

The Effect of eWOM on Intention to Visit and The Mediating Role of Destination Image

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Abstract : This study aims to examine the causal relationship between eWOM, destination image, and the intention to visit a tourist destination. The structural model consisting of these three variables was analyzed using WarpPLS 6.0. Samples of 200 prospective tourists were collected in Denpasar City, Bali. The measurement items are adapted from the research instruments in the marketing literature. The results of the analysis prove that E-WOM has a direct positive and significant influence on the image of Buleleng as tourism destination and the intention to visit Buleleng. Similarly, the image of Buleleng as tourism destination is also proven to significantly mediate the influence of E-WOM on intention to visit Buleleng tourism destination. These findings bring important implications for the theory and practice of tourism marketing. The structural model of the results of the analysis is expected to make a valuable contribution to the development of tourism marketing theory and concepts, as well as a reference for strategic planning in the tourism industry sector.

Keywords: E-WOM, destination image, intention to visit

Date of Submission: 17-09-2018

Date of acceptance: 03-10-2018

I. Introduction

Word-of-mouth communication (WOM) is a type of information most searched by people who have the intention to travel. Such recommendations are considered to be the most reliable source of information for potential travelers (Chi & Qu, 2008). At present WOM deployment occurs not only through conventional means. In particular, the internet has evolved into a resource or means in which electronic communications for Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) takes place between customers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Hypermedia has led to an increase in the number of people using the internet to access information about potential destination travelers (Litvin et al., 2008). Due to the intangible nature of tourism services, there is a greater degree of uncertainty and ambiguity. This intangibility encourages potential visitors to visit sites like Trip-Advisor.com, LateRooms.com, and Hotels.com, etc. Potential visitors consult online reviews because tourism and service products are inaccessible until the time of consumption, thus the risks and uncertainties associated with it also increase (Abubakar & Ilkan 2016).

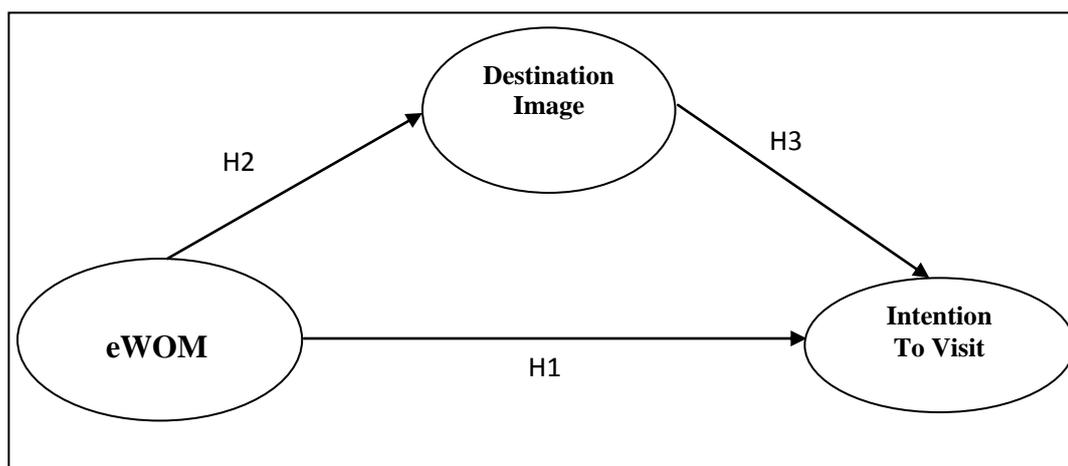
Compared to WOM, existing studies show that eWOM has high credibility, empathy and relevance for customers when compared to resources, created by marketers through their website (Bickart & Schindler, 2001) Although WOM has been declared the most important source of information in the formation of a goal image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), there is little research specifically to analyze the effect of eWOM on the destination image. Some research on the impact of eWOM, largely analyzed the effect of eWOM on customer loyalty (Kim et al., 2004; Gruen et al., 2006), where each study also relates it to customer value (Gruen et al., 2006) and the decision to buy (Kim et al., 2004). While on the other hand, Zhang et al. (2010) analyzed the effect of eWOM on restaurant popularity. The study analyzes the relationship between information satisfaction on the internet and satisfaction in tourist destinations which has also been done by Castaneda et al. (2007). However, research that specifically connects eWOM and destination image is still very limited. Based on this fact, this study aims to analyze the effect that can be generated by eWOM on the image of the destination and the intention to visit, either directly or indirectly.

II. Literature Review And Conceptual Framework

Intention to visit refers to the willingness of potential visitors to visit a tourist destination (Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014); this is a rational evaluation of the costs / benefits of a set of alternative goals, derived from external information sources, including eWOM or tourist blogs' (Chen et al., 2014). Experts have supported the idea that eWOM positively has a tendency to increase the possibility of reservations and sales spaces (Duverger, 2013; Mauri & Minazzi, 2013; Ogut & Onur Taş, 2012). A large number of tourism studies have advocated that eWOM has the ability to influence tourism intentions (Arsal, Backman, & Baldwin, 2008; Filieri & McLeay

2014; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Ye, Law, & Gu, 2009). eWOM is more reliable than WOM because of its anonymous nature, and the absence of incentives (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2013). Marketers can seize the opportunity in the platform to improve product / service quality, innovation and future product characteristics, instilling trust in the minds of consumers, which of course stimulates purchase intentions (Abubakar 2016). As revealed by Jalilvand & Samiei (2012), eWOM also has an influence on brand image and purchase intentions. In addition, it also proves that eWOM has a positive influence on the image of destinations (Setiawan et al., 2014) and intentions to travel / visit (Abubakar, 2016).

Based on these empirical and theoretical arguments, the following hypotheses can be proposed:
H1: eWOM has a positive direct effect on intention to visit.
H2: eWOM has a positive direct effect on destination image.
H3: Destination image has a positive direct effect on intention to visit.
H4: Destination image mediates the effect of eWOM on intention to visit.



3.1. Research Sites

This research was conducted in Denpasar, considering that Denpasar is the capital of Bali Province with a moderately high middle class as a potential market for the tourism industry. In addition, the research was also conducted in Buleleng Regency to observe and explore information about tourist objects that are currently newly developed.

3.2. Population and Sample

The population in this study is the citizens of Denpasar as potential tourists who have read or communicate in forums on the internet about tourist attractions in Buleleng. The population of this study is infinite because the number cannot be known with certainty, so the sampling method used is non probability sampling with judgmental sampling technique with the number of samples in this study is set at 200.

3.3. Data Collection and Measurement Methods

Data were collected by providing questionnaires to potential tourists in Denpasar who were selected as research samples. In the preliminary study, data collection was conducted to obtain data related to the existence of tourist attraction in Buleleng, which has appeal to potential tourists in Denpasar.

Meanwhile, the instruments used to measure eWOM variables consisted of four indicators such as: information, knowledge, answers, and reliability. Destination image measurement consisted of nine indicators such as: travel environment, natural attraction, entertainment and events, historic attraction, infrastructure, accessibility, relaxation, outdoor activities, and price and value. Intention to visit is measured by three indicators such as: prediction; preference, and future need. All of the indicators are measured using a Likert scale with a score ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The following shows a summary of the identification of research variables.

Table 3.1. Variables and Indicators

No	Variable	Indicator
1	<i>Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)</i> (reference: Gruen <i>et al.</i> , 2006)	<i>Information</i>
		<i>Knowledge</i>
		<i>Answers</i>
		<i>Reliability</i>
2	<i>Destination image</i> (reference: Chi & Qu, 2008)	<i>Travel Environment</i>
		<i>Natural Attraction</i>
		<i>Entertainment and Event</i>
		<i>Historic Attraction</i>
		<i>Infrastructure</i>
		<i>Accessibility</i>
		<i>Relaxation</i>
		<i>Accessibility</i>
		<i>Price and Value</i>
3	Intention to Visit (reference: Abubakar, 2016)	<i>Prediction</i>
		<i>Preference</i>
		<i>Future need</i>

II. Result Of The Analysis

4.1. Characteristics of respondents

Table 4.1: Characteristics of Respondents

No	Characteristics of Respondent	Classification	Number	Percentage
1.	Umur	18 – 30 years old	155	77,5
		31 – 50 years old	45	22,5
	Total		200	100
2.	Type of media used	Facebook	90	40,5
		Twitter	6	2,7
		Instagram	80	36
		WhatsApp	32	14,4
		BBM	6	2,7
	Line	8	3,6	
Total		222	100	

Table 4.1 shows some things related to the characteristics of respondents. Referring to the table can be seen that the respondents aged 18 - 31 years dominate that is equal to 77.5 percent compared to respondents aged 31 - 50 years of 22.5 percent. Based on the type of media used, it turns Facebook has the highest percentage, which is equal to 40.5 percent followed by Instagram 36 percent and WhatsApp 14.4 percent. While the rest of Twitter, BBM and Line is very minimal use. Based on Table 4.1 on the characteristics of respondents we can know that most respondents are teenagers. This is a natural thing considering that teenagers have more free time to socialize using internet-based social media. Meanwhile, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp are still the favorite media used to chat or obtain information about various things, especially information on tourist destinations such as Buleleng.

4.2. Validity test

Testing the validity as a measure of how powerful a tool performs its measuring function. Based on Table 4.2, all items of question indicate loading factor ≥ 0.3 at a significance level of 5 percent, it can be explained that all construct indicators in this study are valid so it can be used as a research instrument (Solimun, 2017).

Table 4.2: Test Result Validity of EWOM Indicators

No	Indicators of EWOM	FL	Comments
1	X1.1	0.697	Valid
2	X1.2	0.907	Valid
3	X1.3	0.801	Valid
4	X1.4	0.893	Valid

Table 4.3: Test Results of Indicator Validity Destination Image

No	Indicators and Items of Destination Image	FL	Comments
1	Y1.1	0.730	Valid
2	Y1.2	0.706	Valid
3	Y1.3	0.614	Valid
4	Y1.4	0.647	Valid
5	Y1.5	0.520	Valid

6	Y1.6	0,635	Valid
7	Y1.7	0,465	Valid
8	Y1.8	0,774	Valid
9	Y1.9	0,621	Valid
10	Y1.10	0,409	Valid
11	Y1.11	0,515	Valid
12	Y1.12	0,466	Valid
13	Y1.13	0,552	Valid
14	Y1.14	0,815	Valid
15	Y1.15	0,661	Valid
16	Y1.16	0,612	Valid
17	Y1.17	0,414	Valid
18	Y1.18	0,473	Valid
19	Y1.19	0,621	Valid
20	Y1.20	0,605	Valid
21	Y1.21	0,708	Valid
22	Y1.22	0,730	Valid
23	Y1.23	0,756	Valid
24	Y1.24	0,759	Valid

Table 4.4: Test Results of Indicator Validity Intention to Visit

No	Indicators of Intention to Visit	FL	Comments
1	Y2.1	0,798	Valid
2	Y2.2	0,868	Valid
3	Y2.3	0,901	Valid

4.3. Reliability Test

Reliability test is to measure the consistency of an instrument. The value of an instrument is said to be reliable when the value of cronbach alpha ≥ 0.6 (Solimun, 2017). Reliability test results can be seen in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Reliability Test Results

No	Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Comments
1	EWOM	0,844	Reliable
2	Destination Image	0,930	Reliable
3	Intention to Visit	0,817	Reliable

Based on Table 4.5 it can be seen that the cronbach alpha of the whole instrument is greater than 0.6. This suggests that such measurements can provide consistent results when re-measurements are taken on the same subjects.

4.4. Results of Hypothesis Testing Direct Effect with WarpPLS

Hypothesis testing decision rule is done as follows, if obtained p-value < 0.10 (alpha 10%) then it is said weakly significant, if p-value $< 0,05$ (alpha 5%) then said significant and if p-value $< 0,01$ (alpha 1%) then said highly significant. Testing the hypothesis about the role of destination image in mediating the influence of EWOM on the intention to visit Buleleng can be seen in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.1 as follows:

Table 4.6: Path Coefficients

Path	Coefficient of Correlation	Std. Error	p Values	Comments
EWOM (X_1) \rightarrow Destination Image (Y_1)	0,573	0,063	$< 0,001$	Highly Significant
EWOM (X_1) \rightarrow Intention to Visit (Y_2)	0,196	0,068	0,002	Highly Significant
Destination Image (Y_1) \rightarrow Intention to Visit (Y_2)	0,514	0,064	$< 0,001$	Highly Significant

Based on Table 4.6, it can be stated that:

H1: eWOM has a positive direct influence on the intention of visiting the acceptable tourist destinations with the path coefficient of 0.196 with p-value 0.002 at the significance level of 1 percent.
 H2: eWOM has a positive direct effect on the destination image is acceptable with the path coefficient of 0.573 with p-value < 0.001 at the significance level of 1 percent.

H3: The image of the destination has a positive direct effect on the intention of visiting the acceptable tourist destinations with the path coefficient of 0.514 with p-value <0.001 at the significance level of 1 percent.

4.4 Testing of mediation role using WarpPLS 6.0

The role of mediation of a variable is said to be significant if the p-value of the indirect effect involving the corresponding variable is <the level of significance (Solimun, 2017). Test results of indirect effect of two segments ie EWOM - Image of Destination - Visiting intentions using WarpPLS are shown in Table 4.7

Table 4.7: P P values of indirect effects for paths with 2 segments

Variable	p Values	Comments
EWOM (X ₁) → Intention to Visit (Y ₂)	<0,001	Highly Significant

Based on the results of testing the indirect effect with two segments as shown in table 4.7 it can be stated that the mediation role of the destination image is very significant. In this case the role of destination image mediation is partial, since EWOM also has a significant direct effect on intention to visit.

4.5. Discussion of Research Results

Based on the results of the research, especially the results of hypothesis testing can be explained the influence of exogenous constructs (X) that is EWOM to endogenous construct (Y) that is the image of destination and intention to visit tourist destinations Buleleng, as follows:

4.5.1. EWOM's influence on intentions of visiting tourist destinations

The result of structural model estimation as presented in Table 4.6 shows that hypothesis testing on EWOM influence on the intention of visiting tourist destinations resulted in a coefficient value of 0.196 with p-value 0,002 at a significance level of 1 percent. These results indicate that EWOM has a positive and significant influence on the intention of visiting tourist destinations. This result means that the higher the quantity and quality of information about Buleleng tourist destination, the higher the intention to visit Buleleng tourist destination. Quality perception is made up of accurate information sourced from EWOM through internet-based social media. The results of this study support the results of research conducted by Abubakar (2016).

4.5.2. EWOM influence on destination image

The result of structural model estimation as presented in Table 4.6 also shows that eWOM has a positive direct and significant influence on destination image with path coefficient of 0,573 with p-value <0,001 at 1% significance level. This means that the higher the quantity and quality of information about Buleleng tourist destinations, the better the image of Buleleng tourist destination in the eyes of potential tourists. The results of this study provide support on the results of research conducted by Setiawan et al (2014).

4.5.3. The influence of destination image on the intention of visiting tourist destinations

The result of the structural model estimation as presented in Table 4.6 also shows that the image of the destination has a positive and significant direct impact on the intention of visiting tourist destinations with the path coefficient of 0.514 with p-value <0.001 at the significance level of 1 percent. This result means that the better the image of Buleleng tourist destination, the higher the intention to visit tourist destinations of Buleleng. The results of this study also support the results of research conducted by Abubakar (2016).

4.5.4. The role of destination imagery in mediating the influence of EWOM on the intention of visiting Buleleng tourist destination

The results of indirect effect testing with two segments as shown in Table 4.7 suggest that the objective image variable plays a role in mediating partially and very significantly the influence of EWOM on the intention of visiting Buleleng tourist destination. This means that the intention to visit Buleleng tourist destinations will increase if EWOM able to improve the image of tourist destinations Buleleng. All information about Buleleng tourist destinations should be aimed as much as possible to improve the image of Buleleng tourist destination, because with the increasing image of Buleleng tourist destination it will automatically also increase the intention of potential tourists to visit tourist destinations Buleleng.

III. Conclusion

Based on the results of the discussion of research, it can be concluded that: 1) EWOM positively and significantly influence the intention to visit tourist destinations. This result means that the higher the quantity and quality of information about Buleleng tourist destination, the higher the intention to visit Buleleng tourist

destination. 2) EWOM has a positive and significant direct impact on the destination image. This means that the higher the quantity and quality of information about Buleleng tourist destinations, the better the image of Buleleng tourist destination in the eyes of potential tourists. 3) The image of the destination has a positive and significant direct impact on the intention of visiting the tourist destination. This means that the better the image of Buleleng tourist destination, the higher the intention to visit tourist destinations Buleleng. 4) The image of Destination plays a role in mediating partially and significantly the influence of EWOM on the intention of visiting Buleleng tourist destination. This means that the intention to visit Buleleng tourist destinations will increase if EWOM able to improve the image of tourist destinations Buleleng.

A suggestion for future research is to try to compare the results of testing the EWOM's impact on destination imagery and the intention of visiting a tourist destination in a prospective tourist population that has cultural differences and the familiarity level of internet use as in developed and developing countries. Government and national tourism industry actors can play an active role to create a forum on internet media as a means of communication between them with the tourists, as well as a forum for the interaction and exchange of information among tourists themselves. The forum can be a portal or social networking site that allows for open and transparent communication. Thus, through the forum is expected to obtain objective and relevant information related to the condition of tourist destinations concerned.

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Putu Yudi Setiawan "The Effect of eWOM on Intention to Visit and The Mediating Role of Destination Image" *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)* 20.9 (2018): 21-27.