

## Factors influencing tourist loyalty to Nusa Penida during the post-COVID-19 recovery period

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**Abstract:** This study examines the interplay between destination image, social media influencers, and tourist motivation in shaping tourist loyalty during the post-COVID-19 recovery period. Anchored in the context of Nusa Penida—a rapidly emerging coastal ecotourism destination in Bali—this research develops a behavioral loyalty framework relevant to nature-based tourism. Employing a quantitative design, data were collected through a structured online survey administered to 250 international tourists who had previously visited Nusa Penida. Given the unknown population size, quota sampling was applied, and data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that social media influencers exert the most substantial direct influence on tourist loyalty, followed by the mediating roles of destination image and tourist motivation. These results underscore the significance of digital storytelling, perceived destination quality, and emotional engagement in fostering revisit intentions, particularly among younger, digitally active travelers. Theoretically, this study contributes to the tourism behavior literature by integrating influencer dynamics into a multi-construct loyalty model, which explains 61.3% of the variance in tourist loyalty. Practically, the research offers strategic insights for destination marketers, emphasizing the importance of authentic influencer collaborations and emotionally resonant digital experiences to strengthen destination competitiveness. From a managerial perspective, the findings highlight the necessity of leveraging targeted digital engagement strategies. Future research should explore cross-generational and cross-cultural variations in tourist responses to influencer-driven content, as well as comparative platform effectiveness across different destination typologies.

**Keywords:** coastal tourism, destination image, post-pandemic tourism, social media influencer, tourist loyalty, tourist motivation

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### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted global tourism, forcing destinations to reassess the key factors that influence tourist behavior, particularly tourist loyalty. In the post-pandemic recovery phase, the ability to build and sustain loyalty has become critical for ensuring destination resilience. Coastal destinations, which traditionally rely on aesthetic appeal and recreational activities, must now navigate shifting travel motivations, heightened health awareness, and the increasing dominance of digital engagement. Contemporary tourists are no longer solely in pursuit of relaxation; instead, they are driven by emotional, psychological, and social experiences that shape their intention to revisit. Ecotourism research plays a pivotal role in analyzing these behavioral shifts and in promoting sustainable practices that balance visitor engagement with coastal resource conservation.

A growing body of literature highlights destination image as a fundamental construct in shaping tourists' cognitive and affective perceptions of place, particularly among environmentally conscious visitors (Chiu et al., 2014; Ky Vien, 2021). In the case of Bali Province, Nusa Penida

has cultivated a strong ecotourism image, enhanced through digital narratives and amplified by social media influencers (Luong, 2025). Empirical studies confirm that destination image plays a decisive role in travel decision-making and behavioral intentions (Pahrudin et al., 2021; Duan & Wu, 2024; Eitzenberger & Thimm, 2024; Gavurova et al., 2023; Gorji et al., 2023). Chi & Qu (2008) further emphasize that a positive image enhances the likelihood of repeat visitation. Importantly, the formation of image is not static but occurs throughout the entire tourist journey—pre-visit, on-site, and post-visit (Prayag et al., 2017). Building on this, recent studies highlight how social media influencers shape and amplify destination perceptions through curated, emotionally engaging content (Jaya & Prianthara, 2020; Jeong & Kim, 2019).

Social media influencers (SMIs) are increasingly positioned as critical agents in post-COVID-19 tourism recovery (Grover et al., 2022), particularly within digital marketing strategies (Fusté-Forné & Filimon, 2025). Their visually immersive and emotionally resonant content contributes not only to brand awareness but also to the enhancement of destination image and loyalty (Ye et al., 2011). Empirical studies show that influencer endorsements positively affect tourist intention and behavior. Wong & Lai (2022) found that influencers played a dominant role in restoring the image of destinations during the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, while (Sabilla & Zulestiana, 2022) demonstrate that destination image and influencers jointly affect loyalty intentions. Despite their growing visibility, empirical investigations on the direct influence of influencers on loyalty—especially in ecotourism settings—remain scarce. Existing scholarship tends to address these constructs in isolation, leaving a theoretical and empirical gap regarding their combined effect on tourist loyalty (Ajuhari et al., 2023; Viviers et al., 2013).

Beyond image and influencer dynamics, tourist motivation remains a central construct in explaining tourist behavior. Motivation captures both psychological and emotional triggers that prompt visitation and loyalty (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022; Rejón-Guardia et al., 2023). Classic frameworks such as Crompton (1979) push–pull model and Deci & Ryan (2015) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of travel. Push factors include novelty seeking, social interaction, and escape from routine, while pull factors relate to destination attributes such as natural landscapes and cultural events (Cohen, 1979; Kim et al., 2003). Empirical research supports the relationship between motivation and tourist loyalty, showing that motivated travelers are more likely to revisit and recommend a destination (Suardana & Kristianto, 2022). Moreover, motivation can mediate the effect of external stimuli—such as influencer content—on tourist behavior, reinforcing its relevance in behavioral loyalty models (Hawkins et al., 2015; Osti & Nava, 2020).

In addition, tourist loyalty itself is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019). While behavioral loyalty reflects actual return visits, attitudinal loyalty refers to psychological commitment and positive emotions toward a destination (Ermawati & Prihandono, 2018). Studies confirm that loyalty is influenced by satisfaction and post-purchase behavior (Petrick et al., 2001; Qu et al., 2011; Suardana et al., 2014). In the digital era, however, loyalty is shaped not only by on-site experiences but also by pre-visit perceptions—often influenced by influencer credibility and online engagement (Breiby & Slåtten, 2018; Sthapit, 2019).

Despite increasing digital engagement and evolving travel motivations, there remains a limited empirical understanding of how destination image, social media influencers, and tourist motivation jointly affect tourist loyalty, particularly within the context of post-pandemic coastal ecotourism destinations such as Nusa Penida. While the influence of destination image and motivation on loyalty has been well studied (Duan & Wu, 2024; Gursoy et al., 2014), the combined and mediating role of influencers in ecotourism remains underexplored. This study, therefore, addresses a critical gap by integrating digital influencer dynamics into a comprehensive loyalty framework. Specifically, it examines the direct and indirect effects of destination image, social media influencers, and tourist motivation on tourist loyalty in Nusa Penida. By integrating these constructs into a structural model, this research aims to generate empirical insights into the digital, perceptual, and emotional mechanisms that shape repeat visitation in the post-pandemic tourism landscape.

## Methodology

This study adopts a positivist approach using a quantitative survey method. The research was conducted in Nusa Penida, Klungkung Regency, Bali, selected due to its rapid growth in tourist visits during the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, with an average daily influx of 1,000–1,500 tourists and a repeated visitation rate of up to 40%. The target population consisted of international tourists who had previously visited Nusa Penida within the last three years.

Data collection was carried out through an online structured questionnaire distributed via international travel forums, social media groups focused on tourism (e.g., Facebook travel communities), and referrals from local tour operators. A quota sampling technique was employed due to the unknown population size of past visitors and to ensure regional diversity. Quotas were set based on geographic origin, including Australia, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. While quota sampling allowed for targeted representation, it also presented certain limitations, particularly the potential for selection bias and limited generalizability due to its non-probabilistic nature.

A total of 250 complete and valid responses were collected and used in the analysis. The data collection process was conducted over a ten-month period, from January to October 2024, encompassing both peak and off-peak tourist seasons to enhance the diversity and robustness of the responses. Responses were screened for completeness, internal consistency, and reliability. The sample size was considered sufficient for Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis, following (Hair et al., 2019).

To minimize social desirability bias, the survey was anonymous, and questions were neutrally phrased. Content validity was ensured through expert judgment, and all measurement items were adapted from previously validated scales in the tourism literature. Constructs measured included destination image, social media influencer, tourist motivation, and tourist loyalty. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 software, employing the SEM-PLS technique to evaluate both direct and indirect relationships among constructs. This method was selected for its predictive capability, suitability for complex behavioral models, and robustness to non-normal data distributions, making it appropriate for theory development in tourism research (Hussain et al., 2024; Nieves-Pavón et al., 2024).

The SEM-PLS technique was selected due to its high predictive power and its suitability for exploratory and theory-building research, especially when examining complex relationships among multiple latent constructs. Given the formative and reflective indicators in this study, along with a sample size of 250 and the potential for non-normal data distribution, SEM-PLS provides greater flexibility compared to CB-SEM. Moreover, in tourism behavior research, SEM-PLS is increasingly favored for modeling indirect effects and mediating relationships (Henseler et al., 2016).

## Results and Discussions

### Respondent Characteristics

The characteristics of respondents in this study were examined based on several variables, including country of origin, gender, age, occupation, frequency of visits, source of information, and length of stay in the Nusa Penida area. All respondents were international tourists who had previously visited Nusa Penida's tourist attractions during the new adaptation period or prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of country of origin, the largest proportion of respondents came from Australia (36%), followed by Asia (30%), Europe (23%), the Americas (16%), and Africa (5%). Regarding gender distribution, the sample consisted of 51% female and 49% male respondents, indicating a slightly higher representation of women among visitors to Nusa Penida. Age-wise, respondents were classified into four categories: the majority were aged 17–24 years (45%), followed by those aged 25–44 years (38%), and 45–64 years (17%). These figures suggest that Nusa Penida predominantly attracts younger tourists, consistent with the island's image as an adventurous and nature-oriented destination.

In terms of occupation, the largest group of respondents were students (51%), followed by private sector employees (37%), government employees (4%), homemakers (4%), military personnel (2%), and professionals/executives (2%). Visitation frequency data showed that 32% of respondents were first-time visitors, while 27% had visited more than three times, 23% had

visited twice, and 18% had visited three times. Regarding sources of information, most respondents learned about Nusa Penida through friends or family (52%), followed by social media (45%), and a small fraction through travel agents (3%). The majority of tourists stayed in Nusa Penida for one night (64%), with 28% staying for two nights, and 4% each staying for three nights or more than three nights. These patterns are consistent with the overall tourist profile of Nusa Penida, which primarily appeals to younger travelers engaged in short-duration, adventure-oriented trips.

### Measurement Model Evaluation

Validity testing in this study was conducted using the discriminant validity approach, supported by the evaluation of internal consistency reliability through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients. All constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the 0.70 threshold: destination image ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ), social media influencer ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ), motivation ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ), and loyalty ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ). Composite reliability ( $\rho_c$ ) values were also robust, with destination image ( $\rho_c = 0.88$ ), influencer ( $\rho_c = 0.85$ ), motivation ( $\rho_c = 0.88$ ), and loyalty ( $\rho_c = 0.91$ ), indicating strong internal consistency across all latent constructs. The results confirm that each construct met the criteria for both convergent and discriminant validity. The measurement model analysis demonstrated that all indicators significantly reflected their respective latent variables, as detailed in Table 1. These findings provide empirical support for the adequacy of the measurement model in capturing the underlying constructs used in this research.

**Table 1.** Statistical feasibility of construct measurements

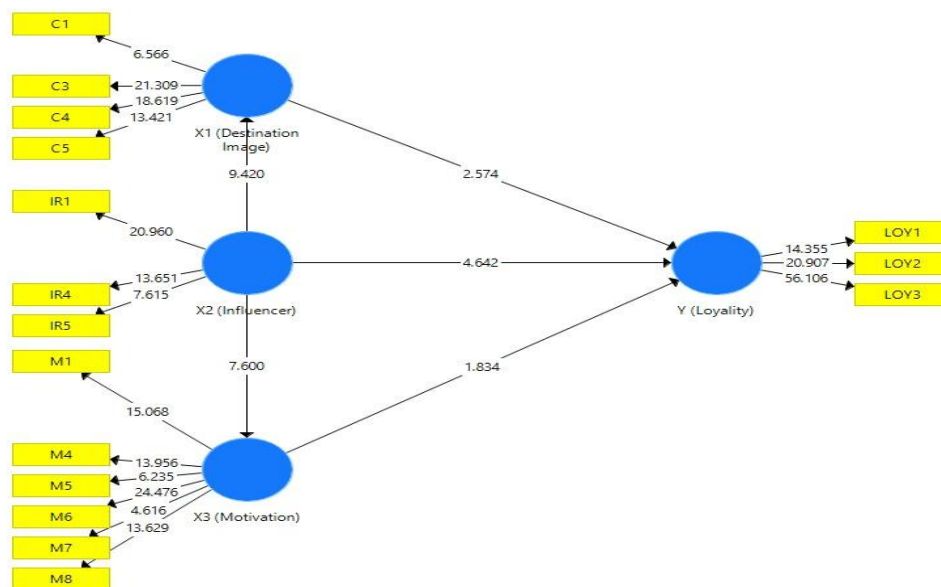
Construct	Mean	O	(SM)	STD	O/STDEV	CR	AVE
Destination Image						0.93	0.50
Quality of infrastructure and supporting facilities	3.72	0.71	0.69	0.10	6.95		
Exotic appeal of the destination	4.26	0.89	0.88	0.04	19.17		
Comfort and safety	4.00	0.87	0.86	0.05	16.71		
Quality of the travel experience	4.28	0.76	0.76	0.06	12.62		
Social Media Influencer						0.95	0.66
Engaging visual content on social media	4.60	0.71	0.69	0.10	6.95		
Up-to-date travel information provided	4.22	0.89	0.88	0.04	19.17		
Intention to share influencer content with others	4.44	0.87	0.86	0.05	16.71		
Motivation						0.93	0.77
Building friendships with like-minded individuals	4.61	0.81	0.80	0.05	13.61		
Escaping daily routines	3.49	0.73	0.71	0.11	6.32		
Engaging and stimulating activities	4.44	0.85	0.85	0.03	23.89		
Success in favored tourism activities	4.03	0.73	0.60	0.14	4.56		
Feeling connected with nature	4.37	0.70	0.70	0.05	12.97		
Demonstrating prestige or competition	3.13	0.81	0.80	0.05	13.60		
Loyalty						0.92	0.67
Enjoyable experience during the visit	4.55	0.87	0.86	0.06	14.40		
Intention to revisit Nusa Penida	4.18	0.85	0.85	0.04	21.15		
Willingness to recommend the destination to others	4.49	0.93	0.93	0.01	54.45		

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Table 1 presents the indicators used to assess construct validity, with all outer loadings exceeding the threshold value of 0.70, indicating strong and reliable relationships between the observed variables and their respective latent constructs. The average scores for each indicator also reflect positive respondent perceptions across constructs.

The model's overall fit was evaluated using several fit indices. According to established criteria, a model is considered to have an acceptable fit when the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is less than 0.10 and a perfect fit when SRMR is below 0.08. The Normed Fit Index (NFI), which ranges between 0 and 1, was also employed to assess model fit. Based on the results (SRMR = 0.10; d\_uls = 1.37; d\_g = 1.15; Chi-Square = 503.37; NFI = 0.61), all variables were confirmed as significant within the model at the 0.05 level. The overall model explained 61.3% of the variance, indicating a moderately good fit.

Predictive relevance was assessed using the Q<sup>2</sup> value, which evaluates the model's capacity to predict observed data. The Q<sup>2</sup> values for each endogenous variable were as follows: destination image = 0.31 (31.3%), motivation = 0.25 (24.9%), and loyalty = 0.46 (46.6%). All Q<sup>2</sup> values exceeded zero, confirming that the model possesses adequate predictive relevance. The next step in the analysis involved evaluating the structural model through path analysis, as illustrated in Figure 1.



(Source: Primary Data, 2024)

**Figure 1.** Structural model of tourist loyalty

Following the completion of the path analysis, a bootstrapping procedure was performed to assess the significance levels and probability estimates of the direct, indirect, and total effects among the constructs. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2 (direct effects), Table 3 (indirect effects), and Table 4 (total effects).

**Table 2.** Direct effects of exogenous variables on endogenous variables

Hypothesis	Var. Exogen → Endogen	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	STDEV	t Statistics	p Values
H1	X1 (Destination Image) → Y (Loyalty)	0.24	0.10	0.10	2.43	0.01
H2	X2 (Influencer) → X1 (Destination Image)	0.72	0.08	0.08	9.08	0.00

H3	X2 (Influencer) (Motivation)	->	X3	0.71	0.09	0.09	7.93	0.00
H4	X2 (Influencer) (Loyalty)	->	Y	0.48	0.10	0.10	4.52	0.00
H5	X3 (Motivation) (Loyalty)	->	Y	0.14	0.07	0.07	1.90	0.05

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on Table 2, five direct relationships between the variables were identified, tested at a 5% significance level (critical t-value = 1.98) with corresponding p-values less than 0.05.

H1: The influence of destination image (X1) on tourist loyalty (Y) was found to be positive, with an original sample estimate of 0.24, a t-statistic of 2.43 (> 1.98), and a p-value of 0.01 (< 0.05). Thus, destination image exerts a statistically significant and positive effect on tourist loyalty.

H2: The effect of social media influencers (X2) on destination image (X1) was also positive, with an estimate of 0.72, a t-statistic of 9.08 (> 1.98), and a p-value of 0.00 (< 0.05). This indicates that social media influencers significantly enhance the perceived image of the destination.

H3: The influence of social media influencers (X2) on tourist motivation (X3) was confirmed with an estimate of 0.71, a t-statistic of 7.93 (> 1.98), and a p-value of 0.00 (< 0.05), demonstrating a strong and statistically significant relationship.

H4: The direct effect of social media influencers (X2) on loyalty (Y) yielded an estimate of 0.48, a t-statistic of 4.52 (> 1.98), and a p-value of 0.00 (< 0.05), suggesting that influencers play a pivotal role in shaping tourist loyalty.

H5: The effect of motivation (X3) on loyalty (Y) was positive with an estimate of 0.14, a t-statistic of 1.90, and a p-value of 0.05. Although the t-value is marginally below the critical threshold, the p-value confirms the relationship as statistically significant at the 5% level, indicating that tourist motivation contributes positively to loyalty.

In addition to the direct effects, the model also reveals several indirect pathways through which exogenous variables exert influence on endogenous variables, as presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Indirect effects of exogenous variables on endogenous variables

Hypothesis	Var. Exogen → Endogen	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	STDEV	t Statistics	p Values
H6	X2 (Influencer) -> X1 (Destination Image) -> Y (Loyalty)	0.17	0.17	0.07	2.26	0.02
H7	X2 (Influencer) -> X3 (Motivation) -> Y (Loyalty)	0.10	0.10	0.05	1.84	0.06

Source: Primary Data, 2024

H6: The indirect effect of social media influencers (X2) on tourist loyalty (Y) through destination image (X1) is positive and statistically significant, with an original sample estimate of 0.17, a t-statistic of 2.26 (> 1.98), and a p-value of 0.02 (< 0.05). This indicates that destination image partially mediates the relationship between influencers and tourist loyalty. Since both the direct and indirect effects are positive and significant, the mediation model is classified as consistent and complementary.

H7: The indirect effect of social media influencers (X2) on tourist loyalty (Y) through tourist motivation (X3) is also positive, with an estimate of 0.10. However, the t-statistic is 1.84 (slightly below the 1.98 threshold), and the p-value is 0.06 (> 0.05), indicating that the indirect effect is not statistically significant. Given that the direct effect of influencers on loyalty is significant while the indirect effect through motivation is not, this represents a case of full mediation. Nevertheless, because both the direct and indirect coefficients are positive, the overall mediation structure remains consistent in direction and exhibits a positive influence.

**Table 4.** Total effects of exogenous variables on endogenous variables

Var. Exogen → Endogen	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	STDEV	t Statistics	p Values
X1 (Destination Image) -> Y (Loyalty)	0.24	0.24	0.10	2.43	0.01
X2 (Influencer) -> X1 (Destination Image)	0.72	0.72	0.08	9.08	0.00
X2 (Influencer) -> X3 (Motivation)	0.71	0.70	0.09	7.93	0.00
X2 (Influencer) -> Y (Loyalty)	0.77	0.77	0.05	14.60	0.00
X3 (Motivation) -> Y (Loyalty)	0.14	0.15	0.07	1.90	0.05

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on the results presented in Table 4, the total effects indicate the cumulative influence of exogenous variables on endogenous constructs. Among all relationships examined, social media influencers exhibit the strongest total effect on tourist loyalty, with a coefficient of 0.77, surpassing the effects of both destination image and motivation. This finding provides robust empirical evidence that influencers play a dominant role in shaping tourists' intention to revisit, highlighting their strategic importance in post-pandemic destination marketing and loyalty-building efforts.

## Discussions

This study reveals that destination image, social media influencers, and tourist motivation are significant predictors of tourist loyalty in the context of post-COVID-19 coastal tourism. Among these factors, social media influencers emerged as the most dominant, influencing tourist loyalty both directly and indirectly. This finding aligns with recent literature highlighting the growing influence of digital opinion leaders in shaping travel behavior, particularly through emotionally engaging and visually persuasive content (De Veirman et al., 2017; Han et al., 2025; Nandagiri & Philip, 2018).

The positive and significant effect of destination image supports prior studies indicating that tourists are more inclined to revisit destinations perceived as safe, aesthetically appealing, and emotionally resonant (Chi & Qu, 2008; Geyer et al., 2024). This finding also reinforces earlier destination image models that link perceived image to behavioral intentions, including loyalty and satisfaction. As Chen & Tsai (2007) noted, the image is composed of both cognitive (e.g., infrastructure and cleanliness) and affective (e.g., emotional impressions) components. In the case of Nusa Penida, the island's dramatic coastal landscapes, unique marine biodiversity, and rapid transformation from a remote fishing village to a digital tourism hotspot have helped shape a strong and favorable image. Moreover, the blend of traditional Balinese life and modern tourism infrastructure—often showcased by influencers—has enhanced the island's emotional appeal and brand authenticity among tourists (Gorji et al., 2023; Luong, 2025).

Although tourist motivation showed a positive direct effect on loyalty, the statistical significance was marginal. This finding contrasts with several previous studies (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022; Suardana & Kristianto, 2022) which found a stronger relationship. One possible explanation is the dominance of first-time or short-stay visitors among the sample, which may have diluted the motivational impact on loyalty formation. Moreover, this suggests that motivation alone is not a sufficient driver of loyalty unless supported by external stimuli such as emotional engagement through influencer content or a strongly perceived destination image. This emphasizes the increasingly central role of digital narrative in reinforcing internal motivations.

Tourist motivation also plays an essential role in loyalty formation, particularly through push factors such as the desire to escape routine, seek adventure, and connect with nature. emphasize that tourist motivation is influenced not only by rational factors but also by personal values, emotions, and past experiences. While its direct effect on loyalty was positive, the magnitude was weaker compared to other variables. This suggests that motivation alone may not be sufficient to drive loyalty unless complemented by external influences like destination image or persuasive digital content. Importantly, motivation demonstrated a meaningful mediating role between influencers and loyalty, indicating that emotionally resonant influencer content can

stimulate deeper internal drives that reinforce revisit intentions (Alves et al., 2016; Carvache-Franco et al., 2022; Lee, 2009).

A critical aspect that emerged from the respondent profile is the demographic composition dominated by younger tourists aged 17–24, many of whom are students. This segment represents digital natives who are highly responsive to social media and influencer content. Previous studies affirm that younger tourists often consider influencers as trustworthy and aspirational sources of travel recommendations, especially when content is visually immersive and emotionally authentic (Seric et al., 2024); Bastrygina et al., 2024). The influencer-driven content that aligns with destination values can significantly enhance loyalty. This generational trend may explain why social media influencers demonstrated the strongest total effect on loyalty in this study.

Furthermore, the analysis supports a complementary mediation model, wherein both destination image and tourist motivation act as pathways through which influencer content strengthens loyalty. This synergy suggests that influencer strategies are most effective when they not only attract attention but also enhance perceptions of destination quality and tap into tourists' emotional and psychological aspirations (Wong et al., 2022; (Nieves-Pavón et al., 2024; Šerić et al., 2024)

Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating influencer-based marketing into the behavioral loyalty framework. It offers an expanded model for understanding tourist decision-making in the digital era, particularly by acknowledging digital opinion leaders as a crucial factor shaping perception, motivation, and commitment. The validated model explains 63% of the variance in tourist loyalty, underscoring the robustness of a multi-construct approach in explaining post-crisis travel behavior. It affirms that in the digital era, tourist loyalty is shaped not just by tangible experiences at the destination, but also by the narratives and emotional frames presented online before the trip even begins (Assaker et al., 2011).

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of quota sampling may limit the generalizability of findings across broader demographics, especially older tourists or those with limited social media exposure. The reliance on self-reported intentions rather than observed behavior also poses a constraint on behavioral inference. Moreover, the study focused solely on international tourists and did not explore the perceptions of domestic visitors, who may differ in their digital consumption patterns.

Practically, the findings offer strategic insights for destination marketers and tourism stakeholders. Influencer partnerships should be carefully curated to ensure content authenticity, alignment with target market values, and emotional resonance. Meanwhile, efforts to maintain and enhance the destination image through sustainable development, improved infrastructure, and consistent digital storytelling will further reinforce positive tourist perceptions and encourage repeat visitation.

Finally, considering the youthful demographic trend of Nusa Penida visitors, future marketing strategies should be tailored to digitally engaged audiences while remaining inclusive of other age groups. Further research is recommended to compare generational responses to influencer-driven tourism marketing and to evaluate the influence of different social media platforms across diverse tourist segments.

## Conclusions

This study identifies destination image, social media influencers, and tourist motivation as key determinants of tourist loyalty in the context of post-pandemic coastal tourism. Among these, social media influencers exert the most substantial influence, both directly and through their effect on motivation and destination image. This finding underscores the rising importance of digital narratives in shaping tourist behavior—especially among younger travelers who engage deeply with visually rich and emotionally compelling content.

From a theoretical perspective, the study advances the loyalty framework by integrating influencer-based marketing as a behavioral determinant. This integration provides a broader understanding of how digital trust, perceived destination value, and internal motivations jointly shape loyalty in the era of digital travel decision-making. Practically, the findings suggest that destination marketers should prioritize partnerships with authentic influencers who reflect the values and aspirations of their target audiences. Enhancing destination image through



sustainability, accessibility, and emotionally resonant storytelling is also critical for fostering repeat visits.

However, this study has several limitations. The use of quota sampling may introduce selection bias and restrict generalizability beyond the sample. Additionally, the dominance of younger respondents (aged 17–24) may limit insights into broader age demographics. The model was also tested in a single destination Nusa Penida, so contextual factors may not fully reflect other tourism settings.

Future research should consider comparative studies across different generational cohorts and destinations, using longitudinal designs to observe shifts in loyalty over time. Investigating the influence of platform-specific content (e.g., Instagram vs. TikTok) or cross-cultural differences in influencer perception could also offer more nuanced insights. In sum, this research contributes both theoretically and practically by framing social media influencers not merely as marketing tools but as agents of behavioral change within a comprehensive loyalty model. It emphasizes the critical interplay between digital engagement, emotional connection, and sustainable destination branding in fostering enduring tourist loyalty.

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