



Research Article

The Influence of Instagram Social Media Marketing and E-WOM on Beach Visit Decisions

Deanna Loren Siregar ^{1*}, Aida Sari ², Faila Shofa ³

¹ Management Department, University of Lampung, Indonesia : deanasiregar33@gmail.com

² Management Department, University of Lampung, Indonesia

³ Management Department, University of Lampung, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author : Deanna Loren Siregar

Abstract: One of the key instruments for advertising travel destinations is the growth of social media, particularly Instagram. Nevertheless, a large number of Instagram followers does not automatically translate into a large number of visitor visits. Rio By The Beach Beach in Kalianda, South Lampung had the most visitors during the 2025 holiday season, despite having fewer Instagram followers than other beach attractions. This condition suggests that the effectiveness of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) and social media marketing may have a significant impact on travelers' decisions to visit. Thus, the purpose of this study is to ascertain how tourists' decisions to visit Rio By The Beach in Kalianda, South Lampung, are influenced by Instagram social media marketing and electronic word-of-mouth. This study examines 170 visitors to Rio By The Beach using a quantitative methodology and selective sampling strategies. Questionnaires were sent as part of the data collection process, and SPSS software was utilized for multiple linear regression data analysis. The study's findings show that electronic word-of-mouth and Instagram social media marketing significantly and favorably influence travelers' decisions to visit. Electronic word-of-mouth has a greater impact than the other one. The study's conclusions suggest that tourism destination managers should concentrate their marketing efforts more on user interaction, high-quality information, and developing travel experiences that can promote the creation of positive electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) in order to boost travelers' decisions to come.

Keywords: Decision; E-WOM; Instagram; Marketing; Visit;

1. Introduction

Indonesia's tourism sector demonstrates strong potential, particularly in Lampung Province, which recorded 10.26 million domestic tourist trips and ranked third in Sumatra after North Sumatra and West Sumatras (Disparekraf, 2023). This achievement reflects growing public interest in tourism, supported by Lampung's diverse attractions, including mountain tourism, educational and conservation sites, and marine destinations such as Bukit Sakura, Mount Betung, Way Kambas National Park, and the increasingly popular Rio By The Beach. Alongside this growth, digital technology has become increasingly important in tourism promotion, as widespread internet use allows information to be disseminated rapidly and widely. Social media, especially Instagram, plays a significant role not only as a communication platform but also in shaping trends, perceptions, and tourists' visiting behavior. According to We Are Social (2024), Instagram is used by 85.3% of internet users aged 16-64 in Indonesia, highlighting its strong potential as an effective marketing tool for delivering information, fostering interaction, and influencing consumer decisions in today's competitive digital environment.

As social media increasingly shapes tourists' perceptions and visiting behavior, Word of Mouth (WOM) has become a key marketing strategy in the digital era. WOM significantly influences tourists' visiting decisions, as informal communication about products, services, or experiences often has a stronger impact than conventional advertising (Kotler & Keller,

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2016). In tourism, recommendations from trusted sources, including Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) shared through social media platforms such as Instagram, serve as important information sources and enhance destination attractiveness due to their perceived authenticity and credibility (Hamzah & Septiani, 2025). This influence is particularly evident in Lampung's beach tourism, where visually appealing content, positive reviews, and strategic digital campaigns shared by users and Instatravel accounts play a significant role in shaping tourists' destination choices (Awad, 2025).

Data from *Tribunnews.com* (2025) show that Rio By The Beach recorded the highest number of visitors during the 2025 Eid holiday, reaching 35,159 visitors, despite not having the highest number of Instagram followers compared to other beach destinations. This indicates that a large follower base does not automatically translate into higher visitor numbers, highlighting the importance of effective Instagram content and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) in attracting tourists. Located in Kalianda, South Lampung, Rio By The Beach offers natural coastal scenery supported by facilities such as Instagramable photo spots, gazebos, restaurants, and live music, making it appealing to various visitor segments. The official Instagram account @riobythebeach is actively used as a promotional and communication platform, providing complete visitor information, engaging visual content, and interactive features that generate both positive feedback and constructive criticism, reflecting strong audience engagement and the strategic role of Instagram and E-WOM in shaping tourists' visiting decisions to Rio By The Beach.

Previous studies have examined the influence of digital marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on tourists' visiting decisions. Massie and Roring (2022) found that digital marketing and E-WOM positively and significantly affected visiting decisions at Rumah Alam Manado Adventure Park, although their study did not specifically address Instagram as a promotional platform. Meanwhile, Febrilia et al. (2023) analyzed the effects of Instagram social media marketing and E-WOM on visiting decisions at Dewi Shinta Waterpark, focusing on an artificial tourism destination in Yogyakarta with characteristics different from marine tourism. Thus, despite existing research on digital marketing and E-WOM, no study has specifically examined the role of Instagram social media marketing and E-WOM in influencing visiting decisions at Rio By The Beach, South Lampung, indicating a research gap that this study aims to address.

Based on the preceding discussion, differences in research focus and context indicate opportunities for further investigation, particularly regarding the gap between social media popularity and actual tourist visits. Empirical data show that a high number of Instagram followers does not necessarily result in higher visitor numbers, as illustrated by Rio By The Beach, which attracted more than 35,000 visitors during the 2025 Eid holiday despite having 46,600 followers, while other destinations with larger follower bases recorded fewer visits. This condition highlights a disparity between online popularity and tourists' visiting decisions, underscoring the importance of examining how Instagram social media marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) influence tourists' decisions to visit Rio By The Beach in Kalianda, South Lampung.

2. Literature Review

Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has become a key component of modern marketing strategies, emphasizing active participation and interaction on social media platforms to engage audiences (Ryan, 2014). SMM aims to create compelling content that encourages users to share it within their networks, thereby increasing brand awareness, expanding reach, and generating valuable feedback (Blakeman, 2018). Moreover, social media marketing involves building, maintaining, and measuring relationships between brands and consumers to foster meaningful engagement, trust, and loyalty in online communities (Solis, 2010). According to Solis (2010), effective SMM is reflected through four main indicators: context, communication, collaboration, and connection, which together support the creation of interactive and sustainable brand-consumer relationships.

Instagram

Instagram is a social networking application that allows users to share photos and videos publicly with their followers and is widely used as a platform for creativity, inspiration, and visual discovery (Robertson, 2018). Due to its large user base, ease of use, visual-oriented

content, free access, and various promotional features such as hashtags, endorsements, and paid advertising, Instagram offers significant advantages as a marketing medium for products and services (Makhin, 2016). Its integration with other social media platforms further enhances promotional reach; however, Instagram also has limitations, including the need for frequent content updates, vulnerability to spam, limited transaction features, and increasingly intense competition among businesses, which require marketers to adopt innovative strategies to remain competitive.

Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) refers to positive or negative statements made by actual, potential, or former customers about a product or company through internet-based platforms that are accessible to a wide audience (Goyette et al., 2010). The influence of E-WOM on visiting decisions is shaped by several factors, particularly the quality, clarity, and accuracy of the information shared. Word of Mouth communication may occur organically through genuine consumer experiences or be amplified through deliberate marketing strategies (Sernovitz, 2012). Furthermore, E-WOM can be measured through key indicators such as intensity, positive valence, negative valence, and content, which collectively reflect the frequency, tone, and substance of online consumer discussions and their impact on perceptions and behavioral intentions (Goyette et al., 2010).

Visiting Decision

Visiting decision is a process in which tourists recognize needs, search for information, evaluate alternatives, make choices, and engage in post-visit behavior, similar to the general consumer decision-making process (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In tourism, visiting decisions are shaped by considerations such as destination attractiveness, accessibility, available information, promotions, prices, service quality, and recommendations obtained both directly and through digital media (Ariyanto & Susanti, 2022). Furthermore, visiting decisions are dynamic and may evolve across different stages of the trip, influenced by flexibility, timing and location of decisions, and social composition during travel experiences (Moore et al., 2012).

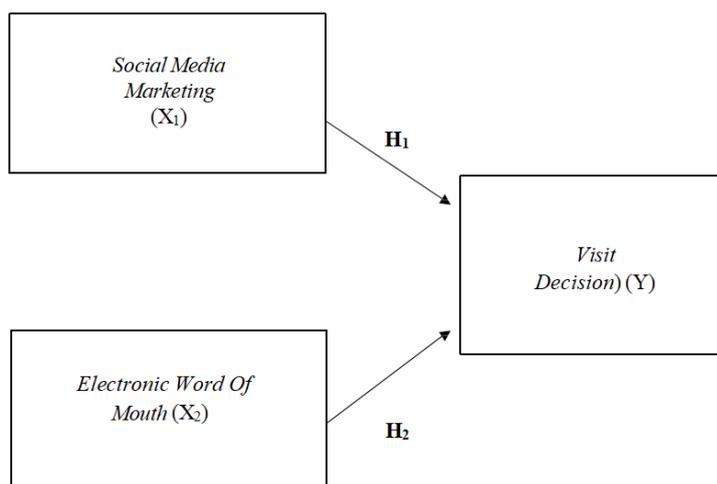


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this research is:

H1: Instagram social media marketing has a significant effect on visiting decisions to Rio By The Beach.

H2: Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has a significant effect on visiting decisions to Rio By The Beach.

3. Proposed Method

Research Design

This study employs an associative research method aimed at analyzing the causal relationship between two or more variables (Sugiyono, 2018). The research examines the effect of Social Media Marketing (X1) and Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) as independent variables on tourists' visiting decisions (Y) to Rio By The Beach. The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources, where primary data are collected directly from respondents who have visited Rio By The Beach through structured questionnaires, while secondary data are obtained from books, journals, and online sources to support the research framework. Data collection is conducted using an online questionnaire method, which is considered efficient for measuring predefined variables and reaching a large and geographically dispersed sample. The questionnaire applies a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to capture respondents' perceptions regarding Instagram social media marketing and E-WOM. In addition, a literature review is conducted to strengthen the theoretical foundation and identify relevant variables by referring to academic books and scholarly articles related to digital marketing and tourism.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of visitors to Rio By The Beach who have been exposed to promotional content through Instagram (Sugiyono, 2018). Due to the unknown population size and practical constraints, a purposive sampling technique was employed, with criteria including having visited Rio By The Beach and having seen its promotion on Instagram, as such respondents are considered capable of providing valid evaluations of social media marketing, E-WOM, and visiting decisions. The sample size was determined using the guideline proposed by Hair et al. (2014), which recommends a minimum of five respondents per indicator; with 34 indicators used in this study, a total of 170 respondents was deemed adequate to represent the sample.

Operational Definition of Variables

To identify constructs as measurable variables, this study uses questionnaires, with operational definitions applied to ensure the variables can be consistently measured and replicated in future research.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables.

Variable	Dimention	Indicators	Scale
Social Media Marketing A marketing approach that emphasizes active engagement in discussions taking place on social media platforms is known as social media marketing, or SMM.	Context	1. Engaging	Likert (1-5)
		2. Unique	
		3. Relevant	
	Communication	4. Easy	
		5. Quick Response	
		6. Increased Trust	
	Collaboration	7. Resharing	
		8. Creation	
		9. Experience Sharing	
	Connection	10. Sense of Connection	
		11. Visiting Motivation	
		12. Sense of Attachment (Solis, 2010).	
Electronic Word Of Mouth E-WOM refers to positive or negative statements shared by	Intensity	1. Discussed more frequently than similar industry sectors	Likert (1-5)
		2. Discussed more frequently than other industry sectors	
	Positive Valance	3. Sharing information with others	
		4. Actively recommending	

Variable	Dimension	Indicators	Scale	
current, potential, or former customers about a product or company through internet-based platforms that are accessible to a wide audience.	Negative Valance	5. Feeling Proud	Likert (1-5)	
		6. Communicating information that benefits the company		
		7. Tendency to share negative comments		
	Content	8. Having expressed unfavorable opinions		
		9. Discussing product prices		
		10. Discussing available facilities		
		11. Discussing product quality (Goyette et al., 2010).		
	Visiting Decision Visiting decision refers to a dynamic process in which tourists select and adjust their activities and choices during a trip based on the situations and experiences they encounter.	Flexibility		1. Ease of Travel
		Location/ timing		2. Flexibility in decision-making, particularly regarding changes in plans
				3. Openness to suggestions and information from others or external sources
				4. Attractive Location
Social Composition		5. Ease of access		
		6. Suitable travel time		
		7. Special needs of travel group members (family, friends, community)		
		8. Recommendations from friends or relatives		
	9. Shared goals with others			
Stage of Trip	10. Consideration of known individuals' personal experiences			
	11. Changes in priorities when selecting activities, accommodation, or destinations during travel stages			
	12. Influence of length of stay on decision-making patterns (Moore et al., 2012).			

Instrument Testing

Instrument testing in this study includes validity and reliability assessments to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the questionnaire. Validity refers to the degree to which the collected data accurately represent the research object and is tested by examining the correlation between item scores and total scores using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with IBM SPSS for Windows 31 (Sugiyono, 2018). An item is considered valid if it meets the criteria of a KMO-MSA value above 0.50 and a factor loading greater than 0.50 (Ghozali, 2018; Hair et al., 2014). Reliability testing evaluates the consistency and stability of the measurement instrument, which is assessed using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS, where a value greater than 0.60 indicates that the questionnaire is reliable (Ghozali, 2018).

Data Analysis Method

This study applies quantitative data analysis using multiple linear regression to examine the effects of Social Media Marketing (X1) and Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) on visiting decisions (Y), with statistical processing conducted using IBM SPSS (Sugiyono, 2018). Prior to hypothesis testing, a classical assumption test is performed to ensure data normality, which

is evaluated through Normal Probability Plots to confirm that the regression model meets the normality assumption. Hypothesis testing is carried out using partial regression analysis (t-test) at a 5% significance level to determine the individual influence of each independent variable on visiting decisions, where a p-value below 0.05 indicates a significant effect (Ghozali, 2018).

4. Results and Discussion

Testing Results

Instrument Test Results

This study uses Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to assess questionnaire validity, and the results indicate that all items meet the required KMO-MSA and anti-image criteria, confirming their validity in measuring the intended constructs.

Table 2. Validity Test.

Variable	Items	KMO	Anti-Image	Result
Social Media Marketing (X1)	X1.1	0,777	0,883	Valid
	X1.2		0,604	
	X1.3		0,943	
	X1.4		0,648	
	X1.5		0,936	
	X1.6		0,901	
	X1.7		0,663	
	X1.8		0,787	
	X1.9		0,932	
	X1.10		0,775	
	X1.11		0,564	
	X1.12		0,875	
E-WOM (X2)	X2.1	0,661	0,570	Valid
	X2.2		0,736	
	X2.3		0,740	
	X2.4		0,700	
	X2.5		0,737	
	X2.6		0,552	
	X2.7		0,579	
	X2.8		0,650	
	X2.9		0,556	
	X2.10		0,782	
	X2.11		0,798	
Visiting Decision (Y)	Y.1	0,753	0,707	Valid
	Y.2		0,699	
	Y.3		0,724	
	Y.4		0,870	
	Y.5		0,668	
	Y.6		0,730	
	Y.7		0,726	

Variable	Items	KMO	Anti-Image	Result
	Y.8		0,837	
	Y.9		0,652	
	Y.10		0,926	
	Y.11		0,739	

Reliability testing showed that all variables have Cronbach’s Alpha values >0.60, indicating that the questionnaire is reliable and consistent.

Table 3. Reliability Test.

Variable	Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted	Result
Social Media Marketing (X1)	X1.1	0,924	0,921	Reliable
	X1.2		0,919	
	X1.3		0,922	
	X1.4		0,919	
	X1.5		0,920	
	X1.6		0,910	
	X1.7		0,918	
	X1.8		0,915	
	X1.9		0,923	
	X1.10		0,917	
	X1.11		0,923	
	X1.12		0,911	
E-WOM (X2)	X2.1	0,908	0,903	Reliable
	X2.2		0,895	
	X2.3		0,904	
	X2.3		0,900	
	X2.5		0,906	
	X2.6		0,901	
	X2.7		0,899	
	X2.8		0,891	
	X2.9		0,903	
	X2.10		0,895	
	X2.11		0,905	
Visiting Decision (Y)	Y.1	0,920	0,910	Reliable
	Y.2		0,916	
	Y.3		0,921	
	Y.4		0,906	
	Y.5		0,918	
	Y.6		0,908	
	Y.7		0,912	
	Y.8		0,908	
	Y.9		0,913	

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Result
	Y.10		0,915	
	Y.11		0,910	

Normality Test Results

This study uses a Normal P-Plot to test normality, and the results show that the data points follow the diagonal line, indicating a normal distribution and suitability for further analysis.

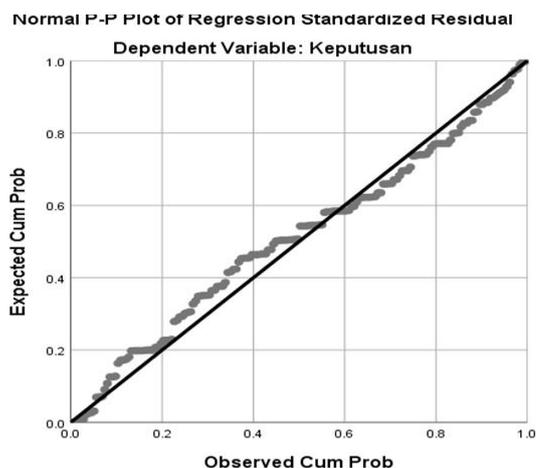


Figure 2. Normal P-Plot Diagram.

Multiple Linear Regression Test and T-Test

This study applies multiple linear regression to examine the effects of Social Media Marketing (X1) and E-WOM (X2) on visiting decisions (Y), with the regression and t-test results presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Test Results.

Model		Unstand. Coef.		Stand. Coef.		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	8,248	2,891			2,853	,005
	Social Media Marketing (X1)	,186	,069	,195		2,699	,008
	E-WOM (X2)	,624	,082	,550		7,618	,000

a. Dependent Variable : Visiting Decision (Y)

Based on the regression results, the coefficients for Social Media Marketing (X1) and E-WOM (X2) are 0.195 and 0.550, respectively, producing the equation

$$Y = 0.195X1 + 0.550X2$$

Both coefficients are positive, indicating that improvements in social media marketing strategies and more positive electronic word-of-mouth increase visitors' decisions to visit Rio By The Beach. The t-test results confirm that both variables have a positive and significant

effect on visiting decisions. Social Media Marketing shows a significance value of 0.008 and a t-value of 2.699, while E-WOM has a significance value of 0.000 and a t-value of 7.618; all exceed the critical threshold (t-table = 1.974, $\alpha = 0.05$). Therefore, both hypotheses are accepted, demonstrating that Social Media Marketing and E-WOM significantly influence visiting decisions.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Social media marketing and E-WOM account for 47.6% of the variance in visiting decisions, falling into the moderate category, according to Table 5's coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.476. Other variables not covered in this study, such as perceived value, pricing, service quality, and trust, have an impact on the remaining 52.4%.

Table 5. R^2 Test Results.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,690	,476	,470	1,893

Discussions

Effect of Instagram Marketing on Visiting Decisions

This study demonstrates that Instagram-based social media marketing has a positive and statistically significant influence on tourists' visiting decisions to Rio By The Beach, as reflected by a significance value of 0.008 (< 0.05), thereby supporting the first hypothesis. This finding indicates that well-managed social media marketing strategies, particularly through visually appealing, informative, and destination-relevant content on the @riobythebeach Instagram account, play an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions and intentions to visit. Descriptive analysis further shows that the strongest aspects of social media marketing lie in context and communication, where the content is considered attractive, consistent with actual destination conditions, and supported by relatively responsive interactions, which help build credibility and emotional engagement with potential visitors. These results are in line with the perspectives of Solis (2010) and Ryan (2014), who argue that social media marketing not only functions as a promotional tool but also as a medium for relationship-building through two-way communication, ultimately influencing the consumer decision-making process. Moreover, this study reinforces previous empirical findings that highlight the significant role of social media marketing in tourism decision-making (Kadang et al., 2023; Kamal et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the results also suggest that increasing interaction intensity and user collaboration could further strengthen the effectiveness of Instagram marketing in encouraging visiting decisions.

Effect of E-WOM on Visiting Decisions

The findings reveal that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has a positive and statistically significant influence on visiting decisions, as indicated by a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), thereby confirming the research hypothesis. Moreover, E-WOM shows a higher regression coefficient than Social Media Marketing, indicating that it is the most dominant variable influencing tourists' decisions to visit Rio By The Beach. This suggests that reviews, comments, and shared experiences on Instagram play a crucial role in shaping tourists' intentions, as potential visitors tend to rely on other users' experiences before making travel decisions. Descriptive analysis further shows that E-WOM is perceived at a good level, particularly in terms of intensity and content, where tourists frequently encounter and share information related to the beach's atmosphere, scenic beauty, ticket prices, and facility quality. In line with Goyette et al. (2010), high-intensity and informative E-WOM can enhance trust, reduce uncertainty, and strengthen positive perceptions of a destination. These results are consistent with previous studies (Felisa, 2021; Jamu & Sari, 2022; Kamal et al., 2024), which also found a significant effect of E-WOM on visiting decisions. However, the presence of negative comments indicates that destination managers should continuously improve service quality and facilities to ensure that E-WOM remains predominantly positive and continues to support tourists' visiting decisions.

Managerial Implication

The management of Rio By The Beach is recommended to concentrate more of their marketing strategy on managing and optimizing E-WOM using social media as a managerial implication of these findings. In addition to promptly and positively responding to all feedback received, the management can actively encourage guests to share their visiting experiences through reviews, comments, and Instagram posts. Additionally, the management must make sure that the standard of services and amenities is upheld so that satisfied customers may write reliable and consistent reviews, boosting confidence and influencing future travelers' choices.

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that Instagram-based Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) have positive and significant effects on tourists' visiting decisions to Rio By The Beach, with E-WOM emerging as the most dominant influencing factor, indicating that effective digital promotion and positive online reviews play a crucial role in attracting visitors. Based on these findings, destination managers are encouraged to strengthen audience engagement through interactive and community-building Instagram content, as well as to respond more proactively and professionally to negative reviews in order to maintain public trust and destination image. Academically, this study contributes to the literature on digital marketing and tourism by providing empirical evidence on tourists' decision-making behavior in the context of social media. Future research is recommended to incorporate additional variables such as trust, service quality, perceived value, or price, expand the study to different destinations and social media platforms, and support policymaking by assisting local governments in developing effective, sustainable, and integrated digital tourism promotion strategies.

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