

The Importance of Publicity and e-WOM in Strengthening Tourist Intentions to Visit Mount Merapi National Park

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Abstract

Studies of tourist behaviour in the national parks' context are still scant. Thus, this study examines the effect of publicity, e-WOM, destination image, and destination preference on tourists' intentions to visit Merapi National Park. Data collected in Greater Jakarta involved 233 participants. Data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis and structural equation models. As a result, publicity and e-WOM significantly affect destination preference and destination image. In addition, destination image crucially influences destination preference, and destination preference significantly affects visit intention. These findings broaden the study of national tourism parks and volcano tourism.

Keywords: *Destination Preference, Mount Merapi National Park, Sustainable Tourism, Publicity, Volcano Tourism.*

Introduction

National parks are protected areas of land, typically designated by a government, that are preserved for their natural, cultural, or historical significance (Netshakhuma, 2021). These parks are often popular tourist destinations, as they offer the opportunity to experience and appreciate the diversity of the natural world for tourists. National Park tourism has undergone significant development in recent decades. Marketing strategy and tourist behaviour research are fundamental to develop National Park tourism sustainably (Tubb, 2003). Promoting the national park through various media is an essential activity, and in terms of marketing, an effective strategy might encourage tourists to visit national parks.

However, the marketing strategy should focus on increasing the number of visitors and how visitors can experience the national park responsibly and sustainably (Blackstock et al., 2008). Therefore, it is essential to integrate information about environmentally friendly national park management policies and provide education on environmental preservation when visiting national parks (Erdogan & Tosun, 2009). Meanwhile, tourist behaviour research can assist in understanding the preferences and behaviour of visitors undertaking national park experiences so that appropriate and effective programs can be developed (Esfandiar et al., 2020; Kruger et al., 2017).

Tourist behaviour in national parks has received considerable attention. As seen in Table 1, several studies have explored behaviour of tourists at national parks. For example, the extended theory of planned behaviour to measure the behaviour of tourists throwing garbage in national parks has been applied (Esfandiar et al., 2019, 2020, 2021; Hu et al., 2019), revisit intention (Seong et al., 2021), and spraying bear behaviour (Miller et al., 2019). Some others pay attention to heritage conservation intention (Nian et al., 2019), destination choice (Hsu et al., 2009), and revisit intention (Neuvonen et al., 2010).

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Table 1. Studies on Tourist Behaviour Relating to National Parks

Author(s)	Focus of Study	Name of National Park	Country
Hsu et al. (2009)	Destination choice and preferences.	Kenting, Taroko, and Yushan.	Taiwan
Wang et al. (2019)	Tourists' adaption intentions.	Kenting.	Taiwan
Ghazvini et al. (2020)	Environmental concerns and attitudes towards national park use and services.	Taman Negara.	Malaysia
Samdin et al. (2022)	Risk perception.	Taman Negara.	Malaysia
Xiao et al. (2022)	Constraints to visitation, and vacation preferences.	US National Park Service.	USA
Zhang et al. (1999)	Travel distance.	Jiuzhaigou, Taoyuandong, Changbaishan, and Zhongsnanling	China
Hu et al. (2019)	Behavioural intention in the Zero Litter Initiative	Huangshan	China
Seong and Hong (2021)	Risk reduction behaviour.	Hallyeo Maritime. Gyeranjae.	China
Esfandiar et al. (2020)	Binning behaviour.	Sorkh-e-hesar.	Iran
Esfandiar et al. (2021)	Binning behaviour.	Yanchep	Australia
González et al. (2019)	Willingness to pay for sustainable transport.	Teide	Spain
Prakash et al. (2019)	Tourists' dissatisfaction	Yala, Wilpattu, Horton Plains, Udawalawe, and Minneriya	Sri Lanka
Miller et al. (2019)	Bear spray behaviour.	Yellowstone	USA

Many studies with different national parks in many countries have investigated tourist behaviour related to national parks. However, the number of studies that choose publicity and destination preference to test the visit intention of tourists to visit the national park is still very limited. For this reason, this study aims to investigate the role of publicity, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), destination image, and destination preference on visit intention, and it takes the context of Indonesia.

Indonesia is home to several national parks, such as Komodo National Park, West Bali National Park, Merapi National Park, and Gunung Leuser National Park. These parks offer a range of tourist activities, such as hiking, camping, birdwatching, and wildlife viewing. This study conducts in Merapi National Park in Central Java, Indonesia, which was established in 2004 and covered an area of approximately 6.410 hectares. More specifically, this park is home to various flora and fauna, including tropical rainforests, grasslands, and savannas, and it is also home to several endemic and endangered species, such as monkeys, deer, porcupines, mongooses, langurs, wild boars, pangolins, forest cats, langurs, boils, rase, and flying squirrels (Novena, 2023). Tourists in the park can participate in various activities, such as hiking, birdwatching, and wildlife viewing.

In this national park, it is Mount Merapi, one of the ten highest mountains on the island of Java, and this Mount is considered as one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia, with recorded eruptions, including in 1930, 1954, 1961, 1969, 1976, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2010, 2021, and 2022. Even though it is considered dangerous, this volcano remains one of the favourite mountains for climbers.

Literature Review

Publicity

Publicity is about the public attention and awareness generated for a person, organisation, product, service, event, or tourism destination through various media channels such as newspapers, television, radio, magazines, social media, and other forms of communication (Al Buloshi & Ramadan, 2015; Shipilov et al., 2019; Su, Chen, et al., 2022; Subramanian, 2018). Publicity aims to create positive exposure and promote a particular brand or message to a large audience. There are various forms of publicity, including news coverage, press releases, product reviews, endorsements, interviews, and advertising. Effective publicity can increase brand recognition, build credibility, drive sales, and shape public opinion. It can also help organizations to maintain a positive public image and respond to crises or negative publicity. When optimising publicity, managers generally cooperate with the mass media, local, national, and international, and this form of cooperation can be paid or unpaid (Mindell, 1997). Barter is one way to obtain paid cooperation (Bardi, 2008), which could provide media with gift certificates that they can use as gifts for their viewers or allow the media to use facilities that belong to the destination (Bardi, 2008; Oliver, 2012).

Furthermore, publicity has a positive and negative side (Oliver, 2012; Shipilov et al., 2019). When destination managers can 'control' news, the published publicity is positive publicity about their destination. Conversely, when managers cannot 'control', then what is consumed by the audience from the media is negative publicity. Negative publicity can be in the form of bad things that happen or are related to a destination (Shani et al., 2009; Sumb, 2021; Wang & Jin, 2019). These harmful incidents are, for example, matters relating to safety and security, health issues, and immoral acts that occur at destinations or involve staff from destinations that become public consumption because they become news in the mass media.

Publicity and Destination Preference

Only now, research on the impact of publicity on destination preference is still challenging to find. However, several relevant studies can become references. For example, Karema et al. (2016) have studied the impact of advertising, publicity, and public relations on consumer preference, by involving guests from a hotel, and one of their findings is that publicity does not significantly affect consumer preference. In contrast, advertising and Public Relations show a significant impact. Publicity, advertising, and Public Relations are part of the marketing tools. Moreover, Amoako et al. (2017) test the effect of advertising and brand preference on brand loyalty, involving customers of several banks in Ghana, and they further revealed the essential role of advertising in realizing the customer's brand preference.

Publicity and Destination Image

Kim and Lee (2018) studied brand loyalty among Chinese tourists from China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and other Chinese living in Asia by comparing price, advertisement, publicity, and word of mouth. They claim the responsibility of advertisements to form the brand image. Advertisement, sales promotion, direct marketing, packaging, and publicity are part of marketing tools.

Considering these rare studies above, the following hypotheses are formulated.

H1 – Publicity will have a significant impact on destination preference.

H2 – Publicity will have a significant impact on destination image.

e-Word of Mouth

E-Word of Mouth, or e-WOM, is a form of digital communication in which individuals share information, opinions, or recommendations about products, services, or brands through electronic channels such as social media, email, or online review sites (Choi, 2020; Tran & Strutton, 2020). e-WOM can be positive or negative and significantly impact consumer behaviour and brand reputation. It has become increasingly

important in the digital age, as consumers often rely on the opinions and experiences of others before making purchasing decisions. e-WOM is particularly relevant in the tourism industry, which has become a significant driver of consumer behaviour. In the past, consumers relied on brochures, travel agents, and other traditional sources of information when planning their vacations. Today, however, they are more likely to use e-WOM to get recommendations, read reviews, and share their experiences (Yaylı & Bayram, 2012).

e-WOM and Destination Image

The effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on the image of a destination has been quantified in several studies (Rizky et al., 2017; Setiawan et al., 2014, 2021; Siang et al., 2020). For example, Siang et al. (Jie-Hua et al., 2020) compare the impact of e-WOM and WOM on destination image and visit intention to a destination. They claimed that e-WOM, as opposed to WOM, had a considerable effect on the destination image. To further predict the travel intentions of tourists, Rizky et al. (2017) used e-WOM, destination image, and attitude toward a destination, and they suggest that e-WOM has a considerable impact on destination image.

e-WOM and Destination Preference

Few scholars are interested in researching how e-WOM influences destination preference, and there are, however, some studies to use. Yadav et al. (2021) chose e-WOM and destination choice to measure travel intention. They observe that e-WOM contributes to increasing tourist preference for a destination. Furthermore, Tardin and Pelissari (2021) examine the impact of e-WOM on brand equity, in which brand preference is one of the dimensions of brand equity, and they demonstrate how e-WOM helps to reinforce customer brand preferences.

e-WOM and Visit Intention

It has been investigated in earlier studies (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016; Rizky et al., 2017; Setiawan et al., 2021; Siang et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2020; Yadav et al., 2021) how word-of-mouth (WOM) or electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) affects visit intention. For example, Abubakar (2016) involves tourists visiting Cyprus to examine the impact of e-WOM and destination trust on their travel intentions. Unfortunately, in this study, e-WOM has no contribution to shaping travellers' intentions to travel. Another study conducted by Doosti et al. (2016) uses e-WOM, attitude toward a city, and city image to measure intention to visit a city, and one of their findings is the influence of e-WOM on visit intention.

After accommodating the studies above, we address the three hypotheses below.

H3 – e-WOM will have a significant impact on destination image.

H4 – e-WOM will have a significant impact on destination preference.

H5 – e-WOM will have a significant impact on visit intention.

Destination Image

A tourist's overall perception or impression of a specific destination, such as a city, region, or country, is called their destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Suhud, Allan, & Willson, 2021). It includes aspects like culture, natural attractions, people, infrastructure, amenities, and other elements that make up the destination's overall appeal (Suhud et al., 2022, 2023; Suhud, Allan, & Willson, 2021; Suhud, Allan, Rizki, et al., 2021; Suhud & Allan, 2022). Numerous factors, such as marketing campaigns, word-of-mouth recommendations, media coverage, personal experiences, and online reviews, affect how travellers perceive destination image (Jalilvand, 2017; Kislali et al., 2020). A positive destination image therefore can attract more tourists and generate economic benefits for the local community.

Destination Image and Destination Preference

Only some studies have shown that destination image contributes to determining destination preference. For example, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) found that tourists' destination image directly affected destination preference. Similarly, a study by Fakeye and Crompton (1991) found that destination image was the most critical factor influencing destination preference among first-time tourists.

We need to test the following hypothesis to broaden the path of destination image and destination preference.

H6 – Destination image will have a significant impact on destination preference.

Destination Preference

The term "destination preference" is used in the tourism industry to characterise a person's or a group's preferences or tendencies when selecting travel destinations or tourist destinations (Deng & Liu, 2021; Lepp & Gibson, 2008). Various factors can influence destination preference, such as personal interests, cultural preferences, budget, recommendations from friends or family, previous experience, and available information about the destination (Chang, 2009; Goodall, 2013). Destination preferences can vary from individual to individual, depending on personal preferences and previous experiences. Therefore, tourism destinations often identify customer preferences to enhance the travel experience and meet customer needs and preferences.

According to Su and Huang's (2019), tourist satisfaction and destination identity could be related to destination preference. Yadav et al. (2021) use destination preference to determine travel intention. Decidedly, preferred destinations is related to the visit intention in the current study.

Destination Preference and Visit Intention

So far, studies examining the role of destination preference in increasing tourist intentions to visit a destination still need to be completed. For example, Riestyaningrum et al. (2020) investigate the general impact, attitude and preference, and hygiene and safety on travel intention during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study involving domestic tourists who have travelled abroad shows that attitude and preference significantly impact travel intention. In supporting the current study, we are looking for other relevant studies. Seo et al. (2017) measure the impact of a cognitive image, affective image, and preference on the intention to eat destination food. A study involving Korean tourists shows that tourists' preference contributes to arousing their intentions to consume food destinations.

In the light of the previous studies, this hypothesis is proposed.

H7 – Destination preference will have a significant impact on visit intention.

Figure 1 is the proposed theoretical framework. We link publicity and e-WOM to destination preference and destination image. In addition, the study relates e-WOM and destination preference to visit intention.

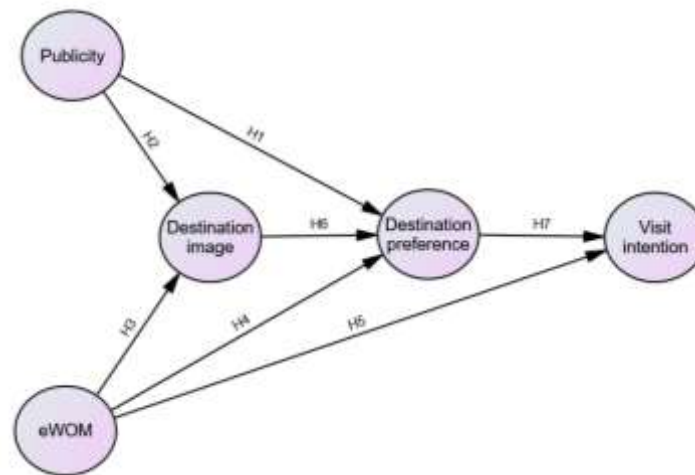


Figure 1. The Proposed Theoretical Framework

Methods

Measures

The current study included five variables, which were measured by indicators from previous studies, and were adapted according to the context of Merapi National Park. Publicity and e-WOM were measured using indicators adapted from Kim and Lee (2018). Whilst the indicators from Hosany et al. (2007) measured the destination image. In addition, Mao and Zhang (2014) indicators measured destination preference. Finally, the visit intention indicators came from Kim et al. (2009) and Su et al. (2022). The rate of all indicators used a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 6 for Strongly Agree.

Data Analysis Methods

We analysed the data in this study in several steps. In the first step, we tested the validity of the data using exploratory factor analysis because this method can reveal whether a variable has dimensions. A valid indicator must have a factor loading of 0.4 or greater. In the second step, we tested the reliability by paying attention to the alpha value. A construct is declared reliable with an alpha value of 0.6 or more. The third step tested the hypothesis using the structural equation model. If the specified criteria have reached a particular score a model is considered fit as shown in Table 1. Furthermore, a hypothesis is considered significant if it has a critical ratio (CR) score of 1.98 or greater.

Table 2. A Fitted Model Criteria

Criteria	Rule of Thumb	Resources
Probability	$0.05 < p < 1.00$	Schermelleh-Engel et al. (2003)
CMIN/DF	$0 \leq \text{CMIN/DF} \leq 2$	Tabachnick et al. (2007)
CFI	$0.95 \leq \text{CFI} \leq 1.00$	Hu and Bentler (1995)
RMSEA	$0 \leq \text{RMSEA} \leq 0.06$	Hu and Bentler (1999)

Results

Participants

Participants profiles are shown in Table 3 and there were 233 participants in this study. These included 96 men (41.2%) and 137 women (58.8%) consecutively. In the age category, 217 participants (93.1%) were aged between 21 and 25 years old, and 12 were aged between 17 and 20 years old. Of the rest, four participants (1.7%) were aged between 26 and 30 years old.

Table 3. Profile of Participants

Profile		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	96	41.2
	Female	137	58.8
	Total	233	100.0
Age	17-20	12	5.2
	21-25	217	93.1
	26-30	4	1.7
Level of education has been completed	Less than high school	1	0.4
	Diploma	17	7.3
	Undergraduate	86	36.9
	High school	129	55.4
Occupational status	Employed	78	33.5
	Unemployed	147	63.1
	Self-employed	8	3.4
Marital status	Unmarried	197	84.5
	Separated/divorced	1	0.4
	Married	35	15.0

Testing of Data Validity and Reliability

The results of the validity and reliability tests of the data are presented in Table 4. Publicity maintains two indicators with an alpha value of 0.776, while e-WOM retains four with an alpha score of 0.805. Two of the four indicators for destination preference store an alpha score of 0.862. In addition, the destination image has six indicators with an alpha score of 0.944, while visit intention saves seven with an alpha score of 0.918. With an alpha score greater than 0.7, all constructs are reliable.

Table 4. Results of Data Validity and Reliability Tests

	Variables and Indicators	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
	Publicity		0.776
P2	News from the mass media about Mount Merapi National Park is favourable and profitable.	0.908	
P1	I often find news from the mass media about Mount Merapi National Park.	0.908	
	e-Word-of-Mouth		0.805

W4	People around me speak well of Mount Merapi National Park.	0.847	
W2	There are recommendations from other people about Mount Merapi National Park.	0.846	
W1	People around me talk about Mount Merapi National Park.	0.77	
W3	Mount Merapi National Park is portrayed positively on the internet.	0.74	
	Destination Preferences		0.862
DP1	Mount Merapi National Park will be my first choice compared to other national parks.	0.928	
DP2	Mount Merapi National Park is more interesting than other national parks.	0.912	
	Destination Image		0.944
DI1	Unpleasant/Pleasant	0.943	
DI2	Boring/Interesting	0.923	
DI3	Gloomy/Exciting/Exciting	0.896	
DI5	Sad/Relaxing	0.89	
DI6	Isolated/Easy to access	0.846	
DI4	Cool/Friendly	0.822	
	Visit Intention		0.918
VI4	I can confidently tell my friends how to travel to Mount Merapi National Park.	0.859	

VI3	I want to experience a trip to Mount Merapi National Park.	0.856	
VI1	I am interested in visiting Mount Merapi National Park	0.855	
VI2	I'm collecting information about Mount Merapi National Park.	0.851	
VI5	I have extensive knowledge about travelling to Mount Merapi National Park.	0.838	
VI6	I plan to visit Mount Merapi National Park in the future.	0.761	
VI7	I prefer to visit Mount Merapi National Park to other destinations.	0.758	

Testing of Hypotheses

Figure 2 shows the results of the theoretical framework. This model is fit with probability score and CMIN/DF score 0.089 and 1.382. In addition, this model achieves a CFI score of 0.993 and an RMSEA score of 0.041.

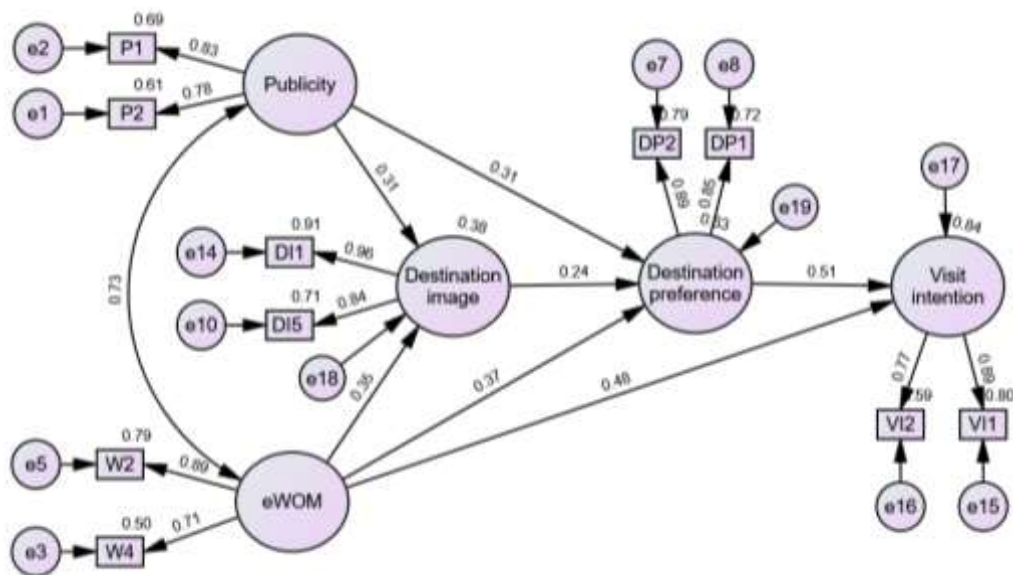


Figure 2. The Structural Model

Table 5 contains the hypotheses testing results. We tested seven hypotheses which their CR scores are over 1.98 on each path. Therefore, all hypotheses show significant effects.

Table 5. Results of the Third Structural Model

Hypotheses	Paths	C.R.	P	Results
H ₁	Publicity > Destination preference	2.849	0.004	Accepted
H ₂	Publicity > Destination image	2.686	0.007	Accepted
H ₃	e-WOM > Destination image	3.026	0.002	Accepted
H ₄	e-WOM > Destination preference	3.404	***	Accepted
H ₅	e-WOM > Visit intention	5.271	***	Accepted
H ₆	Destination image > Destination preference	3.337	***	Accepted
H ₇	Destination preference > Visit intention	5.726	***	Accepted

Discussion

The first hypothesis assumes that there is an influence of publicity on destination preference, and this hypothesis obtains a CR score of 2.849. Publicity certainly affects tourists' destination preference for Merapi National Park. How the media and other forms of publicity portray a destination can significantly impact tourists' destination perception and choice to visit. Positive publicity of articles and advertisements highlighting the natural beauty, cultural attractions, and adventure opportunities in Merapi National Park can attract tourists and increase their interest in the destination. In addition to traditional forms of publicity, social media can also significantly shape tourists' destination preferences. Photos and videos posted by other tourists on social media platforms can provide a glimpse into what it is like to visit Merapi National Park and influence others to choose it as a destination. Furthermore, advertising and Public Relations are the same channels for publicity. Amoako et al. (2017) and Karema et al. (2016) mentioned that these two influenced tourists' preferences.

This study evaluates the impact of publicity on destination image. This second hypothesis produces a CR score of 2.686. The publicity of Merapi National Park can significantly affect tourists' destination image of the park. Merapi National Park's publicity can shape and influence these perceptions and expectations. Positive publicity can enhance the destination image of Merapi National Park in potential tourists' minds. It also results in increased tourist visitation and revenue for the park. In line with the research findings, Kim and Lee (2018) stated that advertising could develop brand image well. Advertising and publicity are two kinds of promotional tools.

This study analyses the role of e-WOM in developing a destination image. The third hypothesis obtains a CR score of 3.026. e-WOM can undoubtedly shape the destination image of Merapi National Park. Positive e-WOM can enhance the destination image of Merapi National Park. It is because it can create a positive buzz and generate interest among potential tourists. Setiawan et al. (2014) claimed that e-WOM could create a destination image. With the prevalence of social media and other online platforms, people have more opportunities to share their opinions and experiences about travel destinations. Positive e-WOM can help promote Merapi National Park as a desirable destination, while negative e-WOM can deter potential tourists from choosing to visit. In particular, e-WOM can be crucial in shaping tourists' perceptions of the park's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and safety. Suppose tourists share positive reviews and photos of their experiences exploring the park's breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural traditions, and well-maintained facilities. In that case, it can create a positive image of the park as a must-visit destination.

With a CR score of 3.404, we can state that the fourth hypothesis is significant. This hypothesis predicted the contribution of e-WOM in strengthening destination preference, as the finding of Yadav et al. (2021). e-WOM can significantly impact destination preference for Merapi National Park. Positive e-WOM can generate interest in the park and increase tourists' likelihood of visiting. Merapi National Park is a popular tourist destination in Indonesia, known for its beautiful natural scenery, diverse wildlife, and cultural significance. As with many tourist destinations, e-WOM can contribute to shaping tourists' perceptions of the park. In this case, positive e-WOM, such as glowing reviews from satisfied tourists or social media posts highlighting the park's beauty and unique features, can help attract more tourists. It can lead to having

higher awareness of Merapi National Park and increased interest in visiting it. The park's reputation can continue to grow and boost its popularity as a destination when more people come and share their positive experiences.

The fifth hypothesis predicts the role of e-WOM in strengthening tourist intentions to visit Merapi National Park. This hypothesis obtains a CR score of 5.271. e-WOM can significantly affect tourists' visit intention to Merapi National Park. e-WOM can help to establish trust and credibility among tourists. When tourists read positive comments, reviews, or recommendations about Merapi National Park from other tourists, they are more likely to trust the information and consider visiting the park themselves. Otherwise, negative e-WOM may discourage tourists from visiting. Besides, e-WOM can also provide tourists with valuable information and increase their awareness of Merapi National Park. Tourists can learn about the attractions, activities, services, and amenities of Merapi National Park from others with their experiences shared online. This information can help tourists make informed decisions and plan their visit more effectively. Yadav et al. (2021) claimed that e-WOM could strengthen the visit intention of tourists.

This study also analyses the effect of destination image on destination preference. With a CR score of 3,337, destination image significantly affects destination preference. A positive destination image can create a strong desire to visit a destination. The research findings support the study of Fakeye and Crompton (1991). In the context of Merapi National Park, a positive destination image can be created by highlighting its natural and cultural attractions, such as the beautiful landscape and diverse flora and fauna. Positive word-of-mouth, travel blogs, and social media posts can also create a positive image of the destination.

The last hypothesis predicted the effect of destination preference on the visit intention of Merapi National Park. This seventh hypothesis obtained a CR score of 5.726. Destination preference refers to specific attractions, activities, or features of a particular destination that become tourists' interests. In the case of Merapi National Park, some tourists may be attracted to its natural beauty, such as its forests, rivers, and mountains. Other tourists may have interests in the cultural attractions in the park, such as historical landmarks or traditional ceremonies. The intentions of tourists to visit Merapi National Park was determined by their destination preferences. In the same vein, Seo et al. (2017) stated that tourists' preferences led to behavioural intention.

Conclusion

This study investigated the role of publicity, e-WOM, destination image, and destination preference in shaping tourist intentions to visit Merapi National Park. Based on the study's results, several factors affect the tourists' preferences and intentions who visit Merapi National Park. Firstly, the study results show that publicity significantly influences tourists' preferences and images of the Merapi National Park destination. The findings show that effective promotion can influence tourists' preferences and perceptions of Merapi National Park. Second, e-WOM or online tourist recommendations also significantly affect destination image and tourist preferences for Merapi National Park. The findings suggest that the influence of tourist recommendations and reviews on social media or online platforms can significantly impact tourists' preferences and visiting decisions to Merapi National Park. Thirdly, the research findings show that the image of the Merapi National Park destination also influences tourist visit preferences. A positive destination image can increase tourists' preferences for visiting Merapi National Park. Fourthly, the study finds that tourists' visit preferences to Merapi National Park affect tourist visit intentions, and it suggests that a strong preference can increase the likelihood of tourists visiting Merapi National Park.

The research findings in this study make several contributions to the study of national park tourism. For example, this study has developed a new theoretical framework that describes the relationship between factors influencing preference, destination image, and intention to visit Merapi National Park. This model can integrate publicity, e-WOM, destination image, and destination preference into a more comprehensive conceptual model. Moreover, this study has explained the relationship between the dependent and independent variables in more detail, such as how publicity and e-WOM affect destination image and destination preferences and how destination image and destination preferences influence visiting intentions.

These findings provide benefits for national park managers, specifically Merapi National Park. Managers can increase the promotion and use of the e-WOM platform. Merapi National Park management can improve promotional campaigns to attract the attention of potential tourists. In addition, management can expand e-WOM platforms, such as social media and tourist forums, to expand the reach of promotions and strengthen the destination's image. Managers can maintain the quality of service and tourist experience and can improve the quality of service and tourist experience by improving the facilities and services available at tourist destinations. It can help strengthen the destination's image and reduce the chances of tourists not returning. In addition, they can improve the quality of environmental management. Merapi National Park is one of the essential natural tourist destinations in Indonesia. Therefore, management must pay attention to sound environmental management to maintain the authenticity and preservation of nature in these tourist destinations. Furthermore, managers can improve cooperation with other parties. Merapi National Park management can help cooperate with other parties, such as the local tourism industry, local communities, and local governments, to improve tourist destinations' management and positively impact the surrounding community.

Suggestions for future studies that can complement previous research related to Merapi National Park the following matters can be considered, for example, by adding moderator variables in the theoretical framework, such as age, gender, or previous experience in travelling to the relationship between factors that influence preference, destination image, and intention to visit Merapi National Park. Also, future studies may use a qualitative approach in subsequent studies. Qualitative studies can provide deeper insight into the experiences of tourists visiting Merapi National Park and provide a more detailed understanding of the factors influencing preferences, destination image, and visit intentions. Another way is to conduct cross-cultural research to compare the experiences of tourists from various countries visiting Merapi National Park. It can better understand how preferences, destination image, and visit intention differ between tourists from different countries.

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