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Do Online Reviews Drive Visit Intention? The Roles of Destination Trust and Creator Credibility

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of online reviews on visit intention, with destination trust as a mediating variable and content creator credibility as a moderating variable. The study employed a quantitative approach using a causal research design and a cross-sectional method. The sample was selected through purposive sampling and consisted of 165 respondents who actively use social media and have accessed online reviews and travel-related content created by content creators. Data were collected through Google Forms and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The results indicate that online reviews have a positive and significant effect on both visit intention and destination trust. Furthermore, destination trust has a positive and significant effect on visit intention and partially mediates the relationship between online reviews and visit intention. Content creator credibility was also found to strengthen the effect of online reviews on destination trust. These findings suggest that online reviews can enhance tourists' visit intention both directly and indirectly through destination trust. In addition, the influence of online reviews on destination trust becomes stronger when supported by high content creator credibility.

Keywords: Online Reviews, Visit Intention, Destination Trust, Content Creator Credibility
JEL Classification: M31, D83, Z32

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the sectors contributing to national economic growth. As a country with diverse natural, cultural, and man-made tourist attractions, Indonesia has experienced positive tourism development. According to the Ministry of Tourism, the number of domestic tourist trips increased from 1.021 bilion in 2024 to 1.200 bilion in 2025 (Kementerian Pariwisata Republik Indonesia, 2025, 2026). This growth has encouraged tourists to seek destination information that aligns with their travel preferences and needs.

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed the way tourists obtain destination information. Tourists can now access a wide range of information through digital platforms before traveling. Among these platforms, social media has become one of the primary channels for disseminating tourism-

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related information. In 2025, the number of social media users in Indonesia reached 229 million, representing approximately 80.66% of the country's total population (APJII, 2025). The widespread use of social media indicates that it serves not only as a communication platform but also as an important source of destination information that shapes tourists' perceptions and supports their travel decision-making processes (Pratiwi et al., 2025).

One of the most widely used sources of information on social media is online reviews. Online reviews are a form of electronic communication that contains evaluations, experiences, and recommendations regarding tourist destinations (Tao et al., 2025; Wicaksana & Putra, 2025). Compared with conventional advertising, online reviews are perceived as more authentic because they are based on the actual experiences of previous visitors (Tao et al., 2025). Consequently, information provided through online reviews can shape tourists' perceptions of a destination and influence their intention to visit (Bo, 2026).

Visit intention refers to an individual's willingness to plan a future visit to a tourist destination (Widiarto & Hidajat, 2026). The formation of visit intention is influenced by several factors, including the quality of information received, perceptions of the destination, and confidence in the expected travel experience (Wahim & Hamzah, 2024; Wang et al., 2023). However, previous studies examining the influence of online reviews on visit intention have produced inconsistent findings. While several studies have reported a positive relationship between online reviews and visit intention, others have found that this relationship is not always direct because it depends on factors that shape tourists' confidence in a destination (Tao et al., 2025).

In addition to online reviews, tourists' perceptions are also influenced by content shared by content creators on social media. Content creator credibility reflects the extent to which audiences perceive a source of information as knowledgeable, honest, and capable of delivering accurate information (Prike et al., 2024). Information provided by a credible content creator is more likely to generate positive perceptions and strengthen tourists' confidence in a destination (Widaningsih & Putranto, 2025). Therefore, content creator credibility is expected to moderate the relationship between online reviews and destination trust.

Previous studies have shown that online reviews positively influence visit intention (Su et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2024) and destination trust (Kalasindhu et al., 2025; Su et al., 2022). In addition, destination trust has been found to positively influence visit intention (Lee et al., 2025; Tedjakusuma et al., 2025). However, studies that simultaneously integrate destination trust as a mediating variable and content creator credibility as a moderating variable within a single Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework remain limited. Therefore, this study develops an integrated model to explain how online reviews influence tourists' intention to visit through destination trust, while considering the moderating role of content creator credibility.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to examine the effect of online reviews on visit intention through destination trust and to investigate the moderating role of content creator credibility in the relationship between online reviews and destination trust. This study is expected to enrich the literature on tourist behavior in the digital era and provide practical implications for destination

managers regarding the use of online reviews and content creators to enhance tourists' intention to visit.

This study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory as the theoretical foundation for explaining the formation of tourists' intention to visit. According to this theory, online reviews serve as the stimulus (S) by providing information to tourists. This information influences tourists' internal psychological state in the form of destination trust as the organism (O), which subsequently leads to visit intention as the response (R) (Su et al., 2022). Furthermore, content creator credibility is positioned as a moderating variable that strengthens the influence of online reviews on destination trust, making the information received by tourists more convincing (Malebrán et al., 2025).

Information provided through online reviews can reduce uncertainty, shape tourists' perceptions of destinations, and influence their decision-making process (Su et al., 2022; Yadav et al., 2024). Online reviews include other tourists' experiences and evaluations provide valuable information that helps potential tourists assess the attractiveness and quality of a destination before visiting (Sihotang & Putra, 2023). Previous studies have also shown that positive online reviews encourage tourists' intention to visit a destination (Su et al., 2022; Tao et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2024). Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Online reviews positively influence tourists' visit intention.

Information obtained through online reviews can strengthen tourists' confidence in a destination by reducing uncertainty and creating more positive expectations (Su et al., 2022). Positive and credible online reviews have been shown to enhance tourists' trust in a destination (Kalasindhu et al., 2025; Su et al., 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2025). Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Online reviews positively influence destination trust.

Destination trust is established when tourists perceive that a destination provides reliable information and is capable of delivering experiences that meet their expectations (Yang, 2022). Higher levels of destination trust reduce perceived risk and encourage tourists to make travel decisions (Omran, 2025). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that destination trust has a positive effect on tourists' intention to visit (Lee et al., 2025; Tedjakusuma et al., 2025; Yang, 2022). Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Destination trust positively influences tourists' visit intention

Destination trust is regarded as a psychological mechanism that links information to tourists' behavior responses. According to the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, online reviews serve as the stimulus (S), destination trust represents the organism (O), and visit intention constitutes the response (R) (Su et al., 2022). Therefore, positive, credible, and informative online reviews can strengthen destination trust by reducing uncertainty before travel (Yadav et al., 2024). Previous studies have found that online reviews influence tourists' intention to visit not only directly but also indirectly through destination trust. Destination trust, in turn, enhances tourists' intention to visit. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed.

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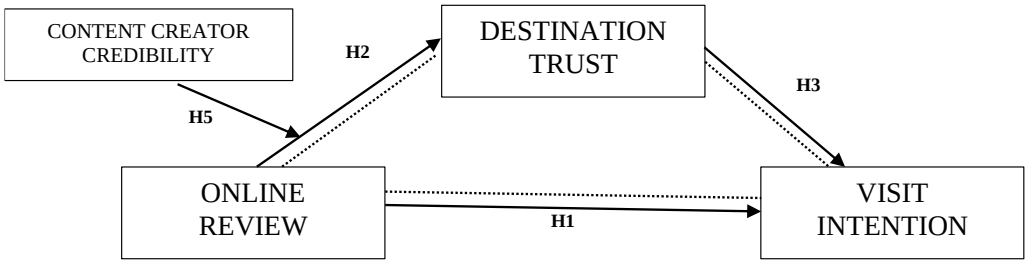
H4: Destination trust mediates the relationship between online reviews and tourists' visit intention

Content creator credibility reflects the extent to which audiences perceive the information provided as honest, accurate, relevant, and trustworthy (Mananti et al., 2026). Content creators with high credibility and expertise are more effective in strengthening tourists' confidence at a destination (Malebrán et al., 2025). Blanco et al. (2026) further demonstrated that content creators act as opinion leaders who shape tourists' perceptions and trust in destinations through authentic travel experiences. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H5: Content creator credibility moderates the relationship between online reviews and destination trust

Based on the proposed hypothesis, the conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1.



Note: The dashed line indicates the mediating effect of destination trust (H4)

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Research Findings (Processed Data, 2026)

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a causal research design and a cross-sectional method. The population consisted of social media users in Indonesia who had accessed online reviews and travel content creators. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. According to Hair et al. (2022), a sample size of 100-200 respondents is recommended for PLS-SEM models with four constructs, each measured by more than three indicators. Therefore, a total of 165 respondents were selected for this study. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms using a five-point Likert scale. The online reviews variable (X) was adapted from Sadila & Murwanti (2025), while the destination trust variable (M) and visit intention variable (Y) were adapted from Su et al. (2022). The content creator credibility variable (Z) was adapted from Malebrán et al. (2025). Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 through the stages of outer model and inner model evaluation, and hypothesis testing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent characteristics were analyzed descriptively based on gender, age, and daily social media usage frequency. The descriptive results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent's Characteristics

Characteristics	Item	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	67	40,61%
	Female	98	59,39%
Age	18 – 25 years	102	61,82%
	26 – 33 years	43	26,06%
	34 – 41 years	13	7,88%
	42 – 49 years	6	3,64%
	> 50 Tahun	1	0,61%
Daily of Social Media Use Frequency	< 5 hours/ day	1	0,61%
	5 – 8 hours/ day	133	80,61%
	9 – 12 hours/ day	19	11,52%
	> 12 hours/ day	12	7,27%
Total		166	100%

Source: Research Findings (Processed Data, 2026)

As shown in Table 1, 165 respondents participated in this study. Of these, 67 respondents (40.61%) were male and 98 respondents (59.39%) were female. The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years (61.82%). In addition, most respondents reported using social media for 5-8 hours per day (80.61%). The research data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4. Figure 2 presents the research model, illustrating the structural framework evaluated in this study.

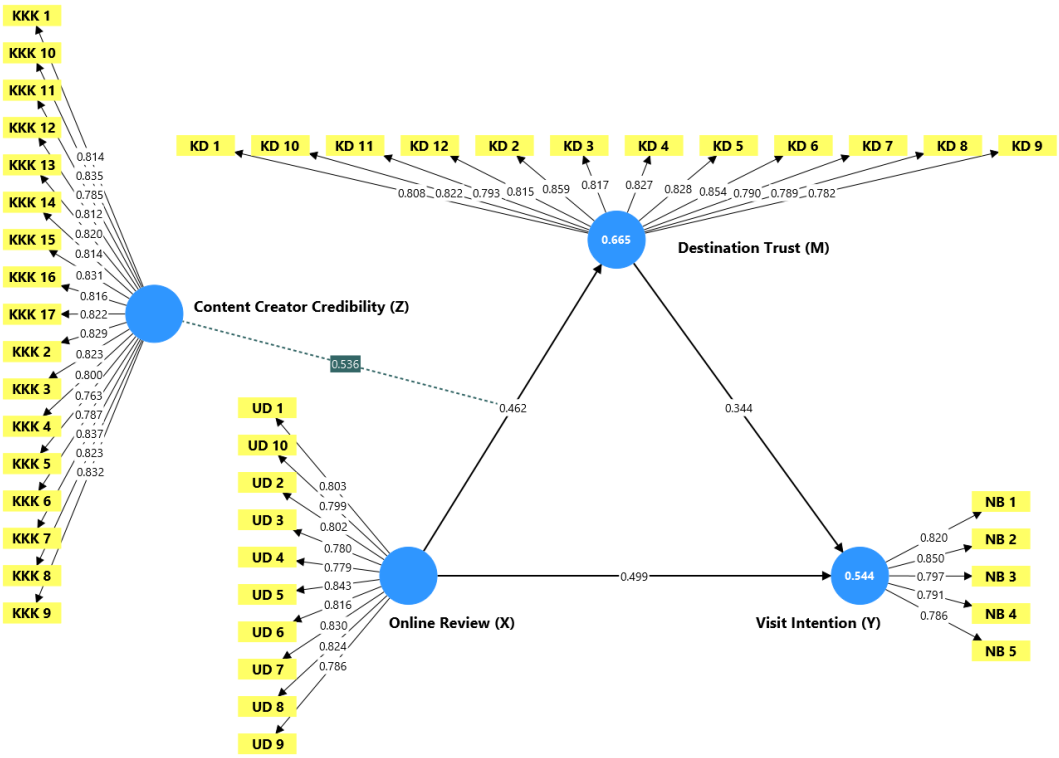


Figure 2. Data Processing Result Smart-PLS

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Source: Research Findings (Processed Data, 2026)

As shown in Figure 2, all indicators of online review, destination trust, visit intention, and content creator credibility exhibited outer loading values above the recommended threshold > 0.70. Therefore, all indicators demonstrated adequate convergent validity and were considered appropriate for measuring their respective constructs.

Result of the Measurement Model Assessment

According to Hair et al. (2019), convergent validity is established when the outer loading values are > 0.70 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.50. Construct reliability is considered satisfactory when both Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability values are > 0.70. The result of the measurement model assessment, including outer loadings, AVE, Cronbach's alpha, and Composite reliability, is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Online Review	UD1	0.803	0,940	0.949	0.650
	UD2	0.802			
	UD3	0.780			
	UD4	0.779			
	UD5	0.843			
	UD6	0.816			
	UD7	0.830			
	UD8	0.824			
	UD9	0.786			
	UD10	0.799			
Destination Trust	KD1	0.808	0,954	0,960	0.665
	KD2	0.859			
	KD3	0.817			
	KD4	0.827			
	KD5	0.828			
	KD6	0.854			
	KD7	0.790			
	KD8	0.789			
	KD9	0.782			
	KD10	0.822			
	KD11	0.793			
	KD12	0.815			
Visit Intention	NB1	0.820	0,868	0.904	0.655
	NB2	0.850			
	NB3	0.797			
	NB4	0.791			
	NB5	0.786			
Content Creator Credibility	KKK1	0.814	0,968	0,971	
	KKK2	0.829			

KKK3	0.823	0.664
KKK4	0.800	
KKK5	0.763	
KKK6	0.787	
KKK7	0.837	
KKK8	0.823	
KKK9	0.832	
KKK10	0.835	
KKK11	0.785	
KKK12	0.812	
KKK13	0.820	
KKK14	0.814	
KKK15	0.831	
KKK16	0.816	
KKK17	0.822	

Source: Research Findings (Processed Data, 2026)

The validity and reliability assessment results indicate that all constructs satisfied the required measurement criteria. All indicators exhibited outer loading values of > 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of > 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs were > 0.70, indicating satisfactory construct reliability.

Result of the Goodness of Fit assessment

Goodness of Fit using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), d_ULS, d_G, and the Normed Fit Index (NFI). According to Hair et al. (2019), a model is considered to have a good fit when the SRMR value is below 0.08. In addition, the NFI ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating a better model fit.

Table 3. Goodness of Fit

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.058	0.058
d_ULS	3.294	3.323
d_G	2.186	2.172
Chi-squre	1721.800	1726.142
NFI	0.759	0.759

Source: Research Findings (Processed Data, 2026)

The Goodness of Fit assessment indicates that the proposed model demonstrated an acceptable level of fit. The SRMR value of 0.058 was below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good model fit. In addition, the NFI value of 0.759 provided additional evidence supporting the adequacy of the proposed model. Based on these results, the proposed model meets the

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recommended Goodness-of-Fit criteria and is considered appropriate for hypothesis testing.

Result of the Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS. A hypothesis was accepted when the t-statistic > 1.96 and the p-value < 0.05, indicating that the relationship between variables was statistically significant (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Variable	Original Sample	T Statistic	P Values
H1	UD → NB	0.499	8.912	0.000
H2	UD → KD	0.462	8.209	0.000
H3	KD → NB	0.344	5.222	0.000
H4	UD → KD → NB	0.159	4.243	0.000
H5	KKK × UD → KD	0.536	10.217	0.000

Source: Research Findings (Processed Data, 2026)

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that all proposed hypotheses (H1–H5) were supported. H1 demonstrates that online reviews have a positive and significant effect on visit intention. H2 indicates that online reviews positively influence destination trust, while H3 confirms that destination trust has a positive and significant effect on visit intention. Furthermore, H4 reveals that destination trust partially mediates the relationship between online reviews and visit intention. Finally, H5 confirms that content creator credibility strengthens the relationship between online reviews and destination trust.

DISCUSSION

Online reviews were found to have a positive and significant effect on tourists' intention to visit. This finding indicates that tourists tend to rely on online reviews as a primary source of information when evaluating a destination before traveling. Information containing other tourists' experiences, evaluations, and recommendations helps reduce uncertainty and increase confidence in travel decision-making. The more positive, informative, and credible the online reviews are, the stronger tourists' intention to visit the destination. This finding is consistent with the study by Su et al. (2022), which found that online reviews play an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions and enhancing their intention to visit.

Beyond influencing tourists' intention to visit directly, online reviews were found to have a positive and significant effect on destination trust. This finding indicates that positive, credible, and informative reviews reduce perceived risk and strengthen tourists' confidence in a destination. Destination trust is established when tourists perceive the information they receive as reliable and consistent with their expectations (Wang & Yan, 2022). This finding is consistent with Su et al. (2022), who reported that online reviews play an important role in enhancing destination trust.

The positive effect of online reviews on destination trust was followed by the significant influence of destination trust on tourists' intention to visit. This finding indicates that tourists with a higher level of trust in a destination are more

likely to intend to visit because their perceived risk is reduced. Such trust reflects tourists' confidence that the destination can meet their expectations and provide the desired travel experience. This finding is consistent with Lee et al. (2025), who reported that destination trust has a positive effect on tourists' intention to visit. Therefore, the higher the level of destination trust, the stronger tourists' intention to visit the destination.

This relationship was further supported by the mediation analysis. Destination trust was found to partially mediate the effect of online reviews on tourists' intention to visit. This finding indicates that online reviews influence visit intention not only directly but also indirectly by enhancing tourists' trust in the destination. This suggests that destination trust serves as a mechanism through which online reviews influence tourists' intention to visit, although the direct effect of online reviews remains significant. Therefore, tourists' intention to visit is influenced not only by the information provided by online reviews but also by destination trust. This finding is consistent with Su et al. (2022), who reported that destination trust partially mediates the relationship between online reviews and visit intention.

The relationship between online reviews and destination trust became even stronger when content creator credibility was considered. Content creator credibility was found to strengthen the effect of online reviews on destination trust. This finding indicates that the influence of online reviews on destination trust is strengthened when the information is delivered by content creators perceived as highly credible. The expertise, honesty, and ability of content creators to communicate information accurately make tourists more likely to trust the information they receive, thereby strengthening their trust in the destination. This finding is consistent with Blanco et al. (2026), who reported that credible content creators enhance tourists' trust in destinations by providing authentic travel information.

Taken together, the findings of this study support the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory in explaining tourists' intention to visit in the context of digital tourism. The results demonstrate that online reviews function as the stimulus (S), destination trust serves as the organism (O)**,** and visit intention represents the response (R). Furthermore, the findings extend the application of the S-O-R theory by showing that content creator credibility strengthens the relationship between online reviews and destination trust. This suggests that tourists' behavioral responses are influenced not only by the quality of online reviews but also by the credibility of the information source, highlighting the importance of trustworthy digital information in shaping destination trust and visit intention.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that online reviews play an important role in increasing tourists' intention to visit, both directly and indirectly through destination trust. The findings demonstrate that destination trust partially mediates the relationship between online reviews and visit intention, indicating that online reviews influence tourists' behavioral intentions both directly and through the development of trust. In addition, positive, credible, and informative online reviews

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strengthen destination trust, while content creator credibility reinforces the relationship between online reviews and destination trust.

The findings provide theoretical implications by supporting the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, in which online reviews function as the stimulus, destination trust represents the organism, and visit intention constitutes the response. In addition, this study extends the application of the S-O-R framework by incorporating content creator credibility as a moderating variable, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of tourists' behavioral intentions in the digital tourism context. Practically destination managers should encourage the dissemination of credible online reviews and collaborate with trustworthy content creators to strengthen destination trust and increase tourists' intention to visit.

This study has several limitations. The sample was limited to social media users in Indonesia, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other populations or cultural contexts. This study has several limitations. The sample was limited to social media users in Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research is encouraged to include respondents from different countries or various cities across Indonesia to obtain a broader understanding of tourists' visit intention.

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