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1 message

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Dear Mr./Ms. Sienny Thio:

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Kind regards,

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The Impact of Social Media Influencer on Attitude towards Local food and Behavioral Intention: A Study on Foreign Tourists Visiting Bali

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has completely changed the way people interact and communicate. This study examines the role of social media influencer in shaping foreign tourists' attitude toward local food and their behavioral intention, with the mediating role of foreign tourists' attitudes towards local food. Self-administered questionnaires surveys with 201 international tourist visiting Bali were collected between July and August 2023. The PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 4.0 was utilized to examine the proposed causal relationships among social media influencer, attitude towards local food, and behavioral intention. The results reveal a positive and significant influence of social media influencer and attitude towards local food on behavioral intention of foreign visitors. However, social media influencer was found to be insignificant in forming tourists' attitude. Attitude towards local food did not mediate the relationship of social media influencer and behavioral intention. This study provides insights into destination marketing efforts to attract more visitors and promote a destination by optimizing influencers of social media.

KEYWORDS

Social media influencer
Attitude towards food
Behavioral intention
Foreign tourists

INTRODUCTION

Food tourism has been growing over recent decades (Ellis et al, 2018) and plays an important factor in shaping the overall tourists' experiences (Almeida and Garrod, 2017). It becomes an essential element of tourism attraction when visiting a destination (Tsai and Wang, 2017) and provides opportunities for visitors to explore various kinds of food in a destination (Wijaya et al., 2017) and to form visitors' decision-making behaviors (Prayag et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to understand travelers' attitudes and behaviors when they consume food in a particular destination (Cheng and Huang, 2015).

Social media is deemed to be the fastest growing communication technology including in tourism marketing (Kang and Schuett, 2013). The popularity of social media has driven the emergence of social media influencers (Dedeoglu et al., 2020) and formed tourist attitudes (Lim et al., 2017). Social

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media influencers are individuals who regularly interact and have many followers on social media (Zorlu & Canda, 202). Social media influencers will share their experiences and stories through photos, captions, and vlogs which are interesting in public attention (Abdullah et al., 2022). Social media influencers who have popularity, many followers, and have interesting content can become a successful key in creating trends and influencing interest and shaping the mindset of tourists in decision making (Jin, et al, 2019).

The study from Handayani et al. (2021) highlighted that the use of social media can contribute to Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Social media offers the opportunity to watch the activities and experiences of others which can trigger anxiety or fear of missing out on interesting or important experiences. With this, individuals who have a high level of FOMO tend to do “foodstagramming”, which is uploading food photos to social media. This activity is carried out with the motivation to actively engage in social activities and share the food experiences. By sharing food photos on social media, it is expected that someone will get recognition and validation from others for their culinary experience. Thus, social media influencers have played an important role for travelers when choosing and determining their culinary tourism destination and can be employed as an effective marketing tool to promote the destination (Soltani et al., 2021).

Although the study of food tourism and social media have been conducted, not much has particularly focused on the role of social media influencers relating to foreign tourists' attitude towards local food and their behavioral intention. Even though social media influencers are considered to be essential in shaping travelers' behavior, it has not received enough academic attention (Canovi and Pucciarelli, 2019). Thus, it is expected that investigating the determinants underlying travelers' attitudes and behavioral intention would help destination marketers and tourism organization create a better understanding on how to attract international visitors to come and return to a destination. Thus, the purpose of the study is to examine the effect of social media influencers on attitude towards local food and behavioral intention from foreign tourists' perspective. The findings should contribute to existing studies related to food tourism, which examined the relationships among social media influencers, attitude toward local food and behavioral intention. Therefore, it will enrich the body of knowledge related to food tourism in overseas tourist destinations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media influencer

Social media is a platform where someone can share experiences such as photos and videos which can influence other people's perceptions and can be an effective promotional tool when real-time users are sharing travel experiences (Osman et al., 2021). The important factor that influences the success of social media in influencing tourists' behavioral intentions is the presence of social media influencers. Social media influencers have the ability to influence consumer preferences, purchasing decisions, and brand perceptions through various strategies such as product introductions, providing reviews, carrying out promotions, and utilizing the social influence they have through social media platforms (Arora et al., 2019).

Information shared by social media users, including reviews, photos and culinary recommendations, can influence tourists' perceptions about the uniqueness and quality of culinary delights in that destination. According to Nugraha et al., (2018), there are several factors that generally contribute to the influence of social media influencers, namely celebrity appeal, brand suitability, and credibility. Content that attracts attention, the level of trust and authority of the

influencer, social interactions with food content, reputation and branding of the restaurant or food, and conformity with individual values and identity can be important factors for social media influencers in influencing general public interest (Soltani et al., 2021). With this, the influence of social media can also influence tourists' behavioral intentions, such as the desire to try food, visit restaurants that are popular on social media, or share food experiences on these platforms.

Attitudes towards food and behavioral intention

Attitudes towards food refer to the way individuals perceive and feel food, especially food, as well as how perceptions are influenced by consumption values (Hussain et al., 2022). Attitudes towards food is evaluations of the extent to which tourists like or dislike the food (Asmoro and Sondakh, 2021). Thus, it influences purchasing decisions and usage of certain brands. The study from Choe and Kim (2018) explains attitudes towards food as overall evaluations, preferences, emotional responses, and experiences when enjoying local culinary delights in a destination. Attitudes towards food involve several important aspects such as perceptions of quality, taste, authenticity, uniqueness and variety of food which are influenced by experience and information received (Soltani et al., 2021). Apart from that, there are aspects of preference, regarding the type of food, presentation method, and culinary style, which are influenced by culture and individual preferences. In addition, willingness aspects play a significant role in reflecting tourists' desire to explore and consume food. The involvement element also shows the extent to which tourists are involved in searching for, tasting and learning about food through activities such as visiting markets or culinary tours (Soltani et al., 2021).

Behavioral intention is a person's total cognitive, affective and behavioral attitude towards the adoption, purchase and use of a particular product, service (Dadwal et al., 2020). In the field of tourism, behavioral intention can be defined as an assessment by tourists to revisit a tourist destination (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Satisfaction with the service received is deemed to be an important consideration for tourists when deciding to return to a certain place. Meanwhile, tourists' appreciation for local food will emerge if there is a positive image and strong identity of the tourist attraction (Thio et al., 2021). Therefore, positive experiences and perceptions will create a desire to try local food again. Apart from the need for positive experience and perception, information/recommendations from someone can also increase someone's desire to try local food. According to Soltani et al. (2021) information or recommendations obtained from external parties such as social media influencers, can raise tourists' interest and desire to try local food. This is aligned with the study from Mabkhot (2022) that the existence of social media influencers plays an important role in generating someone's behavioral intentions. Using Social learning theory, the importance of social media influencers is highlighted to drive food tourists' decision-making and behavior as a way to engage with audiences through social media (Dedeoglu et al., 2020)

Bali culinary tourism

Bali is known as the Island of the Gods which is one of the popular holiday destinations for both local and foreign tourists. The name Island of the Gods emerged because of its natural beauty and diverse cultures that complement each other (Soeprapto and Yohana, 2021). With unique customs and culture, the way of life of the Balinese people originates from the teachings of the Hindu religion which is mostly adhered to by the residents of the island of Bali (Suriani dan Ariani, 2020). Apart from its natural beauty and unique culture, culinary tourism in Bali is also one of the considerations for tourists visiting Bali. Bali culinary tourism can make a great contribution to the development of

national culinary delights which can provide enjoyment to tourists who consume culinary tourism while spending time on holiday on the island of Bali (Nadra et al., 2022).

The existence of various types of food, types of cooking ingredients and the unique flavors found in Balinese culinary delights provide a sense of satisfaction and create special memories of culinary tourism in Bali (Sukerti and Marsiti, 2020). Various local specialties, such as snacks of *jaje*, and some traditionally prepared foods such as *lawar*, *babi guling*, *ayam betutu*, *pepes* and *satay* are regarded as the gastronomy of Bali (Nadra et al., 2022). The authenticity and uniqueness of traditional Balinese food is very difficult to find in other places and is very unique because of the secret of the island's cuisine, along with the preparation of the food itself which is steeped in religious ritual and devout Balinese-Hindu beliefs (Kruger, 2014). With this, Balinese culinary can become a special attraction for tourists because Balinese culinary has the characteristics of a region and becomes a tourist attraction (Nadra et al., 2022).

Social media influencer and behavioral intention

Gupta and Mahajan (2019) who examined the role of micro-influencers on Instagram in influencing behavioral intentions, show that the credibility of the influencers play an important factor to make the content become viral (in this case, viral defined as the act of liking, commenting and also disseminating content from the influencer) which can increase intention to buy. Research conducted by Lim et al., (2017) also show that the presence of social media influencers can have a positive impact on a person's behavioral intentions. This is because people tend to consider social media influencers as role models. The existence of high social interaction between social media influencers and their followers will create social pressure on their followers to stay up to date with existing trends (Gunawan and Huarng, 2015). The results of research conducted by Chatzigeorgiou (2017), show that there is a positive relationship between social media influencers and a person's behavioral intentions when returning to a place. Further, Till et al., (2013) confirm the prior research that the presence of trusted sources of information from social media influencers has a significant positive relationship with a person's behavioral intentions. Based on the previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1: Social media influencer positively affects tourists' behavioral intention.

Social media influencer and attitude towards local food

There is a relationship between social media influencers and attitudes towards local food (Soltani et al., 2021). Through social media platforms, an influencer will share information, reviews, recommendations and interesting visual content about local food with their followers. Of course, this can shape attitudes and influence individual perceptions of local food. Information obtained from trusted sources (such as information from social media influencers) can influence a person's beliefs, opinions and attitudes (Wang et al., 2017). When popular influencers recommend or provide appreciation to local food, this can increase an individual's positive attitude and broaden a person's understanding of local food (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Therefore, social media influencers have an important role in shaping individual attitudes towards local food through influence on social media. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: Social media influencer positively affects tourists' attitude towards local food.

Attitude towards local food and behavioral intention

Soltani et al. (2021) in their research found that there is a significant relationship between attitudes towards local food and behavioral intentions. According to Choe dan Kim (2018), a positive attitude towards a particular food leads to the intention to buy that food and recommend it to others. A customer's feeling of satisfaction and an unforgettable feeling towards a food will direct a person's intention to have a return visit or recommend to others to try the food (Paramita et al., 2021). Several studies have been conducted to show that local food is one of the reasons for someone to revisit a destination. Research conducted by Chi et al., (2013) stated that people who come to Malaysia and feel satisfied with the experience of local food (uniqueness of taste) will lead to customer satisfaction, which will indirectly influence a person's behavioral intentions including the decision to try again. Apart from that, research conducted by Jung et al., (2015) also stated that a person's satisfaction with local food is positively related to a person's behavioral intention to make a return visit. Meanwhile, Crofts (2008) showed that a person's positive perception of satisfaction from local food will evoke unforgettable memories which will give rise to a person's intention to revisit. Hence, the hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H₃: Attitude towards local food positively affects tourists' behavioral intention.

H₄: Attitude towards local food mediates the effect of social media influencer and tourists' behavioral intention

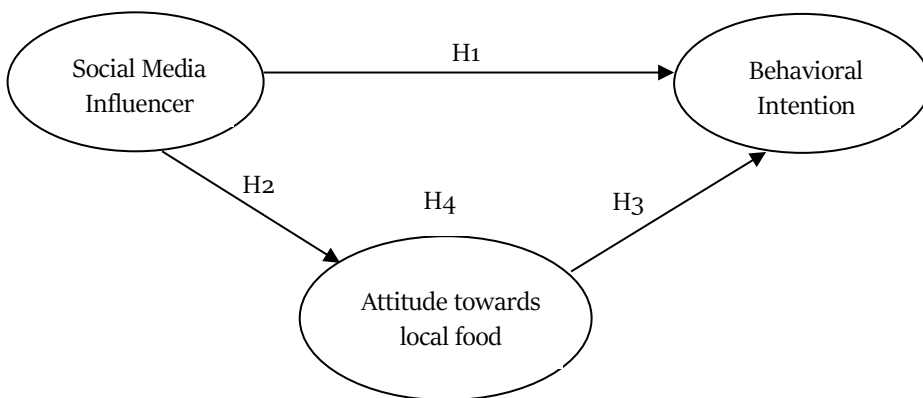


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

The indicators employed to measure social media influencer, attitude towards local food, and behavioral intention were developed from prior studies and modified to fit the context of the study. To measure social media influencer, constructs were adapted from Soltani et al. (2021) to examine foreign tourists' perception in social media influencer in influencing their dining decisions (4 items). For attitude towards food, the items were adapted from Soltani et al. (2021) and Hussain et al. (2022) to investigate foreign tourists' feelings and positive sentiments when consuming food in Bali. While behavioral intention items were derived from Choe and Kim (2018), Soltani et al (2021) and Thio et al (2022) to evaluate foreign tourists' willingness to share and recommend their culinary experiences in Bali to family/relatives, and friends as well as to examine their desire to return to Bali (6 items).

Further, all indicators were measured to indicate the respondents' level of agreement and disagreement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A pilot study with a total of 30 undergraduate students majoring in Hotel Management was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire was modified and distributed onsite to foreign tourists who visited Bali between July and August 2023 with the assistance of two research assistants. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the total of 201 questionnaires were collected from some places in Bali such as restaurants, cafes, malls, airports, rail stations, hotels, and some tourist's spot.

The data collected were then analyzed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method. To test the proposed hypotheses, SmartPLS 4.0, a specialized software for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), was utilized to enable a thorough examination of proposed causal relationships among social media influencer, attitude towards local food, and behavioral intention. The PLS-SEM method was suitable as it predicts the parameters by optimizing the explained variance of the indicators and the assumption of normal sampling distribution is not mandatory (Hair et al., 2019). A significance testing using 5000-subsample method was employed in the process of bootstrapping to support or reject the hypotheses. The PLS-SEM was employed as it has been popular applied in many tourism-and hospitality related studies (Müller et al, 2018) as well as in the field of social science (Henseler, 2017).

RESULTS

Respondents' profile

The respondents of this study were foreign tourists who have travelled to Bali. The majority of respondents were female (62.2%) with the ages of 24 and 30 (34.8%), while 29.4% were between the ages of 31 and 40. Most of the respondents were entrepreneur/business owner (46.3%), students (20.4%), professional (18.4%), and retired/unemployed (11%). European tourists made up 37,8% of the sample, followed by Asian (26.9%), Oceanian (25.4%), and American (7.5%). The sample group was categorized as being educated, noting 72.1% of the respondents had an undergraduate (35.8%) and post-graduate degree (36.3%).

Measurement Model

The convergent validity using factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha were employed to assess the reliability and validity of the construct (Hair et al, 2017). From Table 1, it can be seen that the factor loading of all indicators was over 0.5 (ranging between 0.529 to 0.910). The AVE values were ranging from 0.510 to 0.712 and composite reliability were from 0.814 to 0.953. While the Cronbach's alpha values were ranging from 0.799 to 0.875. The findings have confirmed convergence validity and internal consistency reliability of each construct in the respective cut-off values of AVE (>0.50), CR (> 0.70), and Cronbach's alpha (>0.70) (Hair et al., 2017) indicating measurement fit under evaluation for each construct. The results of internal reliability and convergent validity is presented in Table 1 and Figure 2.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Measure

Measurement item	Loading	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Influencer (SMI)				
SMI1. A social media influencer introduced me to local culinary in Bali.	.895	.712	.953	.875

SMI2. I was encouraged to eat Balinese food by watching photos and videos about Balinese cuisine posted by social media influencer.	.910			
SMI3. I believe in social media influencers who have the experience of eating local culinary in Bali.	.879			
SMI4. Social Media Influencers who travel to Bali are the most useful source of information about local culinary in Bali.	.667			
Attitude Toward Local Food (ATLF)				
ATF1. I like the food in Indonesia.	.853			
ATF2. The food can satisfy my needs.	.714	.625	.814	.799
ATF3. The food is enjoyable.	.808			
ATF4. The food is appetizing.	.781			
Behavioral Intention (BI)				
BI1. I will say positive things about the local culinary to others.	.788			
BI2. I will recommend the local culinary to family/relatives/friends.	.803			
BI3. I am willing to recommend the local culinary when other people ask for suggestion.	.765			
BI4. I would like to revisit Bali to explore diverse local culinary.	.787	.510	.836	.807
BI5. I would like to go to other regions in Indonesia for culinary tourism.	.529			
BI6. plan to return to other regions in Indonesia for culinary tourism.	.558			

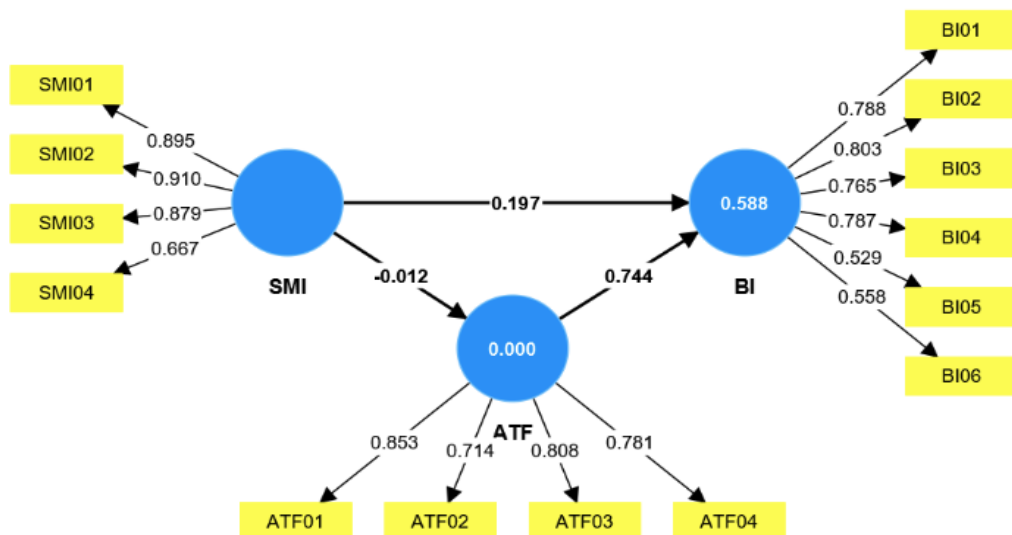


Figure 2. PLS Path Diagram

In this study, discriminant validity was validated by examining the cross-loading matrix for the reflective items. From Table 2, it can be seen that all measurement items load higher on the construct than on any other construct and the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlations between the constructs, indicating a satisfactory level of discriminant validity. Thus, the structural model could be evaluated further.

Tabel 2. Discriminant Validity with Cross Loading

Indicators	SMI	ATF	BI
SMI1	.895	-.035	.194
SMI2	.910	.032	.190
SMI3	.879	-.006	.121
SMI4	.667	-.123	.026
ATF1	.017	.853	.677
ATF2	-.019	.714	.473
ATF3	-.010	.808	.587
ATF4	-.031	.781	.584
BI1	.125	.617	.788
BI2	.111	.631	.803
BI3	.091	.606	.765
BI4	.073	.609	.787
BI5	.239	.301	.529
BI6	.309	.263	.558

Notes: SMI=Social media influencer; ATF=Attitude toward food; BI=Behavioral intention

Structural Equation Modeling Results

After the measurement model was validated, next is to examine the latent constructs in the structural model. The proposed structural model was validated to investigate the causal relationship to test the hypotheses. Hair et al. (2014) suggested assessing the value of R square (R^2), the beta value (β), and the predictive relevance (Q^2) using a bootstrapping method with 5000 resample. The R-square values associated with Attitude towards food (ATF) and behavioral intention (BI) as endogenous variables are 0.000 and 0.588, respectively. The R-square value for the ATF variable is 0.00, indicating that social media influencer does not exert any influence on the attitude toward foods among foreign visitors in Bali. While 58.8 percent of the variance of behavioral intention can be explained by social media influencer and attitude towards local food. Further, according to Henseler et al (2012), the value of predictive relevance (Q^2) higher than 0.25 indicates that exogenous construct has a high predictive accuracy on the endogenous construct. In the current study, the value of Q^2 for the predictive model was 0.588, indicating a substantial predictive relevance of the path model.

As shown in Table 3, two out of four hypotheses were accepted. Figure 3 visualizes the direct and indirect path within the structural model.

Table 3. The results of Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Path				Decision
	Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Value		
H1: SMI → BI	.197	3.195	.001**		Supported
H2: SMI → ATF	-.012	.097	.461		Rejected
H3: ATF → BI	.744	17.778	.000**		Supported
H4: SMI→ATF→BI	-.009	.096	.462		Rejected

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$

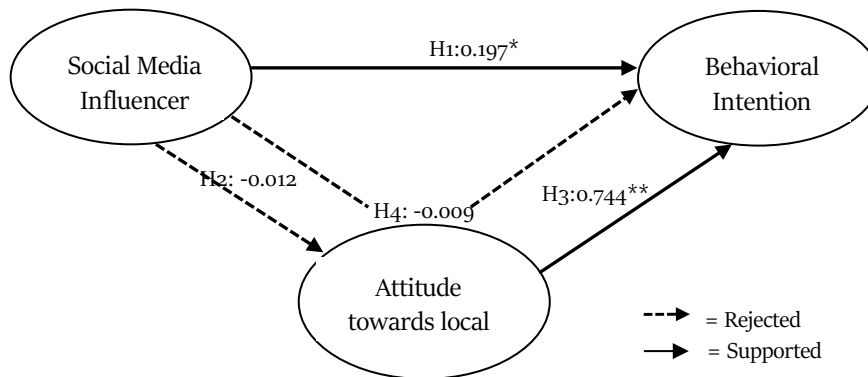


Figure 3. the structural model (n=201)

Hypothesis 1 was tested by examining the path coefficient between "social media influencer" and "behavioral intention" ($\beta = 0.197$, $p < .001$). The result shows that there was a positive and significant effect of social media influencers on foreign tourists' behavioral intention, supporting H1. The trust of foreign tourists on social media influencers was more likely to encourage them to share and recommend the local food they consume to others as well as to drive them return to a destination.

In addition, Hypothesis 2 was tested by examining the path coefficient between "social media influencer" and "attitude towards local food" ($\beta = -0.012$, $p > 0.01$). The result shows that social media influencer was statistically insignificant in shaping attitudes of foreign tourists towards local food, rejecting H2. Attitude of tourists when enjoying food in Bali was not significantly influenced by social media influencer marketing.

Hypothesis 3 was tested by examining the path coefficient between "attitude towards local food" and "behavioral intention" ($\beta = 0.744$, $p < 0.000$). The result reveals that tourists who have positive attitude toward local food in Bali are more positively to return to the destination and create a positive word-of-mouth to others, thereby supporting H3. Foreign visitors who have a positive attitude towards local food and perceive cuisine in Bali as appetizing, enjoyable, as well as satisfying have a tendency to say a positive word-of-mouth regarding their food experiences and to suggest others to visit the destination.

Finally, hypothesis 4 was tested by examining the indirect effect of "social media influencer" on "behavioral intention" ($\beta = -0.009$, $p > 0.01$). The result shows that foreign tourists' attitude towards local food did not mediate the relationship of social media influencer and behavioral intention, thus rejecting H4. Social media influencer has a direct association with tourists' intention to say a positive thing about the local culinary. Tourists' attitudes toward local food was considered to be insignificant to mediate the effect of social media influencer and behavioral intention.

DISCUSSION

The current study develops a conceptual model in the context of local culinary tourism in Bali from foreign visitors' perspective. The research aimed to answer what social media influencer marketing drive attitude of foreign tourists towards local food and their behavioral intention as well as the mediating effect of tourists' attitude towards local food.

Social media influencer has a strong relationship with tourists' behavioral intention. Visitors who were watching photos and videos about Balinese food posted by social media influencer and introduce them to local cuisine are most likely to have a positive image about the destination and willing to share and recommend the destination to others. The findings are consistent with prior studies which indicate that social media influencer plays a significant role in shaping tourists' behavior (Soltani et al., 2012).

The popularity of social media has driven the rise of influencer marketing and used as a strategic tool to boost the selling across various industries (Childers et al., 2019). The food industry relies heavily on visual appeal, thus social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are developing diverse strategies to connect with prospective customers using trusted, authentic, and well-known spokespeople (Mathew, 2018). Research has demonstrated that food images endorsed by social media can lead to an increase in the consumption of foods (Hawkins, et al., 2021). The impact of social media influencer on shaping consumers' purchasing behavior is crucial and surpasses the impact of traditional marketing channels (Masuda et al., 2022). Thus, the use of social media influencers in the context of culinary tourism is highly required to shape tourists' behavioral intention in generating positive word-of-mouth and encourage them to return to a destination.

Social media influencer failed to to impact on tourists' attitude toward local food. The findings is not aligned with the study from Soltani, et al, (2012) and (Lim et al., 2017), who argued that there was a positive and significant relationship between social media influencer or source attractiveness and attitude towards local food. The findings of the study was opposite with the prior studies. This might be due to the respondents who are foreign visitors in Bali have the main aim of enjoying the natural scenery in Bali and not for culinary tourism. Thereby, influencers who posted and promoted food in Bali do not get attention from international visitors. This is supported by Pentina et al. (2013) who said that the impact of marketing differs based on the cultural traits of the consumer. Tourists with various personalities and backgrounds have different perspectives on local cuisine (Santos et al., 2020). Thus, destination marketers need to investigate the variations in marketing impact arising from disparities between cultural backgrounds of influencers and consumers, such as those from Asian, European, and American backgrounds.

Attitude towards local food significantly explain tourists' behavioral intention, so foreign tourists who have a positive attitude towards local food lead their intention to share positive word-of-mouth regarding their food experiences and to return to the destination (Soltani et al, 2012; Thio et al., 2023). The result is consistently consistent with the Theory of Planned behavior (TPB) as well as prior studies which empirically confirmed a closed relationship between attitude and tourists' behavioral intention in the context of food tourism (Choe and Kim, 2018; Hsu et al, 2018; Ting et al, 2019; Mohammad et al, 2022; Hussain et al., 2023). A favorable perception of the destination's local food has a strong association with tourists' intention to try local food and to visit other places within the destination. Overseas visitors who perceived local food in Bali as enjoyable and appealing are most likely to return to the destination for food tourism in the future. This is crucial for food business operators and owners to offer nice and appealing food which will create a memorable dining experience for tourists, it ultimately forms a positive impression and encourages them to return to a food destination.

The lack of mediation by attitude towards local food in the relationship between social media influencers and behavioral intention of foreign tourists could be due to various factors. These might include the influence of other variables such as the appeal of the destination, the overall travel experience, or the specific content shared by influencers. In addition, individual preferences and prior experiences as well as exposure to different types of content may also play a role in shaping tourists' attitude and their behavioral intention. Cultural differences and individual preferences may influence how tourists perceive and respond to the influencer's content, impacting their behavioral intentions independently of their attitude towards local food (Pentina et al., 2013). It is also possible that the impact of social media influencers on behavioral intention is not mainly influenced by attitudes towards local food, but is instead shaped by other factors such as cultural attractions, and the credibility and engagement of the influencer. Furthermore, the influence of social media influencers may be more focused on general travel recommendations and experiences rather than specific attitudes towards local food.

CONCLUSION

This study examined behavioral intention of foreign tourists visiting Bali and its stimulants within the food tourism context, suggesting that social media influencer and foreign tourists' attitude towards local food can explain their behavioral intention. Recognizing the importance of social media influencer and a positive attitude of tourists visiting Bali, the findings indicate that attitude towards local food can encourage tourists to suggest destination-specific food to family/relative/friends and revisit destination for food tourism in the future.

Individual preferences, previous experiences, and exposure to various content types of social media platform may also contribute to shaping tourists' attitude towards food and their behavioral intentions. Cultural differences can also influence how tourists perceive and react to influencer content, affecting their behavioral intention regardless of their attitude towards local food.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

Given the growing popularity of social media, the results of the study provide insights that can help destination marketers optimize their social media marketing strategies using influencers to attract more tourists to visit the destination particularly for international travellers. It is essential to identify social media influencer that can positively influence tourists' attitude and behaviour. Influencers' credibility have been proven to create a greater impact on outcomes (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). Thus, in the context of food tourism, culinary entrepreneurs are highly suggested to optimize influencer to develop more effective social media marketing tactics which fit with their visitors' target. In addition, To boost the number of tourists on culinary tourism in Bali, food business operators and managers should be capable of crafting enticing and delicious dishes complemented by delightful scenery and atmosphere, resulting in an unforgettable dining experience that encourages repeat visits.

For social media marketing practitioners, this study highlights the effectiveness of social media platform such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter to powerfully influence tourists perception toward specific destination. These platforms act as a valuable source of information for destination marketing planning. From the perspective of influencer marketing agency, featuring fun and enjoyable destinations with appetizing food in social media content could be beneficial for boosting traveller attention to try the food. When influencers endorse foods and beverages in a particular destination, it may lead to more effective campaigns. With the substantial volume of

pictures, stories, images posted on social media platform daily, understanding the factors that improve the assessment of these contents holds significant implications for companies, individual users, and influencers. Cultural background and differences should also be taken into account to create and design contents which are suitable and appealing for travellers.

Finally, the findings also have implications for government or tourism regulators. They may need to collaborate with social media influencers to promote tourism and ensure that the content posted aligns with the tourism goals and regulations of the country. Campaigns that capture the country's attractiveness including its culinary tourism should be carried out to encourage foreign visitors to explore and experience the food and the destination.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has two limitations. First, because this study focuses in foreign tourists visiting Bali, its findings may not apply to other destinations within Indonesia. Thus, future research is expected to collect data from international tourists visiting other food destinations in Indonesia such as Surabaya, Malang, Jogjakarta, Solo, Bandung to provide a comprehend understanding and insights regarding the relationships among social media influencer, attitude towards local food and their behavioral intention.

Second, our research did not include moderating effect of cultural background of the visitors as well as their socio-demographic profile (such as gender, ages, educational background) which might be meaningful to optimize the content of the social media to influence attitude and their intention to revisit. It would be interesting for future studies to explore whether cultural background or demographic profile can act as moderating variables to strengthen the relationship between social media influencer and attitude towards local food or between attitude towards local food and behavioral intention.

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2. Bukti konfirmasi review dan hasil review pertama (01 April 2024)



Sienny Thio <sienny@petra.ac.id>

[IJABR] Editor Decision (Revisions)

Fatya Alty Amalia <noreply3@polban.ac.id>

Mon, Apr 1, 2024 at 5:53 PM

To: Sienny Thio <sienny@petra.ac.id>, Yonathan Palumian <ypalumian@yahoo.com>

Dear Mr./Ms. Sienny Thio, Yonathan Palumian,

The manuscript entitled "The Impact of Social Media Influencer on Attitude towards Local food and Behavioral Intention" which you submitted to the International Journal of Applied Business Research has been reviewed. The comments of the reviewer(s) are included at the bottom of this letter.

The reviewer(s) have recommended publication, but also suggested some revisions to your manuscript. Therefore, we invite you to respond to the reviewer(s)' comments and revise your manuscript. **Please use the [this format](#) to respond to the reviewer(s)' comments.**

You will be unable to make your revisions to the originally submitted version of the manuscript. Instead, revise your manuscript using a word processing program and save it on your computer. *Please also highlight the changes to your manuscript within the document by using the track changes mode in MS Word or by using bold or colored text.*

Because we are trying to facilitate timely publication of manuscripts submitted to the International Journal of Applied Business Research, **your revised manuscript should be uploaded before 16th April 2024.** If it is not possible for you to submit your revision in a reasonable amount of time, we may have to consider your paper as a new submission.

Once again, thank you for submitting your manuscript to the International Journal of Applied Business Research and we look forward to receiving your revision.

*Sincerely,
Professor Dwi Suhartanto, Ph.D.
Chief Editor of International Journal of Applied Business Research*

Reviewer A:

The Impact of Social Media Influencer on Attitude towards Local food and Behavioural Intention: A Study on Foreign Tourists Visiting Bali

This is an interesting paper, exploring overseas tourist experience with local food in Bali. Overall, the paper has been well developed. The research problem, method and data analysis has been well developed. However, I have several concerns that the author needs to address.

1. My main concern is related to the issue of theoretical contribution of this study. The literature review does not discuss theoretical basis utilised for this study. Thus, the discussion also lacks information on how this study contribute to the body of knowledge. I would suggest that the authors to select a theoretical Model (TPB, SOR or others), and used it as the theoretical basis of this study. Thus, the discussion on the hypothesis's development has a strong theoretical basis besides the past empirical studies.
2. The finding on the association between sosmed and attitude which is insignificant, I believe is interesting. The author claims "This might be due to the respondents who are foreign visitors in Bali have the main aim of enjoying the natural scenery in Bali and not for culinary tourism". I think this hypothetical explanation need to be developed more, say for instance supporting with references. Additionally, this insignificant might also contribute to our understanding on the theory that will be selected (point 1). The insignificant of mediating test, should also theoretically interesting to discussed in related to the theory/model used.
3. A subsection of 'Local Food' needs to be added (about 2 paragraphs), under the lit review section. This subsection will help the readers to grasp this study context.
4. 3d paragraph of managerial implication, please improve this paragraph into more practical and comprehension for the regulators.

Recommendation: Revisions Required

Reviewer B:

This is an interesting and well written article by the author about consumer loyalty in purchasing fruits through vending machines over other distribution channels.

However, the author has not used a particular theory in discussing the results of his research. The use of a theory will strengthen this article.

In addition, the writer(s) needs to improve the paper because there are many small errors in the manuscript that are annoying, e.g. typing errors, incorrect word cuts.

Paragraph three should be combined with paragraph two. Overall the paper is good. Recommendation: Revisions Required

**3. Bukti konfirmasi submit review pertama,
respon kepada reviewer, dan artikel yang di
resubmit (15 April 2024)**



Sienny Thio <sienny@petra.ac.id>

[IJABR] Editor Decision (Revisions)

Sienny Thio <sienny@petra.ac.id>
To: Fatya Alty Amalia <noreply3@polban.ac.id>
Cc: ypalumian@petra.ac.id

Mon, Apr 15, 2024 at 11:01 PM

Dear Ms. Amalia,

Please find our revised manuscript entitled "The Impact of Social Media Influencer on Attitude towards Local food and Behavioral Intention" in the attachment as well as our response to the reviewers' comments. Our apologies for not being able to upload the manuscript to the IJABR website as it's written "The site can't be reached"

We will retry to upload to the website by tomorrow. We sent the manuscript to you through this email as the deadline is before 16 April 2024. Pls kindly let us know if you have already received this revised manuscript and our responses to the reviewers' comments.

Thank you for your attention and we are looking forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,
Sienny

On Mon, Apr 1, 2024 at 4:53 PM Fatya Alty Amalia <noreply3@polban.ac.id> wrote:
[Quoted text hidden]

2 attachments

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Response to reviewers' comments_IJABR.pdf
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Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for your invitation to revise the manuscript in accordance with the reviewers' comments. Find below, a table listing the issues as well as how they have been dealt with.

Reviewer 1

Comments	Response
1. My main concern is related to the issue of theoretical contribution of this study. The literature review does not discuss theoretical basis utilised for this study. Thus, the discussion also lacks information on how this study contribute to the body of knowledge. I would suggest that the authors to select a theoretical Model (TPB, SOR or others), and used it as the theoretical basis of this study. Thus, the discussion on the hypothesis's development has a strong theoretical basis besides the past empirical studies.	We added the theoretical basis of the study in the literature review section --> page 3-4
2. The finding on the association between sosmed and attitude which is insignificant, I believe is interesting. The author claims "This might be due to the respondents who are foreign visitors in Bali have the main aim of enjoying the natural scenery in Bali and not for culinary tourism". I think this hypothetical explanation need to be developed more, say for instance supporting with references. Additionally, this insignificant might also contribute to our understanding on the theory that will be selected (point 1). The insignificant of mediating test, should also theoretically interesting to discussed in related to the theory/model used.	We added some explanation and references related to the insignificant association between sosmed and attitude --> Page 10-12
3. A subsection of 'Local Food' needs to be added (about 2 paragraphs), under the lit review section. This subsection will help the readers to grasp this study context.	We added more explanation for a subsection of "Local Food" under the literature review section --> Page 4
4. 3d paragraph of managerial implication, please improve this paragraph into more practical and comprehension for the regulators.	We provide more practical and comprehension of managerial implication for the regulator --> Page 12-13

Reviewer 2

Comments	Response
<p>This is an interesting and well written article by the author about consumer loyalty in purchasing fruits through vending machines over other distribution channels.</p> <p>However, the author has not used a particular theory in discussing the results of his research. The use of a theory will strengthen this article.</p> <p>In addition, the writer(s) needs to improve the paper because there are many small errors in the manuscript that are annoying, e.g. typing errors, incorrect word cuts.</p> <p>Paragraph three should be combined with paragraph two. Overall the paper is good.</p>	<p>it seems the comments are not for this paper as it says " consumer loyalty in purchasing fruits through vending machines over other distribution channels" which is irrelevant with our paper.</p> <p>However, we did the several revision related to typing errors.</p>

Warm regards,

Sienny Thio
Yonathan Palumian



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The Impact of Social Media Influencer on Attitude towards Local food and Behavioral Intention: A Study on Foreign Tourists Visiting Bali

Sienny Thio^{a*}, Yonathan Palumian^b

^{a, b} School of Business and Management, Petra Christian University, Indonesia

Received dd/mm/yyyy; accepted dd/mm/yyyy

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has completely changed the way people interact and communicate. This study examines the role of social media influencer in shaping foreign tourists' attitude towards local food and their behavioral intention, with the mediating role of foreign tourists' attitudes towards local food. Self-administered questionnaires surveys with 201 international tourist visiting Bali were collected between July and August 2023. The PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 4.0 was utilized to examine the proposed causal relationships among social media influencer, attitude towards local food, and behavioral intention. The results reveal a positive and significant influence of social media influencer and attitude towards local food on behavioral intention of foreign visitors. However, social media influencer was found to be insignificant in forming tourists' attitude. Attitude towards local food did not mediate the relationship of social media influencer and behavioral intention. This study provides insights into destination marketing efforts to attract more visitors and promote a destination by optimizing influencers of social media.

KEYWORDS

Social media influencer
Attitude towards food
Behavioral intention
Foreign tourists

INTRODUCTION

Food tourism has been growing over recent decades (Ellis et al, 2018) and plays an important factor in shaping the overall tourists' experiences (Almeida & Garrod, 2017). It becomes an essential element of tourism attraction when visiting a destination (Tsai & Wang, 2017) and provides opportunities for visitors to explore various kinds of food in a destination (Wijaya et al., 2017) and to form visitors' decision-making behaviors (Prayag et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to understand travelers' attitudes and behaviors when they consume food in a particular destination (Cheng & Huang, 2015).

Social media is deemed to be the fastest-growing communication technology including in tourism marketing (Kang & Schuett, 2013). The popularity of social media has driven the emergence of social media influencers (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020) and formed tourist attitudes (Lim et al., 2017). Social media

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*Corresponding Author: sienny@petra.ac.id; doi: 123456789101112

influencers are individuals who regularly interact and have many followers on social media (Zorlu & Candan, 2023). Social media influencers will share their experiences and stories through photos, captions, and vlogs which are interesting in public attention (Abdullah et al., 2022). Social media influencers who have popularity, many followers, and interesting content can become a successful key in creating trends influencing interest and shaping the mindset of tourists in decision-making (Jin et al., 2019).

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The study by Handayani et al. (2021) highlighted that the use of social media can contribute to Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Social media offers the opportunity to watch the activities and experiences of others which can trigger anxiety or fear of missing out on interesting or important experiences. With this, individuals who have a high level of FOMO tend to do "foodstagramming", which is uploading food photos to social media. This activity is carried out with the motivation to actively engage in social activities and share food experiences. By sharing food photos on social media, it is expected that someone will get recognition and validation from others for their culinary experience. Thus, social media influencers have played an important role for travelers when choosing and determining their culinary tourism destination and can be employed as an effective marketing tool to promote the destination (Soltani et al., 2021).

Although the study of food tourism and social media has been conducted, not much has particularly focused on the role of social media influencers relating to foreign tourists' attitudes towards local food and their behavioral intention. Even though social media influencers are considered to be essential in shaping travelers' behavior, it has not received enough academic attention (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019). Thus, it is expected that investigating the determinants underlying travelers' attitudes and behavioral intention would help destination marketers and tourism organization create a better understanding of how to attract international visitors to come and return to a destination. Thus, the purpose of the study is to examine the effect of social media influencers on attitudes towards local food and behavioral intention from foreign tourists' perspective. The findings should contribute to existing studies relating to food tourism, which examine the relationships among social media influencers, attitudes toward local food and behavioral intention. Therefore, it will enrich the body of knowledge relating to food tourism in overseas tourist destinations.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media influencer

Social media is a platform where someone can share experiences such as photos and videos which can influence other people's perceptions and can be an effective promotional tool when real-time users are sharing travel experiences (Osman et al., 2021). The important factor for the success of social media in influencing tourists' behavioral intention is the presence of social media influencers. Social media influencers can influence consumer preferences, purchasing decisions, and brand perceptions through various strategies such as product introductions, providing reviews, carrying out promotions, and utilizing the social influence they have through social media platforms (Arora, Bansal, Kandpal, Aswani, & Dwivedi, 2019).

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Information shared by social media users, including reviews, photos and culinary recommendations, can influence tourists' perceptions about the uniqueness and quality of culinary delights in that destination. According to Nugraha et al., (2018), several factors generally contribute to the influence of social media influencers, namely celebrity appeal, brand suitability, and credibility. Content that attracts attention, the level of trust and authority of the influencer, social interactions

with food content, reputation and branding of the restaurant or food, and conformity with individual values and identity can be important factors for social media influencers in influencing general public interest (Soltani et al., 2021). With this, the influence of social media can also influence tourists' behavioral intention, such as the desire to try the food, visit restaurants that are popular on social media or share food experiences on these platforms.

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Attitudes towards food and behavioral intention

Attitudes towards food refer to the way individuals perceive and feel food, especially food, as well as how perceptions are influenced by consumption values (Hussain et al., 2022). Attitudes towards food are evaluations of the extent to which tourists like or dislike the food (Asmoro & Sondakh, 2021). Thus, it influences purchasing decisions and usage of certain brands. The study from Choe and Kim (2018) explains attitudes towards food as overall evaluations, preferences, emotional responses, and experiences when enjoying local culinary delights in a destination. Attitudes towards food involve several important aspects such as perceptions of quality, taste, authenticity, uniqueness and variety of food which are influenced by experience and information received (Soltani et al., 2021). Apart from that, there are aspects of preference, regarding the type of food, presentation method, and culinary style, which are influenced by culture and individual preferences. In addition, willingness aspects play a significant role in reflecting tourists' desire to explore and consume food. The involvement element also shows the extent to which tourists are involved in searching for, tasting and learning about food through activities such as visiting markets or culinary tours (Soltani et al., 2021).

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Behavioral intention is a person's total cognitive, affective and behavioral attitude towards the adoption, purchase and use of a particular product, or service (Dadwal et al., 2020). In the field of tourism, behavioral intention can be defined as an assessment by tourists to revisit a tourist destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Satisfaction with the service received is deemed to be an important consideration for tourists when deciding to return to a certain place. Meanwhile, tourists' appreciation for local food will emerge if there is a positive image and strong identity of the tourist attraction (Thio et al., 2022). Therefore, positive encounters, and impressions will lead to a willingness to try local food and return to the destination. Apart from the need for positive experience and perception, information/recommendations from someone can also increase someone's desire to consume local food. According to Soltani et al. (2021) information or recommendations obtained from external parties such as social media influencers, can raise tourists' interest and desire to try local food. This is aligned with the study from Mabkhot, Isa and Mabkhot (2022) that the existence of social media influencers plays an important role in generating someone's behavioral intention.

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In this study, we adopt social learning theory (SLT) to predict tourists' behavioral intention in the context of food tourism, examining the influence of social media influencers in forming tourists' attitude towards local food and behaviors. Using SLT, the importance of social media influencers is highlighted to drive food tourists' decision-making and behaviors as a way to engage with audiences through social media (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). Behavior is learned by observing the surrounding environment. Individuals frequently exhibit similar behaviors to others in order to achieve desirable results (Bandura, 1977). Bandura emphasizes the importance of observing, imitating, and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Consumers' attitudes and behaviors are shaped and strengthened by their social circle, including their friends. When individuals witness favorable outcomes resulting from the behaviors of their friends and family, they are inclined to adopt similar behaviors (Webb & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2014) and increase their self-esteem (Stets &

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Burke, 2000). The involvement of social media influencers (SMIs) in destination marketing efforts has the potential to influence the attitudes, behaviors, and intentions of food tourists (Lim et al., 2017) as well as the destination's food image (Xu & Pratt, 2018).

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Local food

Local food can be viewed as a significant characteristic of a destination that symbolizes the local culture (Choe & Kim, 2019) to create unforgettable tourism experiences (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017). A positive experience of trying local food in a tourist destination is likely to influence tourists' future intentions, such as returning to the country or making positive recommendations about the local food to others (Kim, Choe & Kim, 2022). Authentic and intriguing local cuisine has the power to sway a tourist's decision when selecting their holiday destination (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010).

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In the context of food tourism, consuming local food while traveling abroad is a way to immerse oneself in the culture of the destination country (Kim et al., 2013). The distinctiveness of local food in a particular destination is especially intriguing, considering the unique ingredients and culinary techniques, which could potentially influence a tourist's decision to visit or revisit the destination (Ting et al., 2019). As highlighted by Mak et al., (2012) that food has the ability to elevate a destination's reputation as it embodies and communicates personal, national, regional, and local identities.

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Bali culinary tourism

Bali is known as the Island of the Gods which is one of the popular holiday destinations for both local and foreign tourists. The name Island of the Gods emerged because of its natural beauty and diverse cultures that complement each other (Soeprapto & Yohana, 2021). With unique customs and culture, the way of life of the Balinese people originates from the teachings of the Hindu religion which is mostly adhered to by the residents of the island of Bali (Suriani & Ariani, 2020). Apart from its natural beauty and unique culture, culinary tourism in Bali is also one of the considerations for tourists visiting Bali. Bali culinary tourism can make a great contribution to the development of national culinary delights which can provide enjoyment to tourists who consume culinary tourism while spending time on holiday on the island of Bali (Nadra et al., 2022).

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The existence of various types of food, types of cooking ingredients and the unique flavors found in Balinese culinary delights provide a sense of satisfaction and create special memories of culinary tourism in Bali (Sukerti & Marsiti, 2020). Various local specialties, such as snacks of *jaje*, and some traditionally prepared foods such as *lawar*, *babi guling*, *ayam betutu*, *pepes* and *satay* are regarded as the gastronomy of Bali (Nadra et al., 2022). The authenticity and uniqueness of traditional Balinese food are very difficult to find in other places and are very unique because of the secret of the island's cuisine, along with the preparation of the food itself which is steeped in religious ritual and devout Balinese-Hindu beliefs (Kruger, 2014). With this, Balinese cuisine can become a special attraction for tourists because Balinese cuisine has the characteristics of a region and becomes a tourist attraction (Nadra et al., 2022).

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Social media influencer and behavioral intention

Gupta and Mahajan (2019) who examined the role of micro-influencers on Instagram in influencing behavioral intention, show that the credibility of the influencers plays an important factor in making the content viral (in this case, viral defined as the act of liking, commenting and also disseminating content from the influencer) which can increase intention to buy. Research conducted by Lim et al., (2017) also shows that the presence of social media influencers can have a positive impact on a

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person's behavioral intention. This is because people tend to consider social media influencers as role models. The existence of high social interaction between social media influencers and their followers will create social pressure on their followers to stay up to date with existing trends (Gunawan & Huarng, 2015). The results of research conducted by Chatzigeorgiou (2017), show that there is a positive relationship between social media influencers and a person's behavioral intention when returning to a place. Further, Till and Busler (2000) confirm the prior research that the presence of trusted sources of information from social media influencers has a significant positive relationship with a person's behavioral intention. Based on the previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed as follows:

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H1: Social media influencer positively affects tourists' behavioral intention.

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Social media influencers and attitude towards local food

There is a relationship between social media influencers and attitudes towards local food (Soltani et al., 2021). Through social media platforms, an influencer will share information, reviews, recommendations and interesting visual content about local food with their followers. This can shape attitudes and influence individual perceptions of local food. Information obtained from trusted sources (such as information from social media influencers) can influence a person's beliefs, opinions and attitudes (Wang, Kao & Ngamsiriudom, 2017). When popular influencers recommend or provide appreciation to local food, this can increase an individual's positive attitude and broaden a person's understanding of local food (Goldsmith, Lafferty & Newell, 2000). Therefore, social media influencers have an important role in shaping individual attitudes towards local food through influence on social media. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed as follows:

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H2: Social media influencer positively affects tourists' attitudes towards local food.

Attitude towards local food and behavioral intention

Soltani et al. (2021) in their research found that there is a significant relationship between attitudes towards local food and behavioral intention. According to Choe and Kim (2018), positive attitude towards a particular food leads to the intention to buy that food and recommend it to others. A customer's feeling of satisfaction and an unforgettable feeling towards food will direct a person's intention to have a return visit or recommend to others to try the food (Paramita, Chairy & Syahrivali, 2021). Several studies have been conducted to show that local food is one of the reasons for an individual to revisit a destination. Research conducted by Chi, Chua, Othman and Karim (2013) stated that people who come to Malaysia and feel satisfied with the experience of local food (uniqueness of taste) will lead to customer satisfaction, which will indirectly influence a person's behavioral intention including the decision to try again. Apart from that, research conducted by Jung, Ineson, Kim and Yap (2015) also stated that a person's satisfaction with local food is positively related to a person's behavioral intention to make a return visit. Meanwhile, Crofts, Pan and Raschid (2008) showed that a person's positive perception of satisfaction from local food will evoke unforgettable memories which will give rise to a person's intention to revisit. Hence, the hypotheses are proposed as follows:

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H3: Attitude towards local food positively affects tourists' behavioral intention.

H4: Attitude towards local food mediates the effect of social media influencer and tourists' behavioral intention

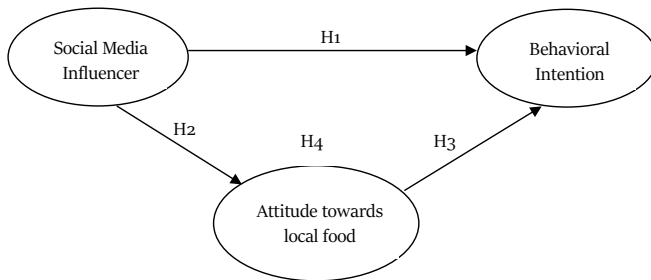


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

The indicators employed to measure social media influencer, attitude towards local food, and behavioral intention were developed from prior studies and modified to fit the context of the study. To measure social media influencer, constructs were adapted from Soltani et al. (2021) to examine foreign tourists' perception of social media influencer in influencing their dining decisions (4 items). For attitude towards food, the items were adapted from Soltani et al. (2021) and Hussain et al. (2022) to investigate foreign tourists' feelings and positive sentiments when consuming food in Bali. While behavioral intention items were derived from Choe and Kim (2018), Soltani et al (2021) and Thio et al. (2022) to evaluate foreign tourists' willingness to share and recommend their culinary experiences in Bali to family/relatives, and friends as well as to examine their desire to return to Bali (6 items). Further, all indicators were measured to indicate the respondents' level of agreement and disagreement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A pilot study with a total of 30 undergraduate students majoring in Hotel Management was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire was modified and distributed onsite to foreign tourists who visited Bali between July and August 2023 with the assistance of two research assistants. Utilizing a quantitative approach, a total of 201 questionnaires were collected from some places in Bali such as restaurants, cafes, malls, airports, rail stations, hotels, and some tourist spots.

The data collected were then analyzed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method. To test the proposed hypotheses, SmartPLS 4.0, specialized software for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), was utilized to enable a thorough examination of proposed causal relationships among social media influencers, attitudes towards local food, and behavioral intention. The PLS-SEM method was suitable as it predicts the parameters by optimizing the explained variance of the indicators and the assumption of normal sampling distribution is not mandatory (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). A significance testing using a 5000-subsample method was employed in the process of bootstrapping to support or reject the hypotheses. The PLS-SEM was employed as it has been popularly applied in many tourism and hospitality-related studies (Müller et al., 2018) as well as in the field of social science (Henseler, 2017).

RESULTS

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Respondents' profile

The respondents of this study were foreign tourists who had travelled to Bali. The majority of respondents were female (62.2%) with the ages of 24 and 30 (34.8%), while 29.4% were between the ages of 31 and 40. Most of the respondents were entrepreneurs/business owners (46.3%), students (20.4%), professionals (18.4%), and retired/unemployed (11%). European tourists were made up 37.8% of the sample, followed by Asians (26.9%), Oceanians (25.4%), and Americans (7.5%). The sample group was categorized as being educated, noting 72.1% of the respondents had an undergraduate (35.8%) and post-graduate degree (36.3%).

Measurement Model

The convergent validity using factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha were employed to assess the reliability and validity of the construct (Hair et al, 2017). In Table 1, it can be seen that the factor loading of all indicators was over 0.5 (ranging between 0.529 to 0.910). The AVE values ranged from 0.510 to 0.712 and composite reliability was from 0.814 to 0.953. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.799 to 0.875. The findings have confirmed convergence validity and internal consistency reliability of each construct in the respective cut-off values of AVE (>0.50), CR (> 0.70), and Cronbach's alpha (>0.70) (Hair et al., 2017) indicating measurement fit under evaluation for each construct. The results of internal reliability and convergent validity are presented in Table 1 and Figure 2.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Measure

Measurement item	Loading	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Influencer (SMI)				
SMI1. A social media influencer introduced me to local culinary in Bali.	.895			
SMI2. I was encouraged to eat Balinese food by watching photos and videos about Balinese cuisine posted by social media influencer.	.910			
SMI3. I believe in social media influencers who have the experience of eating local culinary in Bali.	.879	.712	.953	.875
SMI4. Social Media Influencers who travel to Bali are the most useful source of information about local culinary in Bali.	.667			
Attitude Towards Local Food (ATLF)				
ATF1. I like the food in Indonesia.	.853			
ATF2. The food can satisfy my needs.	.714	.625	.814	.799
ATF3. The food is enjoyable.	.808			
ATF4. The food is appetizing.	.781			
Behavioral Intention (BI)				
BI1. I will say positive things about the local culinary to others.	.788			
BI2. I will recommend the local culinary to family/relatives/friends.	.803	.510	.836	.807
BI3. I am willing to recommend the local culinary when other people ask for suggestion.	.765			

BI4. I would like to revisit Bali to explore diverse local culinary.	.787
BI5. I would like to go to other regions in Indonesia for culinary tourism.	.529
BI6. I plan to return to other regions in Indonesia for culinary tourism.	.558

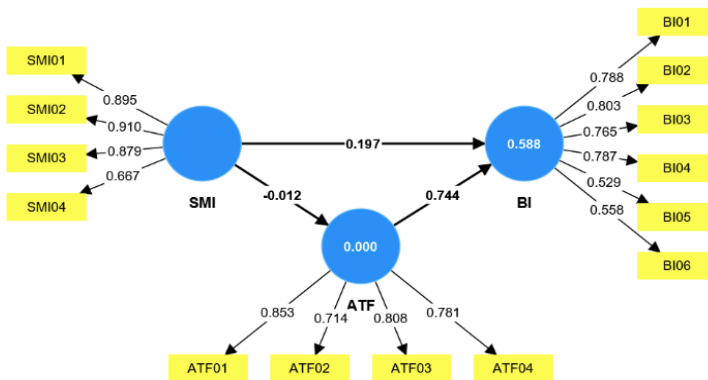


Figure 2. PLS Path Diagram

In this study, discriminant validity was validated by examining the cross-loading matrix for the reflective items. From Table 2, it can be seen that all measurement items load higher on the construct than on any other construct and the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlations between the constructs, indicating a satisfactory level of discriminant validity. Thus, the structural model could be evaluated further.

Tabel 2. Discriminant Validity with Cross Loading

Indicators	SMI	ATF	BI
SMI1	.895	-.035	.194
SMI2	.910	.032	.190
SMI3	.879	-.006	.121
SML4	.667	-.123	.026
ATF1	.017	.853	.677
ATF2	-.019	.714	.473
ATF3	-.010	.808	.587
ATF4	-.031	.781	.584
BI1	.125	.617	.788
BI2	.111	.631	.803

BI3	.091	.606	.765
BI4	.073	.609	.787
BI5	.239	.301	.529
BI6	.309	.263	.558

Notes: SMI=Social media influencer; ATF=Attitude towards food; BI=Behavioral intention

Structural Equation Modeling Results

After the measurement model was validated, the next step was to examine the latent constructs in the structural model. The proposed structural model was validated to investigate the causal relationship to test the hypotheses. Hair et al. (2014) suggested assessing the value of R square (R²), the beta value (β), and the predictive relevance (Q²) using a bootstrapping method with 5000 resamples. The R-square values associated with Attitude towards food (ATF) and behavioral intention (BI) as endogenous variables are 0.000 and 0.588, respectively. The R-square value for the ATF variable is 0.00, indicating that social media influencers do not exert any influence on the attitude towards foods among foreign visitors in Bali. While 58.8 percent of the variance of behavioral intention can be explained by social media influencers and attitudes towards local food. Further, according to Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2012), the value of predictive relevance (Q²) higher than 0.25 indicates that the exogenous construct has high predictive accuracy on the endogenous construct. In the current study, the value of Q² for the predictive model was 0.588, indicating a substantial predictive relevance of the path model.

As shown in Table 3, two out of four hypotheses were accepted. Figure 3 visualizes the direct and indirect path within the structural model.

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Table 3. The results of Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Value	Decision
H1: SMI → BI	.197	3.195	.001**	Supported
H2: SMI → ATF	-.012	.097	.461	Rejected
H3: ATF → BI	.744	17.778	.000**	Supported
H4: SMI → ATF → BI	-.009	.096	.462	Rejected

Notes: **p<0.01

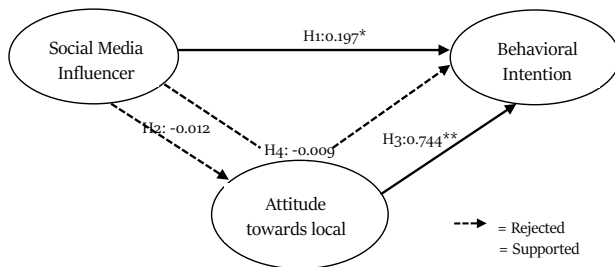




Figure 3. the structural model (n=201)

Hypothesis 1 was tested by examining the path coefficient between "social media influencer" and "behavioral intention" ($\beta=0.197, p < .001$). The result shows that there was a positive and significant effect of social media influencers on foreign tourists' behavioral intention, supporting H1. The trust of foreign tourists on social media influencers was more likely to encourage them to share and recommend the local food they consume to others as well as to drive them to return to a destination.

In addition, Hypothesis 2 was tested by examining the path coefficient between "social media influencer" and "attitude towards local food" ($\beta=-0.012, p>0.01$). The result shows that social media influencer was statistically insignificant in shaping attitudes of foreign tourists towards local food, rejecting H2. The attitude of tourists when enjoying food in Bali was not significantly influenced by social media influencer marketing.

Hypothesis 3 was tested by examining the path coefficient between "attitude towards local food" and "behavioral intention" ($\beta=0.744, p<0.000$). The result reveals that tourists who have a positive attitude towards local food in Bali are more positively to return to the destination and create a positive word-of-mouth to others, thereby supporting H3. Foreign visitors who have a positive attitude towards local food and perceive cuisine in Bali as appetizing, enjoyable, as well as satisfying tend to say positive word-of-mouth regarding their food experiences and to suggest others to visit the destination.

Finally, hypothesis 4 was tested by examining the indirect effect of "social media influencer" on "behavioral intention" ($\beta=-0.009, p>0.01$). The result shows that foreign tourists' attitude towards local food did not mediate the relationship between social media influencers and behavioral intention, thus rejecting H4. Social media influencer has a direct association with tourists' intention to say a positive thing about the local cuisine. Tourists' attitudes towards local food was considered to be insignificant mediating the effect of social media influencers and behavioral intention.

DISCUSSION

The current study develops a conceptual model in the context of local culinary tourism in Bali from a foreign visitors' perspective. The research aimed to answer what social media influencer marketing drive the attitude of foreign tourists towards local food and their behavioral intention as well as the mediating effect of tourists' attitudes towards local food.

Social media influencer has a strong relationship with tourists' behavioral intention. Visitors who watch photos and videos about Balinese food posted by social media influencers and introduce to local cuisine are most likely to have a positive image of the destination and are willing to share and recommend the destination to others. The findings are consistent with prior studies which indicate that social media influencer plays a significant role in shaping tourists' behavior (Soltani et al., 2012).

This shows that SMI can increase awareness and interest among their followers, leading to a potential increase in visit and revisit intention of travelers. The finding of the study contribute the concept of SLT from the perspective of consumer behaviors that consumers' attitude and behavior are influenced and strengthened by their social circle. In the food tourism context, when travelers watch social media of their friend, relatives/family posting their dining experiences during their trips, they will imitate and exhibit the similar behavior ((Webb & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2014). The ability of their social circle to inspire, engage, and create a sense of trust and authenticity, ultimately influencing their followers' travel decisions.

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The popularity of social media has driven the rise of influencer marketing and used as a strategic tool to boost the selling across various industries (Childers, Lemon, & Hoy, 2019). The food industry relies heavily on visual appeal, thus social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are developing diverse strategies to connect with prospective customers using trusted, authentic, and well-known spokespeople (Mathew, 2018). Research has demonstrated that food images endorsed by social media can lead to an increase in the consumption of foods (Hawkins, et al., 2021). The impact of social media influencers on shaping consumers' purchasing behavior is crucial and surpasses the impact of traditional marketing channels (Masuda, Han, & Lee, 2022). Thus, the use of social media influencers in the context of culinary tourism is highly required to shape tourists' behavioral intention, in generating positive word-of-mouth and encourage them to return to a destination.

Social media influencers failed to impact tourists' attitudes towards local food. The findings is not aligned with the study from Soltani, et al. (2012) and Lim et al. (2017), who argued that there was a positive and significant relationship between social media influencers or source attractiveness and attitude towards local food. The findings of the study were opposite with the prior studies. This might be due to the respondents who are foreign visitors to Bali have the main aim of enjoying the natural scenery in Bali and not for culinary tourism. Thereby, influencers who post and promote food in Bali do not get attention from international visitors. ~~This insignificant might also contribute to our understanding on the theory of SLT that the influencers' content does not effectively convey the appeal of local cuisine in Bali, or that tourists are not receptive to the messages delivered by the influencers. Furthermore, tourists may have had preconceived notions about local food that were not easily swayed by influencer marketing. Additionally, the genuineness and trustworthiness of the influencers may have been doubted, resulting in a diminished ability to shape tourists' attitudes. Furthermore, the impact of marketing differs based on the cultural traits of the consumer (Pentina, Zhang & Basmanova, 2013).~~ Tourists with various personalities and backgrounds have different perspectives on local cuisine (Santos, Santos, Pereira, Richards, & Caiado, 2020). Thus, destination marketers need to investigate the variations in marketing impact arising from disparities between the cultural backgrounds of influencers and consumers, such as those from Asian, European, and American backgrounds.

Attitudes towards local food significantly explain tourists' behavioral intention, so foreign tourists who have a positive attitude towards local food lead their intention to share positive word-of-mouth regarding their food experiences and to return to the destination (Soltani et al., 2012; Thio et al., 2022). The result supports the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as well as prior studies which empirically confirmed a close relationship between attitude and tourists' behavioral intention in the context of food tourism (Choe & Kim, 2018; Hsu et al., 2018; Ting et al., 2016; Hussain et al., 2023). A favorable perception towards the destination's local food has a strong association with tourists' intention to try local food and to visit other places within the destination. Overseas visitors who perceive local food in Bali as enjoyable and appealing are most likely to return to the destination for food tourism in the future. This is crucial for food business operators and owners to offer nice and appealing food which will create a memorable dining experience for tourists, it ultimately forms a positive impression and encourages them to return to a food destination.

~~The lack of mediation by attitude towards local food in the relationship between social media influencers and behavioral intention of foreign tourists could be due to various factors. These might include the influence of other variables such as the appeal of the destination, the overall travel experience, or the specific content shared by influencers. In addition, individual preferences and prior experiences as well as exposure to different types of content may also play a role in shaping~~

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tourists' attitudes and their behavioral intention. Cultural differences and individual preferences may influence how tourists perceive and respond to the influencer's content, impacting their behavioral intention independently of their attitude towards local food (Pentina et al., 2013). It is also possible that the impact of social media influencers on behavioral intention is not mainly influenced by attitudes towards local food, but is shaped by other factors such as cultural attractions, and the credibility and engagement of the influencer. Furthermore, the influence of social media influencers may be more focused on general travel recommendations and experiences rather than specific attitudes towards local food.

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CONCLUSION

This study examined behavioral intention of foreign tourists visiting Bali and its stimulants within the food tourism context, suggesting that social media influencer and foreign tourists' attitude towards local food can influence their behavioral intention. Recognizing the importance of social media influencers and the positive attitude of tourists visiting Bali, the findings indicate that attitude towards local food can encourage tourists to suggest destination-specific food to family/relatives/friends and revisit destination for food tourism in the future.

Individual preferences, previous experiences, and exposure to various content types of social media platforms may also contribute to shaping tourists' attitudes towards food and their behavioral intention. Cultural differences can also influence how tourists perceive and react to influencer content, affecting their behavioral intention regardless of their attitude towards local food.

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MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

Given the growing popularity of social media, the results of the study provide insights that can help destination marketers optimize their social media marketing strategies using influencers to attract more tourists to visit the destination, particularly for international travellers. It is essential to identify social media influencers that can positively influence tourists' attitudes and behaviour. Influencers' credibility has been proven to create a greater impact on outcomes (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). Thus, in the context of food tourism, culinary entrepreneurs are highly suggested to optimize influencers to develop more effective social media marketing tactics which fit with their visitors' target. In addition, to boost the number of tourists on culinary tourism in Bali, food business operators and managers should be capable of crafting enticing and delicious dishes complemented by delightful scenery and atmosphere, resulting in an unforgettable dining experience that encourages repeat visits.

For social media marketing practitioners, this study highlights the effectiveness of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter to powerfully influence tourists' perceptions towards specific destinations. These platforms act as a valuable source of information for destination marketing planning. From the perspective of an influencer marketing agency, featuring enjoyable destinations with appetizing food in social media content could be beneficial for boosting traveller's attention to try the food. When influencers endorse foods and beverages in a particular destination, it may lead to more effective campaigns. With the substantial volume of pictures, stories, and images posted on social media platforms daily, understanding the factors that improve the assessment of these contents holds significant implications for companies, individual users, and influencers. Cultural background and differences should also be taken into account to create and design content which is suitable and appealing for travellers.

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Finally, the findings also have implications for government or tourism regulators. They may need to collaborate with social media influencers to promote tourism and ensure that the content posted aligns with the tourism goals and regulations of the country. Campaigns that capture the country's attractiveness including its culinary tourism should be carried out to encourage foreign visitors to explore and experience the food and the destination.

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Finally, the findings also have implications for Indonesian government and tourism regulators. They play a crucial role in developing food tourism in Bali by implementing policies and initiatives

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to support the culinary sector. The government may provide financial incentives or grant to local businesses for improving their facilities, maintaining the standard of food safety and hygiene, and preserving traditional cuisine. Improving transportation access to food tourism destinations can also be undertaken as well as promoting Bali's unique culinary heritage through international marketing campaigns. By creating a conducive environment for the growth of food tourism, the government and the tourism board can contribute to the overall economic development of Bali's tourism industry. In addition, tourism regulators should take various initiative to attract more tourists by collaborating with local communities, local restaurants, street food vendors, and other stakeholders to organize food festivals, culinary events, culinary tours, cooking classes which highlight unique Balinese dishes. They can collaborate with social media influencers to support the development of food tourism by creating engaging and visually appealing content of Bali's culinary delights. By effectively promoting and improving the overall food tourism experience, Bali can further entice more tourists to visit the island and also other places in Indonesia.

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LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has two limitations. First, this study focuses on foreign tourists visiting Bali so its findings may not apply to other destinations within Indonesia. Thus, future research is expected to collect data from international tourists visiting other food destinations in Indonesia such as Surabaya, Malang, Jogjakarta, Solo, and Bandung to provide a comprehended understanding and insights regarding the relationships among social media influencers, attitudes towards local food and their behavioral intention.

Second, our research did not include the moderating effect of the cultural background of the visitors as well as their socio-demographic profile (such as gender, age, and educational background) which might be meaningful to optimize the content of the social media to influence attitude and their intention to revisit. It would be interesting for future studies to explore whether cultural background or demographic profile can act as moderating variables to strengthen the relationship between social media influencers and attitudes towards local food or between attitudes towards local food and behavioral intention.

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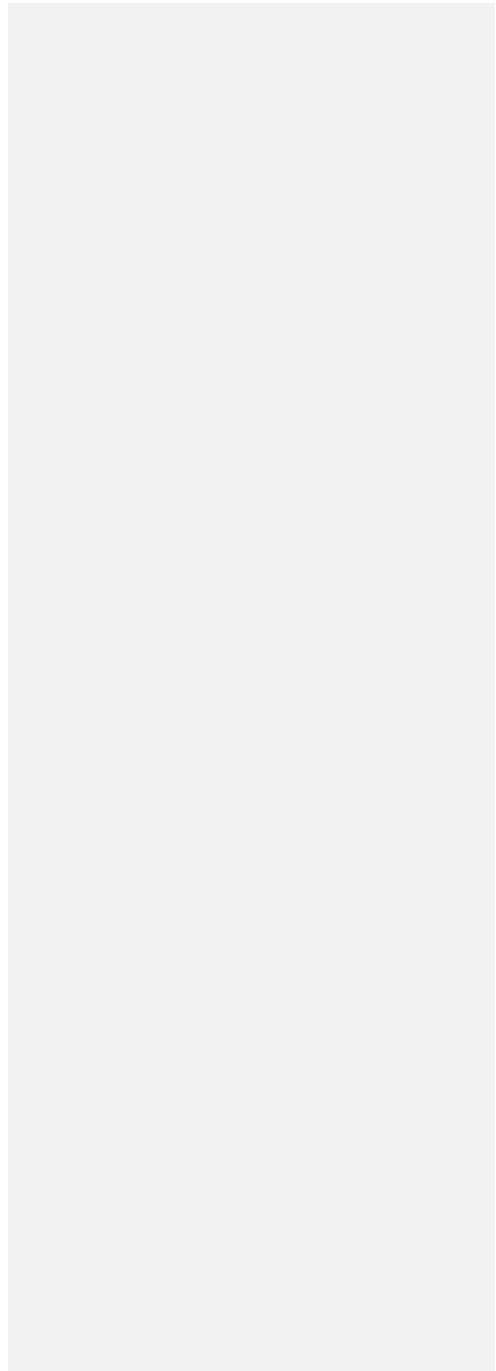
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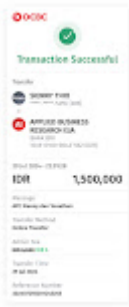
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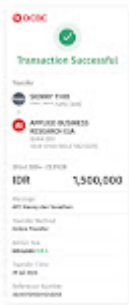
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