

***THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT ON VALIDATION AND SOCIAL
PROOF ON EXTREME TOURISM PARTICIPATION DECISIONS***
(PENGARUH KONTEN MEDIA SOSIAL TERHADAP VALIDASI DAN BUKTI SOSIAL
DALAM KEPUTUSAN PARTISIPASI WISATA EKSTREM)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media content on participation decisions in extreme tourism, focusing on the mediating roles of social proof and validation. Given the high physical risks associated with extreme activities, potential tourists tend to seek psychological assurance through digital media. The research method employs a quantitative approach using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The measurement model evaluation results indicate that all variables meet high validity and reliability criteria. The findings show that social media content significantly influences social proof and validation. Furthermore, social proof was found to be the most dominant mediator in driving participation decisions compared to the validation variable. This indicates that reducing risk perception through the collective experiences of others on social media is a key factor in extreme tourism decision-making. The study concludes that the synergy between engaging visual content and massive social proof is the primary strategy for converting audience interest into actual participation.

Keywords: Social Media Content, Social Validation, Social Proof, Extreme Tourism

INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, communication has undergone major transformations and people's lifestyles have changed, from the industrial sector to tourism. The way individuals interact with media is one example of a significant shift, particularly in social media. From its function as a means of information and entertainment, it is now a marketing instrument that influences tourist behavior (Armutcu et al., 2023). Tourist preferences are formed through the development of short-video social media platforms and the way destinations are marketed, especially to millennials and Gen Z, who rely more on information from social media (Dong et al., 2023). User-generated content has a significant impact on the popularity of tourist destinations, creating a viral effect and encouraging tourists to visit the promoted location. Initially, in tourism, social media content was seen as a destination communication tool that built brands, provided information, and facilitated interaction with potential tourists (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, the emergence of TikTok and Instagram reels with their visual power and recommendation algorithms has made short videos a motivating factor for visitors (Manthiou et al., 2024).

In the context of extreme tourism, visualizing experiences through photos or videos is the most trusted tool in choosing a destination, showing that social media plays a role in shaping the image of a destination (Xie-Carson & Benckendorff, 2024). The right digital marketing strategy through visual and interactive content on social media can increase tourist engagement and strengthen the attractiveness of tourist destinations (Zheng et al., 2023). Active social media users in Indonesia have reached 191 million people, with TikTok and Instagram being the most popular platforms among millennials and Gen Z, which can reflect that tourists are more likely to trust recommendations via social media than conventional advertising (Kavoura & Stavrianea, 2014).

Psychologically, this validation is not only a form of external marketing but also part of the performative formation of a digital identity. Generation Z now views recreation not only as a way to relieve stress or relax, but also as a means to build and strengthen one's brand in the virtual realm. The concept of vacation has also shifted from a personal activity to a social one that demands performance, visualization, and careful self-

representation strategies. This phenomenon creates a new landscape in the world of tourism, where social media plays a key role in shaping motivations, expectations, and even perceptions of the value of travel experiences. This raises an important question: is vacation still about recreation, or has it shifted to a platform for image building and social competition in the virtual world (Asyraf, 2025).

Behavior, motivation, and aspirations are increasingly influenced by a psychological phenomenon known as Social Proof. This principle, rooted in social psychology, states that individuals tend to imitate the actions of others, especially in situations of uncertainty, to determine what is the "correct" or "appropriate" behavior. On social media, this principle is explicitly manifested through metrics such as massive numbers of likes, views, shares, and tagging. This social proof phenomenon has had a transformative impact on the tourism industry, particularly in the extreme tourism segment (Endang Sulistiyani, 2025). High-risk activities like rappelling and rope jumping inherently involve uncertainty and psychological challenges. However, when content showcasing the success and excitement of these activities goes viral, garnering thousands of likes and hundreds of positive comments, it acts as a collective certification, effectively reducing the perception of risk. Digitally recorded popularity sends an implicit message to potential participants.

In recent years, extreme tourism activities such as water rappelling and rope jumping have become increasingly popular among tourists, especially the younger generation who enjoy exploring challenging and unique travel experiences. Water rappelling involves descending a cliff or waterfall with the aid of a rope, while rope jumping involves jumping from a height with a safety harness. Both activities offer an adrenaline rush and a unique adventure experience. The popularity of these activities stems not only from their physical challenges but also from the growing influence of social media in promoting extreme destinations and activities. Social media marketing plays a significant role in expanding the reach of these promotions, attracting tourists with content showcasing the thrill and uniqueness of water rappelling and rope jumping. Furthermore, the desire for social validation through likes, comments, and shares of content on social media also influences

tourists' decisions in choosing activities that are considered interesting and appreciated by others. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing on the desire for social validation and how it influences participation in extreme tourism activities such as water rappelling and rope jumping.

Modern tourism is heavily influenced by the presence of social media as a primary channel for travel information and inspiration. In this study, the term "social media content" refers to any form of posts, images, videos, comments, reviews, or experience stories (user-generated content) uploaded to platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or Facebook and consumed by potential tourists (Joseph et al., 2024). User-generated content (UGC) and visual storytelling from social media have a positive influence on tourist visit intentions. Social media marketing is a marketing strategy that uses social media platforms to reach, interact with, and influence consumers. Social media plays a role in the tourism industry by introducing new attractions, building destination image, and stimulating tourist interest (Z. (Joy) Huang et al., 2024). Social media marketing has become a key strategy for businesses, including those in the tourism sector. Social media is an effective tool for marketers to promote services and products, including activities such as creating engaging content, interacting with followers, and monitoring activity through social media analytics (K S & Massand, 2025). Social media is an effective tool for marketers, used to promote services and products, including activities such as creating engaging content, engaging with followers, and monitoring activity through social media analytics. Marketing activities are crucial for building brand identity. TikTok is one of the main platforms influencing tourists' decisions when choosing a destination (Zhou et al., 2023).

In the context of tourism, social media has revolutionized the way travelers seek information, make decisions, and share experiences. Social media enables two-way communication between service providers and potential travelers. Short video content showcasing sights, experiences, or activities can elicit a response to content believed to offer the sensation, satisfaction, and interest it offers (Tang et al., 2024). Strong driving factors for using TikTok for destination selection include hedonic motivation and perceived

trust. Furthermore, social media allows for direct interaction between destinations and potential tourists. The concept of user-generated content (UGC) is a key element, thanks to the reviews, testimonials, and personal experiences shared by other users (Armutcu et al., 2023).

The need for social validation is one of the primary motives driving individuals to be active on social media. Validation, from a psychological perspective, reflects an individual's need to feel accepted, valued, and recognized by others. Social validation falls under the category of esteem needs (Asyraf, 2025). In the digital age, this validation is often sought through social media, such as in the form of likes, comments, and followers. The relationship between motivation and social validation is very close. When an individual is motivated to engage in extreme activities, whether by internal or external drives, the need for recognition from others plays a role. Posts on social media serve as a tool to "prove" these achievements. Positive reactions from followers will strengthen the sense of achievement, which in turn strengthens the motivation to continue engaging in similar activities. Social psychology studies show that individuals tend to compare themselves to others to assess their social standing, a concept known as social comparison.

Social proof is a psychological phenomenon where individuals imitate or follow the actions of others when they feel unsure or when they see many others doing something. This concept was introduced by Cialdini and has since been widely used in digital marketing literature. Social proof in the context of social media appears as reviews, testimonials, influencer followers, the number of likes/shares, or photos/videos of other users performing a particular activity (Endang Sulistiyani, 2025).

Extreme tourism is defined as a form of tourism that involves high risk. It involves risky activities such as water rappelling and rope jumping in challenging locations. The motivation behind these activities goes beyond relaxation or entertainment, but also includes thrills, increased self-esteem, and personal achievement (Rejón-Guardia et al., 2023). Extreme sports participants are driven more by internal motivation than by competition. Incidental awe arising from experiences outside of extreme sports can effectively trigger this internal drive (Q. Huang et al.,

2024). Extreme activities are now often represented not only as personal experiences but also as socially valuable content. The more “Instagrammable” or “TikTokable” the activity is, the greater the chance that it is driven by validation motives (Diel et al., 2021).

Tourist motivations indicate that extreme activities are often associated with a drive to step out of one's comfort zone, build one's identity, and achieve emotional satisfaction distinct from conventional tourism (Diel et al., 2021). In the context of social media, these experiences become more meaningful when documented and receive a positive response. This phenomenon parallels tourists who see others' posts about extreme tourism: they are encouraged to try because they perceive the challenge as realistic yet prestigious (Diel et al., 2021). Motivation in extreme tourism is also linked to emotional dynamics. Fear, anxiety, and enthusiasm combine to create a drive to prove one's abilities (Q. Huang et al., 2024). When these experiences are shared on social media, an additional incentive arises in the form of appreciation from others. Thus, tourist motivation in extreme tourism stems not only from internal factors (thrill-seeking) but also from external factors such as social validation gained through social media marketing.

By connecting these three variables, it is clear that social media marketing plays an initial role in influencing the perceptions and interests of potential tourists. Through engaging visual strategies, tourists are exposed to information about extreme tourism activities. Afterward, the need for social validation plays a role in strengthening tourists' desire to participate, as they see the opportunity to gain social recognition through participation. Ultimately, the combination of these two factors creates a strong motivation to actually engage in extreme tourism activities (Wang et al., 2023).

Several studies have shown that high-quality and engaging social media content can increase user interaction and trust, ultimately leading to social validation and social proof (Nawang Hakim Mega Angkasa et al., 2024) found that content marketing and social media have a positive influence on purchasing decisions through customer engagement as an intervening variable. (Al Fajar & Dyas Erlangga, 2025) concluded that UGC content and social media play a role in three stages of the travel journey: pre-

travel, during travel, and post-travel, with social validation factors strengthening this influence.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach to explain the relationship between the independent variable (social media content) and psychological variables (social validation and social proof) on the dependent variable, namely an individual's decision to participate in extreme tourism. This study took place at the Old Citarum Bridge and Sanghyang Kenit destinations in Cipatat, West Bandung Regency. The population in this study was all visitors who had participated in rappelling and rope jumping activities in the West Bandung area.

Sampling was conducted using a non-probability sampling method using a purposive sampling technique. The following criteria were used: Having participated in one or both of the extreme activities at the survey location, Active users of social media, particularly visual based platforms like Instagram and TikTok, Adults (at least 17 years old and above 45 years old).

Based on these criteria, a sample of approximately 250 respondents was obtained. Data were collected through a 21 item questionnaire. Each instrument was measured using a 5 point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The 10:1 ratio is a common standard in PLS-SEM to ensure that the algorithm can converge well and minimize the standard error in path estimates (Hair et al., 2017). This instrument was designed to measure research variables including: Social Media Content, Social Validation, and Social Proof on Extreme Tourism Participation Decisions. The research procedure begins with the preparation stage, which involves designing a questionnaire. Next, the data collection stage is carried out by distributing questionnaires to respondents who meet the criteria. Data analysis in this study included descriptive analysis to examine respondent characteristics and response distribution. To test hypotheses and relationships between variables, a variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method was used with the aid of SmartPLS 4 software. The analysis stages include: Outer Model Evaluation: Testing the validity (convergent and discriminant) and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite

Reliability) of each indicator. Inner Model Evaluation: Testing the strength of the relationship between variables through the path coefficient, the R^2 value (coefficient of determination), and significance through the bootstrapping process (t-test).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent characteristics were classified based on gender, age range, occupational background, income, region of origin, duration of social media use, platforms used, type of extreme activity, and

frequency of visits. This classification was conducted to obtain a general overview of respondents' conditions that could potentially influence their perceptions and experiences of tourism activities. Understanding these characteristics is crucial to support more contextual analysis, particularly in identifying visitor behavior patterns and tendencies influenced by differences in age, gender, occupation, income, duration of social media use, and frequency of visits.

Table 1. Respondent Description

Characteristics	Category	Amount	Percentage
Gender	Man	157	62,8%
	Woman	93	37,2%
Age	<18 Years	1	0,4%
	18- 24 Years	87	34,8%
	25-34 Years	127	50,8%
	35-45 Years	33	13,2%
	>45 Years	2	0,8%
	Businessman	69	27,6%
Work	Government employees	29	11,6%
	Private employees	87	34,8%
	Housewife	1	0,4%
	Students	63	25,2%
	Other	1	0,4%
Income	<Rp.1.000.000	27	10,8%
	Rp.1.500.000 – Rp.2.500.00	34	13,6%
	Rp.3.000.000 – Rp.4.000.000	79	31,6%
	>Rp.5000.000	110	44%
Regional Origin	Jabodetabek	105	42%
	Bandung raya	68	27,2%
	Jawa Barat	56	22,4%
	Other	21	8,4%
Duration of Using Social Media	<one hour	1	0,4%
	1-3 hours	26	10,4%
	3-5 hours	109	43,6%
	>5 hours	114	45,6%
Frequently Used Platforms	Instagram	88	35,2%
	Tiktok	147	58,8%
	Facebook	13	5,2%
	other	2	0,8%
Extreme type of activity	Rope Jumping	126	50,4%
	Rappelling	77	30,8%
	Both of them	47	18,8%
Frequency of visits	One time	191	76,4%
	2-3 times	46	18,4%
	4-5 times	12	4,8%
	>5 times	1	0,4%

Data source: research results, 2026

Based on Table 1, the respondents were predominantly male, with 157 people (62.8%), while

female respondents numbered 93 people (37.25%). The dominance of male respondents indicates that

extreme tourism tends to be more attractive to the male group, who psychologically have a higher tendency towards risky activities. Viewed by age group, the majority of respondents were in the 25-34 year range, with 127 people (50.8%), followed by the 18-24 year age group with 87 people (34.8%). Meanwhile, the 35-45 year age group only numbered 33 people (13.2%), and respondents aged over 45 were very minimal. These findings indicate that extreme tourism is more attractive to the productive age group, which is dominated by Generation Z and early millennials.

Based on occupation, the majority of respondents were private sector employees (87 people) (34.8%), followed by entrepreneurs (27.6%) and students (25.2%). This indicates that interest in extreme tourism is not limited to employment, but is quite strong among individuals with relatively stable mobility and purchasing power. In terms of income level, the majority of respondents have an income of more than IDR 5,000,000 per month (44%), followed by those with an income of IDR 3,000,000 – IDR 4,000,000 (31.6%). This data shows that extreme tourism tends to be of interest to individuals with middle to upper purchasing power, considering that this activity generally requires additional costs related to security.

Based on region of origin, most respondents

came from Greater Jakarta (42%), followed by Greater Bandung (27.2%) and other areas in West Java. This indicates that urban areas with high access to digital information significantly contribute to extreme tourism interest. The results showed that the intensity of respondents' social media use was relatively high. Most respondents spent more than 5 hours per day (45.6%), followed by 3-5 hours per day (43.6%). The high duration of social media use indicates the significant influence of digital content in shaping perceptions and travel decisions. Regarding the most frequently used platforms, TikTok dominated with 147 respondents (58.8%), followed by Instagram (35.2%). This finding confirms the shift in user preferences towards video-based platforms, which are considered more engaging and interactive.

In the type of extreme tourism activities, rope jumping is the activity most in demand by respondents (50.4%), followed by rappelling (30.8%), while 18.8 5 respondents are interested in both activities. Frequency of visits, the majority of respondents (76.4%) stated that they had only visited once, this shows that activities with strong visual elements and adrenaline have an attraction when displayed through social media and respondents are still at the exploration stage and seeking initial experiences in extreme tourism.

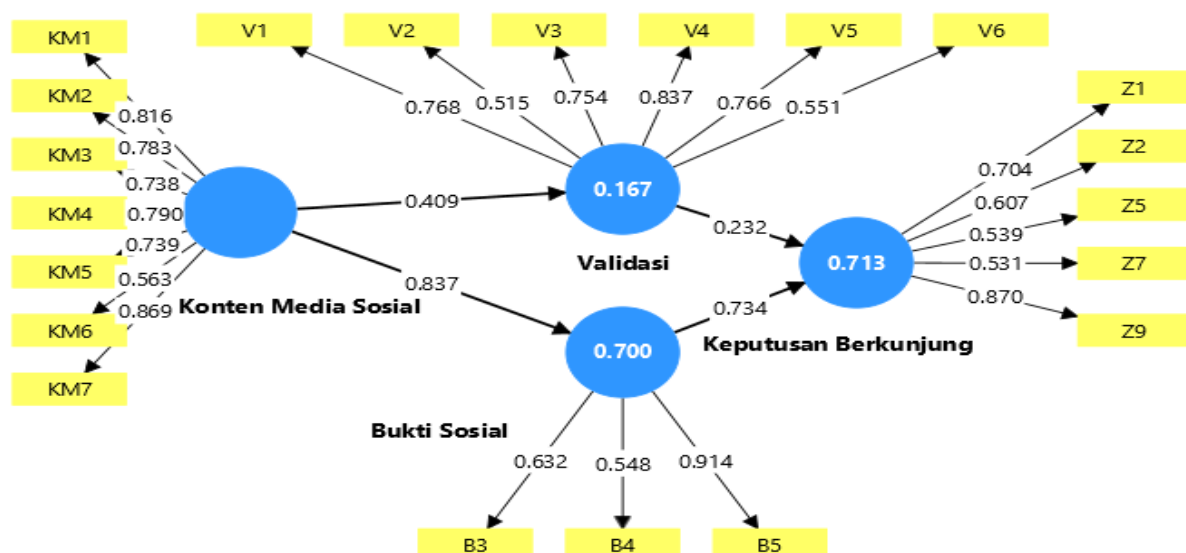


Figure 1. Measurement Model

Data source: smartpls data processing

Table: 2 Evaluation of Measurement Model

Variable	Item	Loading Factor	Reliability	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Content (X)	KM1	0,816	0,905	0,512	0,878
	KM2	0,783			
	KM3	0,738			
	KM4	0,790			
	KM5	0,739			
	KM6	0,563			
	KM7	0,869			
Validation (Y1)	V1	0,768	0,855	0,439	0,797
	V2	0,515			
	V3	0,754			
	V4	0,837			
	V5	0,766			
	V6	0,551			
Social proof (Y2)	B3	0,632	0,749	0,581	0,568
	B4	0,548			
	B5	0,914			
Participation Decision (Z)	Z1	0,704	0,790	0,503	0,684
	Z2	0,607			
	Z5	0,539			
	Z7	0,531			
	Z9	0,870			

Data source: smartpls data processing

The measurement model in this study has met the required validity and reliability criteria. The significant contribution of each indicator is evident from the loading factor value (>0.50). Construct validity is also confirmed by the AVE value greater than 0.50. There is one variable, Y1 which has an AVE value of 0.439. Although it is below the standard threshold of 0.50,

this value is still accepted for further analysis. This is based on the consideration that the Composite Reliability (CR) value for this variable is already very high (above 0.70), so that in terms of internal consistency, this variable remains stable in measuring the intended construct.

Table 3. Path Coefficient

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Result
Social proof- Participation Decision	0,734	0,736	0,047	15,591	0,000	Accepted
Social Media Content - Social proof	0,837	0,843	0,021	39,914	0,000	Accepted
Social Media Content -Validation	0,409	0,425	0,080	5,143	0,000	Accepted
Validation - Participation Decision	0,232	0,234	0,064	3,621	0,000	Accepted

Data source: smartpls data processing

The test results show that the Social Media Content variable has a significant effect on Social Proof, with a T-statistic of 39.914 and a p-value of 0.000. The Social Proof variable also has a significant

effect on the Participation Decision, with a T-statistic of 15.591 and a p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, Social Media Content has a significant effect on Validation ($T = 5.143$; $p = 0.000$). The Validation variable itself

is also shown to have a significant effect on the dependent/subsequent variable (based on the last row of data) with a T-statistic of 3.621 and a p-value of 0.000. These findings indicate that all relationships

between variables in this model have a positive and significant influence, with Social Media Content and Social Proof being very strong key factors in determining the Participation Decision.

Table 4. Indirect Effects

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Result
Social Media Content -> Social proof - >Participation Decision	0,614	0,621	0,044	13,817	0,000	Accepted
Social Media Content -> Validation -> Participation Decision	0,095	0,102	0,040	2,375	0,018	Accepted

Data source: smartpls data processing

The test results indicate that social media content has a significant indirect effect on participation decisions through social proof as a mediator, with a T-statistic of 13.817 and a p-value of 0.000. The magnitude of this indirect effect is indicated by the Original Sample value of 0.614. Furthermore, social media content was also shown to have a significant indirect effect on participation decisions through validation, with a T-statistic of 2.375 and a p-value of 0.018. Although significant, the mediation strength through validation (0.095) was smaller than that through social proof. This finding indicates that social proof plays a much more dominant role in bridging the relationship between social media content and user participation decisions than validation.

This study reveals a complex relationship between social media content and psychological factors that influence tourist behavior, particularly social validation and social proof, in shaping individual decisions to participate in extreme tourism activities in the Old Citarum Bridge and Sanghyang Kenit areas, West Bandung Regency. These findings indicate that validation and social proof do not operate independently, but rather reinforce each other in a feedback loop. Social proof, in the form of accumulated, documented positive experiences from previous participants, creates conditions conducive to validation, as a behavior that has been demonstrated by many others becomes socially safer to imitate. Conversely, the high level of validation received by a participant contributes to a growing pool of social proof that influences future participants, creating a

continuously strengthening social momentum. Although extreme tourism activities inherently carry a high level of physical risk, attractive and widely disseminated visual representations through social media have been shown to modify potential tourists' perceptions of the level of risk. The influence of social validation on travel decisions reinforces digital identity theory, which suggests that the desire for recognition through posting bold moments contributes to positive travel experiences. This phenomenon aligns with studies regarding the role of visuals in social media marketing, where the drive to be validated by online audiences becomes a motive in tourism participation (Peters, 2017). This phenomenon can be better understood through the framework of digital identity construction, where participation in extreme tourism and its documentation on social media serve as an impression management strategy. Individuals choose to participate in these high risk activities not solely for intrinsic motivation, but also because they possess high social signaling value, demonstrating courage and a lifestyle considered aspirational. This is further reinforced by the fear of missing out on the valuable experiences others are enjoying, further compelled individuals to make a swift decision to participate to avoid missing out on the opportunities for validation and social recognition that come with it.

Technically, even though the validation variable shows a mean value of extracted variance slightly below the standard threshold, this variable is still retained in the model because it has a very high level

of internal reliability. The most striking finding in this study is how social media content predominantly shapes the public's perception of social proof. This research confirms the study (L. Huang & Xu, 2023) which states that visual-based platforms such as TikTok and Instagram are very effective in influencing decisions through the narratives of other users' success. Visual narratives in social media content can transform technical information into powerful emotional appeal. In the context of extreme tourism, content depicting challenges and courage serves not only as a promotional medium but also as a tool for constructing reality for potential tourists regarding the experiences they will have. A key characteristic of extreme tourism is the high level of physical risk, which naturally creates psychological barriers for potential participants. However, the presence of social proof through interactions on social media can reduce these barriers. Decision-making is no longer linear, but rather cyclically influenced by interactions within the social media ecosystem.

In addition to its role in shaping social validation and social proof, social media content also has a direct influence on a person's decision to participate in extreme tourism activities. This direct influence arises because content presented through social media can shape an individual's perception, emotions, and interest in a tourism activity even before the individual receives social validation or sees social proof from other users. In the context of extreme tourism in the Citarium Tua Bridge and Sanghyang Kenit areas of West Bandung Regency, social media content serves as the primary source of information, introducing the destination and building appeal that can influence the decisions of potential tourists. This study found that social media content significantly influences tourists' participation decisions. These findings suggest that the quality of content uploaded by destination managers and previous visitors plays a significant role in influencing individual intention to visit. The more engaging and informative the content, the more likely a person is to consider participating in extreme tourism activities. This suggests that participation decisions are not always based on rational considerations of benefits and risks, but are also influenced by emotional responses that arise after consuming social media content. Effective content typically not only showcases the beauty of a destination but also builds a

strong narrative of the experience. For example, a video showing someone successfully overcoming an extreme travel challenge can create the impression that the activity is exciting and worth trying. This kind of narrative can increase the perception that the experience will provide satisfaction, pride, and a compelling story to share with others. As a result, individuals are encouraged to participate, even if they have never visited the location before. Furthermore, the visual nature of social media makes the persuasion process faster than conventional media. Social media users can obtain information in just a few seconds through images or short videos that appear on their homepages. Repeated exposure to extreme travel content can increase a person's level of familiarity with a particular destination. The more frequently an individual sees a destination featured on social media, the more likely they are to find it interesting and relevant to visit. This phenomenon demonstrates that social media content has the ability to directly influence participation decisions by increasing awareness and interest in tourist destinations.

In the context of extreme tourism, the direct influence of social media content becomes even more important because the activities offered generally carry a relatively high level of risk. Logically, this risk can be a deterrent for potential tourists. However, content that showcases positive experiences, the excitement of the activity, and the success of previous participants can reduce the perceived risk. When individuals see that the activity can be done safely and results in an enjoyable experience, any prior anxiety is alleviated. Thus, social media content plays a role in shaping more positive perceptions of extreme tourism activities, thus encouraging individuals to participate. The results of this study also indicate that the influence of social media content on participation decisions occurs not only through direct channels, but also through mediating mechanisms such as social validation and social proof. Nevertheless, the presence of direct influence indicates that social media content has its own power in influencing individual behavior. This means that before someone considers whether an activity is socially recognized or supported by the experiences of others, engaging content can already build interest and a desire to try.

These findings align with the evolving behavior of digital consumers, who increasingly rely on social

media as a source of inspiration when choosing activities. Many individuals now seek out travel resources on platforms like Instagram and TikTok before deciding to visit. The content displayed on these platforms is often the first factor that triggers the intention to participate. Therefore, content quality is a crucial aspect of extreme tourism destination marketing strategies. Furthermore, the direct influence of social media content on participation decisions can also be explained through the concept of experiential marketing. Content that showcases visitors' real-life experiences allows audiences to indirectly experience certain sensations. They feel as if they are sharing the challenges, excitement, and satisfaction depicted in the content. This virtual experience then creates positive expectations that encourage individuals to realize these experiences in the real world through their participation decisions. Based on the research results, it can be understood that social media content is the initial factor that triggers interest in extreme tourism. Once this interest is developed, social validation and social proof play a role in strengthening the individual's belief that the decision they are making is the right one. In other words, social media content serves as the initial trigger, while social validation and social proof serve as reinforcements, helping individuals feel more confident about participating. Overall, the findings of this study confirm that social media content plays a highly strategic role in influencing extreme tourism participation decisions. This influence occurs both directly and indirectly through social validation and social proof. Therefore, extreme tourism destination managers need to pay special attention to the quality of content published on social media. Content that is authentic, engaging, informative, and able to build emotional engagement will be more effective in increasing interest and participation decisions among potential tourists. By optimally utilizing social media, extreme tourism destinations can expand their marketing reach, increase visitation, and build a strong destination image amidst the increasingly competitive tourism industry.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that an individual's decision to participate in extreme tourism activities in the Old Citarum Bridge and Sanghyang Kenit areas of West

Bandung Regency is significantly influenced by the interaction between social media content and psychological motivators. The results indicate that content disseminated through social media plays a crucial role in shaping potential tourists' perceptions, particularly regarding social proof and social validation.

Of these two factors, social proof emerged as the most dominant determinant influencing the decision to participate. Visual documentation showcasing the experiences of other visitors who have successfully attempted activities such as rappelling or rope jumping has been shown to reduce perceived risk and increase potential tourists' confidence in attempting similar activities.

Overall, the research model used demonstrated a high level of predictive ability in explaining tourist behavior in the context of digital-era tourism. Therefore, tourism destination managers in West Bandung Regency are advised to optimize visual-based marketing strategies that emphasize the safety aspects of activities and showcase testimonials or positive experiences from visitors. This strategy is expected to strengthen the perception of social proof among potential tourists. For further research, it is recommended to consider the development of additional variables, such as risk perception and self-efficacy, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of tourist behavior in the context of extreme tourism.

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