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Understanding the Role of Tourist Attitudes in Generating Electronic Word of Mouth

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A B S T R A C T

In the context of digital tourism, tourist attitudes are considered an important factor that can encourage the spread of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), which plays a strategic role in influencing the decisions of potential tourists. This study aims to examine the influence of tourist attitudes on e-WOM in the context of tourism in Garut Regency. The study uses a quantitative approach with primary data collected through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire distributed online via the WhatsApp application. The sample was taken using convenience sampling techniques followed by snowball sampling, with domestic tourist respondents from outside Garut who reside in West Java Province and are over 18 years of age. Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) with a total of 200 respondents. The results of the study indicate that tourist attitudes have a positive and significant effect on e-WOM, with a fairly strong explanatory power. These findings confirm that positive tourist attitudes towards Garut as a destination encourage online information sharing and recommendation behavior, and provide important implications for the management and promotion of digital-based tourism destinations.

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INTRODUCTION

Garut Regency is one of the regions in West Java Province that has a wide variety of tourism potential, both in terms of nature, culture, and man-made attractions. Based on data from the Garut Regency Central Statistics Agency, there are 115 natural tourist destinations, 40 cultural tourist destinations, eight special interest tourist destinations, and 71 man-made tourist destinations spread across 42 sub-districts. The diversity and distribution of these destinations indicate that Garut Regency has strong supporting factors to be developed as a leading tourism destination at the regional and national levels. This potential is in line with the view that the availability and differentiation of destinations are important prerequisites in attracting tourists (Suhud, 2022).

However, despite its great potential, the realization of tourist visits to Garut Regency in the period 2014–2023 has not fully achieved the targets set by the local government. This condition is a matter of serious concern, given that tourist visits have a strategic impact on the economy of tourist destinations, including through increased community income, job creation, and strengthening of the tourism support sector (Ernita, 2003). Therefore, understanding the factors that influence tourists' decisions and intentions to visit is crucial in efforts to optimize the region's tourism potential.

In tourism studies, visit intention is understood as the tendency or probability of tourists to visit a particular destination (Nguyen Viet et al., 2020), which reflects the possibility of actual visit behavior in the future (Luo & Ye, 2020). Visit intention is often positioned as an early indicator of tourist behavior, making it an important variable in tourism consumer behavior research. A number of studies show that visit intention is influenced by various psychological and social factors, including perceptions, attitudes, destination image, and the influence of information obtained through digital media.

One psychological factor that plays an important role in shaping visitation intention is tourist attitude. Attitude reflects an individual's evaluation of a destination, which is formed through cognitive and affective processes, and serves as a predisposition to act (Song et al., 2024). In the context of tourism, tourist attitudes towards destinations have been shown to have a significant effect on visitation intentions, with positive attitudes tending to increase tourists' desire to visit (Choirisa et al., 2021; Muzdalifah et al., 2020; Rizky et al., 2017; Han & Chen, 2021).

As the role of social media and digital platforms increases, the process of shaping tourist attitudes and intentions is increasingly influenced by electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). E-WOM is a form of informal internet-based communication that contains opinions, experiences, and recommendations from tourists about specific destinations, which can influence the perceptions and evaluations of potential tourists at large (Utami & Sari, 2025). A number of studies show that e-WOM not only influences visitation intentions but also serves as a primary channel for the digital dissemination of destination images and travel experiences (Adisty, 2024; Haryono & Albetris, 2024).

Furthermore, the relationship between attitude and e-WOM is interrelated. Travelers' positive attitudes toward a destination encourage them to share their

experiences and recommendations online, thereby increasing their e-WOM (Kim et al., 2016; Cheng et al., 2021; Rana & Arora, 2022). In the context of tourism, Sharma and Arora (2023) proved that tourist attitudes significantly influence behavioral intentions and e-WOM simultaneously. However, empirical studies that specifically examine the influence of tourist attitudes on e-WOM in the context of tourism in Garut Regency are still relatively limited. These limitations indicate a research gap that needs to be filled.

Based on this description, this study was conducted to examine the influence of tourist attitudes on e-WOM in the context of tourism in Garut Regency, as an effort to provide empirical contributions to the development of tourist behavior studies and to support digital-based destination management and promotion strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In consumer behavior and tourism studies, attitude is understood as an individual's relatively stable evaluative tendency toward a particular object, idea, or experience. Attitudes are formed through cognitive and affective processes that reflect an individual's assessment of the benefits, value, and attractiveness of an object, which in turn influences their tendency to act. Individuals who have a positive evaluation of an object tend to show stronger behavioral intentions than individuals with negative or neutral evaluations, so that attitudes play an important role in shaping behavioral intentions (Song et al., 2024).

In the context of tourism, tourists' attitudes toward destinations are formed through perceptions of destination attributes, images built by the media and social media, as well as personal and indirect experiences. Positive attitudes reflect the level of interest and confidence of tourists in the quality and experiences offered by the destination, thereby increasing the tendency to visit. A number of studies show that attitudes and destination image have a significant influence on tourists' visitation intentions (Choirisa et al., 2021; Muzdalifah et al., 2020; Rizky et al., 2017; Suhud, 2022).

With the rapid development of digital technology, tourist attitudes not only affect their intention to visit, but also influence their communication behavior, particularly electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). e-WOM is defined as a form of informal internet-based communication that reflects consumers' opinions, experiences, and recommendations regarding products, services, or tourist destinations that are disseminated through various digital platforms. Compared to traditional marketing communication, e-WOM is perceived to have a higher level of credibility because it is sourced from the real experiences of other users (Utami & Sari, 2025).

In the context of tourism, e-WOM plays a strategic role in shaping the perceptions, attitudes, and decisions of potential tourists. Online reviews, testimonials, and recommendations have been proven to influence tourists' evaluations of destination quality and travel experiences, which in turn affect their intention to visit and recommend the destination to others (Adisty, 2024; Haryono & Albetris, 2024). Additionally, memorable travel experiences and high satisfaction levels also encourage the emergence of positive e-WOM, which

organically expands the destination's exposure on digital media (Damayanti et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the relationship between attitude and e-WOM is interrelated and dynamic. Positive tourist attitudes have been shown to increase individuals' tendency to engage in e-WOM, whether in the form of sharing experiences, providing reviews, or recommending destinations through social media. Empirical findings show that attitudes significantly influence e-WOM and play a role in strengthening tourists' overall behavioral intentions (Kim et al., 2016; Cheng et al., 2021; Rana & Arora, 2022). Sharma and Arora (2023) emphasize that tourist attitudes directly influence behavioral intentions and e-WOM, thus positioning attitudes as a key construct in understanding tourist behavior in the digital era.

Based on the above review, the following hypothesis is formulated:
H: tourist attitude has a positive effect on e-WOM.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a quantitative approach. This study was based on primary data obtained through a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was distributed online via the WhatsApp application. Samples were taken using convenience sampling techniques followed by snowball sampling.

The research population consisted of domestic tourists from outside Garut, located in the province of West Java and aged over 18 years. The sample size was determined based on the use of Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). The minimum sample size was 5 times the number of items in the questionnaire. In this study, there were 10 indicators, where tourist attitudes were measured with 5 statement items, and e-WOM was measured with 5 statement items, so the minimum sample size for this study was 5 x 10 = 50 respondents, but it was rounded up to 200 respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of Outer Model

The outer model describes the relationship between latent constructs and their indicators. Its purpose is to ensure that the indicators used adequately represent each construct being measured. The components assessed in evaluating the outer model are convergent validity based on factor loading values, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity based on cross-loading values and the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Convergent Validity

In this study, the outer model was measured using first-order measurements, where an indicator or item is considered valid if the factor loading >0.50 and the calculated t value >1.96 (t table in dk n-2 with α=0.05/2) or the p value <0.05. Table 4.1 below displays the results of the outer model measurements.

Table 1. Validity (Outer Model)

Variable	Indicator		Loading factors	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics	P Values
TOURIST ATTITUDES	I was impressed with Garut	SW1	0.902	0.030	29,860	0.000
	I like Garut as a tourist destination	SW2	0.907	0.031	28,843	0.000
	I think I will travel to Garut	SW3	0.905	0.024	38,092	0.000
	Garut is a fun destination for me to visit	SW4	0.953	0.014	69,502	0.000
	I am interested in traveling to Garut	SW5	0.910	0.028	32,862	0.000
e-WOM	I provide information about Garut to others online	WOM1	0.902	0.025	36,157	0.000
	I recommend Garut to others online	WOM2	0.921	0.017	53,119	0.000
	I actively share other people's content about Garut online	WOM3	0.824	0.035	23,866	0.000
	I talk about the good side of Garut online	WOM4	0.913	0.028	32,695	0.000
	I recommend people to visit Garut online	WOM5	0.916	0.018	50,368	0.000

Table 1 shows the validity measurements where the factor loading values for assessing Convergent validity exceed 0.50 with all indicator t-values greater than 1.96 with p values < 0.05.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is an aspect used in evaluating outer models in PLS, the goal of which is to ensure that each construct has a distinct concept from other constructs in the same model. One measure used is the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, where the criterion is that the AVE root of each construct must be greater than the correlation of that construct with other constructs.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	E-WOM	TOURIST ATTITUDES
E-WOM	**0.896**	
TOURIST ATTITUDES	0.752	**0.915**

Table 2 shows that the AVE root (bold letters) of each construct has a value greater than the correlation value with other constructs. For example, the AVE root of E-Wom is 0.896, while the correlation with other variables is smaller, namely 0.752, meaning that the two constructs above have discriminant validity.

Another measure of discriminant validity is cross loadings, which describe the correlation between indicators and all constructs in the model. The aim is to ensure that each indicator only has the highest correlation with the construct it represents compared to other constructs, or that the indicator is statistically closer to the construct it measures than to others.

Table 3. Cross Loadings

	TOURIST ATTITUDES	E-WOM
SW1	**0.902**	0.698
SW2	**0.907**	0.680
SW3	**0.905**	0.706
SW4	**0.953**	0.709
SW5	**0.910**	0.644
WOM1	0.662	**0.902**
WOM2	0.719	**0.921**
WOM3	0.624	**0.824**
WOM4	0.613	**0.913**
WOM5	0.733	**0.916**

Table 3 above shows that each indicator only has the highest correlation with the construct it represents compared to other constructs, so that the four constructs above have discriminant validity.

Reliability

The measurement of reliability for internal consistency is to use Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) based on the relationship between the observed item variables and the most widely used method rather than measuring the internal consistency of a research instrument, namely a questionnaire. A CR value ≥ 0.7 is considered good, while an AVE value ≥ 0.5 is considered good, meaning that the construct explains at least 50% of the variance of its indicators.

Table 4. Reliability Test

	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
E-WOM	0.953	0.803
TOURIST ATTITUDES	0.963	0.838

Table 4 above shows that the reliability values with Composite Reliability (CR) > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50 indicate that the measures used in this study have adequate reliability and validity.

The following shows the complete results of the model testing using SmartPLS v.3.00.

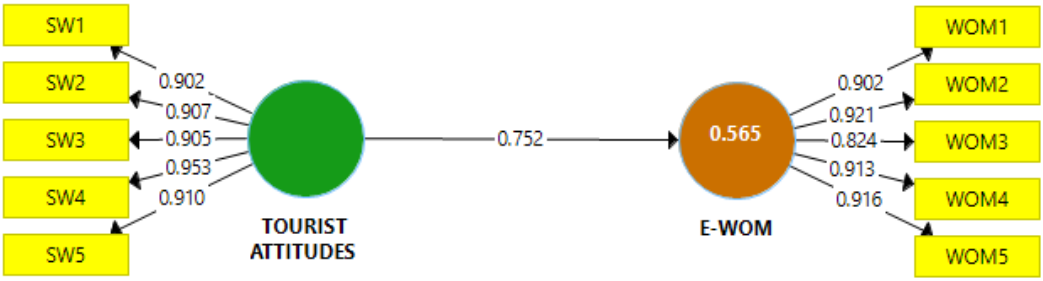

Figure 1. Research Model Test Results

Inner Model Analysis

There are several components used in evaluating the inner model that show the relationship between constructs and are evaluated using R-square, predictive relevance (Q-square) values, and effect size with f^2 (f square). According to Chin (2000), an R-Square value of 0.67 is strong, 0.33 is moderate, and 0.19 is weak. Prediction Relevance (Q-Square) is a test to determine predictive ability using a blindfolding procedure. Q-Square values are 0.35 (large), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.02 (small).

The f2 value is used as the effect size of the independent variable on the dependent variable. According to Cohen (1988), an f2 value has a small effect if it is less than 0.02, a moderate effect if it is between 0.02 and 0.15, and a large effect if it is greater than 0.35.

Table 5. Evaluation Inner Model: R-Square, f Square, and Q Square

	R Square	f Square	Q Square
E WOM	0.565	-	0.630
TOURIST ATTITUDES	-	0.565	0.685

Table 5 explains the effect of the Tourist Attitudes variable on E WOM with an R-square value of 0.565 in the moderate category (above 0.33). In the effect size f^2, it is known that Tourist Attitudes have a large effect (> 0.350) and the Q-Square value of all variables is in the strong category (above 0.35), so the model is a good fit.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Results

No	Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t calculates	P Values	Conclusion
1	TOURIST ATTITUDES -> E-WOM	0.752	0.050	15.169	0.000	Significant

The results of the first hypothesis test show that tourist attitudes influence E-WOM (calculated t > 1.96 and P values < 0.05), so H1 is accepted. The coefficient of determination value of $R^2 = 0.565$ indicates that tourist attitudes can explain 56.5% of the variation in e-WOM behavior in the context of tourism in Garut Regency. This finding shows that tourist attitudes are a dominant factor in driving online communication behavior related to destinations, in line with the literature that places attitudes as the main determinant of individual intentions and behavior (Song et al., 2024; Sharma & Arora, 2023).

Conceptually, tourists' attitudes toward Garut are reflected in statements such as their impression of Garut, their preference for Garut as a tourist destination, their perception that Garut is an enjoyable destination, and their interest and intention to visit. These positive evaluations represent the cognitive and affective dimensions of tourist attitudes, which, according to consumer behavior theory, function as predispositions to act. When tourists are impressed and consider Garut an attractive and enjoyable destination, the internal drive to express these experiences and perceptions to others becomes stronger. This

reinforces previous research findings that positive attitudes toward a destination directly contribute to the formation of tourist behavioral intentions (Choirisa et al., 2021; Han & Chen, 2021).

Furthermore, the influence of tourist attitudes on e-WOM in this study is reflected in the behavior of tourists in providing information about Garut online, recommending Garut to others, sharing third-party content, and discussing the positive aspects of Garut in digital media. These findings indicate that tourists with positive attitudes are not only passive as destination consumers but also play an active role as digital advocates who spread Garut's positive image through e-WOM. These results are consistent with the findings of Kim et al. (2016), Cheng et al. (2021), and Rana and Arora (2022), who stated that positive attitudes significantly increase individuals' intentions to engage in e-WOM as a form of expression of satisfaction, emotional attachment, and the desire to share experiences with the online community.

The relatively high R^2 value (0.565) indicates that e-WOM among tourists in Garut is greatly influenced by tourists' internal attitudes toward the destination. This reinforces the argument that the formation of e-WOM is not solely triggered by external factors such as promotions or digital campaigns, but is more determined by how tourists interpret and evaluate their experiences and the image of the destination. Thus, these findings expand the empirical evidence in the context of regional tourism, particularly in Garut, that tourist attitudes play a strategic role in encouraging the digital dissemination of information and recommendations about destinations, which can ultimately influence the visitation intentions of other potential tourists (Utami & Sari, 2025; Haryono & Albetris, 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that tourist attitudes have a positive and significant influence on electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in the context of tourism in Garut Regency. The test results show that tourist attitudes can explain a significant proportion of the variation in e-WOM behavior, confirming the strategic role of attitudes as a major determinant in encouraging tourists to share information, recommendations, and positive experiences online. Positive attitudes reflected in impressions, liking of the destination, perceptions of Garut as a pleasant destination, and interest in visiting were proven to encourage active tourist involvement in e-WOM, both through the provision of information and recommendations and the dissemination of digital content related to Garut. These findings strengthen the theoretical foundation of tourist behavior while providing practical implications that destination management focused on creating memorable travel experiences and positive tourist attitudes has the potential to increase organic destination promotion through e-WOM.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the tourist behavior model that places attitude as a determinant of e-WOM, particularly in the context of digital-based tourism. These findings support the attitude-behavior theory, which states that individuals' positive evaluations of an object will encourage a tendency to communicate and share experiences voluntarily. Furthermore, the

high R^2 value provides empirical evidence that tourist attitudes have a strong explanatory power over e-WOM, thereby enriching tourism literature with contextual evidence from regional destinations such as Garut Regency, which has been relatively understudied.

From a managerial perspective, these findings have important implications for destination managers and tourism stakeholders in Garut Regency. Efforts to increase positive e-WOM cannot rely solely on digital communication strategies, but must begin with the formation of positive attitudes through improving the quality of the tourist experience. Destination managers need to ensure that tourists are impressed, enjoy their travel experience, and view Garut as a pleasant and worthwhile destination. In addition, digital marketing strategies can be directed to encourage tourists to actively share their experiences and recommendations online, for example through user-generated content-based campaigns, destination branding hashtags, and collaboration with tourists as digital ambassadors. Thus, the positive attitudes of tourists can be converted into sustainable e-WOM that has a broad impact in attracting new tourists to Garut Regency.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research is recommended to expand this study by incorporating additional variables such as destination image, tourist satisfaction, perceived value, or emotional experience as mediators or moderators in the relationship between tourist attitudes and e-WOM. Further studies could also apply comparative or cross-destination approaches to examine whether similar patterns occur in other regions with different tourism characteristics. In addition, using longitudinal or mixed-method designs would provide deeper insights into how tourist attitudes and e-WOM behavior evolve over time, particularly in response to changes in digital platforms and tourism experiences.

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