How Travel Influencer and Social Media Influence Tourist Travel Decision to Ubud

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Abstract

Bali is a popular tourist destination, with 522,141 foreign tourists visiting the island directly in August 2023. Ubud, is renowned for its natural beauty, arts and culture, and authentic village life. This sub-district has a total area of 42.38 km2 and is included in the top five most favorite cities in the world according to Travel and Leisure. The rapid development of tourism in Ubud has led to an increase in the number of influencers promoting on social media, giving rise to the 'Travel Envy' phenomenon. The impact of travel influencers in influencing travel decisions is important to study of how important the role of travel influencers is. The researchers aimed to discuss the impact of social media content created by travel influencers on tourists' decision-making and travel behavior. This research used a qualitative research method that conducted interviews with 17 individuals aged 19-35 years, respondents from various regions and countries who had traveled to Ubud. Research shows that tourists tend to rely on social media reviews and recommendations from travel influencers when planning their trip to Ubud. They are more likely to be interested in content related to travel destinations announced by travel influencers they follow. We found that social media and travel influencers can influence people's travel decisions.

Keywords: travel influencers, social media, travel decision

A. Introduction

According to data released by Badan Statistika, in August 2023, 522,144 foreign tourists visited Bali directly, which was 3,55% lower compared to the previous month's 541,353 visits. Tourists from Australia dominated the foreign tourist arrival in Bali in August 2023, accounting for 23,07% of the total visitors. Ubud is one of the favorite destinations to visit while in Bali, located in Gianyar (Ernawati et al., 2018) with a sub-district are of 42,38 km2. As per Travel and Leisure 2023, Ubud is one of the top five most favored cities in the world, according to a list of 25 best cities. This has led to the rapid development of tourism in Ubud. Furthermore, Ubud presents a harmonious blend of natural beauty, Balinese art, culture, and authentic rural life. Its tropical forests, enchanting rivers, and rice terraces are some of the stunning natural features that attract visitors. Ubud's art and traditions are on display in several art galleries, museums, and art shows. The preserved village feel is a unique aspect of Ubud's charm, making it an unforgettable place to visit in Bali. Nowadays, information about Ubud's tourist destinations is widely available on multiple social media platforms, in addition to official sites.

As the number of internet users in Indonesia continues to rise, social media marketing has evolved into a dynamic field for creativity and strategy. According to the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemenkominfo), social networks are accessed by 95% of internet users in Indonesia, and its estimated that the number of social media users will reach 267 million by 2023. Among Indonesian users, TikTok and Instagram are the most popular social networking platforms, with TikTok ranked fourth globally in terms of users.

The emergence of social media has given rise to influencers, individuals who have gained significant attention in the digital and social media landscape (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencers with large followings have the ability to shape consumer behavior and preferences across multiple industries. Influencers create authentic and engaging content that resonates with their followers on a personal level, making them more than just online celebrities. As representatives of modern culture, influencers have a moral responsibility to promote positive values and endorse products and destinations that align with ethical standards. The influencers phenomenon not only reflects changes in media interaction but also how fame and influence are viewed in the digital age. In the tourism industry, individuals who promote destinations or tourism, products are known as travel influencers. These influencers have a significant impact on inspiring people to travel. By sharing engaging content like captivating photos, thrilling travel videos, and informative travel advice, they ignite curiosity and inspire people to discover new places. Rahjasa et al., (2023)

state, that to attract more visitors, tourists need to have access to comprehensive information about the destination.

A study by Hajli et al., (2018) explained the rise of travel influencers has led to the phenomenon of 'Travel Envy,' a feeling of jealousy or envy towards others' travels often triggered by beautiful photos or stories of travel decisions by inspiring them to plan similar trips. When people see the beautiful experiences shared by influencers, including exotic destinations, delicious food, or luxury accommodations, it can create a strong desire to experience the same thing. People are often inspired by influencers and themselves reliving those experiences, which then influence the destinations or activities they choose for their next trip. In today's connected world, it is easy to crave the adventures we see others having. However, travel envy is a complex emotion that raises questions about the role of social media in shaping our perceptions of travel, the impact of comparison culture on our well-being, and our desire to explore the world.

The influence of travel influencers on travel decisions to Ubud is an area of research that has not been extensively explored. While there are studies on the impact of influencers on travel decision in general, but there is still a glaring gap in research that specifically focuses on the decision to travel to Ubud. This research aims to discuss the impact of social media content by travel influencers on travelers' decision-making and travel behavior. Previous research byHakim et al., (2019) reveals that social media plays an important role in finding information for planning travel. The current generation will arrange their excursions by conducting research on social media (Auliya, n.d.) this has lead to an increasing number of social media users, but there is still a glaring gap in research that specifically focuses on the decision to travel to Ubud.

Researchers have studied how travail influencers have a major impact on destination marketing, but there needs to be more attention paid to how social media and travel influencers affect travelers' decision-making processes. Therefore, this research focuses on the responses of travelers on how they perceive the impact of travel influencers on social media.

B. Literature Review
Travel Influencer

Travel influencers are individuals who have managed to build a huge reputation in the world of social media by sharing their inspiring travel experiences, and exerting a significant impact on people's desire to travel (Bakanauskas & Kisieliauskas, 2018). By presenting a diverse range of captivating content such as photo of amazing landscapes, exciting travel videos, and informative travel tips, they can arouse curiosity and a desire to discover new places (Asan, 2022). They are not only world travelers sharing their

adventure stories but also agents of change in the tourism industry. Travel influencer have the ability to influence travel decisions, promote destinations, and share tips and guidance with their followers (Jang et al., 2021). Though epic photos, videos, and writing based on their personal experiences, they build a strong and loyal community of fans, who often look to these influencers for inspiration for their next trip (KARADENİZ et al., 2022).

Individuals who can be considered travel influencers utilize their personal social media accounts to document their travel experiences. By sharing content that predominantly centers around travel, they offer unique perspectives and ideas that can inspire others to choose their next travel destination (Saepulloh et al., 2022).As individuals who have gained significant popularity both online and offline, travel influencers possess the power to influence and provide information to assist in making travel decisions (Chan et al., 2013). These influencers typically specialize in the tourism niche, making them valuable resources for destination organizations (DMOs) to communicate messages and persuade millennial tourists (Hakim et al., 2019; Saepulloh et al., 2022).

Travel Envy

Travel envy can trigger feelings of distress or dissatisfaction with one's personal travel experiences, fueling a desire to follow in others' footsteps, or even anxiety that they are missing out on interesting experiences (Hajli et al., 2018). This phenomenon is increasingly common in the digital age and is closely linked to overexposure to travel through the internet and social media (Hajli et al., 2018; Kim & Chung, 2022) define social media envy as the jealousy triggered by others' vacation posts on SNS.

The desire to travel to certain destinations can be influenced by envy. A study conducted by (Machado et al., 2021) delved into the intention to visit tourist destinations is influenced by social comparison, travel envy, and self-presentation effects. It was found that envy and social comparison can increase the likelihood of intending to visit a destination, with the social comparison variable having the greatest impact. Another study by Wang et al., (2022) focused on travel envy and social returns in domestic travel. The study revealed that travel envy can spark an individual's desire to visit a destination that has been discussed or mentioned within their social circle.

Travel envy and FOMO (Fear of missing out) are two similar things. Travel envy occurs when someone feels jealous or envious of the travels and experiences they see on social media, often showcased by friends or influencers (Sharma et al., 2022). FOMO, on the other hand, is the fear of missing out on exciting experiences that others are enjoying (Argan et al., 2023). These two phenomena can encourage travelers to make impulsive travel decisions, as they want to keep up with trends and feel the need to post similar experiences on

their social media. In addition, these two phenomena are expected to influence tourists' tourist behavior when visiting a destination(Kang & Schuett, 2013).

Travel Decision

The travel decision is one of the most important aspects of travel planning. It involves various considerations that include the purpose of the trip, budget, personal preferences, and many other factors (Lejealle et al., 2021). The travel decision-making process often requires careful research, assessment of various destination options, accommodation, transport, and planned activities to be undertaken during the trip (Dwityas & Briandana, 2017).

Deciding to travel is an exciting and introspective process (Saini et al., 2023). It involves turning dreams into reality, discovering new places, and immersing oneself in different cultures (Hernández-Méndez et al., 2015; Pop et al., 2022). Traveling starts with a spark of curiosity that ignites a desire to explore, whether it's faraway destinations or hidden gems closer to home. Every travel decision is a unique tapestry of factors, including selecting the perfect destination, deciding on the ideal time to go, budgeting, and creating an itinerary that reflects personal interests and goals. Ultimately, choosing to travel promises unforgettable experiences, personal growth, and the opportunity to make cherished memories that stand the test of time (Hudson & Thal, 2013; Karl et al., 2020).

Tourist Behavior

To comprehend tourist behavior, a multitude of factors must be considered, such as personal factors like age, lifestyle, occupation, and economic condition, as well as psychological factors such as perception, attitudes, belief, and motivation (Kumar Asst Professor & Jyoti Eduversity, 2016). Tourist behavior is a complex and dynamic process that involves both observable and unobservable actions(Juvan et al., 2017). It can have both positive and negative impacts on local communities and environments. Negative impacts can include littering, overcrowding, and trampling of natural resources. To manage tourist behavior, it is important to understand behavior as referring to observable actions, rather than attitudes, awareness, feelings, values, or identity(Kozak, 2013; Kumar Asst Professor & Jyoti Eduversity, 2016). Travel envy, self-presentation, and social comparison are some of factors that can influence tourist behavior (Kachniewska, 2014). To improve tourist experiences and quality of life, it is vital to examine tourists' choice behavior within a changing digital, social, and physical environment. In conclusion, understanding tourist behavior in essential for sustainable tourism management and planning (Gan & Ouyang, 2022).

C. Research Methods

Due to limited research sources, we selected Ubud as our research site because it offers a variety of attractions and has been reviewed by numerous influencers for its diversity of tourist spots. The author utilized a qualitative research method and conducted in-depth interviews of 17 individuals aged between 19-35 years. The participants were selected from both domestic and international tourists who had visited Ubud. The in-depth interview approach was designed to gather insights into the impact of travel influencer on the travel decision-making process of individuals visiting Ubud. The questions revolved around the role social media on travel decision, the tyupe of content that interests people, and the extent to which travel influencers affect someone's travel plan. Additionally, the author has included some data from other sources relevant to the research.

D. Result and Discussion

The emergence of social media, along with the increasing demand for tourism, has given rise to a new trend among modern tourists by seeking recommendations and information on social media and other people's travel experiences about tourist destinations. Given this, we conducted interviews with people who had visited Ubud, as a sample, to determine the impact of travel content that posted on social media and the influence of travel influencers on their travel decisions.

Table 1. Informant Profile

Initial	Gender	Age	Profession	Origin
VL	Female	21	Student	Surabaya
PR	Female	35	Remote Workers	London
AP	Male	19	Student and Freelancer	Jakarta
DW	Female	21	Student	Yogyakarta
AN	Male	19	Student	Tangerang
AB	Female	20	Student	Jakarta
PA	Female	20	Medical Student	Jakarta
VL	Male	27	Employee and Travel Blogger	Yogyakarta
YI	Female	21	Student	Bogor
CR	Male	21	Student	Bali
JJ	Male	21	Student	Bandung
ND	Female	29	Fashion Designer	Serang
GP	Female	20	Student	Tangerang
OD	Male	21	Student	Medan
MJ	Female	19	Student	Bali

Initial	Gender	Age	Profession	Origin
WL	Female	23	Travel Influencer	Bali
AH	Male	31	Employee	Singapore

Source: data from researchers (2022)

According to the Hootsuite report in 2023 social media users in Indonesia are experiencing very rapid growth with a population of 276.4 million, 77% (212.9 million) of the total population are active social media users and internet users reach 60.4% (167 million) of the total population. Hootsuite is an all-in-one social media management platform that enables users to manage multiple social media accounts from a single dashboard. As of 2021, Hootsuite has been adopted by over 200,000 customers across more than 200 countries worldwide to effectively engage with their target audiences via social media. The high number of active social media users in Indonesia illustrates how social media has become an integral part of the lives of Indonesians. Furthermore, the time spent by social media users has become a significant aspect of daily life. Indonesians like to spend hours every day accessing social media, the average time spent is around 3 hours 18 minutes as published in a recent report by Hootsuite.

Table 2. Daily time spent with Media

Time spent using the internet	7 hour 42 minutes
Time sent watching television (broadcasting and streaming)	2 hour 53 minutes
Time using social media	3 hour 18minutes
Time spent reading press media (online and physical print)	1 hour 34 minutes
Time spent listening to music streaming services	1 hour 37 minutes
Time spent listening to broadcast radio	0 hour 32 minutes
Time spent listening to the podcast	0 hour 56 minutes
Time using a game console	1 hour 15 minutes

Source: Hootsuite (We are social) 2023

With high rate of social media use in Indonesia, it is a easier for tourists to search for travel information on social media before visiting Ubud.

> *"It's common to receive information about places like Ubud through social media platforms, especially in today's technology-driven era. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and various websites provide us with a lot of information that piques our curiosity about Ubud. As a result, we become increasingly interested in discovering what Ubud has to offer. "(PA Oct 23rd2023)*

In the digital era, travel influencers have emerged as a new intermediary for modern travelers seeking information about travel destinations, accommodations, and transportation. These influencers, who are experts in travel and share their experiences on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, have become an invaluable source of information for anyone planning a trip to Ubud or any other tourist destination.

"I think it's really big, because if for example, I do not see the content shared by influencers, I don't know, and I will not go there. So I went there because of TikTok's influence" (MJ Oct 24th, 2023)

Though their interesting and engaging content, travel influencers provide practical and detailed guides about Ubud. They share their experiences in a way that sparks the imagination and makes the destination's natural beauty even more attractive. With interesting content and the consistency factor in sharing accurate and inspiring information, it builds a relationship of trust between influencers and followers.

"In my opinion, the posts that influencers share have a significant impact on me. Because I follow travel influencers who have the same preferences as mine, this makes me trust influence more than internet travel agent reviews. When I'm planning a trip to Bali, particularly to Ubud, their page give me ideas for accommodations, tourist attraction, and transportation." (ND Oct 24th2023)

With stunning photos and video of iconic places such as terraced rice fields of Tegalalang, the winding Ayung River, and Balinese temples, they offer vivid portraits of these locations. By following these travel influencers, tourist can easily access the information they need when traveling to Ubud or other destinations.

Interesting content from travel influencers

Social media users in Indonesia actively shared various aspects. The main reason for using social media is to interact with family and friends, fill spare time, discuss and find out information that others are talking about, and find inspiration about what to do. Data reported by Hootsuites shows that the first most used social media is WhatsApp (92.1%) followed by Instagram (86.5%), Facebook (83.8%), and TikTok (70.8%). A travel influencer is an individual who promotes a tourist attraction or object with the intention of influencing others in their travel decisions. Similar to other types of influencers, travel influencers utilize their personal social media accounts to share their travel experiences and activities. Content that covers diverse tourism themes can inspire travel decisions. (Saepulloh et al., 2022)
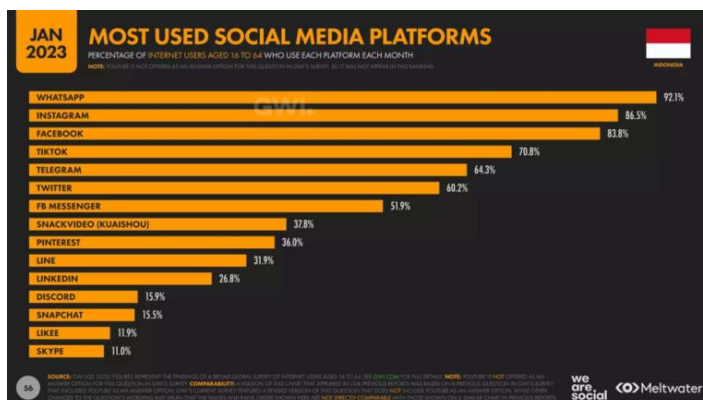
Figure 1. Most used social media platforms
Source: Hootsuite (We are social) 2023

With the increasing number of social media users, travel influencers have become a popular job choice for Millennials and Gen Z. These influencers share fascinating content related to their travel and destinations, which they upload to their personal social media accounts. By creating interesting content, they can attract a large number of viewers and increase engagement.

"The most crucial aspect of attracting visitors to a destination is ensuring its safety. People are more likely to visit a destination that is safe and secure. Additionally, affordability is another factor that influences Indonesians to visit a place. If a place is affordable, it is more likely to attract visitors. Moreover, fast and easy accessibility is also an influential factor that encourages people to visit a destination." (WL 24th 2023)

Travel influencers use the Instagram and TikTok platforms to connect with their followers and share fascinating travel content. They create inspiring travel stories by utilizing interesting photos and videos.

"Well, I would say nowadays pretty much a lot of news comes from Instagram. Because when you start following the Indonesian pages, let's say Bali travel and all, they will start guiding you in different places around Bali, right? So, pretty much a lot of good influences influence you to go to and visit those places" (AH 24th 2023)

Act as "digital travel guides," they provide insight and recommendations about fascinating destinations, accommodations, food, and activities. Through their visually rich experiences and interactions with followers via comments and personal messages, travel influencers build strong relationships with their audiences. They motivate and inspire their followers to follow in their footsteps and visit the same places.

Content Shared on Social Media Generates Travel Envy and FOMO

Social media is filled with photos of beautiful destinations, travel recommendations, and interesting experiences. It often triggers feeling of

"travel envy" and "FOMO" among the public. Travel envy towards content shared by photos and stories featuring exotic destination, delicious food, or exciting experience the same things. Sometimes, we feel like we're "missing out on something" if we don't go to the same destination or try a similar experience.

> *"It seems more like FOMO to me. I wonder why there is so much content about Ubud. Perhaps people who post about Ubud don't want to miss out on anything exciting. I'm also confused about what makes Ubud so special. Why does it go so viral among people in South Jakarta? Even my friends from Surabaya have said, "If you go to Bali, go to Ubud, go to Ubud for healing." (VL Oct 16th 2023)*

Travel influencers play crucial role in inspiring us with beautiful images and compelling stories that create dreams and aspirations to visit those places ourselves. They also provide practical recommendation and guidance, making travel planning easier. However, travel envy can lead to FOMO among social media users. This occurs when people see other people's seemingly adventurous and happy lives on social media, leading to feelings of jealousy or the fear of missing out on similar experiences. As a result, it increases curiosity and envy among people who share their travel experiences.

Affects Travel Decision and Tourist Habit

Ubud has gained immense popularity on the internet and social media, making it easier for travelers to gather information and make informed decisions about their trip. With a plethora of online content related to Ubud, potential tourists can access photos, reviews, articles, and recommendations from content creators and previous visitors. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok allow people to visualize the natural beauty, art, and culture of Ubud. Reviews from past visitors also provide valuable insight into their experiences, which can help prospective travelers plan their trips accordingly. Ubud's popularity in cyberspace also enables direct communication between tourists who have visited Ubud.

> *"I believe more in experiences that are shared through visual representations of the natural beauty of Ubud, such as photos or videos, to be more convincing. Ubud has its unique characteristics, which make it a special place to visit. It is an ideal location for meditation and learning about Balinese art and culture, which is still deeply rooted in the local people." (CR Oct 23rd 2023)*

This facilitates a personal exchange of information, recommendations, and suggestions that aid in better planning a trip. As a result, travellers can quickly and efficiently gather all the necessary information and make travel decisions that meet their preferences and expectations.

> *"I often come across them on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. These are usually visually appealing places such as aesthetic cafes and other beautiful*

locations. Have noticed that the content on these platforms has a significant influence on me, and so far what I see on social media matches the reality" (OD Oct 24th, 2023)

Many people planning to visit Ubud find travel influencers to be a great source of inspiration. Influencers share photos, stories, and reviews on various social media platforms, and with their large followings, they hold significant influence over travel decisions. People trust their recommendations and consider them to be a reliable source of information. In addition to providing interesting views of Ubud, travel influencers also offer practical tips, local secrets, and recommendations for the best places to stay, eat, and visit.

"I don't pay attention to the account, but I frequently come across recommendations from influencers that I follow because we have the same preferences. I tend to visit the places they suggest because the information provided is comprehensive and their content is an accurate representation of reality without being overly exaggerated." (AP Oct 25th 2023)

As a result, many people planning to visit Ubud turn to their favorite influencers as a guide to plan their trip. They believe that the influencers experiences will provide an extraordinary travel experience. Consequently, travel influencers have become role models and the primary source of recommendations for those seeking adventurous experiences in Ubud.

Build trust and authentic experience

Ubud offers a unique and refreshing tourist experience, showcasing Bali's artistic and cultural heritage. Visitors can immerse themselves in authentic village life while exploring stunning natural scenery, attending captivating art performances, and learning about well-preserved traditions. Ubud is brimming with extraordinary natural charm, including beautiful terraced rice fields, tropical forest, and rivers that cut through the area. Rich art and culture are also integral to the Ubud experience.

"Ubud is amazing! I've been to Bali many times and Ubud is always my go-to destination. Because if you see the south of Bali has more of a party culture. However, if you're looking to relax and enjoy nature, the central area of Ubud is the perfect place to be. It's surrounded by forests and has a rich cultural heritage, making it a great destination for those who want to explore the heart of Bali." (AH 24th 2023)

Tourist can visit art galleries and museums, as well as enjoy traditional Balinese art performances. The combination of natural beauty, art, culture, and strong traditions makes Ubud a destination that allows tourist to experience Bali in a new and immersive way, making it truly unique and inspiring place.

"Choosing Ubud allows me to escape the city and enjoy a tranquil, authentic Balinese village atmosphere. Additionally, I can engage in activities such as cycling, yoga, and other wellness pursuits. (PR Oct 16th 2023)

Ubud provides a tranquil and authentic Balinese Village atmosphere, allowing visitors to explore the wonders of tropical nature, witness the richness of art and culture, and immerse themselves in the unique local traditions and way life. With this combination, Ubud enables tourists to experience a deeper and more authentic side of the island, away from the hustle and bustle.

F. Conclusion

Based on research findings, the increasing popularity of social media and travel has given rise to a new phenomenon – travel influencers. These influencers share their travel experiences and preferences on social media platforms with visually appealing content that captivates their followers. They have the power to influence a tourist's travel decisions by showcasing destinations they have visited in Ubud, Bali. By sharing their honest personal travel experiences transparently, travel influencers build a relationship of trust with their followers. The abundance of content on social media platforms can cause travel envy and FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) among viewers, which can lead to an increased desire to travel to Ubud.

Research shows that tourist tends to rely on social media reviews and recommendations from travel influencers when planning their trip to Ubud. They are more likely to be interested in content related to accommodation, transportation, and tourist destinations shared by travel influencers they follow. Therefore, travel influencers play a crucial role in influencing the behavior and decision-making process of tourists when visiting Ubud. We suggest that future research delves deeper into the impact of social media and travel influencers on tourist behavior in destinations. Further research should discuss the influence of social media and travel influencers on tourist behavior and habits in destinations.

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