

THE IMPACT OF INDONESIAN FOOD INFLUENCERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING INDONESIAN CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION FOR FOOD CHOICES DURING OVERSEAS TRAVEL

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ABSTRACT

As social media increasingly becomes the primary reference source for culinary information, the role of food influencers has grown more significant in shaping consumer perceptions, preferences, and influencing purchasing decisions—especially in the context of international tourism. This study aims to analyze the impact of Indonesian food influencers on social media in shaping Indonesian consumers' purchase intentions for food choices, particularly when traveling abroad. This research adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing SEM-PLS as the analytical tool to examine the proposed research model. Out of 241 respondents who participated in a mobile-based survey using Google Forms, 225 respondents met the criteria of having been exposed to foreign food review content uploaded by Indonesian food influencers on social media. The findings indicate that influencer expertise and perceived similarity have a significant positive effect on both consumer trust and purchase intention. Interactivity was found to positively influence purchase intention but had no significant effect on trust. Trust plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between expertise and perceived similarity with purchase intention, but not in the relationship between interactivity and purchase intention. These findings highlight the importance of expertise and perceived similarity in building trust toward influencers, as well as the critical role of trust in driving consumers' purchase intentions in the context of international travel. This study contributes new insights into cross-cultural consumer behavior by examining the interplay between same-nationality influencers and consumers within a foreign context, which has been largely overlooked in prior studies. The practical implications of this study can be utilized by stakeholders in the tourism and culinary industries to design promotional strategies based on collaborations with credible food influencers and making them more effective for Indonesian consumers traveling abroad.

Keywords: *Food Influencer, Overseas Travel, Trust, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the global tourism industry, culinary tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing trends. According to Choe & Kim [1], food is a key element considered by travelers when making travel decisions. According to the World Travel Association (WTA) report in 2022, 34% of tourists choose to visit places that are interesting to them in terms of culinary. This is because many tourists want to try food products made from local ingredients and explore new cultures through food around the world [2]. Therefore, several tourist destinations emphasize

culinary activities and create culinary experiences to attract international visitors [3].

Travelers' food choices and preferences are influenced by several factors, including food characteristics (such as composition and nutrition), consumer characteristics (such as genetics, age, gender, and physiological and psychological conditions), and the consumer environment (such as culture, religion, education, price, or convenience) [4], [5]. In addition, tourists' culinary choices and preferences can also be influenced by marketing strategies, one of which is carried out by food influencers [6].

A food influencer or reviewer refers to an individual or group of individuals who provide reviews of food and beverages across various digital platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter/X, and TikTok, and possess significant influence on social media. Food influencers play a major role in shaping consumer behavior, preferences, and food choices, which has become increasingly significant in the digital era [7], [8]. Just like Gen Z nowadays relies on food influencers on social media to find culinary recommendations [9]. Several elements influence the quality of food influencers, including expertise, perceived similarity, and interactivity [10], [11], [12]. The combination of these elements forms a multifactor framework within which food influencers operate, shaping how they create content and how they influence consumer participation, engagement, and purchase intentions in the food and beverage sector [13].

By leveraging social media, food influencers share information about food and beverages as part of advertising campaigns that allow other users to like, share, and comment on the content [14]. Through the published content, influencers provide a visual experience of the promoted food, which can be further leveraged by expanding to an international audience, thereby offering references for culinary tourism abroad.

This study empirically examines a conceptual model focusing on the purchase decisions of Indonesian consumers in the context of international culinary tourism, which are influenced by local food influencers. This study addressing a gap in the literature on influencer marketing by understanding how same-nationality food influencers shape the purchasing intentions of consumers in a cross-cultural setting, a phenomenon that remains underexplored despite the rapid globalization of tourism and the increasing reliance on social media for culinary decision-making. Yet, existing literature predominantly focuses on domestic influencer marketing and the promotion of local food, leaving unanswered questions about when consumers and influencers share the same nationality but operate in an international context.

A quantitative approach was used to investigate the causal relationships between the attribute factors of food influencers, namely expertise, perceived similarity, and interactivity, and consumers' purchase intentions, mediated by trust. The target population of this study consisted of Indonesian consumers who actively use social media and are exposed to food influencer content. The data were

collected through an online questionnaire survey distributed to respondents using a six-point Likert scale. The data obtained will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with a Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) approach. This study is expected to contribute to the fields of digital marketing and consumer behavior, particularly in the context of international culinary tourism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Similarity – Attraction Theory

The Similarity-Attraction Theory, proposed by Byrne [15], [16], explains the tendency of individuals to be attracted to others who share similar characteristics. On social media, people are more likely to follow influencers who resemble them in terms of interests, preferences, and personality traits [17], [18]. According to Levine & Valle (1975) cited [11] mention that perceived similarity has a significant effect on fostering trust, as the solutions suggested by the influencer are seen as more likely to work for the audience due to the perceived alignment between the message source and the audience. This approach enhances emotional attachment toward influencers who appear similar to the audience, which in turn increases purchase intention [10]. One implication from the study by Xu et al. [19] is that similarity in health-related concerns has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention of sustainable food.

2.2 Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory is a widely used concept to explore individual characteristics through three main elements: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. According to Burgoon (1976), Hovland & Weiss (1951), Hovland et al., (1953), McCroskey (1966), and Whitehead (1968) cited [20], early communication literature largely claims that the perceived credibility of a particular source stems from a combination of expertise and trustworthiness. Ohanian (1990) and Petty & Wegener (1998) cited [11], mentions that in general, if a source is perceived as trustworthy, attractive, and considered an expert, it can influence the audience's attitudes and behavior, including purchase intentions [21]. The effectiveness of a message largely depends on the credibility of the message sender; thus, the persuasive power of a celebrity endorser is based on the perceived level of trust and expertise associated with that particular endorser as Erdogan (1999) said cited [22].

2.3 Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratification Theory that proposed by Katz et al 1974 cited [23], [24], is a theory used to understand the motivations behind the use of media in certain studies of new digital media communication. This theory highlights that everyone plays an active role in selecting media based on their specific needs and motivations. The main needs that drive a person to use media include the need for information, entertainment, social interaction, and personal identity. Interactivity, as one form of gratification in social media, allows users to directly engage in two-way communication, such as leaving comments, asking questions, or participating in live sessions [25]. Sokolova and Perez [26] have identified the motivations behind social media use, as the information provided by these platforms is entertaining, easy to process, and shareable.

2.4 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is an individual's conscious plan to buy a product [27]. Martins et al. [28], show that purchase intention is closely related to the likelihood of consumer purchasing behavior, meaning that if consumers have a positive purchase intention, it will encourage actual purchasing behavior. Consumer purchase intention is one of the key elements in marketing concepts, as it can help predict consumer behavior in future product purchases. In today's digital era, where marketing is often conducted through social media influencers, the engagement possessed by influencers can be interpreted as a purchase intention held by their followers [29]. Marketing strategies using influencers are a phenomenon that affects consumer purchase intention, which is closely related to various factors, namely psychological, social, and behavioral factors [30], [31]. In the context of F&B, food-related content provided by influencers on social media is one of the social factors that shape consumer purchase intention [31].

2.5 Expertise

The concept of expertise pertains to how extensively an endorser is perceived to possess adequate knowledge, experience, or skills to promote a product [32]. In the context of marketing, expertise plays a crucial role in shaping the credibility of an influencer, as individuals with a high level of expertise tend to be more trusted by the audience [33]. Specifically, in food and beverages sector, the expertise of a food influencer in

reviewing food can significantly affect consumer attitudes and behaviours. This is supported by previous studies, which state that influencer expertise has a positive effect on purchase intention [34], [35], [36]. Based on these studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Expertise positively affects trust

H2: Expertise positively affects purchase intention

2.6 Perceived Similarity

According to Graves and Elsess (2005) cited [37], perceived similarity is an individual's perception of other individuals who shares similar characteristics, such as demographic background, abilities, lifestyle, personality, and so on. Perceived similarity can influence customer perceptions of trust [38]. Perceived similarity is a crucial factor to consider, because it has a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions [39]. Based on the research findings above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H3: Perceived similarity positively affects trust

H4: Perceived similarity positively affects purchase intention

2.7 Interactivity

Interactivity refers to the ability of influencers to connect social media users as customers to disseminate marketing messages as Kiouis (2002) said cited [12]. Interaction fulfills individuals' social needs and plays an important role in the use of social media, as humans naturally seek social connections, and social media platforms enable users to connect with fellow community members [23]. Interaction among social media users allows them to exchange and obtain diverse information about a particular product or service. Food videos uploaded by food influencers provide users with the opportunity to interact and build social relationships through features such as "Like," "Comment," or "Share." Users can form online friendships with content creators or other members of the virtual community who share a common interest in food videos [40]. This interaction can also strengthen the relationship between customers and product providers, resulting in mutually beneficial exchanges [12]. A study conducted by Liao et al. [41] found that interactive websites or social media platforms can influence consumer purchase intention and that there is a positive relationship between interactivity and trust.

H5: Interactivity positively affects trust

H6: Interactivity positively affects purchase intention

H10: Interactivity positively affects purchase intention mediated by trust

2.8 Trust

According to Giffin (1967) cited [42], trust is defined as the recipient's perception of the information received from a source as honest, sincere, and reliable. Trust is a key factor in influencer marketing, as it directly affects consumers' perceptions of the messages and opinions conveyed, thereby shaping consumer behavior such as loyalty and purchase intention [33], [36], [43], [44]. Previous studies referring to influencer marketing on social media have highlighted the importance of trust which is considered to have a significant positive impact on purchase intention [45], [42]. Therefore, the research hypotheses proposed are as follows:

H7: Trust positively affects purchase intention

H8: Expertise positively affects purchase intention mediated by trust

H9: Perceived similarity positively affects purchase intention mediated by trust

Although prior studies have examined the impact of influencers on consumer behavior, most have focused on domestic settings or influencers from the host destination rather than same-nationality influencers who may exert a unique cultural connection with their audience. This gap raises critical questions regarding how Indonesian food influencers affect consumer trust and purchase intention when Indonesians encounter foreign cuisines. Furthermore, while trust is widely recognized as a key driver of purchase intention, its mediating role between influencer credibility and consumer decision-making in a cross-border context remains underexplored. In addition, this research could contribute theoretically to bridge the research gap. Also, this study offers practical implications for the tourism and culinary industries in designing more effective digital marketing strategies through collaborations with credible and relatable food influencers.

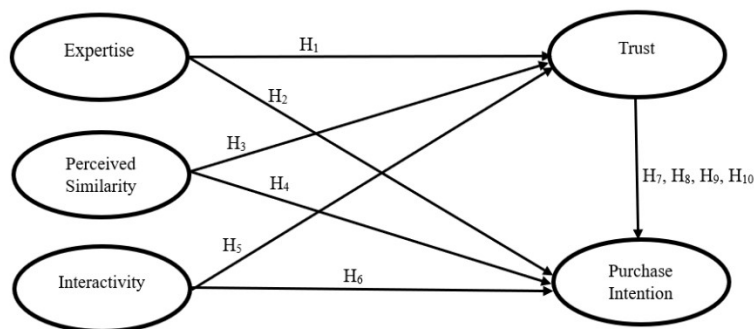


Figure 1: Research Model

collected data was analyzed using statistical software, including SmartPLS, to ensure its validity.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Variable Measurement

Each variable is described through several indicators. The following Table 1 shows every indicator for each variable.

3.2 Data Collection

To collect data for hypothesis testing in this study, a questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms and shared with respondents who had previously been exposed to foreign food review content uploaded by Indonesian food influencers on social media. The dissemination was carried out through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter/X, and others. The

The questionnaire was structured using a Likert scale with 6 intervals (1 – strongly disagree; 6 – strongly agree). This approach was chosen because it enables respondents to answer in a structured and measurable way. The Likert scale serves to assess respondents' attitudes, opinions, and motivations regarding different variables within the questionnaire. The use of six response levels offers more variation, which enhances the sensitivity of the data and leads to more precise results. The choice of using an even number of scale points was also influenced by the need to minimize bias. According to Garland (1991) cited [46], an even scale (6 points) helps reduce social desirability bias by discouraging

respondents from selecting a neutral middle option, to indecision in expressing agreement or which might otherwise limit the depth of the data due disagreement.

Table 1. Variable Measurement

Variable	Item	Indicator	Reference
Expertise	EXP1	Food Influencer knows about the posting very well	Choi & Lee [47]
	EXP2	It is an undeniable fact that Food Influencer is an expert on the posting	
	EXP3	Food Influencer has a lot of experience with his/her vlog topic	
	EXP4	Food Influencer will give viewers information about his/her vlog content	
Interactivity	INT1	I can connect with Food Influencer and other people through food video	Liu et al. [48]
	INT2	I can exchange information with Food Influencer and other people through food video	
	INT3	Food Influencer usually interacts with the audience through food video	
	INT4	Food influencer usually interacts with the audience directly or indirectly through social media	
Perceived Similarity	SIM1	Food Influencer shares my value	Lee & Watkins [49]
	SIM2	Food Influencer has a lot in common with me	
	SIM3	Food Influencer behaves like me	
	SIM4	Food Influencer has thoughts and ideas that are similar to mine	
Trust	TR1	Food Influencer would be sincere every time	Choi & Lee [47]
	TR2	Food Influencer would not either exaggerate or lie	
	TR3	Food Influencer would not pretend to know about what he/she does not know well	
	TR4	Food Influencer would not talk without grounds	
Purchase Intention	PI1	I would like to try the food that have been exposed on the video by Food Influencer	Choi & Lee [47]
	PI2	I would encourage people close to me to buy the food promoted by Food Influencer	Sokolova & Kefi [11]
	PI3	The video by Food Influencer help me make a purchase decision	Choi & Lee [47]
	PI4	I would purchase the food promoted by Food Influencer in the future	Sokolova & Kefi [11]

3.3 Sample

The survey garnered 241 responses, with data cleaning reducing the sample to 225 usable responses. Demographic details are documented in **Table 2**. The demographic composition revealed a

gender distribution of 85.78% women and 14.22% men. Age-wise, the respondents were segmented as 8.00% aged 13-20, 79.11% aged 21-48, 5.33% aged 29-36, and 7.56% aged 37-44. Furthermore, 79.56% of the respondents was domiciled in Jawa, 6.22% domiciled in Bali, 2.22% domiciled in Kalimantan,

1.33% domiciled in Sulawesi, 6.67% domiciled in Sumatera, 2.67% domiciled in Nusa Tenggara, 0.89% domiciled in Maluku, and 0.44% domiciled in Papua. Regarding vocation, 58.67% were students, 31.56% were employees, 8.44% were entrepreneurs, and 1.33% had other vocations. The most widely used social media is Instagram, followed by TikTok, YouTube, Twitter/X, and Facebook.

	TikTok	184	81.78
	Youtube	135	60.00
	Twitter/X	144	64.00
	Facebook	20	8.89

4. RESULTS

4.1 Measurement Model

In this study, the validity and reliability of the constructs were assessed through the development of a measurement model. This model aims to ensure that the items used accurately reflect the intended latent constructs and to guarantee the internal consistency of the research instrument. The measurement model was evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). CFA was used to examine the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales, as well as the construct reliability.

To examine whether there were multicollinearity issues among the constructs in the proposed model, this study utilized the Variable Inflation Factor (VIF) values. Previous studies have shown that this indicator has been widely used in quantitative research to estimate multicollinearity as well as the correlation among construct measurement scales through the measurement model. The multicollinearity is generally not present if the VIF values for all items do not exceed the threshold of 5 [50]. Table 3 shows that all VIF values of the selected measures fall within the acceptable range (< 5), confirming that the tested latent variables are not overlapping and that the collected data are suitable for further analysis [51].

Table 2: Respondent Demographics

Criteria		n	Percentage (%)
Age	13 – 20 Years Old	18	8.00
	21 – 28 Years Old	178	79.11
	29 – 36 Years Old	12	5.33
	37 – 44 Years Old	17	7.56
Gender	Men	32	14.22
	Women	193	85.78
Domicile	Jawa	179	79.56
	Bali	14	6.22
	Kalimantan	5	2.22
	Sulawesi	3	1.33
	Sumatera	15	6.67
	Nusa Tenggara	6	2.67
	Maluku	2	0.89
	Papua	1	0.44
Vocation	Student	132	58.67
	Employees	71	31.56
	Entrepreneur	19	8.44
	Others	3	1.33
Social Media Used	Instagram	204	90.67

Table 3: Multicollinearity Test

Construct	Item	VIF	Construct	Item	VIF
Expertise	EXP1	1.508	Perceived Similarity	SIM1	2.040
	EXP2	1.475		SIM2	2.223
	EXP3	1.364		SIM3	2.435
	EXP4	1.220		SIM4	2.283
Interactivity	INT1	1.390	Trust	TR1	1.920

	INT2	1.434		TR2	2.382
	INT3	1.831		TR3	2.303
	INT4	1.702		TR4	1.796
Purchase Intention	PI1	2.100			
	PI2	1.917			
	PI3	1.654			
	PI4	1.749			

Table 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Expertise	EXP1	0.809	0.714	0.822	0.539
	EXP2	0.784			
	EXP3	0.731			
	EXP4	0.593			
Interactivity	INT1	0.753	0.748	0.840	0.569
	INT2	0.737			
	INT3	0.783			
	INT4	0.742			
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.859	0.837	0.891	0.672
	PI2	0.840			
	PI3	0.770			
	PI4	0.807			
Perceived Similarity	SIM1	0.833	0.876	0.915	0.729
	SIM2	0.864			
	SIM3	0.863			
	SIM4	0.856			
Trust	TR1	0.836	0.861	0.905	0.705
	TR2	0.866			
	TR3	0.846			
	TR4	0.811			

According to [52], an acceptable factor loading value should range between 0.5 and 1. The analysis results indicated that all factor loadings were within the range of 0.593 to 0.866. In addition, convergent validity was assessed by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. It was found that all AVE values were within the recommended range, ranging from 0.539 to 0.729. [52] stated that convergent validity is achieved if the AVE value of

a construct exceeds 0.5. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that the convergent validity test for all constructs was fulfilled.

Discriminant validity was assessed through the measurement model to ensure that the measurement items for each construct were distinct from those of other constructs. This procedure followed the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) method and the approach of Fornell and Larcker (1981) [53]. The HTMT method was used to test discriminant

validity, which aims to determine whether the constructs (latent variables) in the model are truly distinct from one another. HTMT method ensures that each construct in the model measures a different concept and that no overlap occurs between constructs. In its measurement, HTMT compares the average correlations between indicators of different constructs (heterotrait) with the correlations between indicators within the same construct (monotrait). The HTMT assessment criterion uses a threshold, where an HTMT value below 0.90 indicates good discriminant validity [54]. According to Fornell and Larcker, discriminant validity can also be tested by comparing the correlations among constructs with the square root (SQRT) of the AVE values [55]. In general, the analysis results (Table 5) show that all HTMT values are below 0.90, and the square root values of AVE for each construct are greater than the correlations among constructs in the corresponding rows and columns (Table 6). This provides clear evidence that the assumption of discriminant validity has been fulfilled.

Subsequently, a reliability analysis was conducted for each construct. [56] stated that the threshold value for Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7. The statistical analysis presented in Table 4 confirms that all values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability exceed the 0.7 threshold, with Cronbach's Alpha ranging from 0.714 to 0.876 and Composite Reliability ranging from 0.822 to 0.915. Therefore, the assumption of reliability has been fulfilled.

Table 5: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	HTMT
Interactivity <-> Expertise	0.778
Perceived Similarity <-> Expertise	0.498
Perceived Similarity <-> Interactivity	0.577
Purchase Intention <-> Expertise	0.791
Purchase Intention <-> Interactivity	0.666
Purchase Intention <-> Perceived Similarity	0.626
Trust <-> Expertise	0.650
Trust <-> Interactivity	0.504
Trust <-> Perceived Similarity	0.574

Trust <-> Purchase Intention	0.675
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Table 6: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Const	1	2	3	4	5
1 EXP	0.734				
2 INT	0.573	0.754			
3 SIM	0.402	0.471	0.854		
4 PI	0.622	0.534	0.538	0.820	
5 TR	0.534	0.410	0.501	0.588	0.840

4.2 Structural Model

After confirming that the tested model is valid and reliable, the next step is to conduct structural model testing to test each hypothesis. Chin (1998) cited [57] mentions the key criterion for evaluating the structural model is the coefficient of determination (R-square) of the endogenous latent variables. Based on the R-square indicator (Table 8), this study revealed that 37.5% of food influencer trust can be explained by various exogenous factors displayed in the conceptual model. The conceptual model explains 53.1% of the impact of food influencer trust on purchase intention. The results of the hypothesis testing are attached in Figure 2 and Table 7.

The statistical findings indicate that expertise food influencers have a significant positive effect on trust in food influencers ($\beta = 0.380$, t-value = 5.738, $p < 0.05$) and on the intention to purchase food abroad ($\beta = 0.317$, t-value = 4.327, $p < 0.05$), so H1 and H2 are accepted. Additional statistical results also reveal that perceived similarity between food influencers and Indonesian consumers significantly and positively influences trust ($\beta = 0.330$, t-value = 5.068, $p < 0.05$) as well as the intention to purchase food abroad ($\beta = 0.215$, t-value = 3.883, $p < 0.05$), thus supporting H3 and H4. Hypothesis H5 states that interactivity has a significant effect on trust in food influencers. However, the results of the H5 test do not meet the requirements ($\beta = 0.036$, t-value = 0.506, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, H5 is rejected. On the other hand, Hypothesis H6 states that there is a significant positive effect between food influencer interactivity and purchase intention and the results meet the requirements ($\beta = 0.148$, t-value = 2.463, $p < 0.05$), so H6 is accepted.

Hypothesis H7 proposes a significant positive influence of trust in food influencers on the intention to purchase food abroad. The results indicate a positive direction and a significant effect ($\beta = 0.251$, t-value = 3.627, $p < 0.05$), thereby supporting Hypothesis H7. The mediating role of trust in food

influencers in the positive relationship between food influencer attributes and purchase intention was verified through the testing of indirect effects. Overall, the results presented in Table 7 shows that the indirect effect of expertise on purchase intention is confirmed ($\beta = 0.095$, $t\text{-value} = 3.035$, $p < 0.05$), thereby supporting Hypothesis H8. Other findings also show that the indirect effect of perceived

similarity on purchase intention is supported ($\beta = 0.083$, $t\text{-value} = 2.788$, $p < 0.05$), so H9 is accepted. However, the indirect effect of interactivity on purchase intention is not significant ($\beta = 0.009$, $t\text{-value} = 0.498$, $p > 0.05$), H10 is rejected.

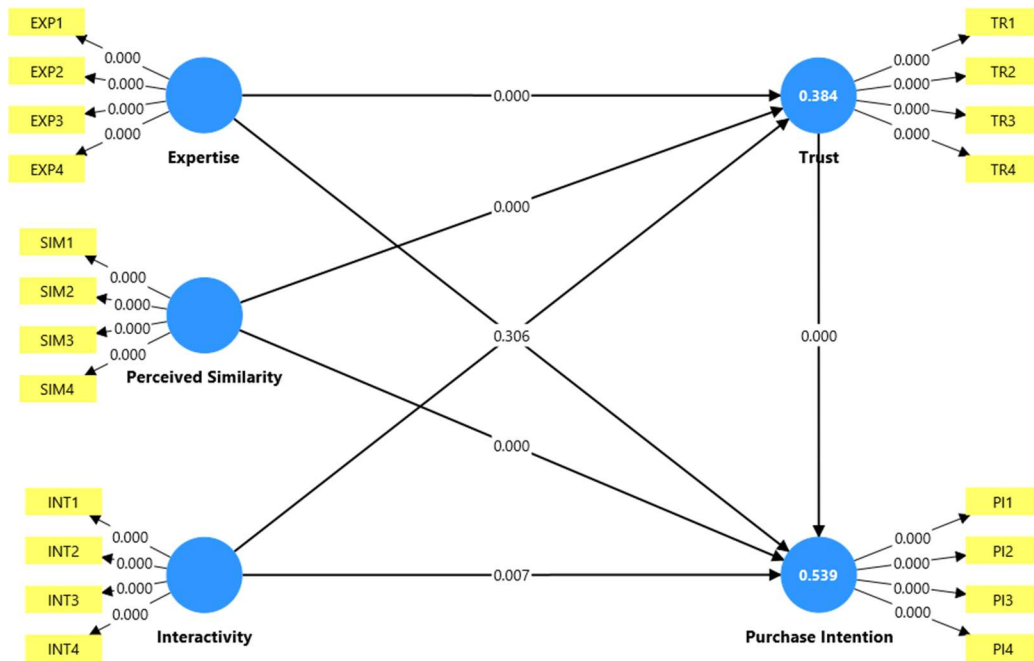


Figure 2: Result of SEM Structural Model Analysis

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Construct	Path Coefficient	t-Value	P-Value	Result
H1	EXP à TR	0.380	5.738	0.000	Accepted
H2	EXP à PI	0.317	4.327	0.000	Accepted
H3	SIM à TR	0.330	5.068	0.000	Accepted
H4	SIM à PI	0.215	3.883	0.000	Accepted
H5	INT à TR	0.036	0.506	0.306	Rejected
H6	INT à PI	0.148	2.463	0.007	Accepted
H7	TR à PI	0.251	3.627	0.000	Accepted
H8	EXP à TR à PI	0.095	3.035	0.001	Accepted
H9	SIM à TR à PI	0.083	2.788	0.003	Accepted
H10	INT à TR à PI	0.009	0.498	0.309	Rejected

Table 8: Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	R-Squared Adjusted
TR	0.375
PI	0.531

5. DISCUSSION

This study focuses on examining the direct and indirect effects of Indonesian food influencers on the purchasing intentions of Indonesian consumers when traveling abroad. Furthermore, the study aims to verify whether trust serves as a mediating factor in the relationship between Indonesian food influencers and the food purchasing intentions of Indonesian consumers overseas.

In building consumer loyalty and purchase intention, trust is essential as it serves as a key factor in influencer-based marketing. This is because influencers can directly influence consumers' perceptions of the messages and opinions they convey [36]; [58]; [44]. The findings of this study validate this notion, showing that trust has a significant and positive effect on consumers' purchase intentions.

The respondents, most of whom are Gen Z, represent a generation that is highly active on social media and tends to use influencer reviews as a reference in decision-making, particularly when it comes to culinary experiences while traveling abroad. The limited availability of information about foreign destinations makes trusted influencer recommendations a primary source in shaping their perceptions and interest in international food. This aligns with the source credibility theory, which states that a trustworthy message source can influence the attitudes and behaviors of the audience, as well as consumer purchase intentions (Ohanian, 1990; Petty and Wegener, 1998 cited [11]; Gunawan and Huarng, 2015 cited [11]).

Studies conducted by [45], [59], and [42] also state that there is a significant positive impact on purchase intention and emphasize the importance of customer trust. This is because consumers who have a high level of trust in food influencers tend to feel more confident about the information conveyed by the influencer, which encourages them to seek more information about the product and increases their likelihood of making a purchase.

In the digital world, consumer responses rely on trust and brand knowledge [12]. [60] reported that online trust plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior. As consumer trust grows, it becomes easier for companies to deliver their

intended marketing messages and create a positive brand image in the minds of consumers [61]. This study demonstrates that trust can mediate the relationship between expertise and perceived similarity with purchase intention.

Following digital trends, including content from food influencers, is something that Gen Z often does today. This generation is characterized by an exploratory lifestyle and consumption patterns, with a strong interest in new experiences, such as trying foreign cuisine while traveling abroad. They tend to be open to recommendations from figures they consider credible and relatable, which in turn increases their trust in the recommendations given. Therefore, they rely on visual content, reviews, and personal experiences shared by influencers they trust to influence their purchasing decisions. This is consistent with the source credibility and similarity-attraction theories, which emphasize that trust, expertise, and similarity can affect consumer behavior and subsequently influence purchase intentions.

However, different results were found where trust was unable to mediate the relationship between interactivity and purchase intention. This is because trust is not automatically formed merely through interactivity. For the younger age group, interactions such as replying to comments or creating responsive content do not necessarily generate trust from consumers. This age group places more importance on the quality of the content and the information provided. Therefore, although interactivity can create closeness between influencers and consumers, it is not strong enough to build trust that ultimately affects purchase intention.

The respondents in this study were dominated by female. As consumers, women are known to adopt a more cautious approach while demonstrating a high level of curiosity toward new experiences, particularly in the context of personal experiences such as culinary tourism. They do not rely solely on appealing visuals but tend to seek detailed, credible, and preference-aligned information, including aspects such as taste, cleanliness, health, and the cultural value of the recommended food. Women are also more sensitive to emotional aspects and narrative experiences conveyed by influencers. Therefore, in building trust, it is not only the visual

presentation that matters but also the depth of content knowledge.

The findings of this study support this tendency, as influencer expertise was found to have a significant influence on both trust and purchase intention. This aligns with [62], who stated that the selection of influencers should be based on competence, knowledge, and expertise, rather than merely on visual appeal. [63] also emphasized that influencers must reinforce their credibility through knowledge while linking emotional elements with their capabilities. This combination strengthens influencer expertise and has a significant impact on consumer awareness and purchase intention. The higher the level of influencer expertise, the greater the tendency of consumers to trust the content delivered. This finding is also supported by the studies of [31], [33], which demonstrated that expertise has a significant and positive affect on trust.

Trust was proven to mediate the relationship between expertise and purchase intention, indicating that consumers are not directly influenced by expertise alone, but also through the trust that is first established. Therefore, in the context of culinary tourism while traveling abroad, influencers who possess expertise and are capable of building trust through informative and authentic content will be more effective in influencing their audience's decisions. This is in line with the findings of [64], which state that the more expertise is shown, the more effectively trust can be built, ultimately leading to increased purchase intention. Therefore, information provided by influencers with expertise makes the audience more likely to trust the recommendations given and increases their purchase intention.

The findings in this study indicate that perceived similarity, both directly and indirectly, influences consumer purchase intention through food influencer trust. This finding is consistent with previous studies [65]; [39]; [66]; [67]; [68]; [69]; [70].

Gen Z, which is the majority of respondents, are characterized as digital natives, individuals who have grown up closely integrated with digital technology in their daily lives. They are accustomed to accessing information and culture from around the world through social media and are highly responsive to content that is personally and emotionally relevant. Gen Z also tends to Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) toward current trends, so they are more easily motivated to follow trends or

behaviors from influencers they like and are similar to them.

Perceived similarity is a factor that facilitates persuasion in marketing. The interest in studies related to perceived similarity in marketing literature is only recent and is mainly introduced in social contexts such as social commerce, brand's microblogging, social servicescape, and social hub. Perceived similarity has been recognized for its ability to increase the effectiveness of marketing communications [10].

Similarity between the source and the recipient of the message (viewers in the case of vlogs) has been recognized to facilitate interpersonal relationships, intensify affective bonds, strengthen relationships, and enable connections and interactions on social media. They can easily share common interests with others who are similar to them, such as in the form of attitudes, values, morals, preferences, tastes in products or services, food, lifestyle, shopping experiences, tourism, and others [10], [71]. This is because, in general, people tend to be attracted to and easily influenced by others who possess characteristics similar to their own [10], [11].

In the context of traveling abroad, perceived similarity is important because Indonesian consumers tend to seek a sense of security and familiarity in a foreign culture. Generally, Indonesian consumers have a preference for food with a distinctive taste and rich in spices, so recommendations from Indonesian food influencers are considered in line with these preferences. This, in turn, increases consumers' confidence and encourages their intention to try such foods while overseas.

People who are considered similar tend to build a sense of trust and attachment. This is because the audience feels that the solution or opinion conveyed is suitable for them due to the similarity, compared to heterophilous sources [10], [11]. Other studies have shown that similarities between bloggers and readers can positively influence blog reader engagement, as well as purchase intentions for recommended products [72]. Therefore, trust and purchase intentions are not formed only by accurate information, but also by a sense of emotional connection.

[73] stated in their research that companies relying on social media platforms to communicate and interact with their customers tend to gain high

levels of trust. With increased consumer trust, this positively influences consumers' purchase intentions toward the food recommended by the food influencer. [12] also reported a significant relationship between interactivity and trust. However, unlike these studies, this research shows that interactivity does not have a significant effect on consumer trust.

The younger generation, who are active consumers of social media content, have high expectations regarding the quality of information they receive, especially related to food recommendations abroad. In the context of food recommendations overseas, interactivity such as replying to comments and conducting Q&A sessions is not enough to build trust. This is because consumers seeking recommendations for food abroad tend to require informative content that can serve as practical reference rather than just interactivity. Therefore, although interactivity can create social closeness, if it is not supported by substance, credibility, and relevant information, it will not affect consumer trust.

The Uses and Gratification theory states that the primary needs driving a person to use media are not only social interaction but also other motivating factors such as the need for information. This is supported by [12]'s research, which states that informativeness has an influence on trust. This is because consumers prioritize the information in the content that can build trust, so interactivity does not affect the level of consumer trust [40].

Unlike previous findings, interactivity has been proven to have a direct effect on purchase intention. This is because interactivity such as replying to comments, live streaming, and conducting Q&A sessions can create closeness and personal engagement with influencers, especially among the younger generation. This engagement can increase confidence and comfort in following recommendations, including in the context of trying new foods while traveling abroad. Therefore, interactivity becomes an important element in the relationship between influencers and their audience, which ultimately can encourage purchase intentions for the food recommended during overseas trips.

According to the Uses and Gratification theory, which highlights the motivations that drive individuals to use social media, one of these motivations is social interaction [25]. [13] also emphasize the role and importance of user interaction on social networks, as it helps increase brand awareness, brand engagement, and customer involvement, ultimately boosting customers' purchase intentions. These findings are consistent

with previous studies conducted by [74] and [12], which state that interactivity can enhance consumers' purchase intentions.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of credibility and similarity in fostering consumer trust and purchase intention [31]; [33]; [39]; [65]; [66]; [67]; [68]; [69]; [70]. However, unlike [74] and [12], reported a significant positive effect of interactivity and can enhance consumers' purchase intentions, this study demonstrates that interactivity does not significantly build trust among Indonesian consumers in the context of overseas culinary choices. This divergence underscores the contextual nature of influencer-consumer relationships, suggesting that Indonesian consumers place greater emphasis on information quality and expertise rather than social interaction when evaluating food recommendations abroad. Accordingly, this study contributes novel insights by positioning interactivity as a driver of purchase intention but not necessarily of trust, thereby refining existing theoretical perspectives in influencer marketing.

6. CONCLUSION

The digital era and the significant growth of social media have led to the emergence of various types of online celebrities, such as bloggers, vloggers, and influencers. This study focuses on testing the attributes of Indonesian food influencers on food purchase intentions when traveling abroad on social media. Testing is carried out on the mediation effect of trust to determine the relationship between food influencer attributes and purchase intentions.

The results of the study indicate that social media is an important channel in shaping consumer purchase intentions for food abroad, through the active role of food influencers. The attributes of food influencers examined in this study include expertise, perceived similarity, and interactivity. Among these three attributes, expertise and perceived similarity were identified as the most influential in affecting consumers' purchase intention, both directly and indirectly. On the other hand, interactivity was found to have a direct effect on purchase intention, but not on trust.

The insignificant effect of interactivity on trust is likely due to the interaction that occurs, through features such as "Like", "Comment", or "Share", does not reflect the formation of genuine social relationship between food influencers and the audience. This shows that although interactivity can

drive engagement, this attribute is not sufficient enough to build deep audience trust in food influencers.

In conclusion, the findings confirm the initial hypotheses and address the research problem by demonstrating that the expertise and perceived similarity of influencers' attributes are more decisive than interactivity in building trust. This evidence highlights that expertise and perceived similarity attributes are critical drivers of trust formation, which in turn significantly shape purchase intentions. These findings also provide insight into social media-based culinary promotion strategies, particularly in cross-country or international contexts.

7. IMPLICATION

These findings offer important implications for business practitioners, particularly in the international tourism and culinary sectors. Collaborating with food influencers who possess expertise and share similar characteristics with their audience (similarity) can serve as an effective strategy to build trust and enhance consumers' purchase intentions toward food products abroad, especially among Gen Z. Each generation has distinct characteristics in how they consume information and make decisions. Gen Z, being highly familiar with technology, is capable of filtering and selecting the information they choose to receive. This is supported by the high level of digital literacy and the ease of access to various sources through technology and social media. Gen Z also tends to be critical of overt advertising and is more responsive to content that is perceived as authentic, educational, and relevant to their values and lifestyle. Therefore, when selecting marketing media that involve influencers as a communication strategy, it is essential to consider the characteristics of the target consumers. For Gen Z, marketing is not sufficiently effective if it relies solely on the number of followers or engagement rates; it must also consider the audience's perception of the influencer's expertise and the alignment of values or background.

These findings also offer a strategic opportunity for international businesses seeking to enter the Indonesian market. Before full-scale market penetration, they may conduct market testing

by introducing their products or services through collaborations with credible local influencers who are relevant to the target segment. This strategy is not only more cost-effective compared to large-scale marketing campaigns, but it also enables the collection of consumer feedback more organically, fosters initial trust, and allows the marketing approach to be adjusted according to local cultural preferences. Thus, a locally based influencer approach can serve as an effective bridge to reach Indonesian consumers, particularly in the culinary tourism category.

Although interactivity is not mediated by trust, it still needs to be considered as it has a direct influence on purchase intention. Therefore, brands and businesses should encourage influencers to remain active and responsive to their audience as part of a digital communication strategy. In addition, building trust is also a key element in directing the positive influence of influencers on consumer decision-making, which can be achieved through consistency, credibility, and the quality of content shared by influencers on social media platforms.

These findings also provide strategic insights for food influencers to continuously develop their knowledge and understanding of the products or sectors they promote, thus, they are able to show their expertise. In addition, influencers can show attitudes and similar values (cultural values, personal values, and moral values) that align with their target audience in order to foster mutual connection [10] and strengthen trust. Interaction also serves as an important indicator in building stronger relationships with the audience, which will affect consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, to enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies, food influencers need to improve their expertise and establish closeness through similar characteristics while maintaining consistent interaction with their audience.

8. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the analysis of this study, this study still has certain limitations. However, future research may address these limitations. First, the focus of this is limited to Indonesian consumers who are exposed to Indonesian Food Influencers, thereby not considering the potential influence of foreign food

influencers, particularly those from the destination countries. In practice, Indonesian consumers who travel abroad often rely on recommendations from local influencers in those countries. This would enrich crosscultural comparisons, enhancing the study's analytical depth. Additionally, the narrow focus of this study on the food and beverage (F&B) sector may limit the applicability of its findings to a broader range of industries. Future research could expand the scope by including sectors such as fashion and skincare, thereby enhancing the relevance and practical utility of the findings across various industries.

Furthermore, this study was conducted within the context of Indonesia, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other countries. Future research is encouraged to expand the geographical scope by exploring both developing and developed countries. Each country has its own cultural characteristics and food preferences, which may influence consumer behavior differently. Therefore, in future research is recommended to consider cross-cultural effects by including influencers from destination countries and broaden the research context to other countries to gain deeper insights into global consumer behavior.

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