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Enhancing Museum-Based Learning Engagement: The Role of Atmosphere and E-WOM among Student Visitors to the Indonesian Postal Museum

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study investigates the influence of physical atmosphere and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) on student visitors' intention to visit the Indonesian Postal Museum in Bandung. The research is driven by the declining interest in museum visits among younger demographics, despite the institution's historical and educational value. Strengthening informal learning environments such as museums is essential to enhancing student engagement beyond the classroom. **Method:** A quantitative approach with descriptive and verification design was employed. Data were gathered through a non-probability sampling technique by distributing questionnaires to 397 student respondents who have visited or intend to visit the museum. Data analysis involved validity and reliability tests, classical assumption testing, multiple linear regression, T-tests, F-tests, and the coefficient of determination, processed using IBM SPSS 27. **Results:** The findings reveal that (1) atmosphere has a positive and significant, though moderate, effect on students' intention to visit; (2) E-WOM shows a strong and significant influence, indicating its dominant role in shaping visit intentions; and (3) both variables together account for 40.2% of the variance in intention to visit, with the remaining 59.8% likely influenced by other factors such as accessibility, lifestyle, or promotional strategies. **Novelty:** This research offers a novel integrative perspective by linking environmental cues (atmosphere) with digital communication (E-WOM) in the context of cultural and informal education. Unlike prior studies that examined these elements separately, this research highlights how the synergy between physical and virtual experiences can enhance student motivation and engagement with informal learning sites like museums, offering valuable insights for educators and cultural institutions seeking to increase educational outreach in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

Asia's tourism industry is growing rapidly, in Southeast Asia, for example, the total contribution of travel and tourism has increased from US$291 billion to 301 billion and is expected to increase to 528 billion by 2025 (WTTC, 2015 and WTTC, 2017) (Yang & Zhang, 2022). Tourism in Indonesia has become a strategic sector in contributing to economic recovery, especially post-pandemic. The diversity of tourist destinations, including cultural and heritage-based attractions such as museums, plays an important role in preserving culture and history and educating the public (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia, 2022). Since the 1980s, cultural activities have begun to be seen as part of tourism. As UNESCO reports, cultural and natural heritage tourism is "the fastest growing international sector of the tourism industry". Although it is difficult to estimate the true size of this phenomenon, the OECD and UNWTO estimate that in 2007, cultural tourism accounted for 40% of all international tourism, up from 37% in 1995. Museums play a relevant role as repositories of cultural diversity, education, social cohesion, personal development;

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IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

promoting an integrated approach to cultural heritage and allowing the preservation of community identity (García Cano, Gil-Ruiz, & Martínez-Vérez, 2025). They are also a stimulus to the economy, increasing jobs and incomes, thanks to the multiplier effect they can generate (Kim et al., 2015). Museums are an important sector in tourism. The function of museums has shifted from merely collecting to serving. Currently, the tourism experience is the core product of museums (Su and Teng, 2018). As an experiential tourism destination, museums have many functions. The current functions of museums include education and learning, recreation and recreation, and social interaction (Guo et al., 2021; (Yang & Zhang, 2022).

Museums are important cultural institutions because they help people understand history, culture, and social life through the presentation of meaningful collections, narratives, and cultural heritage (Shaffer, 2020). In addition, museums also play a role in the tourism industry and are often considered attractive heritage destinations for both local and international tourists (Kelly, 2001; Alam et al., 2016). However, despite their cultural and educational value, museums are still often perceived as old-fashioned and unattractive places, especially by the younger generation. The dark, quiet, and static image of museums often deters students who prefer active, interactive, and engaging experiences.

Previous studies have identified various reasons for low museum attendance. Hood (1983) showed that many people prefer activities such as sports, picnics, or shopping to visiting museums. Martin noted that 43 percent of respondents in the UK did not visit museums due to time constraints (Pallud & Straub, 2014; Han & Hyun, 2017). Apart from time constraints, feelings of boredom and discomfort are also significant causes. Falk, Dierking, Hooper Greenhill, and Roberts found that museums are often associated with a cold, gloomy, and overly serious atmosphere, resembling a place of worship that can feel intimidating, especially for young visitors.

This view is important in the context of education because museums are not only places to preserve the past, but also have great potential as informal learning spaces. In today's educational ecosystem, museums can enhance students' learning outcomes by offering contextual, interdisciplinary, and engaging hands-on experiences. As Chng and Tan (2024) emphasize, museums provide "inquiry-driven, contextual learning outside traditional classrooms," making them effective platforms for experiential science education. Similarly, El Bedewy and Lavicza (2024) highlight that "hands-on and interactive activities in interdisciplinary museum exhibits contribute significantly to informal learning," especially when connecting diverse subjects such as mathematics, the arts, and culture. When students feel emotionally and cognitively connected to what they see and experience in the museum, the learning process becomes more profound and more meaningful (Packer, 2008; Schreiber et al., 2013).

Unfortunately, if the museum environment feels unfriendly or less relevant to students' lives, its educational potential cannot be maximized. Therefore, a pedagogical approach in the design of exhibition spaces, communicative narratives, and interactivity that encourages curiosity is essential to creating learning engagement. Hooper-Greenhill emphasizes the importance of museum design that is student-friendly, interactive, and relevant to their daily experiences. Museum learning can be part of an effective contextual and cross-subject learning strategy, encompassing history, the arts, culture, digital literacy, and citizenship (Becker & Lock, 2021; Liu, 2025).

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IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

Based on this view, this study aims to explore how the museum atmosphere and the influence of online information (electronic word of mouth or E-WOM) affect the intention of junior high and high school students to visit the Indonesian Postal Museum. More than just an interest in visiting, this study emphasizes the potential of museums to support students' informal learning in a fun, relevant, and connected way to their real-life context (Kuflik et al., 2011). With this approach, museums are not only seen as cultural tourism destinations but also as strategic partners in education that can strengthen the learning process outside the classroom.

Some of the reasons why students choose not to visit museums include the perception that museum environments are dull, intimidating, or poorly lit. These impressions may evoke discomfort and fear, especially among younger audiences. According to Annechini et al. (2020), children often associate museum spaces with boredom or fear, especially when the design lacks natural lighting or stimulating visual elements. Similarly, Zhang and Hu (2022) highlight that poor visual aesthetics and low sensory engagement in digital museums can reinforce negative stereotypes about museums being uninviting or outdated. Furthermore, negative word of mouth shared through social media significantly affects students' willingness to visit museums, as demonstrated by Leung et al. (2023) in their study on emotional responses to VR-based museum experiences. One of those experiencing a decline is the Indonesian Postal Museum in Bandung City, although it has rich historical content, the Indonesian Postal Museum is experiencing instability and a decline in the number of visitors.

Tabel 1. The Number of Visitors to the Indonesian Postal Museum in Bandung City

No	Month	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Januari	5.781	2.748	-	**Pandemy**	10.370	8.284
2	Februari	12.957	4.330	-	-	22.752	12.952
3	Maret	17.500	2.355	**Pandemy**	-	17.537	6.358
4	April	7.243	150	-	-	765	3.198
5	Mei	2.958	-	-		8.007	9.386
6	Juni	5.760	-	-	2.417	6.815	2.359
7	Juli	3.723	-	-	932	2.724	1.874
8	Agustus	5.889	**Pandemy**	-	752	1.770	1.227
9	September	5.549	-	600 (Virtual Tour)	3.652	2.632	3.613
10	Oktober	13.569	-	-	14.292	8.509	9.135
11	November	8.220	-	-	13.807	12.845	
12	Desember	9.851	-	-	3.918	7.523	
		99.000	**9.583**	**600**	**39.770**	**102.249**	**58.386**

Sources : (Museum Pos Indonesia, 2024),

Table 1 shows that visitors to the Indonesian Postal Museum from 2019 to 2021 experienced a decrease in visits, notably between 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the museum saw a recovery in 2022–2023, with visits increasing to 102,249 in 2023, the number significantly dropped again in 2024 to 58,386 visits — a 57.1% decline. This fluctuation highlights an ongoing challenge in maintaining public interest, particularly among student segments who are key to sustaining museum engagement in the long term. Previous research has acknowledged the roles of atmosphere and E-WOM in shaping visitor behavior. However, limited attention has

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Page 1109-1123

been given to how these factors specifically influence **student visitors' intention to visit** cultural institutions like museums. Given that students are both active consumers of digital content and potential repeat visitors, understanding their behavioral drivers is critical. This study addresses this gap by investigating the extent to which the physical atmosphere of the museum and digital narratives shared by previous visitors (E-WOM) affect the visit intentions of student audiences.

Intention To Visit can generally be interpreted as a person's desire or intention to visit a tourist destination (Sugita et al., 2024). Visit Intention is a combination of consumer interest and the possibility of visiting a place. (Luo & Ye, 2020). According to Zheng et al. (2024) intention to visit museums, especially in digital and immersive forms, is significantly influenced by how well the experience aligns with students' educational needs and motivational drivers. Engagement through well-designed educational content and interactive technology fosters a stronger desire to revisit and learn, positioning museums as powerful informal learning environments. The tendency of an individual, especially a student or young adult, to decide to visit a museum is closely linked to behavioral and motivational factors. According to Nguyen (2021) four key factors significantly influence students' decisions to visit museums: extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, social interaction, and cultural awareness. These factors shape how visitors perceive the educational value of museums and ultimately determine whether they choose to engage with them. Kotler and Keller (2012) state that the decision to visit is part of a larger visit process, starting with recognition through how tourists feel after visiting and marketers are involved during the visit decision-making process. This is reinforced by the statement stated by (Kotler et al. 2017). Visitor behavior in museums increasingly reflects educational consumption, especially when interpretive content is linked to broader social themes. According to Xue et al. (2025), museum exhibitions that emphasize issues such as resource scarcity can influence visitors' sustainable consumption intentions by promoting reflective and purposeful engagement with the learning material. The dimensions/indicators used in this study are 1). The possibility of visiting the museum is high, 2). If I have time I will visit the museum, and 3). I intend to visit the museum (Luo & Ye, 2020).

Museum visits are often influenced by the atmosphere and how information about the museum is distributed digitally. Atmosphere is defined as an attempt to design a purchasing environment to produce specific emotional effects on shoppers that increase their probability of purchasing. (Piancatelli et al., 2021). In this context, Atmosphere is often used to describe human interaction with a particular environment or situation, and the emotions that arise as a result (Paschou & Papaioannou, 2023). The dimensions used in this study are from Berman and Evam in (Yuliawati, Y., Hurriyanti R, L.A. Wibowo, 2021) namely store exterior, general interior, museum layout, and interior display.

Another thing that causes Intention To Visit is because of E-WOM. According to Ismagilova (2017) E-WOM is an active information exchange process from a brand, product, company or service created by previous visitors and then shared on the Internet (Khoirrani & Silitonga, 2023). E-WOM can influence tourists' decisions to buy a product, for example attracting visitors and influencing decisions to visit certain tourist attractions. E-WOM promotes certain tourist attractions more effectively by depicting the positive image of tourist destinations and previous visitors' opinions about tourist destinations. E-WOM improves the image of tourist destinations and increases

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Page 1109-1123

customer satisfaction and loyalty (Andriani et al., 2019). The dimensions used in this study are 1). Spreading good things about this museum on social media, 2). Enjoying sharing experiences on social media, 3). Posting pictures/videos of the museum on social media, 4). Sharing Experiences at the museum as Credible Tourism, 5). Saying positive things about the museum, 6). to my friends or family through personal social networks (Maulina, A., Sukoco, I., Hermanto, B., & Kostini, 2023).

This finding highlights the intention to visit the postal museum and how atmospheric factors and EWOM can influence the intention to visit the POS museum. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of atmospheric and EWOM on POS museum visitors.

Research Questions:

1. How does atmosphere influence the student visitor's intention to visit the POS museum?
2. How does EWOM influence the student visitor's intention to visit the POS museum visitors?
3. How do atmosphere and EWOM influence the student visitor's intention to visit the POS museum visitors? More details can be seen in the research paradigm presented in Figure 1

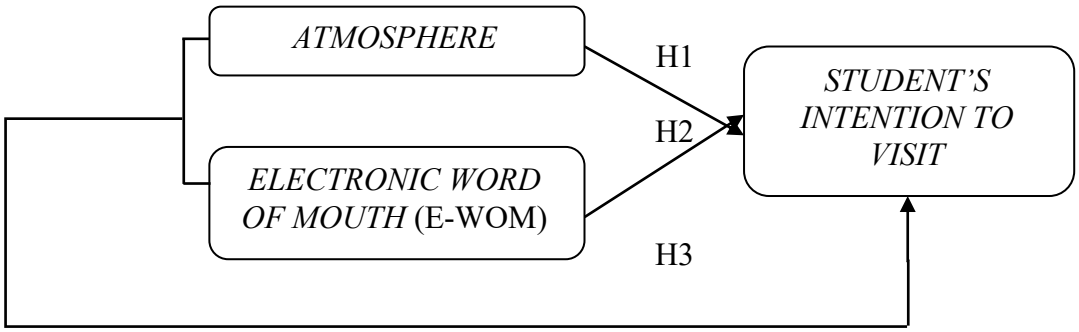

Figure 1. Research Paradigm

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach aimed at measuring and analyzing the relationship between atmosphere and E-WOM to intention to visit museums POS Indonesia. This approach is suitable for collecting numerical data that can be analyzed using statistical techniques. The sample for this study consists of 397 respondents, selected through random sampling from visitors who attended museums POS Indonesia. This sample is expected to represent the general population of museum visitors, including a variety of ages, genders, and educational levels. The inclusion criteria for the sample are individuals who have visited the museum at least once in the past 12 months.

Data collection is conducted through a questionnaire distributed to museum visitors either directly on-site or through an online platform. The questionnaire consists of several sections, including:

1. Demographic questions to understand the visitors' profile (e.g., age, gender, education level, etc.).
2. Visitor experience, measured through questions regarding satisfaction, interactions with exhibits, museum facilities, and atmosphere.

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IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

3. Intent to visit, measured using a Likert scale to assess the likelihood of visitors intention to visit to the museum in their decision destination. Additionally, the questionnaire includes open-ended questions that allow visitors to provide further feedback on their experiences.

Data Analysis, After data collection, analysis was conducted using descriptive and verification statistical methods:

1. Descriptive statistics were used to describe sample characteristics and data distribution (e.g., frequency, mean, and standard deviation).
2. Verification regression analysis was used to test the effect of atmosphere and electronic word of mouth on museum visiting intentions.

This study consists of the use of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through the distribution of questionnaires to visitors to the Indonesian Postal Museum directly and online via social media. Secondary data was obtained through literature studies. The filling criteria include individuals who have visited or are interested in visiting the museum. Respondents consist of various age groups, occupations, and frequency of visits to the museum. Data analysis techniques were carried out by researchers using, among others, the validity test rcount> rtable, with a significance level <0.05 then the statement is valid. Reliability test where items are tested by looking at the Alpha-Cronbach value> 0.7 then the level of reliability is met. Then the Classical Assumption Test, Descriptive Test, and Verification Test were carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent's Demographic

The sample for this study consists of 397 student respondents from junior high schools (SMP) and senior high schools (SMA) who have visited or expressed interest in visiting the Indonesian Postal Museum. Respondents were selected through random sampling from school-based museum visitation records and outreach programs. Demographic data were collected to understand the profile of student visitors, including age, gender, and educational level. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 13 and 18 years old, reflecting the typical age range of students in lower and upper secondary education. Specifically, 46.3% of the respondents were junior high school students, while 53.7% were senior high school students. Female students accounted for 55.4% of the sample, while male students made up 44.6%. This composition indicates balanced participation across educational levels and gender.

Results

Validity tests for each variable used in the study showed valid results as listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Validity Test Results

Atmosphere (X1)				
No Item	**R table corrected – item total correlation**	**R count (n=397) sig 5%**	**Sig (2-tailed)**	**Conclusion**
X1.1	0,098	0,690	<0,001	Valid
X1.2	0,098	0,849	<0,001	Valid

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IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

No Item	R table corrected – item total correlation	R count (n=397) sig 5%	Sig (2-tailed)	Conclusion
		***Atmosphere* (X1)**		
X1.3	0,098	0,837	<0,001	Valid
X1.4	0,098	0,859	<0,001	Valid
X1.5	0,098	0,878	<0,001	Valid
X1.6	0,098	0,890	<0,001	Valid
X1.7	0,098	0,726	<0,001	Valid
X1.8	0,098	0,891	<0,001	Valid
X1.9	0,098	0,884	<0,001	Valid
X1.10	0,098	0,913	<0,001	Valid
X1.11	0,098	0,905	<0,001	Valid
X1.12	0,098	0,880	<0,001	Valid
X1.13	0,098	0,891	<0,001	Valid
		E-WOM (X2)		
X2.1	0,098	0,715	<0,001	Valid
X2.2	0,098	0,775	<0,001	Valid
X2.3	0,098	0,754	<0,001	Valid
X2.4	0,098	0,737	<0,001	Valid
X2.5	0,098	0,659	<0,001	Valid
		Student's Intention To Visit		
X3.1	0,098	0,867	<0,001	Valid
X3.2	0,098	0,813	<0,001	Valid
X3.3	0,098	0,716	<0,001	Valid

Source: Processed data, 2025

This shows that each statement in the Atmosphere, E-WOM, and Intention To Visit variables is reliable and worthy of use in research. The Reliability Test shows the results listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	N of Item	Conclusion
Atmosphere	0,969	13	Reliabel
E-WOM	0,776	5	Reliabel
Intention To Visit	0,719	3	Reliabel

Source: Processed data, 2025

Based on Table 3, it can be concluded that the measuring instrument is stated as reliable and can be used for further analysis. In other words, this questionnaire has consistent results if measurements are taken at different times and models or designs. Descriptive test for the Atmosphere variable can be seen in table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents' Assessment of Variable X1

Item	Respondent's Assesment										Total		%
	STS=5		TS=4		N=3		S=2		SS=1		Actual Score	Ideal Score	%
	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score			
1	26	130	71	284	66	198	144	288	90	90	990	1985	49,87
2	39	195	100	400	58	174	148	296	52	52	1165	1985	58,69
3	30	150	90	360	77	231	130	260	70	70	1117	1985	56,27
4	72	360	72	288	72	216	125	250	56	56	1071	1985	53,95
5	49	245	75	300	60	180	127	254	86	86	1170	1985	58,94
6	67	335	67	268	67	201	133	266	63	63	1130	1985	55,56
7	32	160	63	252	60	180	164	328	78	78	998	1985	50,27
8	42	210	91	364	74	222	124	248	66	66	1110	1985	55,20

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IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

Item	Respondent's Assesment										Total		%
	STS=5		TS=4		N=3		S=2		SS=1		Actual Score	Ideal Score	%
	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score			
9	71	335	73	292	66	198	117	234	70	70	1129	1985	56,87
10	77	385	65	260	75	225	119	238	61	61	1169	1985	58,89
11	61	305	91	364	60	180	121	242	64	64	1155	1985	58,18
12	51	255	81	324	62	186	130	260	73	73	1098	1985	55,31
13	68	340	82	328	61	183	126	252	60	60	1163	1985	58,58
Skor Total Variabel											**14465**	**25805**	**56,05**

Source: Processed data, 2025

Based on the results of the distribution of respondent perception data on the Atmosphere variable at the Indonesian Postal Museum, it is in the moderate category, with a total score of 14,465 or 56.05%. This indicates that the museum's Atmosphere is considered sufficient or moderate, but not yet fully optimal in creating comfort and strong appeal to support visitors' intentions to visit. Descriptive Test for the E-WOM variable can be seen in table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents' Assessment of Variable X2

Item	Respodent's Assement										Total		%
	STS=5		TS=4		N=3		S=2		SS=1		Actual Score	Ideal Score	
	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score			
1	103	515	139	556	26	78	116	232	13	13	1394	1985	70,22
2	161	805	139	556	20	60	66	132	11	11	1564	1985	78,79
3	199	995	133	532	13	39	51	102	1	1	1669	1985	84,08
4	217	1085	108	432	20	60	50	100	2	2	1679	1985	84,58
5	204	1020	126	504	21	63	42	84	4	4	1675	1985	84,38
Total											**7981**	**9925**	**80,41**

Source: Processed data, 2025

Overall, the results of respondents' perceptions of the Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM) variable are in the high category, with a total score of 7,981 or a percentage of 80.41%. This shows that most respondents agree that information, reviews, and experiences shared online, either through social media or other digital platforms, have a strong influence on their intention to visit the Indonesian Postal Museum. These results confirm that e-WOM is one of the sources of information trusted by the current generation of visitors, especially because the majority of respondents come from the young age group (17-25 years) who are active in the digital world. Descriptive Test for the Intention To Visit variable can be seen in table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of Respondents' Assessment of Variable Y

Item	Respondent's Assement										Total		%
	STS=5		TS=4		N=3		S=2		SS=1		Actual Score	Ideal Score	
	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score	F	Score			
1	137	685	116	580	40	120	93	186	11	11	1582	1985	79,69
2	168	840	131	655	38	114	58	116	2	2	1727	1985	87
3	188	940	138	690	35	105	35	70	1	1	1806	1985	90,98
Total											**5115**	**5955**	**85,89**

Source: Processed data, 2025

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IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

Overall, it can be seen that the respondents' perception of the Intention To Visit variable is in the very high category, with a score of 5,115 or equivalent to 85.89%. This percentage shows that the majority of respondents have a strong desire or intention to visit the Indonesian Postal Museum, both in the near future and in the future. This high intention to visit reflects the unique appeal of the museum that is able to motivate visitors, although there are aspects that still need to be improved in terms of Atmosphere. The results of the verification test conducted in this study using the T Test to test the level of significance of the relationship between the Atmosphere (X1) and E-WOM (X2) variables have a partial influence on the Intention to Visit (Y) variable.

Table 7. Results of T-Test of Variables X1, X2 Against Y

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.382	.610		3.903	.000
	Atmosphere	.033	.007	.179	4.581	.000
	E-WOM	.415	.026	.629	16.113	.000

a. Dependent Variable: *Intention To Visit*
Sumber: Data diolah SPSS 27 (2025)

The t-test results show that the calculated t value for the atmosphere variable is 4.581, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.966, with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05. This means that H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, indicating a significant effect of atmosphere on the intention to visit. This finding aligns with research by Piancatelli, Massi, and Vocino (2020), who emphasize that the museum atmosphere significantly shapes visitors' perceptions and influences their behavioral intentions to visit or return.

Then the *thitung* value for the E-WOM variable is 16.113> *ttabel* 1.966 with a significance of 0.000 <0.05 (*H*0 is rejected, *H*1 is accepted). So it can be concluded that the e-wom variable has a significant effect on Intention To Visit. This is consistent with recent studies showing that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a significant influence on students' and young visitors' intention to visit museums. For instance, Lin, Ryu, and Ahn (2024) found that positive eWOM shared through social media significantly affected visit intentions toward cultural institutions like museums, especially when users perceived strong emotional engagement and value alignment with their expectations. In addition, the F Test is also used to determine the level of significance of the influence of the independent variables, namely Atmosphere (X1) and E-WOM (X2) together (simultaneously) on the dependent variable, namely Intention To Visit (Y).

Table 8. Results of the F Test of Variables X1 and X2 to Y

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1121.970	2	560.985	134.250	.000[b]
	Residual	1646.393	394	4.179		
	Total	**2768.363**	**396**			

a. Dependent Variable: Student's *Intention To Visit*
b. Predictors: (Constant), E-WOM, *Atmosphere*

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IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

Based on the results of table 8 which shows that the value of *Fhitung* is 134,250> *ftabel* of 3.02 with a significance of 0.000 <0.05 (*H*0 is rejected, *H*1 is accepted) which means that the independent variables, namely Atmosphere and e-wom, have a significant effect simultaneously on Intention To Visit. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that the Atmosphere and E-WOM variables have a joint influence on the Intention To Visit variable can be accepted.

The Coefficient of Determination Test is essentially a tool to measure the extent to which a model is able to explain variations in the dependent variable.

Table 9 Results of the Test of the Determination Coefficient X1, X2 to Y

Model Summary				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	.637[a]	.405	.402	2.04418

a. Predictors: (Constant), E-WOM, *Atmosphere*

Source: Processed data, 2025

Based on the results of the data in table 10, the coefficient of determination (*R*2) in the adjusted R square column is 0.402 or 40.2%, so it can be concluded that the magnitude of the influence of the Atmosphere (X1) and E-WOM (X2) variables on Intention To Visit is (Y) 40.2% while the remaining 59.8% is influenced by other variables not examined in this study such as facilities, lifestyle, and promotions, and others.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that both the museum atmosphere and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) significantly influence the intention of junior high and high school students to visit the Indonesian Postal Museum. Although the museum atmosphere is considered moderate (56.05%), this indicates that the physical environment of the museum only meets basic standards of comfort and visuals, but has not been able to create an immersive, interactive, and emotionally stimulating atmosphere to support students' deep learning engagement. This is in line with the findings of Hooper-Greenhill (1999), Hidayat (2023), and Sundari (2021), which show that museums that are perceived as static or outdated tend to fail to arouse curiosity, reflection, and critical thinking, which are important elements in meaningful learning, especially for the younger generation.

In the context of education, museums can be effective informal learning spaces if they are able to integrate an inquiry-based learning approach, which engages students cognitively and emotionally (Brajčić & Kuščević, 2022). Elements such as lighting, room layout, and exhibition interactivity have a significant impact on students' emotional responses and learning motivation (Kuflik et al., 2011; Piancatelli et al., 2021). By optimizing these elements, museums can serve as a complement to formal learning in schools, for example in history, sociology, or citizenship subjects, as well as improve students' exploratory, reflective, and collaborative abilities in understanding cultural and social contexts.

In contrast, E-WOM has the strongest influence on students' visit intentions, with 80.41% of respondents acknowledging the importance of digital information, peer reviews, social media content, and online experiences in shaping their perceptions of museums. From an educational perspective, this suggests that museum narratives that

p-ISSN : 2721-852X ; e-ISSN : 2721-7965
IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

are disseminated digitally, whether through social media, learning videos, or stories from friends, can strengthen or inhibit students' interest in engaging in experiential learning. Kim et al.'s study. (2023) emphasized that digital communication between students plays a major role in building engagement in informal learning spaces, while Schwan and Buder (2021) showed that digital storytelling can increase students' emotional closeness to educational materials and their non-formal learning outcomes.

The combined influence of museum atmosphere and E-WOM explains 40.2% of the variation in students' visiting intentions, while the rest (59.8%) is likely influenced by other factors such as the relevance of museum materials to the school curriculum, availability of transportation, entrance fees, or support from teachers and parents. This is in line with the findings of Su and Teng (2018), Han and Hyun (2017), and Luo and Ye (2020), which state that museum experiences that are relevant to students' learning needs and supported by educational approaches and digital technology have more potential to increase their participation and engagement. Therefore, in order to remain relevant in the current educational context, museums need to transform into informal learning spaces that are integrated with digital curricula and strategies, so that they can bridge learning experiences inside and outside the classroom for junior high and high school students.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study confirms that both the physical atmosphere and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) significantly and positively influence students' intention to visit the Indonesian Postal Museum. Although the physical atmosphere was perceived as moderate (56.05%), it still contributed meaningfully to students' visit intentions, indicating that improvements in spatial layout, comfort, and engagement features could strengthen its impact. E-WOM emerged as the most influential factor, with a strong score of 80.41%, underscoring the importance of peer-shared digital narratives in shaping behavioral intentions among students. Collectively, both variables explained 40.2% of the variance in visit intention, highlighting their combined relevance in understanding museum-going behavior among younger, digitally active audiences. **Implications for Practice and Education:** These findings suggest the need for museums to increase their appeal to students by creating an interactive and immersive environment and leveraging E-WOM through social media, student digital content, and collaboration with young influencers. From an educational perspective, museum visits need to be integrated into formal learning through thematic projects, reflective assignments, or cross-subject modules that are relevant to the curriculum. Partnerships between schools and museums are also important to bridge classroom theory with real-world experiences, thus strengthening the role of museums as informal learning spaces that support educational goals. **Suggestions for Further Research**: Future research could explore additional variables that influence students' intention to visit, such as affordability, transportation access, cultural relevance, or curricular alignment. Demographic moderators—such as age, field of study, and level of digital literacy—may also offer valuable insights into how different student subgroups respond to atmosphere and E-WOM. Comparative studies across museum types (e.g., science, art, or history museums) or across regions could help identify contextual differences in student engagement. Moreover, more granular exploration of specific atmospheric elements, such as exhibit design, lighting, signage, or interactive technologies, could

p-ISSN : 2721-852X ; e-ISSN : 2721-7965
IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

guide targeted improvements in the visitor experience. Longitudinal studies would also be beneficial to examine how students' perceptions and behaviors evolve over time, particularly in relation to educational integration and digital trends.

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Page 1109-1123

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IJORER, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 2025
Page 1109-1123

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