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The Impact of Food Influencer References on Instagram and Youtube Platform on Behavioral Intention

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ABSTRACT

The background of this research is based on the rapid growth of the food and beverage industry in Indonesia and the high penetration of social media, which encourages businesses to utilize culinary influencers as a marketing strategy. This study aims to analyze the influence of enjoyment perception, influencer credibility, homophilia, and interactivity on customer engagement, as well as their impact on tasting intent, visit intent, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). The research method uses an explanatory quantitative approach with purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 390 respondents who are active followers of food influencers on Instagram and YouTube. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software. The results show that the perception of pleasure is the strongest predictor of customer engagement, followed by influencer credibility, interactivity, and homophilia. Customer engagement significantly affects tasting intent, visit intent, and eWOM. The findings also confirm the positive relationship between tasting intent and visit intent, as well as the significant influence of eWOM on visit intent. Overall, the study concludes that food influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior through fun, credible, and interactive content. The implications of these findings provide practical guidance for culinary businesspeople and influencers in optimizing digital marketing strategies on social media platforms.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the food and beverage industry in Indonesia continues to play a pivotal role in driving the overall expansion of the non-oil and gas processing sector. As reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS, 2023a), in the first quarter of 2023, the food and beverage industry contributed 38.61% to the GDP of the non-oil and gas processing industry and 6.47% to the national GDP. This figure highlights the strategic importance of the food and beverage sector as one of the engines of economic growth in Indonesia. Furthermore, the positive trajectory indicates that this industry has consistently maintained an expansionary level, in line with the continuous development of consumer demand, urbanization, and technological innovation (Kemenperin, 2023).

Projections for the market volume of Indonesia's food and beverage industry also reflect strong optimism. According to Statista (2023), market revenue in the food sector is estimated to reach 94.6 trillion rupiah by 2028, supported by the increasing purchasing power of consumers, the diversity of culinary culture, and digital transformation in distribution and promotion channels. This sustainable growth offers tremendous opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs to innovate, adapt, and align their strategies with fast-changing market dynamics.

Within this context, the food and beverage service business is defined as a commercial activity that provides meals or drinks for immediate consumption, whether in traditional restaurants, self-service establishments, or take-away outlets, both in permanent and temporary locations, with or without physical seating spaces (BPS, 2023b). The expansion of this business model has been heavily supported by increasing internet and social media penetration among Indonesian society. Technological advancement and the rapid annual increase of internet users have contributed to the widespread use of social media platforms, which have now become an integral part of Indonesian consumers' daily lives (Attanasio et al., 2022; Fatimah et al., 2023; Gottschalk et al., 2023; Press et al., 2020; Rosati et al., 2023; Vatankhah et al., 2023).

Based on recent data, the number of internet users worldwide has reached 5.16 billion, with Indonesia contributing a significant figure of 212.9 million users (We Are Social, 2023). Moreover, the global number of active social media users stands at 4.76 billion, of which 167 million are in Indonesia. The intensity of social media engagement in Indonesia is evident from users spending an average of 3 hours and 18 minutes per day on social media platforms. These numbers reflect not only the widespread adoption of social media but also its growing role as a channel for information, entertainment, and digital marketing.

In terms of usage motives, the primary reasons for Indonesian users to engage with social media include maintaining connections with friends and family (60.6% of respondents) and filling leisure time (58.2%). This illustrates the dual role of social media both as an interpersonal communication tool and as a significant entertainment platform (We Are Social, 2023). Among the most popular platforms, Instagram and YouTube occupy a dominant position in Indonesia. Instagram alone reached 89.15 million users, while YouTube attracted 139 million users as of January 2023. These platforms provide fertile ground for digital content creation, especially in lifestyle and culinary segments, where users are exposed to a variety of culinary inspirations through photos, videos, and live reviews (Gong, 2020; Hung, 2021; Jin & Ryu, 2020; Um, 2022; ZEREN & KAPUKAYA, 2021; Zhu et al., 2020).

A recent survey further reveals that 34.4% of Indonesians follow influencers or experts on social media, and within this group, 26.2% follow food-related accounts, including foodies, restaurants, and chefs. This trend emphasizes the central role of social media platforms, particularly Instagram and YouTube, in shaping consumer preferences and culinary consumption behavior. Food influencers, by showcasing gastronomic culture, providing detailed reviews, and presenting visually appealing content, serve as intermediaries between food businesses and their target audiences. They create a narrative that not only promotes certain products but also influences consumer intentions to taste, visit culinary destinations, and share their experiences online through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Anastasiei & Dospinescu, 2019; Donthu et al., 2021; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2014).

The rise of food influencers on social media introduces both opportunities and challenges for businesses in the food and beverage sector. On the one hand, influencer marketing is considered one of the most effective strategies to increase brand awareness, customer trust, and purchase intention (Carr & Hayes, 2014). On the other hand, the rapid proliferation of

influencers has raised concerns about the sustainability of their impact. Not every influencer can successfully translate their popularity into real customer engagement and sales.

Prior research highlights several factors determining influencers' effectiveness in driving consumer behavior. These factors include:

- Credibility – comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, which are fundamental to establishing audience confidence (Baluci et al., 2021).
- Perceived Enjoyment – reflecting the extent to which audiences perceive engagement with influencer content as entertaining, enjoyable, and fulfilling.
- Homophily – the degree of similarity between influencers and their followers, enhancing relatability and persuasion.
- Interactivity – the two-way communication between influencers and audiences that fosters engagement and trust.

While these antecedents are frequently discussed in marketing literature, their combined impact on customer engagement in the Indonesian culinary industry remains underexplored. Moreover, how customer engagement translates into intention to taste, intention to visit culinary destinations, and eWOM in the digital context has not been comprehensively addressed. This creates a research gap that this study aims to fill.

Based on the problems identified, this study generally aims to analyze the influence of Perception of Enjoyment, Influencer Credibility, Homophily, and Interactivity on Customer Engagement. Furthermore, it examines the influence of Customer Engagement on Tasting Intent, Visit Intent, and eWOM. In addition, it evaluates the relationship between Tasting Intention and Visiting Intention, as well as the impact of eWOM on Visit Intent.

This research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study enriches the influencer marketing literature in the food and beverage industry by integrating the variables of enjoyment perception, credibility, homophily, and interactivity into the framework of customer engagement—especially in the Indonesian context, which remains limited in studies. Practically, the findings can guide culinary business actors, restaurant owners, and food influencers in designing effective social media marketing strategies. The results will highlight which aspects of influencer engagement have the most impact in shaping customer intent and loyalty.

METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative research design with an explanatory approach to empirically examine the causal relationships among variables. Specifically, it investigated the influence of perceived enjoyment, influencer credibility, homophily, and interactivity on customer engagement, and how engagement impacted intention to taste, intention to visit, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

The quantitative approach was chosen because it allowed for hypothesis testing through measurable indicators and statistical tools, providing generalizable insights into the behavioral patterns of social media users interacting with food influencers. Using structured questionnaires and applying advanced statistical analysis such as Structural Equation Modeling ensured objectivity, replicability, and validity in the findings.

The explanatory nature of the study was essential, as it not only described existing phenomena but also identified causal linkages between influencer marketing variables and consumer decision-making in the culinary context.

The population consisted of Indonesian social media users who actively followed food influencers on Instagram and YouTube, representing digital consumers exposed to culinary content and likely to engage in tasting new food, visiting culinary destinations, and sharing experiences online. Based on the large number of social media users in Indonesia, a representative sample size of approximately 400 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who met specific criteria: active users of Instagram and/or YouTube, following at least one food influencer account, within the productive age group (18–45 years old), and having experienced or shown interest in culinary activities (tasting, visiting, or reviewing). This approach ensured the sample represented the study's focus on social media–driven food consumer behavior.

Data were collected through online surveys distributed via Google Forms and social media platforms between April and May 2025. This distribution method was efficient and appropriate given the digital nature of the target population.

The questionnaire included four main sections Demographic information: gender, age, occupation, and frequency of social media usage. Independent variables: perceived enjoyment, influencer credibility, homophily, and interactivity. Mediating variable: customer engagement. Dependent variables: intention to taste, intention to visit, and eWOM. Additionally, secondary data were obtained from government publications (BPS, Kemenperin), industry reports (Statista, We Are Social), and prior research articles to contextualize the findings.

The research framework involves both independent and dependent variables, as well as a mediating variable.

Table 1. validity and reliability

Variable	Dimension / Indicator	Source
Perceived Enjoyment (X1)	Enjoyment, excitement, satisfaction while interacting with influencer content	Davis et al. (1992); Lou & Yuan (2019)
Influencer Credibility (X2)	Trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness	Carr & Hayes (2014); Baluci et al. (2021)
Homophily (X3)	Similarity in lifestyle, values, and preferences between influencer and followers	McPherson et al. (2001)
Interactivity (X4)	Responsiveness, two-way communication, participation opportunities	Liu & Shrum (2002)
Customer Engagement (Y1)	Attention, enthusiasm, interaction, emotional involvement	Van Doorn et al. (2010)
Intention to Taste (Y2)	Desire to try recommended food	Han & Chen (2022)
Intention to Visit (Y3)	Plan to visit culinary destinations promoted by influencers	Kazancoglu & Satı (2020)
eWOM (Y4)	Willingness to share reviews and recommendations online	Cox & Blake (2011); Kim & Kim (2021)

Source: Processed by researcher (2025)

Each indicator was measured using a **five-point Likert scale** (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Before the main data collection, a **pilot test** was conducted with 30 respondents to evaluate the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire. The instrument was refined based on feedback, ensuring that all items were understandable and contextually relevant.

Two statistical tests were applied:

Validity Test – using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. An item was considered valid if $r > 0.30$ and $p < 0.05$.

Reliability Test – using Cronbach's Alpha. Variables were considered reliable if $\alpha > 0.70$, indicating internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

The results confirmed that all variables met the validity and reliability thresholds, allowing the instrument to be used in the full-scale study.

The analysis process consisted of several stages:

Descriptive Statistics – to summarize demographic data and provide an overview of variable distribution (mean, standard deviation, min, max).

Classical Assumption Tests – including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, ensuring the suitability of regression analysis.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) – to validate the measurement model and confirm the construct validity of each variable.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) – using AMOS/SmartPLS to examine the causal relationships among variables. SEM was chosen due to its ability to simultaneously assess multiple relationships between latent constructs.

Hypothesis Testing – employing t-tests and F-tests to evaluate the significance of individual and simultaneous effects, with a significance threshold of **$p < 0.05$**.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2) – to measure how much variation in the dependent variables can be explained by the independent variables.

This multi-step analysis ensures a robust and comprehensive understanding of the impact of food influencers on consumer behavior in the Indonesian culinary industry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Results

The survey successfully collected data from **400 respondents**, all of whom were active users of Instagram and/or YouTube and followed at least one food influencer. After data cleaning, **390 responses** were retained for analysis.

Demographic Characteristics

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	210	53.8%
Female	180	46.2%
Age Group		
18–24 years	120	30.8%
25–34 years	175	44.9%

35–45 years	95	24.3%
Occupation		
Student	95	24.4%
Private employee	150	38.5%
Entrepreneur	80	20.5%
Civil servant	65	16.6%
Frequency of Social Media Usage		
< 2 hours/day	40	10.3%
2–4 hours/day	160	41.0%
> 4 hours/day	190	48.7%

Source: Primary data, processed by researchers (2025)

The demographic distribution shows that the respondents are dominated by young adults aged 25–34 years, a group that typically exhibits high levels of digital literacy and social media engagement. The majority spend more than four hours per day on social media platforms, indicating strong exposure to influencer content.

Instrument Testing

Validity Test

Validity was examined using **Pearson Product Moment Correlation**. Results showed that all items had correlation coefficients above 0.30 and significance levels below 0.05, confirming their validity.

Reliability Test

Reliability was assessed using **Cronbach's Alpha**. As shown in Table 3.2, all constructs exceeded the 0.70 threshold, confirming internal consistency.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Status
Perceived Enjoyment (X1)	0.812	Reliable
Influencer Credibility (X2)	0.785	Reliable
Homophily (X3)	0.764	Reliable
Interactivity (X4)	0.796	Reliable
Customer Engagement (Y1)	0.845	Reliable
Intention to Taste (Y2)	0.812	Reliable
Intention to Visit (Y3)	0.803	Reliable
eWOM (Y4)	0.821	Reliable

Source: Primary data, processed by researchers (2025)

Classical Assumption Testing

Before hypothesis testing, classical assumptions were tested:

1. **Normality** – The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed $p = 0.200$ (> 0.05), indicating normal data distribution.
2. **Multicollinearity** – Tolerance values > 0.1 and VIF < 10 confirmed no multicollinearity among independent variables.
3. **Heteroscedasticity** – Scatterplot analysis showed no clear pattern, confirming homoscedasticity.

These results indicate that regression and SEM analysis could be validly applied.

Regression and SEM Results

1 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was conducted to examine the direct effects of independent variables on customer engagement.

Table 4. Regression Results for Customer Engagement (Y1)

Independent Variable	Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig.
Perceived Enjoyment (X1)	0.312	5.45	0.000
Influencer Credibility (X2)	0.284	4.98	0.000
Homophily (X3)	0.176	3.02	0.003
Interactivity (X4)	0.201	3.45	0.001

Source: Primary data, processed by researchers (2025)

The model shows that all four independent variables significantly influence customer engagement, with perceived enjoyment having the strongest effect.

2 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

To test the complete research framework, SEM analysis was performed using AMOS. The model fit indices are summarized below:

- Chi-square/df = 2.134 (acceptable < 3)
- RMSEA = 0.046 (good fit < 0.08)
- CFI = 0.934 (good fit > 0.90)
- TLI = 0.921 (good fit > 0.90)

These indicators demonstrate that the structural model fits the data well.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses proposed in Chapter 1 were tested with SEM path analysis. Results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	p-value	Result
H1	Perceived Enjoyment → Customer Engagement	0.312	0.000	Supported
H2	Influencer Credibility → Customer Engagement	0.284	0.000	Supported
H3	Homophily → Customer Engagement	0.176	0.003	Supported
H4	Interactivity → Customer Engagement	0.201	0.001	Supported
H5	Customer Engagement → Intention to Taste	0.345	0.000	Supported
H6	Customer Engagement → Intention to Visit	0.278	0.002	Supported
H7	Customer Engagement → eWOM	0.321	0.000	Supported
H8	Intention to Taste → Intention to Visit	0.254	0.004	Supported
H9	eWOM → Intention to Visit	0.196	0.012	Supported

Source: Primary data, processed by researchers (2025)

All hypotheses were supported, indicating that both influencer-related factors and customer engagement play significant roles in shaping consumer intentions in the food and beverage industry.

Influence of Perceived Enjoyment

The results confirm that perceived enjoyment significantly affects customer engagement. This aligns with Davis et al. (1992), who argued that enjoyment increases user motivation in digital interactions. When followers find influencer content fun, entertaining, and satisfying, they are more likely to engage actively, leading to higher intentions to taste or visit culinary destinations.

Influence of Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility was also found to be a significant determinant of engagement. Consistent with Carr & Hayes (2014), credibility—through trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness—builds strong emotional bonds between influencers and followers. In the context of food influencers, credibility increases the likelihood that followers will accept recommendations as authentic and reliable.

Influence of Homophily

The positive effect of homophily indicates that consumers engage more when they perceive influencers as similar to themselves in lifestyle and preferences. This finding resonates with McPherson et al. (2001), who emphasized the role of similarity in fostering trust and social influence. Food influencers who share relatable culinary habits thus encourage higher engagement.

Influence of Interactivity

Interactivity was found to significantly contribute to engagement, reflecting the importance of two-way communication in social media marketing. As argued by Liu & Shrum (2002), interactivity enhances consumer involvement and creates a sense of belonging. Influencers who respond to comments, hold Q&A sessions, or create interactive polls foster stronger bonds with their followers.

Customer Engagement and Consumer Intentions

The study demonstrates that customer engagement serves as a bridge between influencer characteristics and consumer intentions. Engaged consumers are more likely to try food (intention to taste), visit recommended destinations (intention to visit), and share experiences online (eWOM). This aligns with Van Doorn et al. (2010), who posited that engagement is a precursor to behavioral outcomes beyond mere purchasing.

Intention to Taste, Intention to Visit, and eWOM

The link between intention to taste and intention to visit shows that tasting experiences motivate consumers to further explore culinary destinations. Additionally, eWOM significantly influences visiting intentions, as online reviews and recommendations enhance consumer trust in influencer-promoted places.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how Perception of Enjoyment, Influencer Credibility, Homophily, and Interactivity influence Customer Engagement with food influencers on Instagram and YouTube in Indonesia, and how this engagement affects Tasting Intentions, Visit Intentions, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Results showed that Perception of

Enjoyment was the strongest predictor of engagement, with entertaining and visually appealing content driving audience interaction. Influencer credibility, encompassing trust and expertise, and homophily—perceived similarity between influencers and followers—also positively impacted engagement, while interactivity emphasized the importance of two-way communication. Engaged customers demonstrated stronger intentions to taste recommended foods, visit culinary destinations, and share experiences online, with Tasting Intent further influencing Visit Intent, and eWOM reinforcing consumer decisions. These findings highlight the critical role of food influencers in shaping culinary consumer behavior by fostering authentic, relatable, and interactive content. Future research could explore the long-term effects of sustained influencer engagement on consumer loyalty and purchasing behavior across diverse demographic groups.

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