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Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Visit Intention Through Destination Image

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ABSTRACT
This research seeks to analyze and clarify the mediating effect of destination image on he connection between electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and the likelihood of visiting is being among potential tourists of Kampung Majapahit Tourism Village, Mojokerto. A quantitative associative–causal approach was applied, employing purposive sampling to select respondents who had viewed information, comments, or reviews about the destination on Instagram or Google Maps but had not yet visited in person. The minimum required sample size was calculated using 10 times rule, resulting in 50 participants, and further validated with a G*Power analysis that suggested 68 participants. To ensure sufficient representation, the final sample consisted of 100 respondents. Data was gathered using an online survey created with Google Forms. Participants evaluated the statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from complete disagreement to complete agreement. Data analysis was conducted employing the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS) method in SmartPLS 4, encompassing both measurement and structural model assessments. The research demonstrates that electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) substantially improves perceptions of a destination, which in turn encourages people to visit, and also directly motivates travel intentions. Moreover, the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on the intention to visit a place is, to some extent, explained by the image that place creates in people's minds. Within the framework of cultural tourism, these findings highlight the need to enhance digital communication strategies and refine destination image in order to encourage more prospective tourists to make a visit.

Keywords: e-WOM; Destination Image; Visit Intention; Tourism Village; Digital Marketing.

INTRODUCTION
Indonesia is one of the world's most attractive countries for nature- and culture-based tourism, contributing around 4.01–4.5% to national GDP in 2024 (Wisnubroto, 2025). East Java, in particular, has shown a steady rise in tourist arrivals. However, despite this regional growth, Bejijong Village (Kampung Majapahit) has experienced a decline in visitor numbers. This situation creates a gap between the destination's strong cultural potential and its limited digital marketing reach. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), defined as online reviews, comments, and user-generated content, plays a major role in influencing tourists' perceptions and visit intentions (Rosi & AS, 2024; Yandi et al., 2023). Destination image, which reflects cognitive and affective impressions, also significantly affects visit intention(Wisnu & Sholahuddin, 2023). However, prior studies often overlook the mediating effect of destination image between e-WOM and visit intention, especially in cultural heritage destinations. This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing the effect of e-WOM on visit intention both directly and through destination image. The findings are expected to guide tourism managers in optimizing online marketing strategies on community-based destinations such as Kampung Majapahit. This study supports previous findings on the role of e-WOM in influencing behavioral intentions while extending them by incorporating destination image as a mediating variable within a cultural tourism context.

METHOD
This study employed a quantitative associative–causal design to explore the relationships among electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), destination image, and visit intention. The research focused on potential visitors to Kampung Majapahit Tourism Village in Mojokerto who had accessed online information, comments, or reviews about the destination via Instagram or Google Maps but had not yet visited the site. To ensure that the data collected matched the study's objectives, a purposive sampling approach was utilized, selecting only participants who met the predetermined inclusion criteria. The minimum sample size was estimated based on Hair Jr et al. (2021) "10 times rule," which suggested at least

50 respondents. To enhance statistical reliability, following this, a G*Power analysis determined a minimum sample size of 68 participants. To ensure sufficient data for robust analysis, the final sample comprised 100 respondents. An online questionnaire, distributed through Google Forms, was used to assess three underlying constructs: electronic word-of-mouth (measured by credibility, intensity, review valence, informativeness, and reviewer trust), destination image (comprising cognitive, affective, and unique components), and visit intention (covering transactional, referential, and preferential dimensions). A five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement), was utilized for all indicator measurements. Data were analyzed employing the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS) method with SmartPLS 4, this study encompasses a comprehensive evaluation of both the measurement and structural models, alongside hypothesis testing, and an examination of reliability and validity utilizing composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Outer Model Test

The outer model depicts the connections between indicator blocks and their underlying latent variables, serving to evaluate the research instrument's construct validity and reliability. This analysis establishes whether the measurement items accurately reflect the constructs they are meant to measure and confirms the internal consistency of participant responses to the questionnaire. (Ghozali & Latan, 2020).

Table 1. Outer Loading of Research Variables

Variabel Indicator	Outer Loading	Description
e-WOM (X)		
Credibility	.848	Valid
Quantity	.764	Valid
Review	.781	Valid
Informativeness level	.831	Valid
Trust in reviewer	.779	Valid
Destination Image(Z)		
Cognitive Image	.876	Valid
Affective Image	.847	Valid
Unique Image	.865	Valid
Visit Intention (Y)		
Transactional	.840	Valid
Referential	.858	Valid
Preferential	.860	Valid

Based on Table 1 above, the e-WOM (X) variable is reflected through credibility, quantity, review, informativeness level, and trust in reviewer, which have outer loading values of 0.848, 0.764, 0.781, 0.831, and 0.779 respectively. Since all the values exceed 0.708, it can be concluded that all indicators are valid and effectively measure the e-WOM construct. The destination image (Z) variable is reflected through cognitive image, affective image, and unique image, which have outer loading values of 0.876, 0.847, and 0.865 respectively. As each loading value exceeds 0.708, it indicates that all indicators are valid in reflecting the destination image variable. Furthermore, the visit intention (Y) variable is reflected through transactional, referential, and preferential, with outer loading values of 0.840, 0.858, and 0.860 respectively. Because all these values are higher than 0.708, it can be concluded that the indicators are valid and can represent the visit intention construct well. Thus, all indicators in this study are declared valid, as their outer loading values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.708 (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Determinant Legitimacy Test

The discriminant legitimacy test employments the normal change extricated assessing to determine if the research tool accurately measures or represents the underlying construct. How to compare the average AVE value of the extracted variance with a value of 0.5 is used as a determinant of convergent validity (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted

Variables	AVE	Description
e-WOM	.642	Valid
Destination Image	.744	Valid
Visit Intention	.727	Valid

As indicated in Table 2, the Destination Image variable has an AVE of 0.744, exceeding the 0.5 threshold and thus fulfilling the requirement for convergent validity. Similarly, the e-WOM variable's AVE of 0.642, and the Visit Intention variable's AVE of 0.727, both surpass 0.5, also confirming convergent validity for these constructs. Consequently, the findings demonstrate that all constructs included in this research satisfy the criteria for convergent validity, as evidenced by AVE values above the 0.5 minimum.

Composite Validity and Cronbach's Alpha

Composite validity aims to test the reliability value between the indicators of the constructs that form it. A good composite validity and Cronbach's alpha value ranges from 0.70-0.90 (Hair Jr et al., 2021). This can be presented in table 3 below:

Tabel 3. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Validity

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A	Composite Reliability	Description
e-WOM	.860	.862	.900	Reliable
Destination Image	.828	.830	.897	Reliable
Visit Intention	.813	.814	.889	Reliable

Based on Table 3, the composite reliability values for the e-WOM, Destination Image, and Visit Intention variables are 0.900, 0.897, and 0.889, respectively, all exceeding the recommended threshold value of 0.70. This demonstrates that all instruments used in this study are consistent and meet the reliability standards. Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha values for e-WOM (0.860), Destination Image (0.828), and Visit Intention (0.813) all exceed 0.70, indicating that each variable possesses a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

Inner Model Test

The R2 value is used to test the level of determination of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. A higher R2 value indicates that the level of determination is stronger. This information is presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Godness of Fit

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Destination Image	.720	0,717
Visit Intention	.518	0,508

Referring to Table 4, the results show that e-WOM influences 72.0% of the variation in Destination Image, whereas the rest 28.0% is affected by additional factors that were not considered in this research. Meanwhile, e WOM and Destination Image together influence 51.8% of the variation in Visit Intention, with the remaining 48.2% affected by factors beyond the focus of this study.

Hypothesis

Based on the conceptual framework of this study, correlation and hypothesis testing between variables may be done in two ways: correlation analysis and correlation analysis. This may be summarized in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Hypothesis Tests Result

Variables	Coefficients	T_statistic	Sig.
DI>VI	.343	2.436	.015
EW>DI	.849	22.137	.000
EW>VI	.406	2.556	.011
EW>DI>VI	.291	2.355	.019

The results of the hypothesis tests in Table 5 indicate significant connections among the variables examined. The findings of the analysis indicate a significant positive correlation between Destination Image (DI) and Visit Intention (VI), confirmed by a t-statistic of 2.436 (surpassing the critical value of 1.96) and a p-value of 0.015 (under 0.05), thus validating Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, Electronic Word of Mouth (e-

WOM) significantly and positively shapes Destination Image (DI), as demonstrated by a large t-statistic of 22.137 and a p-value of 0.000. In the same vein, Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) also significantly and positively influences Visit Intention (VI), with a t-statistic of 2.556 (exceeding 1.96) and a p-value of 0.011 (below 0.05). As a result, all direct hypotheses are supported, demonstrating that both e-WOM and Destination Image have a positive and significant impact on Visit Intention. Notably, the indirect effect of e-WOM on Visit Intention (VI) through Destination Image (DI) is also significant, supported by a t-statistic of 2.355 (above 1.96) and a p-value of 0.019 (below 0.05). This substantiates the mediating function of Destination Image (DI) in the relationship between e-WOM and Visit Intention (VI), meaning e-WOM influences Visit Intention both directly and indirectly by shaping Destination Image.

Discussion

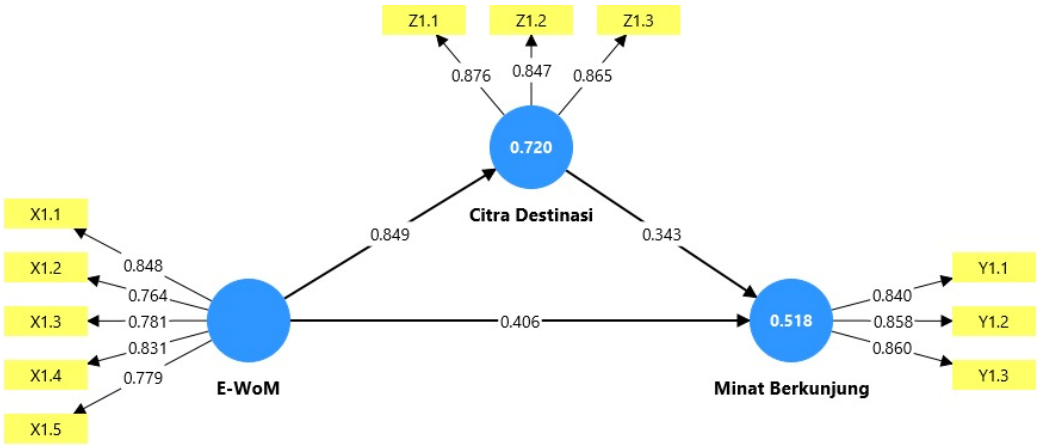

Figure 1. SEM Test Results

Destination Image influenced by Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

This research indicates a strong, positive correlation between Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) and Destination Image (DI). The path coefficient of 0.849 and a t-statistic of 22.137 ($p < 0.05$) provide significant evidence supporting this conclusion. These statistical results imply that increased positive online reviews, recommendations, and shared experiences regarding a destination lead to stronger and more favorable perceptions in the minds of potential visitors. These conclusions are consistent with prior studies, including those by Maryam et al. (2021) and Sarapang et al. (2021), which similarly established that e-WOM significantly shapes destination image formation. Furthermore, Aldrian (2022) and Widyastuti & Putri (2023) elucidated that online communication, delivered through reviews and testimonials, is instrumental in building a positive and trustworthy destination image. In line with Verma & Yadav (2021), e-WOM is understood to function as a dynamic exchange of information that profoundly impacts how tourists perceive destinations in the digital era. Consequently, the prevalence of social media and digital interaction plays a crucial role in shaping the favorable image of tourism destinations, such as Kampung Majapahit Bejjilong.

Visit Intention influenced by Destination Image

The results also show that Destination Image has a positive and significant effect on Visit Intention, with a coefficient of 0.343, a T-statistic of 2.436 (>1.96), and a significance level of 0.015 (<0.05). This means that a more positive and stronger image of a destination will encourage a higher intention to visit. This result supports the research of Kencana & Facrureza (2023) and Fauziya & Mahendri (2024), who found that an attractive and positive destination image significantly enhances tourists' intention to visit. Similarly, Widyaningsih et al. (2020) and Mheidat & Marzuki (2025) emphasized that the cognitive and affective components of destination image, including perceptions of attraction, safety, and hospitality, influence tourists' emotional responses and visiting decisions. Thus, strengthening the positive image of cultural destinations such as Bejijong becomes an important strategy to increase visitors' desire to travel.

Visit Intention influenced by Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

The direct relationship between E-WOM and Visit Intention also shows a positive and significant effect, with a coefficient value of 0.406, a T-statistic of 2.556 (>1.96), and a significance level of 0.011 (<0.05). This means that visitors who receive or read positive online recommendations tend to have a stronger desire to visit the destination. This finding aligns with Sarapang et al. (2021) and Maryam et al. (2021), who found that e-WOM positively and significantly affects tourists' interest and visiting behavior,

either directly or through destination image. Supporting this, Iqbal et al. (2022) and Rani et al. (2022) describe e-WOM as a powerful communication tool in influencing consumers' travel decisions in the digital age. In the context of Kampung Majapahit Bejijong, a destination rich in cultural and historical value, e-WOM serves as a medium for digital storytelling that enhances awareness, builds trust, and sparks curiosity among potential visitors. Therefore, encouraging positive online engagement and visitor reviews can directly increase tourists' intention to visit.

Visit Intention influenced by Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) through Destination Image

The study demonstrates a noteworthy indirect effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on the desire to visit a place, operating through the lens of Destination Image. A path coefficient of 0.291 ($t = 2.355$, $p = 0.019$) confirms this relationship. Consequently, Destination Image acts as a partial mediator in the connection between e-WOM and Visit Intention, meaning that favorable online discussions and recommendations not only directly encourage travel but also indirectly increase it by improving how the destination is perceived. These conclusions echo previous research by Maryam et al. (2021), Sarapang et al. (2021), and Aldrian (2022), which also identified Destination Image as a mediating factor between e-WOM and tourist behavior. Moreover, Widyastuti & Putri (2023) highlighted that trustworthy and compelling online interactions contribute to a positive and credible destination image, ultimately driving tourism. This suggests that e-WOM is more impactful when potential visitors view the destination as appealing, dependable, and emotionally resonant. Thus, strategically managing online interactions – for example, by encouraging genuine visitor stories and showcasing positive aspects of Kampung Majapahit Bejjilong – can substantially improve Destination Image and, in turn, boost Visit Intention.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a meaningful and positive contribution to forming destination image and encouraging tourists' visit intentions. The influence occurs both directly and through destination image, which functions as a mediating factor. Positive digital interactions such as feedback, online discussions, and traveler testimonials help build a favorable perception of Kampung Majapahit Tourism Village and inspire people to visit. A well-managed online communication approach not only increases public trust and awareness but also supports the overall competitiveness of cultural destinations. These findings are consistent with the study's initial assumptions, showing that the synergy between e-WOM and destination image can reinforce tourists' behavioral responses. Practically, local tourism managers should continue to enhance online marketing initiatives, stimulate authentic visitor participation through social media content, and maintain the credibility of digital reviews to strengthen the attractiveness of the destination. However, the study's limited respondent number and the focus on individuals who have not yet visited Kampung Majapahit may restrict the generalization of results. Future research is advised to include visitors with prior travel experiences and to integrate additional factors such as satisfaction, perceived value, or motivation. Expanding these elements will deepen the understanding of what drives tourists' intention to visit cultural destinations.

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