



Branding Kebumen Geopark through enhancing the intent of tourists to return

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors influencing revisit intention to Kebumen Geopark, Indonesia. Using a quantitative approach and Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis, data was collected through an online questionnaire from 100 tourists. The analysis results show that destination image, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and perceived risk have a significant impact on revisit intention. A positive destination image can enhance tourist satisfaction and encourage them to return, while eWOM serves as an effective promotional tool in the digital era. Perceived risk also influences tourists' decisions, where a good image can reduce the negative effects of perceived risk. Recommendations for destination managers include improving visitor experiences, utilizing social media for promotion, and enhancing facilities to reduce perceived risks. This study identifies the importance of comprehensive marketing strategies to enhance the image of Kebumen Geopark and attract more tourists.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a sector with significant potential to enhance the economy of Indonesia. It plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable national development and contributes to the country's foreign exchange earnings through the arrival of international tourists. Additionally, the tourism sector serves as an important source of employment for local communities, encompassing various fields such as accommodation, restaurants, tour guiding, arts, travel agencies, and other related services.

Kebumen Regency, located in Central Java, Indonesia, has emerged as a prominent geopark tourism destination, showcasing a wealth of natural beauty, geological history, and cultural diversity. The Kebumen Geopark is an important symbol for the region, functioning not only as a tourist attraction but also as a centre for environmental preservation and cultural heritage. Despite various efforts to promote Kebumen Geopark as an appealing tourist destination, challenges remain in sustaining and increasing tourist visits. Therefore, understanding the factors influencing tourists' decisions to revisit Kebumen is essential for developing the tourism sector and strengthening the image of Kebumen Geopark at the national level.

Kebumen Geopark has the attraction of unique geological formations, beautiful beaches, and biodiversity that can be a strong factor in shaping tourists' perceptions of the beauty and authenticity of nature. In addition, tourists are often attracted to the unique and authentic local culture. Local culture, handicrafts, culinary, and local history can enhance the positive image of a destination.

In the context of risk perception that influences tourists' decisions not to return to Kebumen Geopark, it is Given that Kebumen Geopark involves coastal locations and geological areas, the risk of disasters such as tidal waves, landslides, or earthquakes can be the main factors that make tourists feel unsafe to return. However, the existence of educational tourism programs related to geology, the availability and quality of facilities such as accessibility, accommodation, transportation, and restaurants make tourists tend to be more positive about returning to Kebumen Geopark.

A significant issue facing the development of tourism in Kebumen is the low rate of repeat visits from tourists. Data from the Kebumen Tourism Office indicates that only about 30% of tourists who have visited Kebumen plan to return. This presents a unique challenge for tourism managers in creating engaging and memorable experiences for visitors. Factors influencing this decision include destination image, perceived risk, and the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which is increasingly dominant in today's digital era.

As a potential solution, tourism managers in Kebumen should strive to enhance the destination's image through effective promotion, facility development, and improved services. One approach could involve leveraging social media to disseminate positive information about Kebumen Geopark. This strategy aims to attract new tourists and encourage previous visitors to return. This study aims to identify the factors influencing the decision to revisit and provide strategic recommendations for developing the branding of Kebumen Geopark.

Destination image refers to the perception held by tourists about a place based on the information received, previous experiences, and recommendations from others. A positive image significantly influences tourists' decisions to revisit a destination. According to (R. , Riyadi & Nurmahdi, 2022), a favourable destination image can enhance tourists' intentions to return. Their research indicates that elements such as cleanliness, the friendliness of local residents, and natural beauty play vital roles in shaping a positive image. Furthermore, a study by (A. Ariesta et al., 2020; D. Ariesta et al., 2020) reveals that natural attractions and good facilities contribute to a destination's positive image. Natural attractions encompass not only scenic beauty but also activities available at the site, such as hiking, cycling, or experiencing biodiversity. In the context of Kebumen Geopark, it is essential to create an appealing and positive image to entice tourists to return. This aligns with findings from a journal by (Santoso et al., 2023), which states that developing a destination image should involve local community participation to create authentic and immersive experiences for visitors.

Moreover, a strong destination image not only attracts tourists but also contributes to local economic development. When tourists have positive experiences, they are more likely to recommend the destination to others, thereby increasing visitor numbers. Research by (Putra & Sari, 2021) indicates that 70% of satisfied tourists will recommend the destination to friends and family. This underscores the importance of building a good image, particularly in today's digital era where information can spread rapidly through social media and other online platforms. Consequently, the managers of Kebumen Geopark should focus on enhancing service quality and facilities while creating unique and memorable experiences for visitors. Such efforts to strengthen the destination image will not only boost tourist visits but also support local economic sustainability. Given these factors, effective and sustainable marketing strategies are essential to ensure that Kebumen Geopark can compete with other destinations and continue to attract tourists in the future.

One increasingly influential factor in the tourism industry today is electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). A study by (Zaenab et al., 2019) found that recommendations through social media can significantly affect tourists' decisions to revisit a destination. This indicates that in the current digital age, information shared on social media platforms serves not only as a communication tool but also as an effective promotional instrument. Consequently, a destination's image can be shaped by reviews and recommendations shared by social media users, which in turn affect tourists' perceptions and decisions. Recent research by (R. , Prasetyo & Sari, 2021) also supports this finding, stating that 70% of tourists are more likely to choose destinations with positive reviews on social media. Therefore, marketing strategies that leverage eWOM are crucial for increasing return visits to Kebumen Geopark, as they can generate positive buzz that attracts new tourists while retaining existing ones.

In this context, it is important to recognise that eWOM encompasses both positive and negative reviews, which can influence a destination's image. According to research conducted by (Hidayat & Lestari, 2023) the impact of negative eWOM can be detrimental to a tourist destination's reputation, especially if such information spreads quickly among social media users. Consequently, destination managers must actively monitor and respond to reviews on these platforms. This process involves not only addressing complaints but also utilising feedback to improve existing services and facilities. Therefore, analysing eWOM can provide valuable insights for developing more effective marketing strategies. As competition in the tourism industry intensifies, an eWOM-based approach will be key to capturing tourists' attention and ensuring the sustainability of visits to Kebumen Geopark in the future.

Perceived risk, on the other hand, is a factor that cannot be overlooked in the context of tourism. (Bai & Wang, 2020) explain that the risks perceived by tourists, whether health-related, safety-related, or financial, can influence their decisions to revisit. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many tourists became more cautious in choosing travel destinations. Huang and Hsu (2022) emphasise the importance of understanding how perceived risk can mediate the relationship between eWOM and the intention to revisit.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis. The population under study comprises all tourists visiting Kebumen Geopark, with a sample size of 100 tourists. Respondents were selected randomly through a survey. Data was collected through an online questionnaire. A Likert scale was used in this study to measure respondents' levels of agreement with the provided statements (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The data collected was derived from the responses of participants to the questionnaire. The research instrument refers to the research instrument conducted by (Alfaisaly et al., 2022; Harahap & Dwita, 2020) for the variables EWOM, Perceived Risk, Destination image and revisit intention. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach with SmartPLS version 3.2.9. The analysis process in this study was conducted in two stages: (1) The first stage involved testing the measurement model to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs from each indicator, and (2) The second stage involved testing the structural model to determine the influence between variables or the correlation among the measured constructs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the data analysis using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) are presented below. The analysis was conducted on a sample of 100 tourists to explore the

relationships between Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM), Perceived Risk, Destination Image, and Revisit Intention.

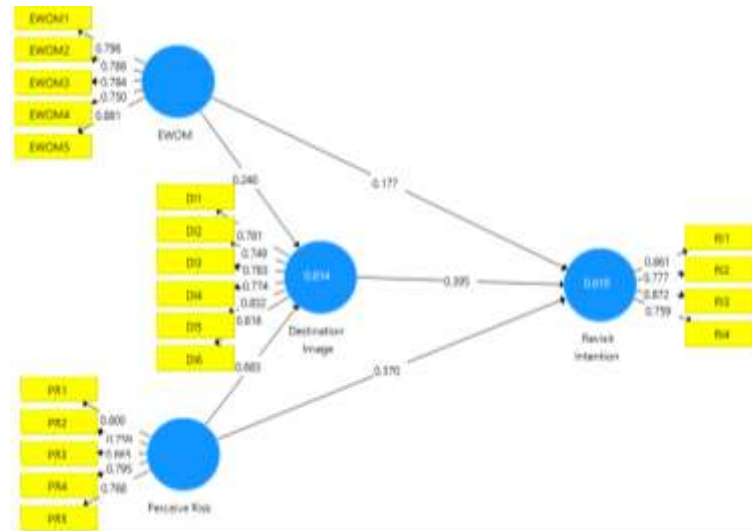


Figure 1. Output Outer Loading SmartPLS

Table 1. Validity and Reliability of Variables

Constructs/Indicators (Reflective)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Standardized Loading	Average Variance Extracted
Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)	0,899	0,860		0,641
EWOM1			0,796	
EWOM2			0,788	
EWOM3			0,784	
EWOM4			0,750	
EWOM5			0,881	
Perceive Risk (PR)	0,898	0,857		0,637
PR1			0,800	
PR2			0,759	
PR3			0,865	
PR4			0,795	
PR5			0,768	
Destinatation Image (DI)	0,909	0,879		0,624
DI1			0,781	
DI2			0,749	
DI3			0,783	
DI4			0,774	
DI5			0,832	
DI6			0,816	
Revisit Intention (RI)	0,890	0,835		0,670
RI1			0,861	
RI2			0,777	
RI3			0,872	
RI4			0,759	

The convergence validity can be evaluated by examining the loading factor values of each indicator. As shown in Figure 1 and detailed in Table 1, the outer loading values for all indicators are above 0.70. This suggests that all the indicators used are considered valid.

Table 2. Cross Loading Discriminant Validity Test Results

	Destination Image	EWOM	Perceived Risk	Revisit Intention
DI1	0,781	0,657	0,624	0,632
DI2	0,749	0,591	0,721	0,704
DI3	0,783	0,623	0,643	0,585
DI4	0,774	0,702	0,730	0,754
DI5	0,832	0,746	0,751	0,761
DI6	0,816	0,656	0,752	0,684
EWOM1	0,592	0,796	0,687	0,598
EWOM2	0,625	0,788	0,649	0,629
EWOM3	0,664	0,784	0,692	0,640
EWOM4	0,593	0,750	0,643	0,616
EWOM5	0,849	0,881	0,828	0,823
PR1	0,681	0,678	0,800	0,711
PR2	0,759	0,654	0,759	0,687
PR3	0,783	0,812	0,865	0,754
PR4	0,686	0,693	0,795	0,672
PR5	0,654	0,666	0,768	0,681
RI1	0,783	0,739	0,791	0,861
RI2	0,696	0,629	0,662	0,777
RI3	0,742	0,758	0,780	0,872
RI4	0,636	0,594	0,631	0,759

Based on the testing results presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that the Cross Loading values for the targeted constructs are higher than those of the other constructs, indicating that the data is valid. Table 2 also illustrates that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all research variables exceed 0.5, confirming the validity of each variable in this study. Furthermore, each indicator of the latent constructs is capable of explaining 50% or more of its variance. The results for composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha demonstrate values that surpass the minimum threshold of 0.70.

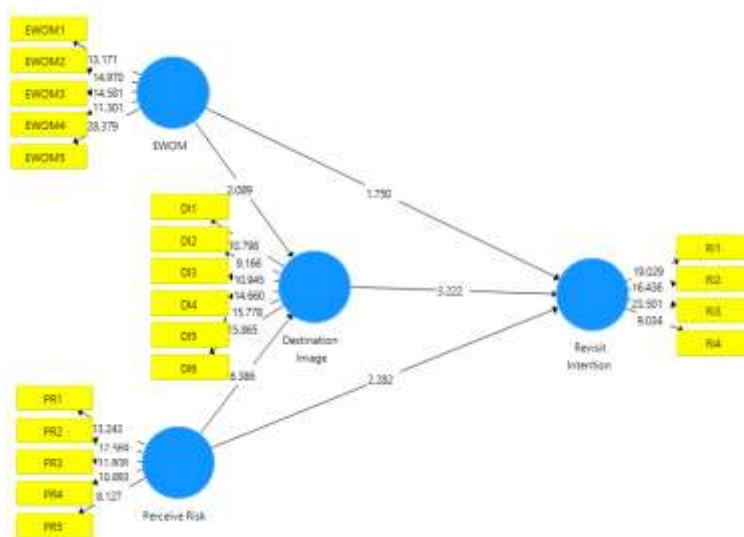


Figure 2. Output Structural Model of Bootstrapping SmartPLS

Table 3. R Square Results

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Destination Image	0,814	0,810
Revisit Intention	0,819	0,813

Table 3 illustrates that the R-squared value for the destination image variable is 0.810, indicating that 81% of the destination image is explained by the variables of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and perceived risk, while the remaining 19% is influenced by other variables. For the revisit intention variable, an R-squared value of 0.813 demonstrates that 81.3% of tourist loyalty is accounted for by the variables of eWOM, perceived risk, and destination image, with the remaining 18.7% being affected by other factors.

The relationships between the latent constructs in this research model were analysed through path estimation (path coefficients) and significance levels (p-values). In this study, a significance level of 0.05 (5%) was employed. To ascertain whether the hypotheses are accepted or rejected, one can examine the significance values between constructs, the t-statistics, and the p-values. A hypothesis is deemed accepted if the t-statistic is greater than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing based on Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Destination Image -> Revisit Intention	0,395	0,389	0,123	3,222	0,001
EWOM -> Destination Image	0,240	0,237	0,115	2,089	0,037
EWOM -> Revisit Intention	0,272	0,263	0,114	2,379	0,018
Perceive Risk -> Destination Image	0,683	0,690	0,107	6,386	0,000
Perceive Risk -> Revisit Intention	0,640	0,651	0,110	5,807	0,000
EWOM -> Destination Image -> Revisit Intention	0,095	0,092	0,055	1,741	0,082
Perceive Risk -> Destination Image -> Revisit Intention	0,270	0,268	0,093	2,892	0,004

Firstly, as indicated in Table 4, the p-value is 0.001 (<0.05) and the t-statistic is 3.222 (>1.96). This suggests that Destination Image has a positive and significant impact on Revisit Intention. Previous research supports this finding, with a study by (H. , Chen & Rahman, 2019) highlighting that a positive image of a destination can enhance visitor satisfaction, subsequently encouraging them to return. This indicates that visitors who have a positive experience and a favourable image of a destination are more likely to intend to revisit in the future. Furthermore, research by (Lee & Jang, 2021) revealed that elements such as natural beauty, adequate facilities, and the friendliness of local residents significantly contribute to the formation of a positive destination image. Consequently, these factors not only enhance the visitor experience but also strengthen their desire to return.

Secondly, the p-value of 0.037 (<0.05) and t-statistic of 2.089 (>1.96) indicate that eWOM has a positive and significant effect on Destination Image. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by (Smith & Jones, 2020) in their journal article, which states that eWOM can foster positive perceptions of a tourist destination, particularly among millennials who are more active in sharing experiences online. (Lee & Jang, 2021) demonstrated a strong correlation between information shared online and tourists' decisions when selecting destinations.

Thirdly, the p-value of 0.018 (<0.05) and t-statistic of 2.379 (>1.96) suggest that eWOM positively and significantly influences Revisit Intention. This finding is consistent with research conducted by (Chatterjee & Kumar, 2020), which asserts that eWOM can enhance consumer trust, thereby affecting their decisions to revisit a location or service. Additionally, a study by (Li & Wang, 2021) supports this claim by showing that positive interactions on social media have a direct impact on revisiting intentions, with a significant p-value.

Fourthly, the p-value of 0.000 (<0.05) and t-statistic of 6.386 (>1.96) indicate that Perceived Risk has a positive and significant effect on Destination Image. This finding is corroborated by

research from (Smith & Jones, 2020), which found that high perceptions of risk can influence how tourists view a destination. (Lee & Jang, 2021) also supports this result, showing that destinations perceived as low-risk tend to have a more positive image in the eyes of tourists.

Fifthly, the p-value of 0.000 (<0.05) and t-statistic of 5.807 (>1.96) suggest that Perceived Risk positively and significantly influences Revisit Intention. This indicates that the higher the perceived risk felt by individuals, the greater their likelihood of intending to return. Research by (Sari & Rahman, 2021) emphasises that perceived risk can affect consumer decisions regarding revisiting a location, particularly in tourism, where safety and comfort are paramount. Furthermore, a recent study by (R. , Prasetyo & Sari, 2021) found that factors such as previous negative experiences and situational uncertainty also contribute to perceived risk, which in turn affects the intention to return.

Sixthly, the p-value of 0.082 (>0.05) and t-statistic of 1.741 (<1.96) indicate that Destination Image does not mediate the effect of eWOM on Revisit Intention. This suggests that while electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) plays a crucial role in shaping revisit intentions, this influence does not occur through the destination image formed from online disseminated information. Research by (Smith & Jones, 2020) found that eWOM can directly impact consumer decisions without the need for mediator variables such as destination image. In other words, consumers are more likely to be influenced by the recommendations and reviews they read, regardless of their perception of a destination's image. Additionally, research by (Lee & Jang, 2021) indicates that in the context of tourism, eWOM often has a more substantial impact compared to other factors, including destination image, on revisit intentions.

Seventhly, the p-value of 0.004 (<0.05) and t-statistic of 1.741 (>1.96) suggest that Destination Image mediates the effect of Perceived Risk on Revisit Intention. These results indicate that when visitors have a high perception of risk, a positive destination image can mitigate the negative impacts and encourage the desire to return. Previous studies support this finding; for instance, research by (L. , Chen & Tsai, 2020) demonstrated that a good destination image can enhance visitor trust and alleviate concerns regarding potential risks. Additionally, research by (Park & Kim, 2021) underscores the importance of managing destination image to enhance visitor satisfaction and loyalty, contributing to their intention to return.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that EWOM and Perceived Risk have a positive effect on destination image and revisit intention. The existence of good online reviews related to a destination will improve the image of a tourist destination. The perception of risk felt by tourists, be it health, safety, or financial risks, can influence their decision to revisit. Therefore, it is essential for destination managers to focus on enhancing destination image through positive visitor experiences and effective utilisation of eWOM. Recommendations include developing marketing strategies that leverage social media and visitor testimonials, as well as improving facilities and services to mitigate perceived risks that tourists may experience. With this comprehensive approach, it is hoped that visitor satisfaction can be increased, thereby encouraging them to return to the destination in the future. However, this study does have limitations, including a sample size that may not represent the entire tourist population. Moreover, the data collection methods employed could influence the results, particularly if there is no stringent control over variables that may affect revisit intentions. Therefore, future research is suggested to involve larger and more diverse samples, as well as employing more varied data collection methods to achieve more comprehensive results. Thus, further studies are expected to provide deeper insights into the factors influencing revisit intentions and how marketing strategies can be optimised to enhance destination image.

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