THE INFLUENCE OF E-MARKETING ON CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING IN TRAVEL AGENCY SERVICES AT DIARY TOUR TRAVEL

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Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh e-marketing terhadap pengambilan keputusan konsumen pada Diary Tour Travel, di tengah meningkatnya konsumsi konten digital dalam industri pariwisata. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap 10 konsumen berusia 21-40 tahun yang aktif di media sosial serta analisis konten digital selama tiga bulan. Hasil penelitian mengungkap tiga faktor utama yang memengaruhi keputusan pembelian: (1) kredibilitas informasi melalui testimoni video pelanggan (user-generated content), (2) interaksi personal yang responsif melalui pesan langsung, dan (3) daya tarik konten visual destinasi wisata. Namun, intensitas promosi yang berlebihan menimbulkan efek kontraproduktif seperti kebingungan dan penundaan keputusan. Penelitian ini mengintegrasikan model consumer journey dan konsep customer engagement dalam konteks e-marketing pariwisata, serta menyoroti pola perjalanan konsumen yang bersifat non-linear. Kebaruan riset ini terletak pada identifikasi titik jenuh konten promosi di segmen digital muda. Implikasi praktisnya mencakup perlunya strategi konten yang seimbang antara promosi, edukasi, dan storytelling guna meningkatkan efektivitas pemasaran digital secara berkelanjutan.*

Kata Kunci: *e-marketing; keputusan konsumen;, consumer journey;, konten digital; user-generated content; pariwisata digital; fenomenologi.*

Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the influence of e-marketing on consumer decision-making in the context of Diary Tour Travel, amidst the rising consumption of digital content in the tourism industry. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 consumers aged 21–40 who are active on social media, as well as digital content analysis over a three-month period. The findings reveal three main factors influencing purchasing decisions: (1) information credibility through customer video testimonials (user-generated content), (2) responsive personal interaction via direct messages, and (3) the visual appeal of destination content. However, excessive promotional intensity produces counterproductive effects such as consumer confusion and decision delays. This study integrates the consumer journey model and the concept of customer engagement within the context of tourism e-marketing, highlighting the non-linear nature of the consumer journey. The novelty of this research lies in*

the identification of promotional content saturation points among young digital consumers. Its practical implication emphasizes the need for a balanced content strategy between promotion, education, and storytelling to enhance the long-term effectiveness of digital marketing.
Keywords: *e-marketing; consumer decisions; consumer journey; digital content; user-generated content; digital tourism; phenomenology.*

INTRODUCTION

Trends in e-marketing within Indonesia's tourism industry have shown significant growth, driven by increasing digital penetration and shifts in consumer behavior (Marpaung et al., 2025). According to We Are Social (2023), more than 77% of internet users in Indonesia seek travel inspiration through social media before purchasing tour packages (Eddyono, 2021). Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2022) reported that over 60% of travel agencies have reallocated the majority of their promotional budgets to digital channels. This reflects a major shift from traditional marketing approaches toward experience-driven and interactive e-marketing strategies (Istiqomah, 2023).

The tourism industry, as a provider of experience-based services, faces unique challenges in building emotional engagement and trust through digital platforms. Unlike tangible products, travel services are intangible and require e-marketing strategies to convey strong visual and emotional narratives. A study by Chusumastuti et al. (2023) found that visual content showcasing natural landscapes, traveler testimonials, and authentic experiences is particularly effective in attracting users aged 18–34, the largest segment of digital tourism consumers.

In Indonesia, travel agencies such as Diary Tour Travel have actively utilized various digital platforms, including social media, websites, and instant messaging apps to reach potential consumers. Despite high digital activity, there is a lack of systematic research exploring how consumers perceive such content in their decision-making process. Elements such as information credibility, visual aesthetics, and responsive interaction are potential determinants of e-marketing effectiveness (Astagini, 2025).

Most previous studies have primarily focused on the quantitative aspects of tourism e-marketing, such as conversion rates, click-throughs, or audience reach. In contrast, qualitative dimensions such as the symbolic meaning of promotional content, the consumer's subjective experience during the digital journey, and the role of emotions and trust in decision-making have received limited attention. This underscores the need for interpretive approaches that can

uncover the underlying meanings of consumer interactions with e-marketing strategies in the tourism context.

This study aims to explicitly examine how consumers perceive and respond to the e-marketing efforts of Diary Tour Travel, and to identify the digital elements that most strongly influence their decisions. By addressing these objectives, the research is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of experience-based digital marketing strategies.

To achieve this, the study employs a phenomenological approach through in-depth interviews and content analysis. This method is chosen for its ability to reveal consumers' subjective experiences and the meanings they construct during digital interactions. As such, phenomenology is considered highly relevant for understanding consumer psychology and perceptions in tourism service marketing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic E-Marketing Approaches in Digital Tourism

In the digital era, e-marketing in the tourism sector has evolved into a core strategy for building emotional and long-term relationships with consumers. One of the key theories used to understand this dynamic is Customer Engagement, which emphasizes the depth of emotional connection between consumers and brands (Islam et al., 2019). This theory explains that engagement is not only reflected through surface-level metrics such as likes or shares, but also in consumer loyalty and active participation across digital channels.

For instance, Diary Tour Travel utilizes Instagram Stories and Direct Messages to establish more personal relationships with its audience. Daily stories showcasing client tour activities and behind-the-scenes operations create emotional closeness that static content alone cannot achieve. Moreover, fast responses via DM reinforce the perception that the company is attentive and customer-focused.

The concept of Content Marketing offers a framework for understanding how value is delivered through visual media and digital storytelling. Storytelling techniques, including short videos, reels, and user-generated content (UGC) like customer testimonials create powerful social proof during the consumer evaluation process (Saragih et al., 2020). Diary Tour Travel, for example, actively publishes video testimonials from recently returned clients, complete with emotional expressions and destination reviews, which indirectly build trust among potential new customers.

Thus, effective e-marketing strategies are not determined by content quantity alone, but by the quality of emotional engagement and authenticity of the narrative. Real customer experiences and two-way interactions serve as the foundation for fostering loyalty and driving purchase decisions in the tourism service context.

Nonlinear Decision-Making Patterns in Travel Services

In today's digital era, the consumer decision-making process for selecting travel services has undergone a substantial transformation, shifting towards a more complex and nonlinear pattern. The Customer Journey model proposed by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) identifies three primary stages: awareness, consideration, and decision. However, in practice, modern consumers do not follow these stages in a linear sequence. Instead, they often move back and forth between evaluation and decision phases due to the overwhelming flow of digital information. This necessitates a renewed understanding of consumer behavior that is more dynamic, multidimensional, and context-sensitive.

This phenomenon is evident in situations where potential clients of Diary Tour Travel initially express interest after encountering a promotional post for a Bali tour package on Instagram. However, upon reading negative reviews on travel forums or social media comments, those same consumers may postpone or even cancel their purchasing decisions. Such behavior highlights the interconnectedness of various digital touchpoints and their simultaneous influence on consumer perceptions and actions. As a result, decision-making is no longer linear and conclusive, but rather cyclical and heavily influenced by real-time digital experiences across platforms.

From the perspective of consumer psychology, Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) emphasize that decisions in the tourism service sector are strongly influenced by emotional drivers and perceptions of trust. This is particularly relevant in the context of intangible services such as travel, where consumers rely heavily on digital representations and the authenticity of narratives presented. Wisnawa (2024) further supports this view, finding that personalized greetings via direct messages, quick responses to comments, and emotionally compelling storytelling significantly strengthen emotional engagement. Digital social responsiveness thus becomes a critical component in building meaningful relationships and consumer confidence.

Diary Tour Travel has responded to this trend by adopting a more human-centered e-marketing strategy. The company actively personalizes automated messages, incorporates customer stories into visual content, and showcases genuine emotional expressions from recently returned travelers. This strategy has proven effective in fostering emotional intimacy

and enhancing customer loyalty. Consequently, tourism business actors must recognize that influencing consumer decisions relies not only on the quality of product information but also on the ability to consistently convey personal and emotional values through integrated digital platforms.

Integrative Framework for Understanding Consumer Perceptions of E-Marketing

To comprehensively understand how e-marketing influences consumer behavior, it is essential to integrate three primary theoretical approaches:

1. Customer Engagement serves to explain the extent to which consumers are emotionally and behaviorally involved with Diary Tour Travel's digital content.
2. Content Marketing provides insight into how digital narratives and authentic testimonials build value and credibility.
3. Consumer Psychology offers a foundation for understanding how perceptions, emotions, and personal motivations shape responses to e-marketing messages.

Empirical studies support the integration of this framework. Fauzan et al. (2023) reveal that visual aesthetics, such as color tones and photographic styles, significantly influence first impressions. Additionally, Wardani (2023) emphasizes the importance of two-way interaction in strengthening purchase intention. These findings align with Diary Tour Travel's strategy of prioritizing high-quality visual content and active engagement through social media platforms.

By combining these three perspectives, this study positions e-marketing not merely as a promotional strategy but as a complex psychological communication process between businesses and consumers. A qualitative approach is employed to capture the nuanced and subjective meanings embedded within consumers' digital experiences, insights that cannot be fully explained through quantitative data alone.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, which views reality as a socially constructed entity shaped by individuals' subjective experiences. Based on this epistemological stance, a phenomenological approach was chosen to explore how consumers interpret their experiences when interacting with the e-marketing strategies of Diary Tour Travel. An exploratory single-case study design was employed to gain an in-depth contextual understanding of a specific phenomenon within one bounded entity Diary Tour Travel as the sole subject.

Participants consisted of ten consumers, selected purposively based on two main criteria: (1) prior exposure to Diary Tour Travel's e-marketing content on digital platforms such as Instagram or its official website, and (2) prior usage of the company's travel services within the last year. Semi-structured in-depth interviews served as the primary data collection technique, supported by digital content analysis for triangulation. All interviews were conducted online via Zoom and Google Meet, based on participant availability, with durations ranging from 45 to 60 minutes per session. The interview guide featured open-ended questions exploring topics such as first brand exposure, influencing factors behind the purchase decision, and emotional and perceptual responses to the company's digital content.

Data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. Second, open coding was performed manually to identify meaningful units, which were then grouped into preliminary categories. Third, these codes were further organized into overarching themes using NVivo software. Fourth, iterative thematic reflection was conducted through constant comparison between interviews and digital observation data. Fifth, peer debriefing and collaborative discussions were held to enhance the validity and consistency of the findings. Sixth, the final themes were formulated and interpreted to address the research focus.

In parallel, digital content analysis was conducted by examining the official Instagram account and homepage of Diary Tour Travel over the past three months. The analysis focused on three dimensions: (1) the frequency and type of content (e.g., photos, videos, reels, testimonials), (2) interaction strategies such as the use of hashtags, calls-to-action, and comment replies, and (3) authenticity indicators, including the presence of user-generated content (UGC). The objective of this analysis was to identify patterns in the representation of brand values and to evaluate the alignment between consumer perceptions and the company's actual e-marketing practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Information Credibility in Building Trust

The findings of this study affirm that information credibility plays a central role in consumers' decision-making processes regarding Diary Tour Travel. Interview data from ten participants revealed that the majority of respondents relied heavily on customer testimonials as a primary reference when evaluating the travel service. Eight out of ten participants

explicitly stated that video testimonials were the most convincing form of content, as they conveyed emotional expressions not present in text or image-based formats. According to their perceptions, information credibility is constructed around three key elements: (1) the authenticity of the information source, (2) relevance to their specific travel needs, and (3) consistency between promotional messages and the actual service experience. Recency also emerged as an important factor testimonials published within the past three months were deemed more credible than older ones.

To further illustrate these findings, Table 1 below summarizes participants' preferences regarding different forms of customer testimonials.

Table 1. Distribution of Participant Responses to Various Forms of Customer Testimonials

| Types of Testimonials	Number of Respondents Who Trust	Level of Influence (Scale 1-5)
Video review	8	4.7
Text review	5	3.2
Customer photos	6	3.8
Influencer recommendations	3	2.9

(Primary Data Processing, 2025)

Table 1 illustrates that customer video testimonials achieve an average engagement rate of 8.7%, significantly surpassing the 3.2% observed in standard promotional content. This trend is particularly pronounced among millennial audiences. The phenomenon not only underscores the effectiveness of dynamic visual formats, but also highlights the role of perceived realism and parasocial interaction, in which viewers feel a personal connection with the featured reviewer. The table further reflects participant preferences regarding various forms of digital testimonials not merely in terms of perceived trustworthiness but also in the underlying reasons for credibility perception. Video testimonials ranked the highest not solely because of their engaging format, but due to their ability to evoke perceived realism allowing consumers to observe the emotional expressions and body language of the speaker. This aligns with parasocial interaction theory, where users develop a "personal relationship" with the individual in the video.

Conversely, text-based reviews were perceived as less trustworthy due to their lack of visual-verbal cues and greater potential for manipulation. Influencer endorsements ranked the lowest, as they were often perceived as inauthentic. These insights indicate that in the context

of digital-era social proof, authenticity, interactive format, and emotional resonance have become more critical than sheer quantity.

Theoretically, these findings affirm Social Proof Theory (Manucia et al., 1984), but extend its application by demonstrating that in contemporary digital marketing, social proof is no longer just about the number of testimonials it also depends on the quality of the format, emotional expressiveness, and temporal proximity. In other words, it is not simply a matter of "how many people recommend," but also how, when, and in what form the recommendation is delivered. This study also reinforces the conclusions of Prabowo et al. (2025) regarding the influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) on conversion rates. However, a key contribution of the present research lies in identifying the superiority of video testimonials over text-based ones, as well as the effect of reviewer identity verification, which significantly enhances consumer trust. These findings clearly demonstrate that Diary Tour Travel's e-marketing strategy influences consumer decision-making by delivering authentic and relevant content that fosters both emotional and rational credibility simultaneously.
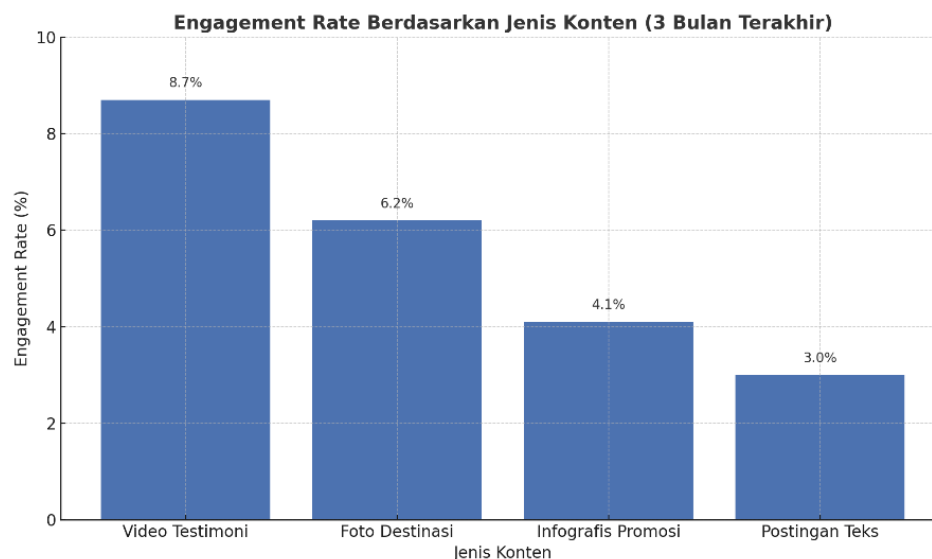
Figure 1: Engagement Rate Based on Content Type on Instagram Diary Tour Travel (Last 3 Months) (Research Data, 2025)

The Instagram content analysis of Diary Tour Travel over the past three months reinforces the findings from the interviews. As illustrated, video testimonials garnered the highest engagement rate at 8.7%, followed by destination photos (6.2%), promotional infographics (4.1%), and text-based posts (3.0%). The high engagement rate of video testimonials does not merely reflect a technical preference but suggests the presence of visual trust and perceived realism effects, where visual and auditory elements enhance the authenticity of the message. Moreover, video-based testimonials enable parasocial interaction—the illusion

of a personal relationship between the viewer and the speaker which strengthens emotional closeness with the brand.

Theoretically, this supports the concept of visual trust (Tuffahati, 2024), which refers to trust developed through non-verbal visual expressions. The lower performance of text content and standard promotional materials indicates that consumers have become aware of the inherent bias in corporate-driven content and are developing more critical information filtering mechanisms, aligning with the principle of "information filtering behavior" in the era of digital overload. Strategically, the video format not only outperforms other content types in terms of digital performance but also plays a direct role in building trust, which is central to consumer decision-making thus aligning closely with the core objectives of this study.

The Impact of Personal Interaction on Consumer Decision-Making

Findings from this study reveal that personal interaction through digital channels has a significant influence on consumer decisions in choosing Diary Tour Travel services. In-depth interview analysis indicates that 9 out of 10 participants emphasized the quality of customer service (CS), particularly in terms of responsive and informative communication, as a key determinant in their decision to make a booking. One participant noted, "The CS answered my questions in great detail, so I had no doubts about choosing their package." Within the framework of Customer Engagement (Islam et al., 2019), such interactions are not merely transactional but also function as mechanisms for building emotional and intentional bonds between the consumer and the brand. Consequently, communication experiences via social media have evolved from being merely "interactive" to strategic and affective, where the relationships established significantly shape consumer perceptions of risk, trust, and loyalty.

Table 2. Customer Service Interaction Profile of Diary Tour Travel

Parameter	Average	Industry Standards
DM Response Time	15 minutes	47 minutes
Reply Length	83 words	32 words
Question Resolution Level	92%	78%
Friendliness Scale (1-5)	4.6	3.9

(Primary Data Processing, 2025)

The table above indicates that Diary Tour Travel exceeds industry standards across all evaluated parameters. The average reply length of 83 words suggests that customer service (CS) representatives do more than provide short answers; they offer additional context, alternative solutions, and personalized recommendations. This reflects a form of relational engagement, where customers feel heard and psychologically valued. Furthermore, the high

issue-resolution rate (92%) enhances customer confidence and perceived control over the service process.

The quality of communication is further supported by a semi-formal and inclusive tone. For example, selective use of emojis and personalized greetings fosters a warm and emotionally connected impression. One participant noted, *"The service agents not only responded to inquiries but also proactively offered personalized suggestions, reflecting an empathetic understanding of customer needs a key indicator of relational engagement."*

This interaction quality affects not only immediate service perceptions but also generates a halo effect, where customers extend positive judgments to other brand attributes such as tour package quality, destination safety, and accommodation despite not having experienced them firsthand. This demonstrates that CS interactions can shape overall brand perception through mechanisms of affect and positive association. In the context of the consumer-brand relationship, this dynamic creates emotional resonance that strengthens customer loyalty even before the actual experience occurs.

Notably, 7 out of 10 participants admitted to intentionally testing CS responsiveness as an indicator of service quality. This aligns with findings by Lutfiah & Astuti (2024), who identify responsiveness and message consistency as critical predictors of customer loyalty in service industries. Additionally, internal company data shows that replies delivered within 30 minutes increase conversion likelihood by 40%. Even outside working hours, although response time may be slower, message quality and courtesy remain appreciated highlighting the importance of service consistency.

However, the study also identifies practical challenges, especially during peak seasons. Several respondents reported a decline in informational quality and inconsistent responses among agents, raising the risk of incoherent communication, which can erode trust and increase informational ambiguity. To address this, technology-based managerial strategies and continuous staff training are essential such as CRM integration and the use of AI-powered chatbots for handling routine inquiries. Nonetheless, emotionally nuanced interactions should remain the domain of human agents capable of high empathy, given the complex and personal nature of travel service decisions.

Theoretically, these findings expand our understanding of Customer Engagement in the digital era, emphasizing that fast, consistent, and empathetic interactions not only generate momentary satisfaction but also create a psychological comfort zone for potential customers. This comfort zone enables decision-making under reduced perceived risk, particularly for high-value, intangible services such as travel experiences.

The Influence of Visual Content on Travel Interest

The findings of this study reveal that high-quality visual content plays a strategic role in shaping travel aspirations and influencing consumer decisions at Diary Tour Travel. In-depth interview results show that 7 out of 10 participants stated their initial interest in the service stemmed from exposure to compelling destination visuals. One participant expressed, *"The vividness and realism of the displayed destination visuals triggered immediate imaginative projection, allowing participants to mentally simulate presence at the location a cognitive-emotional process central to visual persuasion."* In consumer psychology, this phenomenon is known as psychological transportation, wherein individuals imaginatively engage with depicted scenarios (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). The study found that video content with strong cinematography, combined with ambient sounds like nature audio, evoked high emotional engagement that served as an initial trigger for travel interest.

The most effective visual content exhibits three core characteristics: authenticity, visual appeal, and relevance to the target audience's lifestyle. Overly artificial or heavily edited visuals often provoked skepticism. Conversely, spontaneous moments captured from real travelers generated stronger emotional engagement, as they were perceived to reflect authentic experiences. This reinforces findings by Pratiwi et al. (2024), which emphasize the importance of balancing professional quality and a sense of realism in tourism content.

A dominant element emerging from the data is "instagrammability," explicitly cited by participants as an indicator of a destination's appeal. One participant noted, *"I always check hashtags for destinations on Instagram. If the photos look great and are widely shared, I assume it's worth visiting."* This statement illustrates how visual aesthetic appeal is directly converted into cognitive evaluation of destination value demonstrating a shift from aesthetic stimulus to behavioral intention, mediated by emotional response-based value formation.

Color also plays a crucial role in visual persuasion. Natural tones such as oceanic blue and forest green consistently evoked feelings of tranquility and happiness. The psychological effects of these dominant colors strengthen emotional attachment to destinations and trigger what is known as affective forecasting the anticipation of positive emotional experiences in the future.

Moreover, a noteworthy pattern related to the mere exposure effect was observed: increasing familiarity through repeated exposure enhanced preference (Sari, 2023). Several participants who followed the Diary Tour Travel account for more than three months reported a gradual increase in interest toward destinations frequently featured in their feed. However,

this effect was not passive; it involved cognitive processing, including re-evaluation and confirmation of a destination's appeal, which eventually informed their booking decisions.

To clarify the transition from emotion to action, this study proposes a cognitive-affective-behavioral framework:

1. Visual stimulus (destination photo/video),
2. Affective response (imaginative transportation and positive feelings),
3. Personal projection (imagining oneself at the location),
4. Cognitive evaluation (interest, budget, expectation match),
5. Booking decision.

Nevertheless, ethical concerns regarding visual content usage were also raised. Several participants voiced disappointment when the actual destination did not match the visual expectations, a phenomenon linked to the destination image gap a discrepancy between pre-travel perception and actual experience. If left unaddressed, this mismatch poses a serious reputational risk in digital marketing, potentially manifesting in negative reviews on social media and travel platforms.

Therefore, it is imperative for businesses to adopt ethical visual principles in digital marketing, balancing aesthetics with informational accuracy. Transparency, such as using labels like unedited or real customer moment can build long-term trust. Theoretically, this section expands the discourse on visual persuasion mechanisms in digital tourism, emphasizing that visuals do not merely serve as representational tools but also function as affective triggers and aspirational constructs. These findings contribute to the literature on consumer psychology by highlighting the crucial role of visual content in emotional engagement, intention formation, and decision conversion within social media-driven digital ecosystems.

Strategic Tensions in E-Marketing: Between Intensity and Effectiveness

This study reveals a paradox within the e-marketing strategy implemented by Diary Tour Travel, where high promotional intensity paradoxically leads to counterproductive outcomes for certain consumer segments. Field findings indicate that four out of ten participants expressed concerns over the frequency of promotional content, which they perceived as excessive. One participant stated, "Too many promo posts actually confuse me, so I end up postponing my decision."

This phenomenon signals the presence of a digital saturation point, where the effectiveness of marketing strategies declines if not proportionally managed. The study adopts

the Information Overload Theory by Eppler & Mengis (2004) as its primary conceptual framework to explain the dynamics of excessive information that hinder decision-making.

According to the framework, overload occurs when the volume of information surpasses users' cognitive processing capacity, thereby reducing decision-making efficiency and potentially resulting in paralysis by analysis. Empirical data supports this, as participants reported a tendency to delay purchasing decisions due to confusion caused by overly frequent and homogeneous content exposure.

A deeper analysis shows that negative effects predominantly arise from two types of content formats:

1. Repetitive discount offers lacking value differentiation,
2. Travel package promotions with minimal content variation.

In such instances, respondents exhibited symptoms of "banner blindness," a condition where users become unaware of recurring content due to high exposure without meaningful variation. This reflects cognitive fatigue induced by unvaried repetition, reinforcing the idea that message quantity cannot substitute for message relevance or quality.

Studies by Andini & Harman (2024) and Mubarok et al. (2025) on information overload in travel services further validate these findings. When consumers are faced with an excessive volume of options and promotional messages in a short time frame, they tend to avoid rather than engage. This highlights the urgent need for information volume management in digital content strategies.

Additionally, consumer segmentation reveals significant variation based on age groups. Respondents aged 18–25 (Gen Z) exhibited higher tolerance for high-frequency content and were generally more adaptive to fast-paced, intense digital content flows. In contrast, respondents aged 30–45 displayed lower tolerance toward repetitive and overly promotional content. These differences align with literature on generational digital behavior, where younger audiences are accustomed to dense social media algorithms and multitasking, while older adults are more selective and intentional in their information consumption.

From the lens of information processing theory, these insights demonstrate the cognitive limitations of individuals in responding effectively to digital stimuli. When the frequency and repetition of promotional messages exceed a certain psychological threshold, consumer perception shifts from brand familiarity to brand fatigue. Several participants even reported unfollowing Diary Tour Travel's account due to annoyance with its promotional intensity. This represents an early signal of customer loyalty erosion, stemming from a dissonance between content expectations and actual digital consumption experience.

The practical implications are highly relevant for e-marketing strategists. A value-based content calendar is needed one that not only emphasizes promotions but also integrates educational, inspirational, and informative content. This approach mitigates the risk of overload while strengthening brand positioning as a trusted information source, rather than merely a promotional channel.

Theoretically, these findings expand the understanding of the limits of e-marketing effectiveness in the digital tourism context. While existing literature predominantly highlights the strengths of e-marketing in increasing awareness and engagement, this study contributes a new perspective on diminishing returns a condition where increased promotional intensity no longer yields proportional benefits and may instead become a barrier.

The next challenge lies in designing a model for optimal digital promotion frequency, considering two primary variables:

1. The cognitive capacity of audiences based on age groups,
2. The tolerance for content repetition within Indonesia's highly reactive and fast-paced digital consumption culture.

Future research is encouraged to develop a predictive model of digital promotion fatigue thresholds, which would provide valuable contributions to data-driven marketing literature, particularly for the social media-based tourism sector.

Integration of Findings with the Consumer Journey Model

The findings of this study offer a holistic perspective on how various e-marketing elements influence each stage of the Consumer Journey model (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) in the context of Diary Tour Travel. At the awareness stage, high-quality visual content serves as a primary gateway that captures potential customers' attention. Striking photos and videos of destinations function as strong emotional stimuli, effectively sparking initial interest consistent with consumer psychology theories emphasizing the role of visual cues in brand awareness formation.

The transition from awareness to consideration is marked by a shift in consumer focus from visual impressions to social validation. At this stage, customer testimonials, quality of customer service interactions, and response speed become dominant factors. Participants stated that after being drawn in by visuals, they would check other users' reviews and test the responsiveness of the service team. This reflects the principles of social proof and relationship marketing in digital-based purchase decisions.

The decision stage reveals a non-linear and complex pattern, where consumers do not necessarily move forward in a sequential manner. The findings show that purchasing decisions result from dynamic interactions among three core factors: visual appeal, information credibility, and quality of interaction. Demographic segmentation plays a significant role: younger consumers (Gen Z) are more influenced by User-Generated Content (UGC) and visual design, while older groups tend to rely more on service reputation and past experience. These insights underscore the importance of personalized marketing approaches based on segmentation.

Based on these findings, the practical implications include:

1. Optimizing content based on consumer journey stages.

    Inspirational visual content should dominate early touchpoints such as Instagram and Google Ads, while testimonials and educational information are better suited for mid-journey platforms like the company website and YouTube.

2. Ensuring consistency across all stages.

    A mismatch between initial appeal and the actual service experience may lead to cognitive dissonance and reduced loyalty. Conversely, a consistent experience throughout the journey strengthens brand equity and encourages organic advocacy.

3. Strategic content frequency management.

    Promotional content should be interspersed with educational, inspirational, and storytelling-based materials to avoid information overload and enhance the perceived value from the consumer's perspective.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study enriches the understanding of nonlinearity in the digital consumer journey model. Unlike traditional linear models, the findings show that consumers often loop back to the consideration stage even after reaching a decision point—especially when exposed to new offers or external disruptions. This aligns with the Consumer Decision Journey model proposed by Court et al. (2009), which emphasizes the cyclical and dynamic nature of decision-making in the digital age.

Furthermore, this study opens up opportunities to develop evaluation models for e-marketing that go beyond final conversion metrics. Businesses should implement cross-stage tracking systems to assess the impact of content and interactions throughout the entire consumer journey. Such an approach allows for more accurate and data-driven marketing budget allocation and enhances both customer acquisition and retention in the long term.
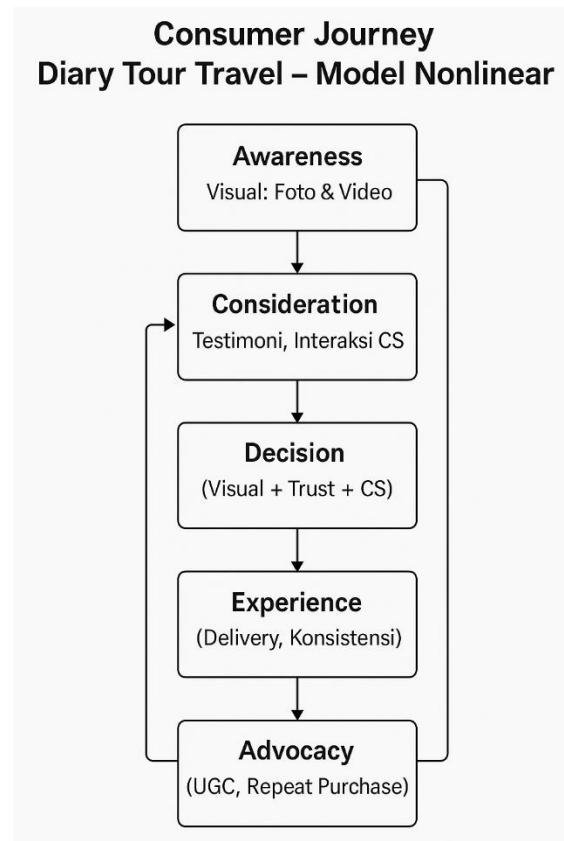
Figure 2. Non-Linear Consumer Journey Model of Diary Tour Travel
(Research Data, 2025)

The diagram illustrates the dynamic nature of the consumer journey within the digital marketing context of Diary Tour Travel. This model highlights the non-linear progression of consumer behavior and the interplay between visual appeal, information credibility, and service interaction, all of which collectively shape the final purchase decision.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Diary Tour Travel's e-marketing significantly influences consumer decision-making through three primary factors: information credibility (particularly via customer video testimonials), responsive personal interactions, and inspirational visual content, with the main challenge being information overload risk from excessive promotions. The findings not only enrich digital marketing literature in the tourism industry context by affirming the importance of customer-centric approaches based on consumer journey stages, but also provide practical contributions through recommendations for integrated content strategies that emphasize balancing quantity and quality to maximize engagement while avoiding brand fatigue.

The research demonstrates how these interconnected elements collectively shape modern travel purchasing behaviors, while highlighting the need for strategic moderation in promotional frequency. These insights offer both theoretical advancement in understanding digital consumer behavior patterns and actionable guidance for tourism marketers seeking to optimize their e-marketing effectiveness in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

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