

The Effect of Destination Image and Electronic Word of Mouth on Visiting Decisions through Interest in Visiting the Twin Lakes Area Twin Lakes Region of West Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia offers a unique travel experience with diverse cultures, religions, ethnicities and languages on each island. The Twin Lakes region in West Sumatra is one such amazing destination, despite experiencing a decline in visitation from 2019 to 2023. In the age of the internet and social media, advertising and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) can strengthen a destination's image, increase traveler interest and influence visiting decisions. The study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to evaluate the influence of destination image and eWOM on interest in visiting the Twin Lakes Region. The implications of this research are important in building tourist interest and a positive image of this destination. By providing interesting information, we can influence tourists' decision to visit

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country with rich diversity, offers an unrivalled travel experience. From Sabang to Merauke, every island in Indonesia presents a unique culture, religion, ethnicity and language. This is a tremendous draw for domestic travellers who want to explore the natural beauty and cultural richness of their own homeland. With a variety of stunning tourist destinations, ranging from stunning beaches to majestic mountains, as well as an alluring cultural heritage, Indonesia offers an unforgettable experience for every traveller who explores it. In the ever-growing tourism industry, competition between tourist destination managers is increasingly fierce, encouraging them to compete in increasing the number of tourist visits (Putri & Sukawati, 2019).

In the era of globalisation and advances in information technology, public interest in travel and tourist destinations has increased significantly. This phenomenon can be explained by various factors, including increased access to information about tourist destinations through the internet and social media, advances in transportation infrastructure that facilitate accessibility to various places, and increased public awareness of the importance of leisure and holidays for life balance. In addition, sustainable economic development allows more people to explore tourist destinations that were previously inaccessible. All these factors combine to create a strong impetus for people to explore various tourist destinations at home and abroad. Public interest in travelling can be seen in Figure 1 below which shows the number of tourist trips throughout Indonesia 2019 - 2023.

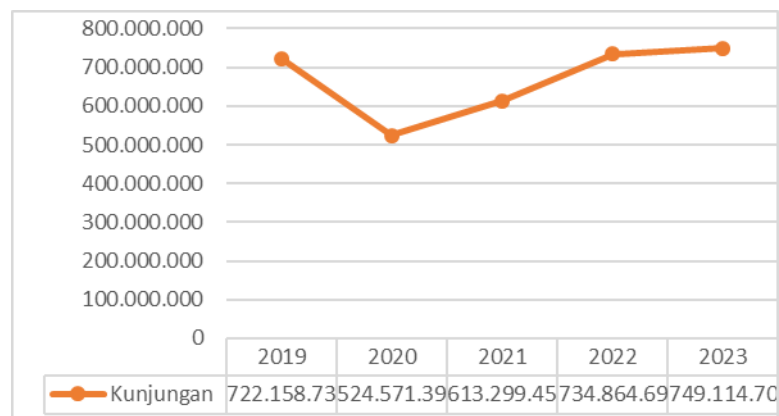


Figure 1. Number of National Tourist Visits

Source: Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics

Data on domestic tourist arrivals in all provinces in Indonesia from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) shows an interesting trend over the last five years. From 2019 to 2023, there were fluctuations in the number of visits with a significant increase in 2022 and 2023. In 2019, the number of visits reached 722,158,733, then experienced a sharp decline in 2020 to 524,571,392. However, the trend increased again in 2021 by reaching 613,299,459 visits. The most striking trends occurred in 2022 and 2023, where the number of visits peaked at 734,864,693 and 749,114,709 respectively. These fluctuations may be influenced

by various factors, such as changes in government policies, economic conditions, and important events at home and abroad that affect tourist interest. Further analysis of this data can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of the tourism industry in Indonesia and provide a basis for the development of future promotion and destination management strategies.

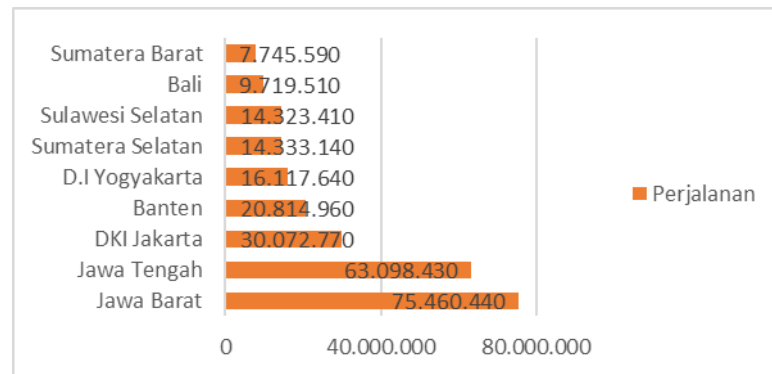


Figure 2. Provinces With the Most Visits 2023

Source: Databooks 2023

The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) recorded the provinces in Indonesia that were visited by many domestic tourists in the first semester of 2023. In Figure 2, Java Island is a tourist destination that is visited by many domestic tourists. East Java Province is ranked first as the most tourist destination, followed by West Java Province. However, there are two provinces on the island of Sumatra that are destinations for domestic tourists, namely North Sumatra and West Sumatra Provinces.

In West Sumatra Province, there are various tourist destinations that can be visited by tourists, such as Padang City which offers natural beauty at Air Manis Beach, Mount Padang and Nirvana Beach. Bukittinggi City which offers tourist destinations in the form of Sianok Gorge and Puncak Lawang. Pesisir Selatan Regency has natural beauty such as Mandeh Tourism Area and Carocok Beach. Solok Regency has interesting destinations such as Twin Lakes, Alahan Panjang tea garden and Lake Talang. But among the tourist destinations found in West Sumatra, there is a lake that is nicknamed "Twin Lakes" because in this area there are two lakes located side by side, namely the lake at the top and the lake at the bottom. Although these lakes are said to be twins, they have differences, from the shape, height and depth of the lake. This Twin lake tourist destination is located in Solok Regency, precisely in Bungo Tanjung, Alahan Panjang.

The level of tourist visits at Lake Kembar has decreased from 2019-2023 (Figure 3).

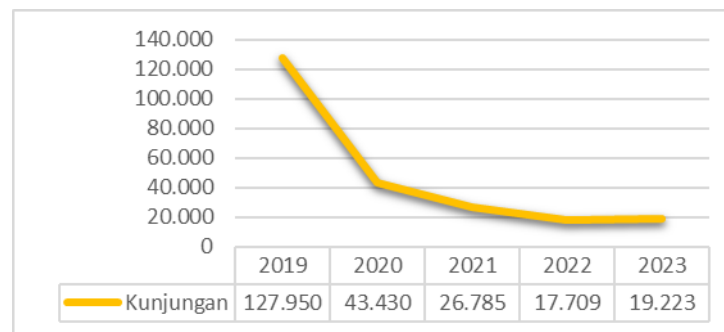


Figure 3. National Tourist Visit in Twin Lakes

Source: Solok Regency Tourism Office

Based on Figure 3, it can be seen that tourist visits from 2019 to 2023 experienced a significant decline. This decline was caused by the emergence of new tourist destinations in Solok Regency, which attracted tourists to visit the new place. Several factors have been identified as the cause of the decline in domestic tourist visits to the Twin Lakes tourist attraction in Solok Regency. One of the main factors is the lack of promotional activities through various media, both electronic and print media. In addition, the existence of non-optimal sales promotions also contributes to the decline in tourists' interest in visiting. Another factor that also plays a role is inadequate facilities, such as lack of cleanliness, equipment, and less than optimal management.

In response to this problem, changes and additions are needed in terms of promotion, improved accessibility, and improved facilities so that tourist interest can be increased. Although the Twin Lakes Area has an official website managed by the local government or the tourism office of Solok Regency, it does not yet have an official social media that is managed directly. The presence of social media as a very effective tool to promote the Twin Lakes Area to the Indonesian people offers great potential. By utilising the features available on social media, the Twin Lakes Area manager can build strong branding and establish a close relationship with tourists. Relevant content on social media about the Twin Lakes Region has a significant impact in influencing visitors' decision to visit.

Personal experiences shared through electronic word of mouth also have a major influence in convincing potential tourists to visit the Twin Lakes Region. In accordance with the opinion of Nurbaeti (2020) electronic word of mouth has a significant impact in influencing tourists' visiting decisions. With the recommendations or reviews given by tourists on a platform, it will be able to influence public interest. Consumer information about a product or company that is exchanged and disseminated via the internet, social media, and mobile communication can be considered a form of electronic word of mouth (eWOM). eWOM tends to encourage the intention to share information again because of the ease with which consumers can interact online, allowing the dissemination of information globally and instantly (Chu, 2021).

The tourism sector is expected to provide added value through the application of science, technology, and information, as well as in-depth market analysis. Tourism market analysis is very important to understand consumer behaviour, namely tourists. By understanding tourist behaviour, it is expected that we can formulate appropriate marketing strategies to attract visits and encourage tourists to return to visit the tourist destination. It is expected that the tourism sector in Indonesia can be an attraction for tourists and encourage increased interest in visiting. One of the key factors in attracting tourist visits is the destination image offered, especially in displaying the natural beauty of the destination. The formation of a tourist destination image starts from various factors, such as advertising, word of mouth, direct visits to tourist destinations, experiences gained from these destinations, satisfaction levels, and services received during visits to destinations (Riyadi & Nurmahdi, 2022)

The presence of a positive destination image will increase tourists' interest in visiting a place. This indicates that the preservation of the natural environment and natural beauty that is maintained, supported by the presence of tourist attractions, adequate supporting infrastructure, easy accessibility, and complete facilities, all contribute to tourists' decision making to visit the destination and stimulate them to return to visit in the future (Illah, Nur, 2019)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Theory

Tourism according to (Wirawan, Eka et al., 2022), said tourism is a journey that is outside the place of residence and its environment, which is not permanent in nature which has the aim of travelling, business or other purposes in the place visited.

According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 9 of 1990 article 3, tourism is the activity of travelling, whether carried out by individuals or groups. It can be concluded that tourism is the activity of individuals or groups who move to a place, which is temporary with the aim of making a tourist visit or seeking entertainment.

Tourist Theory

According to Pendit (2002), tourists are people who travel for fun, for personal purposes, for health purposes and so on. Meanwhile, according to Cohen in (Maesaraoh, 2019) classifies tourists based on the level of popularity of the area to be visited, as well as the level of organisation of the tour.

Characteristics of Travellers

According to Burkart in Maesaraoh (2019), tourists have four characteristics, namely

- a) Tourists are people who travel to and stay in various destinations
- b) The tourist destination is different from their daily residence
- c) Tourists aim to return home within a few days, while travelling
- d) Tourists travel not to find a place to live, to settle in the destination, but to have fun

Destination Image Theory

Destination image is how tourists trust a tourist service or product promoted by business actors (Dewi, Argita, RAtih et al., 2024). Gallaarza, G et al.

(2002), created a theory of destination image based on four terms, namely, complex, multi-element and process, relative, and dynamic. Destination image is something complex to explain it in analytical dimension. Multi-element and process in explaining that destination image is a dimension of an action. Relative is that destination image is a strategic tool especially in management and marketing purposes. While dynamic explains that the destination image always follows the strategic policy based on the image of a destination. According to Mahfudhotin & Nurfarida (2020), an image is not formed by itself but by someone's perception of an object. The better the destination image, the better the impression conveyed to visitors, so it will have an impact on visiting interest in tourism visitors.

Trimurti and Utama (2020) found the goodness of fit theory that tourist satisfaction is based on how well or in accordance with tourist expectations of a tourist destination. This suitability can be measured when tourists have experienced or enjoyed the products or services at a destination they visit. Destination image is complex because there are many debates about how to measure it and there are many components in its measurement. The multi-dimensionality of destination image is due to the diverse and interrelated attributes (Walenta, Sakti, Abdi, 2023). According to Schiffman & G (2008), there are seven factors contained in the brand image, namely, quality or quality, trustworthiness or reliability, usefulness or benefits, service, risk, price, and the image owned by the brand itself.

Electronic Word of Mouth Theory

According to Kotler & Keller, Lane (2016), argues that electronic word of mouth is marketing carried out using the internet to create word of mouth effects to support marketing efforts and objectives. Electronic word of mouth according to Sari et al. (2019), tourists collect information from online media, which shows a high interest in the topic of tourism products. Social media has strong content power as a reference for tourists in getting information about a tourism product. The power of content through social media can promote a product and form an online community or group for consumers who like the brand used (Suwarduki et al., 2018)

According to Aljukhadar & Senecal (2011), explained that electronic word of mouth groups in four classes: 1) specialised electronic word of mouth that refers to customer reviews posted on comparison shopping or rating websites that are not involved in product sales; 2) affiliated electronic word of mouth refers to customer reviews affiliated with the website; 3) social electronic word of mouth that provides any information about the brand/product exchanged among users of social networking sites; 4) electronic word of mouth that includes the necessary brand/product information on online social media platforms.

Visitor Interest Theory

The theory of visiting interest is analogous to buying interest, such as Albarq (2013), which states that tourists' visiting interest is the same as consumer purchases. Purchase interest is analogous to visiting interest because tourists visit a destination through stages such as interest in purchasing, namely the search for information, the desire to immediately come to visit these tourist attractions and

the desire to ignore other choices (Aulia & Yulianti, 2019). Interest in visiting a tourist attraction can be compared to consumer purchase interest, where the drive from within the individual creates motivation to act, which is induced by stimulus and positive feelings generated by the tourist destination itself. Stimuli can come from personal experience, recommendations from others, or information obtained from social media. All of these can influence the likelihood of someone deciding to visit a particular tourist destination (Nurbaeti, 2020).

Encouragement from within consumers in the form of a desire to visit a place or area that attracts someone's attention (Suwarduki et al., 2018). Interest in the form of individual desires has not actually taken the action of visiting (Lutur, 2020). Schiffman & G (2008), state that interest can be measured through several components, namely, 1) interested in finding information; 2) considering visiting; 3) interested in visiting; 4) want to visit.

Visiting Decision Theory

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2016), explaining visiting decisions has to do with the desire to buy a desired item from various forms / ways that exist. The theory of visiting decisions is assumed to be a purchasing decision in marketing theory according to (Rahmah, Fauziyah, 2020). According to Swasta et al (2000), purchasing decisions are a collection of decisions.

Ariyanto (2015) states that there are five factors that determine a person in buying services or visiting tourist attractions, namely:

- a. Location is a factor that influences tourists to visit a destination. In choosing a location, tourists will have a strategic location and do not require too much time, energy and cost.
- b. Facilities as tourist needs while in the tourist destination visited. A destination that has good facilities will affect consumers when visiting.
- c. Image / image as a picture to someone of a destination, which contains beliefs, impressions and perceptions.
- d. Price / tariff will influence consumers in making decisions to visit tourist destinations.

H1 : Destination image influences visiting decisions

Destination image has a significant influence on visiting decisions, where interest as a drive in the form of strong internal stimuli motivates action, and the drive is influenced by stimulus and positive feelings towards the product. Consumers can buy a brand or take action on their buying interest so that related to this, purchases can be measured through the level of likelihood of consumers taking purchasing action. This theory is the same as research on the confidence indicator which is the indicator with the highest average on the destination image variable. When a destination image appears, visitors will realise that they have a certain interest in a place and want to visit it (Rofiah, 2020).

Building a destination image in the minds of tourists does not just happen, but requires consistency, uniqueness, and in-depth promotion. The tourism industry is vulnerable to risks and threats such as crime, socio-political instability, natural disasters, diseases, epidemics, and others. Such vulnerabilities can damage the image of a tourist destination. As travellers become increasingly

discerning, it is important to create a positive destination image. It is therefore clear that destination image is relevant to visitation decisions (Ayu, 2021).

H2 : Electronic word of mouth influences visiting decisions

According to Sari et al (2019), electronic word-of-mouth has a significant impact on decisions about access. Information is collected from visitors Online media shows a strong interest in the topic of tourism products. Social media has the power of content as a reference Provide information to tourists regarding tourism products. Through the power of social media content you can promote products and build online communities or groups for consumers who like your brand to use.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth Research Based on Kurniawan (2019),,, Provides a positive and significant impact on visit decisions. information shows Written by tourists who have visited here before Accelerate this process by providing more value to potential visitors The development of electronic word-of-mouth will ultimately have an impact Deciding to visit.

H3 : Visiting decisions affect visiting interest

In the research of Aulia & Yulianti (2019), states that visiting interest can attract tourists so that they make visiting decisions, this variable has a high influence in influencing visiting decisions. Tourists get positive information about tourist destinations, so someone will focus on making a visit, visiting interest which consists of being interested in finding information, considering visiting, being interested in trying, wanting to know tourist objects and wanting to know tourist destinations and wanting to visit can be a driving force for someone to make a visiting decision (Widyanto et al., 2017)

H4 : Destination image affects visiting interest

The better the destination image of a tourist destination will increase the desire of tourists to visit the tourist destination (Hapsara & Ahmadi, 2022). Destination image is defined not only as destination attributes but also the overall impression displayed by the destination. The multi-dimensionality of destination image is also caused by the included attributes that are quite diverse and interrelated. This is because the attributes included are very diverse and interrelated. As long as it is realistic, it is caused by the subjective way of interpretation between people. It depends on the comparison to be used. Destination images are also not the same Static but very dynamic with changes in space, time and place (Charli & Putri, 2021)

H5 : Electronic word of mouth affects visiting interest

Electronic word of mouth has a significant influence on visiting interest. This is due to the electronic word of mouth communication that occurs on Instagram accounts, so that it becomes a strong internal impetus or stimulus that motivates followers of Instagram accounts to make decisions, this encouragement is influenced by sharing information between users and posting tourist destinations from these accounts (Suwarduki et al., 2018). Travellers' trust in information, photos and videos regarding positive impressions of tourist attractions or the number of reviews displayed on Instagram regarding tourist destinations can be a driver of someone's interest in visiting (Widyanto et al., 2017).

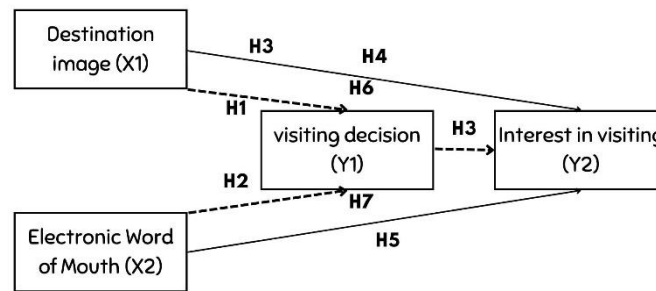


Figure 4. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This research is a quantitative study that aims to analyse the relationship between various variables, both directly and indirectly, with intervening variables acting as mediators between them. This research method involves the use of questionnaires as an instrument to collect data from respondents, with a focus on measuring the influence of destination image and electronic word of mouth in the Twin Lakes Area. This research is conducted in the Twin Lakes Area, with a population of respondents consisting of people who access the JSNI (Jendela Solok Nan Indah) website and Instagram which provides information about the Twin Lakes Area. The sample for this research will be selected using the Nonprobability Sampling method, the sampling technique uses the number of research populations is not known with certainty. Respondents' participation is expected to provide the perceptions needed to test the hypotheses proposed in this study.

Calculations will be carried out using SEM PLS software. The scale used in this study is a Likert scale of 1-5, with information: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = moderately; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. After that, the calculations will be interpreted using descriptive analysis techniques to explain the results of the calculations carried out with the aim of defining the research figures. Based on the theoretical framework, the data analysis technique used is quantitative analysis by utilising the SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) model or Structural Equation Model using the AMOS 4 program. SEM is a series of statistical techniques that allow testing a relatively complex set of relationships simultaneously.

RESULTS

The current decline in the level of visits to the Twin Lakes Area in Solok Regency is caused by several factors, including less than optimal promotion, inadequate facilities, and lack of promotional activities through various media. The existence of social media that has not been utilised optimally also affects tourist interest. The importance of destination image in attracting tourists, where a positive image can increase interest in visits. Destination image is not only

formed through promotion, but also influenced by direct experience, satisfaction level, and service quality during the visit.

In addition, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) also plays an important role in influencing tourists' visit decisions. eWOM, which is in the form of recommendations or reviews spread through the internet and social media, can be significant in influencing people's interest in visiting the destination. A tourist destination can attract tourists if it has a positive image in their minds. To build a strong destination image, there is a need for consistency, uniqueness, and vigorous promotion. Tourism is vulnerable to risks and threats such as crime, socio-political instability, natural disasters, diseases, and pandemics (Ayu, 2021). Through information and suggestions spread on social media platforms such as Instagram, one can find out the condition of tourist destinations, including rides, accessibility, and others. Travellers expect positive information about the tourist destinations they want to visit (Widyanto et al., 2017) Thus, improving destination image, effective use of social media, and good risk management can be important strategies in overcoming the decline in tourist visits.

Previous research has shown a strong relationship between visit intention and visit decision against the factors discussed earlier. For example, a study conducted by Chen and Tsai (2007) found that visit interest has a significant influence on tourists' decision to visit a particular destination. They highlighted the importance of factors such as destination image and recommendations from others (word of mouth) in shaping visiting interest and ultimately influencing tourists' decisions. Based on these findings, it can be explained that factors that influence visiting interest, such as positive destination image and electronic word of mouth (eWOM), will have an impact on tourists' decisions to visit the Twin Lakes Area in Solok Regency. For example, if a tourist is exposed to positive information about the destination through eWOM or through a strong destination image, it is likely that their interest in visiting will increase. Along with the increased interest in visiting, the tourist's decision to actually travel to the destination will also be strengthened.

Thus, the relationship between visit interest and visit decision can be seen as an interrelated and mutually influencing process. Factors such as destination image and eWOM play a role in shaping visit interest, which in turn influences tourists' decision to visit a particular tourist destination.

DISCUSSION

The Twin Lakes tourist area has a stunning natural beauty, making it a magnet for tourists looking for an unforgettable experience. Surrounded by breathtaking mountain scenery, clear water and a reflection of the blue sky, the lake creates a soothing and alluring atmosphere for anyone who visits it. This outstanding natural beauty not only enhances the Twin Lakes' destination image as an attractive tourist destination, but also strengthens its influence through electronic word of mouth. Visitors who are mesmerized by the natural beauty they encounter do not hesitate to share their experiences with others through social media, online reviews and in-person conversations. Thus, the charm of the Twin Lakes not only attracts travelers to visit it, but also expands its reach through

widespread stories, encouraging more people to make the decision to visit and experience the natural wonders offered by this destination.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to carefully analyse and understand the impact of destination image and electronic word of mouth on visit decisions, through the mechanism of interest in visiting. Destination image refers to an individual's perception or mental picture of a tourist spot, which includes elements such as natural beauty, cultural aspects, and facilities available. On the other hand, electronic word of mouth refers to the process by which people share information, recommendations or reviews about a destination through online platforms such as social media, review sites or discussion forums.

With a positive destination image, tourists can form strong expectations of the destination they will visit. Positive experiences that are trusted by electronic word of mouth can also provide a significant impetus for tourists to seek more information and ultimately make a visit decision. Through the interaction between the built destination image and the influence of electronic word of mouth, tourists can feel the convincing and relevant appeal of the destination.

Thus, electronic word of mouth engagement plays an important role in shaping visit interest, which in turn can influence tourists' final decision to visit a particular tourist destination. As such, this study not only expands the understanding of the factors that influence tourist behaviour, but also provides valuable insights for tourism industry practitioners to develop effective and relevant marketing strategies.

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