. This practice can mislead travelers who rely on these images when making travel decisions. Furthermore, actual conditions at tourist sites often do not align with what is portrayed on social media, leading to disappointment among tourists and potentially fostering negative perceptions of the destinations. This scenario can adversely affect Bali's reputation as an appealing tourist destination. The credibility of sources on Instagram is crucial in the tourism sector, as low credibility can tarnish the image of the destination itself. Research by Veasna et al. (2013) supports the notion that source credibility directly influences the destination's image. Thus, if the information shared on Instagram is not reliable, it could further harm Bali's image.

In this context, the study posits that the credibility of information sources, along with the features of the communication medium and message, plays a vital role in determining communication effectiveness. The research is grounded in the notion that individuals tend to exhibit greater trust and responsiveness toward sources perceived as reliable. Thus, it is crucial to explore the perspectives of the audience, especially Generation Z, regarding the information sources they regard as credible to effectively address their informational needs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Tourist Destination**

According to Undang-undang Nomor 10 Tahun 2009, tourist destinations are geographical areas that include a variety of attractions, public facilities, tourist amenities, accessibility, and interactions with local communities. Morrison (2019) defines a tourist destination as a place intended for recreational or vacation activities, supported by necessary infrastructure such as accommodation and transportation. Hidayah (2019) further explains that tourist destinations are locations where tourists engage in tourism activities, which can encompass cities, regions, provinces, or entire countries.

### **2. Tourist**

According to Undang-undang Nomor 10 Tahun 2009, a tourist is defined as an individual who travels for tourism purposes. Hidayah (2019) further specifies that a tourist is someone who visits a location for tourism, staying for at least 24 hours. Sugiama (2011) describes tourists as individuals or groups traveling for leisure, business, healthcare, religious activities, or educational purposes, classifying anyone temporarily away from their residence as a tourist.

### **3. Social Media**

Social media serves as a platform for consumers to exchange information, including text, images, audio, and video, with each other and with companies (Keller *et al.*, 2016). According to (Brogan, 2010), describes social media as a new set of communication and collaboration tools that facilitate various types of interactions that were previously inaccessible to the general public. This medium enables users to communicate, share, collaborate, and engage with one another, fostering virtual connections. (Nasrullah, 2016) defines social media as internet platforms that allow users to express themselves, interact, cooperate,

share information, and communicate with others, thereby creating virtual social relationships.

#### **4. Influencer**

An influencer, derived from the term "influence," is an individual capable of affecting others, typically a public figure or a prominent social media user with a substantial following. Their statements can indirectly shape the behavior of their followers (Nisa, 2024). According to Brown and Hayes (2008), influencers serve as third parties that play a crucial role in influencing customer purchasing decisions. They are integral to marketing, particularly within the framework of Influencer Marketing, a contemporary strategy in marketing and public relations that targets potential consumers by leveraging influencers to enhance awareness and impact purchasing decisions among those who regard their expertise.

#### **5. Source Credibility Theory**

The Source Credibility Theory, initially introduced by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley in 1953, posits that individuals are more easily influenced when the communicators are deemed credible. A communicator perceived as an expert and trustworthy is more effective in shaping the opinions of others (Hovland *et al.*, 1953). (Ohanian, 1990) assesses an influencer's credibility through three key components: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. (Andrews & Shimp, 2018) elaborate on these components, stating that expertise encompasses the knowledge, experience, and skills perceived by followers; trustworthiness reflects the audience's perception of honesty and integrity; and attractiveness refers to the emotional connection or appeal that the influencer possesses.

#### **6. Generation Z**

Generation Z, often referred to as the iGeneration or internet generation, shares some characteristics with Generation Y but is distinguished by their ability to engage in multiple activities simultaneously, such as tweeting from mobile devices, browsing on computers, and listening to music through headphones. This generation is deeply embedded in the virtual world and has been exposed to advanced technology and devices from an early age, which subtly shapes their personality (Bencsik & Machova, 2016). According to (Bencsik & Machova, 2016) Generation Z has grown up amid digital advancements, enabling them to access information rapidly and develop into intelligent, tech-savvy, and creative individuals. A significant difference between them and previous generations lies in their proficiency with information and technology.

#### **7. Information Search Based on Tourist Type**

Information sources like brochures and the internet are valuable for both domestic and foreign tourists. However, foreign tourists tend to rely on these tools more than domestic tourists, who often seek recommendations from friends and family rather than relying on brochures. Foreign tourists frequently trust information from platforms like Tripadvisor, blogs, and Google (Muktaf & Zulfiana, 2018), while domestic tourists favor recommendations from friends and family shared on social media (Dewi *et al.*, 2021). These differences in information

sources are important for managers, as they need to ensure that the information provided aligns with actual conditions. According to research conducted by (Fesenmaier & Jeng, 2000), indicates that travelers have varying information needs due to the different choices they face at various stages of their journey. Consequently, the unique situations encountered by tourists can influence their information-seeking behaviors. Previous studies have not thoroughly examined the differences in information source searches between domestic and foreign tourists. Thus, several assumptions can be drawn from this study.

**H1: There is a significant influence in the preference for choosing tourist information for Generation Z based on the credibility of the source a) Expertise b) Trustworthiness c) Attractiveness is influenced by the type of domestic tourists and foreign tourists.**

## 8. Information Search Based on Gender

Gender significantly influences consumer information search behavior (C. Haridasan *et al.*, 2021). Female and men employ different strategies for processing information (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015), and this disparity extends to the types and number of sources they utilize for information searches (C. Haridasan *et al.*, 2021). Understanding these gender differences in the design and content of information sources is essential for managers when creating tourism websites, engaging with potential visitors, and crafting effective online messages (Kim *et al.*, 2007). According to research conducted by (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008), gender is a crucial factor in market segmentation, influencing social media usage. Women typically visit websites and review content more frequently than men, as they believe that reading others' reviews enhances their decision-making efficiency and minimizes risk. Furthermore, women often conduct more thorough searches, where the quality and credibility of information from social media sources can significantly impact their choices. They are inclined to base their decisions on external information rather than solely on personal judgment, often considering multiple sources before arriving at a final decision (Kim *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, several hypotheses emerged from this research, including the following:

**H2: There is a significant influence in the preference for choosing tourist information for Generation Z based on the credibility of the source a) Expertise b) Trustworthiness c) Attractiveness is influenced by gender (female and male).**

## METHODOLOGY

The research adopts a quantitative approach to explore Generation Z's perspective on assessing the credibility of influencers as sources of travel information for Bali. It utilizes purposive sampling, selecting respondents based on specific criteria: a minimum age of 17 years, active Instagram users, and followers of an influencer account deemed trustworthy. The study encompasses both domestic and foreign tourists. The sample size is determined using the formula by (Hair *et al.*, 2014), as the population size is unknown, aiming for a minimum sample size of 5-10 times the number of indicators. With 11 indicators, the required sample size is 110 for domestic tourists and 110 for foreign tourists.

Data collection utilizes a questionnaire in the form of a Google Form distributed online via Instagram. The study measures the variable of source credibility across three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Data analysis employs MANOVA Analysis.

**RESEARCH RESULT**

**1. Comparison of the Importance of Influencer Credibility is influenced by Type of Tourist**

Table 1. Comparison of the Importance of Influencer Credibility is influenced by type of Tourist

Dependent Variabel	Group to be Compared		Mean Difference Between Group		Statistical Significance
	Dimensi(I)	Dimensi (J)	Mean Difference	Std Error	Tukey HSD
Domestic	Expertise	Trustworthiness	.755	.369	0,104
		Attractiveness	4.782	.369	0,000
	Trustworthiness	Expertise	-755	.369	0,104
		Attractiveness	4.027	.369	0,000
	Attractiveness	Expertise	-4.782	.369	0,000
		Trustworthiness	4.027	.369	0,000
Foreign	Expertise	Trustworthiness	.036	.322	0,993
		Attractiveness	4.482	.323	0,000
	Trustworthiness	Expertise	-36	.324	0,993
		Attractiveness	4.445	.325	0,000
	Attractiveness	Expertise	-4.482	.326	0,000
		Trustworthiness	4.445	.327	0,000

The results of the MANOVA test show that both domestic and foreign tourists have similar perceptions in evaluating an influencer's credibility, primarily emphasizing attractiveness. This indicates that the dimensions of

expertise and trustworthiness for both groups have p-values greater than 0.05, signifying no significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ). In contrast, the attractiveness factor for both domestic and foreign tourists has p-values less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## 2. Comparison of the Importance of Influencer Credibility is influenced by Gender

Table 2. Comparison of the Importance of Influencer Credibility is influenced by Gender

Dependent Variabel	Group to be Compared		Mean Difference Between Group		Statistical Significance
	Dimensi(I)	Dimensi (J)	Mean Difference	Std Error	Tukey HSD
Female	Expertise	Trustworthiness	0,045	.369	0,992
		Attractiveness	4.255*	.369	0,000
	Trustworthiness	Expertise	-0,045	.369	0,992
		Attractiveness	4,209*	.369	0,000
	Attractiveness	Expertise	-4.255*	.369	0,000
		Trustworthiness	-4.209*	.369	0,000
Male	Expertise	Trustworthiness	0,709	.328	0.080
		Attractiveness	4.936*	.328	0,000
	Trustworthiness	Expertise	-0,709	.328	0.080
		Attractiveness	4.227*	.328	0,000
	Attractiveness	Expertise	-4.936*	.328	0,000
		Trustworthiness	-4.227*	.328	0,000

The results of the MANOVA test indicate that both females and males evaluate an influencer's credibility similarly, primarily based on attractiveness. This suggests that the values for expertise and trustworthiness for both genders

are greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ), while the value for attractiveness is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ) for both female and male.

These results indicate that attractiveness plays a crucial role in assessing influencers. Respondents noted that one key reason for trusting an influencer is their popularity and established reputation among the audience. According to (Sylvia & Hasan, 2023) Famous influencers can effortlessly draw the audience's attention and earn their trust. Their popularity often reflects an understanding of the lifestyle that influencers lead.

### 3. Hipotesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was performed to assess the significant influence based on responses from 110 domestic tourists and 110 foreign tourists. Below are the results of the hypothesis test.

**H1: There is a significant influence in the preference for choosing tourist information for Generation Z based on the credibility of the source**  
a) Expertise  
b) Trustworthiness  
c) Attractiveness is influenced by the type of domestic tourists and foreign tourists.

H1a: There is no significant influence between the type of tourists and expertise (p-values for domestic tourists and foreign tourists were 0.104 and 0.993, respectively,  $> 0.05$ ).

H1b: There is no significant influence between the type of tourists and trustworthiness (p-values for domestic tourists and foreign tourists were 0.104 and 0.993, respectively,  $> 0.05$ ).

H1c: There is a significant influence between the type of tourists and attractiveness (p-values for domestic tourists and foreign tourists were 0.000 and 0.000, respectively,  $< 0.05$ ).

The research findings show that expertise and trustworthiness do not have a significant impact on Generation Z's perceptions of influencers, regardless of whether they are domestic or foreign tourists. Generation Z is less likely to evaluate an influencer's credibility based on these criteria. This is because assessing an influencer's expertise and trustworthiness often requires a more nuanced understanding of the broader context, such as practical experience or third-party endorsements. A single post usually does not provide a complete view. Furthermore, influencers sometimes share content derived from materials or approvals from third parties, which can compromise the objectivity of their posts, particularly in product reviews. Reviews that are meant to be honest and based on personal experience can sometimes be mixed with paid promotions, leading to disappointment among followers who seek unbiased information (Qiarasyifa, 2020).

In general, Generation Z evaluates an influencer's credibility primarily through their attractiveness, which includes shared interests, popularity, and content delivery style. This demographic feels that an influencer's expertise and trustworthiness cannot be determined from a single social media post, as it may not accurately represent reality. Consequently, they are more inclined to follow influencers whose attractiveness matches their preferences and who have cultivated a positive reputation in society.

**H2: There is a significant influence in the preference for choosing tourist information for Generation Z based on the credibility of the source a) Expertise b) Trustworthiness c) Attractiveness is influenced by gender (female and male).**

H2a: There was no significant effect between gender and expertise (p values for female and male (0.992 and 0.080 > 0.05).

H2b: There was no significant effect between gender and trustworthiness (p values of female and male (0.992 and 0.080 > 0.05).

H2c: There is a significant influence between gender and attractiveness (p values of female and male (0.000 and 0.000 < 0.05).

The test results indicate that both men and women view influencer credibility similarly, emphasizing the influencer's attractiveness. This finding is consistent with psychological theories suggesting that Generation Z is significantly affected by social factors, which play a crucial role in their decision-making. Generation Z tends to trust influencers who display attractiveness, as these influencers create strong connections with their followers through relatable content. On social media, Gen Z followers experience psychological fulfillment from the recognition and validation they receive through positive interactions with the influencers they admire.

This theory highlights the importance of recognizing that Gen Z's trust in influencers is shaped by changing social norms within their online communities and the content they engage with. When influencers are perceived as trustworthy, it can profoundly impact Gen Z's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in various areas of their lives, including purchasing decisions, lifestyle choices, and media preferences (Turner & Reynolds, 2012). This viewpoint aligns with previous research suggesting that attractiveness is a key factor influencing tourists' attitudes. Influencers with a positive image and charisma often wield significant influence over their audience (Chen et al., 2021).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research led to two main conclusions:

1. The study found no significant differences in how Indonesian and foreign tourists assess influencer credibility. Factors like the influencer's expertise and trustworthiness do not heavily influence Generation Z's judgments. Instead, influencer appeal significantly impacts their perceptions, which contrasts with initial expectations that expertise and trust would be more critical. Popularity and brand image appear to matter more to this demographic.
2. Credibility ratings by gender show similar evaluations for both males and females. Influencers with appealing qualities are generally seen as more credible, while expertise and trustworthiness have minimal impact. This trend is evident among both Indonesian and foreign tourists, who tend to trust influencers based on their attractiveness and the relevance of the content.

From these conclusions, several recommendations are made:

1. Tourism managers in Bali should select influencers carefully, focusing on their popularity and appeal. Choosing influencers with established personal brands will enhance their reliability and trust, particularly among Generation Z.
2. Managers should also consider other factors important to Generation Z, such as the influencer's expertise and honesty. A blend of appeal, expertise, and trustworthiness should be tailored to the target audience. Influencers must provide accurate tourist information about Bali, avoiding excessive content alteration.
3. The research highlights limitations in understanding Generation Z's preferences for information sources about various tourist attractions. Future studies should explore their perspectives on the types of tourism information they seek before traveling, especially in Bali.

### ADVANCED RESEARCH

In writing this article, the researcher realized that there are still many shortcomings in terms of language, writing, and form of presentation considering the limited knowledge and ability of the researcher himself. Therefore, for the perfection of the article, the researcher expects constructive criticism and suggestions from various parties.

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