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Viral Marketing And Electronic Word-Of-Mouth Influencing Visiting Decisions For Pacu Jalur Events In Kuantan Singingi

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effects of Viral Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth on visitors' decisions to attend the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency. Pacu Jalur is a traditional cultural event that attracts local and outside visitors, making digital promotional activities and online recommendations increasingly relevant to tourism marketing. This study employed a quantitative approach to analyze the relationship between Viral Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth, and visit decisions. The sampling technique was purposive sampling, involving 96 respondents who had previously attended the Pacu Jalur event. Primary data were collected through questionnaires designed to measure respondents' perceptions of viral marketing exposure, electronic word-of-mouth information, and their decisions to visit the event. Data analysis was conducted using validity and reliability tests, multiple linear regression analysis, partial t-tests, simultaneous F-tests, and the coefficient of determination (R^2). The findings indicate that Viral Marketing has a positive and significant effect on visitors' decisions to attend the Pacu Jalur event. Electronic Word of Mouth also has a positive and significant effect on visit decisions. Furthermore, the simultaneous test demonstrates that Viral Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth jointly have a positive and significant influence on visit decisions. These findings highlight the importance of engaging digital content and credible online recommendations in strengthening visitor interest and supporting the promotion of cultural tourism events in Kuantan Singingi Regency and strengthening destination attractiveness locally.

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector is an important economic sector that provides various products and services to meet tourists' needs and experiences. Tourism development can stimulate regional economic growth by generating demand for consumption and investment in supporting sectors, including transportation, communication, hotels, and other accommodation facilities (Sutanto & Prihatini, 2023). In Indonesia, cultural tourism has increasingly become an important part of regional tourism development because it can preserve local traditions while creating economic opportunities. Riau Province has considerable cultural tourism potential through various events, including the Bakar Tongkang Festival, Siak Bermadah Festival, Zapin Festival, and other Malay cultural events. These events serve not only as cultural preservation activities but also as tourism attractions that can encourage tourist visits and regional economic activity.

One of the most prominent cultural tourism events in Riau is Pacu Jalur, held in Kuantan Singingi Regency. The event represents a long-standing cultural tradition that is deeply rooted in the local community and has developed from a local boat-racing tradition into a widely recognized cultural tourism attraction. Since 2014, Pacu Jalur has been recognized by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (WBTB). Its increasing popularity has attracted visitors from various regions, including outside Riau Province (Nandini et al., 2024). The event is therefore an important cultural asset with potential to strengthen the tourism sector and local economy. The Pacu Jalur event is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1.1. Pacu Jalur Event in Kuantan Singingi Regency

However, the attractiveness of Pacu Jalur does not necessarily guarantee consistent tourist visits. Fluctuations in visitation indicate the need for more effective

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promotional strategies, particularly to reach younger generations and tourists outside the region. The increasing use of social media and digital platforms has created opportunities for cultural tourism events to reach wider audiences through faster and more interactive communication. In this context, digital promotional strategies such as *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) are increasingly relevant.

Viral Marketing enables promotional messages to spread rapidly through social media in various forms, including text, images, and videos (Rodríguez & Torres, 2022). Its ability to disseminate marketing communication across geographical boundaries allows tourism information to reach a broad audience through internet networks (Pasha et al., 2024). The widespread digital exposure of Pacu Jalur, including videos highlighting the uniqueness and atmosphere of the event, illustrates the potential of social media to increase the visibility of local cultural tourism. Furthermore, tourism experiences can encourage visitors to share information with others, while attractive destination components can strengthen tourists' confidence in selecting a destination (Andora & Yusuf, 2021; Ernawati, 2020).

In addition to *Viral Marketing*, e-WOM involves the dissemination of reviews, experiences, opinions, and recommendations through electronic media. In the context of Pacu Jalur, photos, videos, comments, and stories shared by visitors can provide potential tourists with information about the event's atmosphere, uniqueness, and cultural value. Such user-generated information may strengthen trust and interest and subsequently encourage tourists to visit. While *Viral Marketing* focuses on the rapid and broad dissemination of promotional content, e-WOM emphasizes information and experiences shared by users. Examining both variables simultaneously can therefore provide a broader understanding of digital communication in influencing tourists' visiting decisions.

Although previous studies have examined *Viral Marketing* and e-WOM in various tourism contexts, studies integrating both variables into a single model to explain tourists' visiting decisions remain limited. Research specifically focusing on cultural tourism events, particularly Pacu Jalur in Kuantan Singingi Regency, is also limited. This represents a research gap that provides an opportunity to examine the role of digital promotional communication in the context of local cultural tourism.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* on tourists' visiting decisions at the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on digital tourism marketing and provide practical insights for local governments, tourism

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agencies, and event organizers in developing more effective promotional strategies for cultural tourism in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach to examine the influence of *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) on tourists' visiting decisions at the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency, Riau Province. The study used primary data collected directly from respondents and secondary data obtained from relevant supporting sources. The population comprised individuals who had visited the Pacu Jalur event. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) aged 17–40 years; (2) actively using social media or having been exposed to *Viral Marketing* content related to Pacu Jalur; (3) having read, viewed, or followed online reviews, comments, or experiences related to Pacu Jalur; and (4) having visited the event within the previous two years. Because the population size could not be determined precisely, the minimum sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula with a 95% confidence level and 10% margin of error, resulting in 96 respondents.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed online using Google Forms. The questionnaire link was disseminated through social media platforms, including WhatsApp and Instagram, both personally and through relevant groups. Before hypothesis testing, the research instrument was evaluated for validity and reliability using SPSS. Validity was assessed by comparing the calculated correlation coefficient (*r*-count) with the critical value (*r*-table), while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. An item was considered valid when *r*-count ≥ *r*-table, and a construct was considered reliable when Cronbach's Alpha exceeded 0.60.

The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to examine the effects of *Viral Marketing* (X_1) and e-WOM (X_2) on visiting decisions (Y), using the following model: $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$ (Sugiyono, 2016). Hypotheses were tested using the partial *t*-test to assess the individual effect of each independent variable and the simultaneous *F*-test to assess their joint effect, with a significance level of 5%. The coefficient of determination (adjusted R^2) was also used to determine the proportion of variation in tourists' visiting decisions explained by the independent variables.

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Result

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 96 respondents who had previously attended the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency. Most respondents were aged 17–25 years (90.63%), followed by those aged 26–30 years (5.21%) and 36–40 years (4.17%). No respondents were aged 31–35 years.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics by Age

Age group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
17–25 years	87	90.63
26–30 years	5	5.21
31–35 years	0	0.00
36–40 years	4	4.17
Total	96	100.00

Source: Processed primary data, 2026.

Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity test showed that all questionnaire items for *Viral Marketing*, *Electronic Word of Mouth*, and Decision to Visit had correlation coefficients greater than the critical *r*-value of 0.2006 (n = 96, α = 0.05), indicating that all items were valid. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All three constructs demonstrated high internal consistency, with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.943 to 0.961, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.60.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability of the Research Constructs

Construct	Critical *r*	Cronbach's α	Reliability
Viral Marketing (X1)	0.2006	0.943	Reliable
Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	0.2006	0.943	Reliable
Decision to Visit (Y)	0.2006	0.961	Reliable

Note: All questionnaire items had calculated correlation coefficients greater than 0.2006.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the effects of *Viral Marketing* (X1) and *Electronic Word of Mouth* (X2) on Decision to Visit (Y). The regression model was expressed as:

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$$Y = -0.014 + 1.013X1 + 1.075X2 + e$$

Both independent variables had positive regression coefficients. *Viral Marketing* had a coefficient of 1.013 (β = 0.480, t = 7.702, p < 0.001), while *Electronic Word of Mouth* had a coefficient of 1.075 (β = 0.500, t = 8.028, p < 0.001).

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression and Partial Hypothesis Testing

Predictor	B	SE	β	*t*	*P*
Constant	−0.014	3.805	—	−0.004	0.997
Viral Marketing (X1)	1.013	0.131	0.480	7.702	<0.001
Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	1.075	0.134	0.500	8.028	<0.001

Note: Dependent variable = Decision to Visit.

Classical Assumption Tests

The regression model met the required classical assumptions. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated normally distributed residuals (test statistic = 0.075, p = 0.200). No multicollinearity was identified, as both independent variables had the same tolerance value of 0.474 and VIF value of 2.110. The scatterplot also showed randomly distributed residuals around zero, indicating no apparent heteroscedasticity.

Table 4. Classical Assumption Tests

Test	Statistic	Result
Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality	0.075; p = 0.200	Normal
Multicollinearity – X1	Tolerance = 0.474; VIF = 2.110	No multicollinearity
Multicollinearity – X2	Tolerance = 0.474; VIF = 2.110	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity	Random residual distribution	No heteroscedasticity

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Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing and Model Fit

The simultaneous F-test demonstrated that *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* jointly had a statistically significant effect on Decision to Visit, $F(2, 93) = 225.201$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, H3 was supported.

The model produced an R of 0.910 and an R^2 of 0.829, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.825. Thus, *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* jointly explained 82.9% of the variance in Decision to Visit, while the remaining 17.1% was attributable to other factors not included in the model.

Table 5. Model Fit and Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing

Model statistic	Value
R	0.910
R^2	0.829
Adjusted R^2	0.825
F-statistic	225.201
df	2, 93
p-value	<0.001
Std. Error of Estimate	4.25288

Overall, the results support all three hypotheses: *Viral Marketing* (H1) and *Electronic Word of Mouth* (H2) each had a positive and statistically significant effect on Decision to Visit, while both variables simultaneously produced a significant effect (H3).

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be seen that the variables of *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* have an influence on the Decision to Visit the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency. This is evidenced by the results of hypothesis testing, which indicate that each variable contributes to visitors' decision to visit.

1. The Effect of *Viral Marketing* on the Decision to Visit

Based on the results of the partial test (t-test), the *Viral Marketing* variable (X1) obtained a calculated t-value that was greater than the t-table value, with a significance level below 0.05. These results indicate that H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that *Viral Marketing* has a positive and statistically

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significant partial effect on the Decision to Visit the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency. These findings demonstrate that the more effectively information about the Pacu Jalur event is disseminated through various social media platforms in the form of photos, videos, and engaging content shared by content creators or users, the greater the tendency of potential visitors to decide to attend the event, as the rapid and wide-reaching nature of such dissemination stimulates curiosity and interest (Sari et al., 2024; Taufik et al., 2022). Furthermore, the capacity of viral marketing to amplify attention and influence behavioral intentions aligns with empirical evidence showing that strategically shared digital content significantly enhances tourists' decisions to visit destinations by leveraging social network effects and perceived attractiveness (Mananda, 2023). These results are consistent with prior research indicating that effective viral marketing campaigns positively shape visit decisions through heightened awareness and engagement, reinforcing the strategic value of social media-driven dissemination for event tourism (Abidah & Huda, 2024).

The results of this study indicate that the more effectively information about the Pacu Jalur event is disseminated through various social media platforms, the greater the tendency of visitors to decide to attend the event. Content presented in the form of photos, videos, and interesting information shared by content creators or social media users is able to increase visitors' attention and interest in the event. In addition, the rapid dissemination of information and its ability to reach a large number of social media users can also stimulate curiosity, thereby influencing visitors' decisions to attend the Pacu Jalur event directly. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Rakhmawati et al., (2023), which showed that the *viral marketing* variable had a significant effect on tourists' Decision to Visit.

2. The Effect of *Electronic Word of Mouth* on the Decision to Visit

Based on the results of the partial test (t-test), the *Electronic Word of Mouth* variable showed a calculated t-value that was greater than the t-table value, with a significance value of less than 0.05. Thus, H0 is rejected and H2 is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that *Electronic Word of Mouth* has a positive and statistically significant partial effect on the Decision to Visit the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency.

The results of this study indicate that various reviews, comments, experiences, and recommendations conveyed through social media can influence an individual's decision to visit the Pacu Jalur event. The more positive information prospective visitors

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obtain from other social media users, the higher their level of trust in the event. Information derived from the actual experiences of previous visitors tends to be perceived as more convincing, thereby reducing uncertainty when making the decision to visit. The results of this study are consistent with the research conducted by Xu & Huang (2023), which showed that the *Electronic Word of Mouth* variable had a positive effect on tourists' Decision to Visit.

3. The Effect of *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* on the Decision to Visit

Based on the results of the simultaneous test (F-test), the calculated F-value was greater than the F-table value, with a significance level below 0.05. These results indicate that H0 is rejected and H3 is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* simultaneously have a positive and statistically significant effect on the Decision to Visit the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency.

The results of this study indicate that the combination of attractive information dissemination through social media and positive reviews and recommendations from internet users can increase visitors' decisions to attend the Pacu Jalur event. The two variables complement each other in forming positive perceptions, increasing prospective visitors' trust, and strengthening their confidence in making the decision to visit the Pacu Jalur event.

This study has several limitations. Therefore, future research is expected to incorporate other variables that may influence the Decision to Visit, such as destination image, service quality, tourism attractiveness, facilities, accessibility, and other forms of digital promotion. In addition, future research is also expected to expand the research object and involve a larger number of respondents so that the findings have broader coverage and can provide a more comprehensive picture of the factors influencing visitors' decisions to visit.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* significantly influence visitors' decisions to attend the Pacu Jalur event in Kuantan Singingi Regency. Individually, both *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* demonstrate positive and statistically significant effects on visiting decisions. Furthermore, the simultaneous test confirms that both variables jointly have a significant

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influence on visitors' decisions. The regression model indicates that *Viral Marketing* and *Electronic Word of Mouth* explain 82.9% of the variance in visiting decisions, while the remaining 17.1% is explained by other factors outside the model.

These findings highlight the importance of digital communication in promoting cultural tourism events such as Pacu Jalur. Attractive and widely disseminated social media content can increase awareness and interest, while positive online reviews, experiences, and recommendations can strengthen potential visitors' trust and confidence. Therefore, event organizers and tourism stakeholders may consider integrating viral promotional content with strategies that encourage positive visitor-generated information and online engagement. Future studies should consider additional factors, such as destination image, service quality, tourism attractiveness, accessibility, facilities, and other forms of digital promotion, as well as larger and more diverse samples to provide a broader understanding of visitors' decisions in cultural tourism.

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