

# The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on Tourists' Intention to Stay with Destination Image as a Mediating Variable

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## Abstract

*The development of digital marketing has significantly transformed how tourists obtain information and shape their consumption decisions, particularly in selecting accommodation. One important form of digital marketing communication is Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), which plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' perceptions and destination image. This study aims to analyze the effect of E-WOM on tourists' intention to stay, with destination image acting as a mediating variable in Cirebon City. Using a quantitative survey approach, data were collected from 102 tourists who had visited Cirebon and accessed online reviews related to the destination through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS. The results indicate that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on both destination image and tourists' intention to stay, while destination image also significantly influences tourists' intention to stay. Furthermore, destination image partially mediates the relationship between E-WOM and intention to stay, suggesting that E-WOM not only directly stimulates tourists' lodging intentions but also indirectly influences them by strengthening destination image. These findings contribute to the development of digital tourism marketing literature and provide practical implications for destination managers and accommodation providers in designing more effective digital marketing strategies to enhance tourists' intention to stay.*

**Keywords:** *Asset Growth, CSR Disclosure, and Company Value.*

## A. INTRODUCTION

The business world is developing rapidly, accompanied by increasingly fierce competition. This development requires companies to think critically, effectively, and efficiently to excel in business competition. Companies want their businesses to continue growing over time through strong financial performance and a high company value. Company value is an important concept for investors, as it is an indicator that helps the market assess the company as a whole. (Azzahra et al., 2025). Company value is the price that potential buyers are willing to pay for the company if it were sold. Company owners desire high company value because it indicates that shareholder prosperity is also high. Shareholder and company wealth are represented by the stock market price, which reflects investment, financing, and asset management decisions. (Ichwani et al., 2023). Several factors, including corporate social responsibility disclosure and asset growth, can influence company value. In addition, there are external factors that can affect company value, such as volatile (unstable) market conditions, including economic changes, government policies, and investor sentiment (views or attitudes).

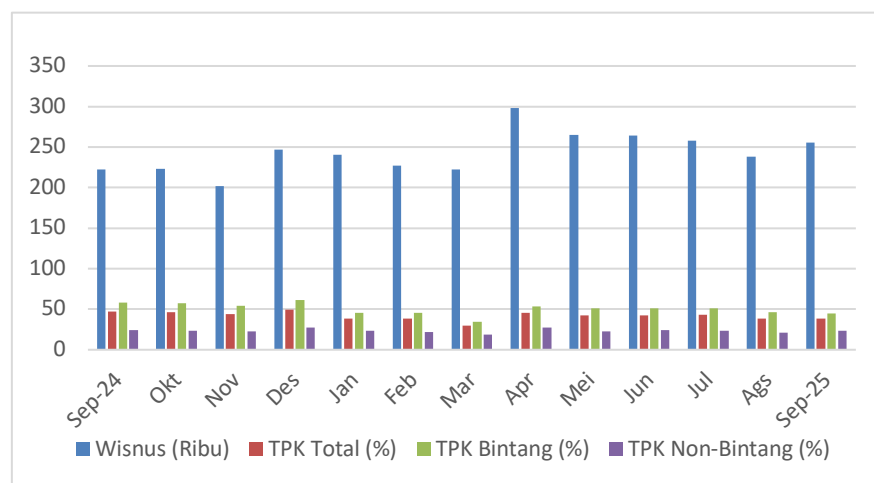
In recent years, the development of the tourism industry in Indonesia has shown an increasingly dynamic trend, driven by digital transformation that has reshaped tourist behavior in searching for, evaluating, and deciding on travel destinations. In the digital era, tourists’ decisions are no longer solely influenced by conventional promotional activities but are increasingly shaped by information and reviews disseminated through social media and digital platforms, commonly referred to as Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM). E-WOM has become a crucial element in tourism marketing communication strategies due to its high credibility, broad reach, and its ability to shape tourists’ perceptions of a destination (Chawla & Chodak, 2021; Sánchez-González & González-Fernández, 2021).

Globally, E-WOM has been shown to play a significant role in shaping destination image and influencing tourists’ behavioral intentions, such as visit intention and stay intention (Şengöz & Eren, 2024; Wibawa et al., 2025). International studies indicate that destinations capable of managing positive online reviews on digital platforms such as TripAdvisor, Instagram, or Google Review tend to develop a stronger destination image and achieve higher levels of tourist visitation and accommodation demand (Pestana et al., 2024; Pourfakhimi, Shahab; Duncan, Tara; Coetzee, 2020). However, similar patterns have not consistently occurred in the context of tourism destinations in Indonesia.

This condition suggests the existence of a gap between the digital exposure of destinations formed through online media and its conversion into actual tourist behavior, particularly the decision to stay. Several recent studies highlight that tourists’ stay intention represents a more complex behavioral indicator compared to visit intention, as it is closely related to perceptions of destination value, trust, and digitally constructed destination image. Moreover, it has a significant impact on tourism economic performance, regional revenue, and the hospitality industry (Ajid et al., 2023; Chawla & Chodak, 2021; Pestana et al., 2024).

Cirebon City is one of the prominent cultural tourism destinations in West Java, Indonesia, with strong potential in historical, religious, and culinary tourism. According to data from the Cirebon City Statistics Agency (BPS Kota Cirebon, 2025), the number of domestic tourists visiting Cirebon in September 2025 reached 255.13 thousand trips, showing an increase compared to the previous year. However, the hotel occupancy rate (TPK) showed a declining trend, averaging only 38.4%. This phenomenon reflects a digital communication gap, where the increasing exposure of tourism through digital media has not been fully converted into tourists’ decisions to stay at the destination.

**Table. 1 Graph of Domestic Tourist Growth and Hotel Room Occupancy Rate Cirebon City, September 2025**



Source: Statistics Indonesia (BPS) Cirebon City, 2025

An analysis of the graph above indicates that the increase in domestic tourist visits (Wisnus) to Cirebon City during the period of September 2024–September 2025 was not aligned with the hotel room occupancy rate. For instance, in April 2025 the number of tourist visits reached its peak at 297.74 thousand trips, yet the hotel occupancy rate was only around 45.6%. Even in months with increasing visitor numbers, such as May and June 2025, the occupancy rate declined consecutively to 42.21% and 42.67%. This condition suggests that although the intention to visit has increased, tourists do not always

choose to stay overnight, indicating a relatively weak destination image as a place suitable for accommodation.

This phenomenon reinforces the view that destination image plays a crucial role in mediating the influence of E-WOM on tourist behavior. A positive destination image can strengthen tourists' trust in the quality and attractiveness of a destination, thereby increasing their intention to stay (Ajid et al., 2023). Conversely, when the destination image formed through social media is inconsistent with actual experiences or with other tourists' reviews, tourists' intention to stay may decline.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between E-WOM and tourist behavior. For example, studies by Harun et al. (2023) and Absharina (2022) found that E-WOM has a positive influence on revisit intention through the formation of destination image. However, most of these studies focus on visit intention rather than stay intention. Furthermore, cross-country studies tend to examine international tourists with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (Chaieb & Chaieb, 2023; Şengöz & Eren, 2024), while research focusing on domestic tourists in Indonesia—who possess distinct digital behavior characteristics—remains limited.

From a theoretical perspective, this study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Framework proposed by Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell (1974), which explains that exposure to digital stimuli such as E-WOM can trigger tourists' cognitive and affective responses (organism) in forming a destination image, which ultimately influences behavioral responses in the form of stay intention. Therefore, a research gap exists in the limited number of empirical studies examining the mediating role of destination image in the relationship between E-WOM and domestic tourists' stay intention within the context of urban cultural destinations. Understanding this relationship is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of regional digital tourism marketing strategies.

The novelty of this study lies in the empirical testing of a destination image mediation model in the relationship between E-WOM and tourists' stay intention in Cirebon City, a topic that has received limited attention in Indonesia. Academically, this study is expected to enrich the literature on tourist behavior in the context of digital hospitality, while practically, the findings may serve as a reference for local governments and hospitality industry stakeholders in formulating E-WOM–based marketing communication strategies to improve hotel occupancy rates in Cirebon City.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)***

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) refers to consumer-to-consumer communication conducted through digital media and has become one of the most influential sources of information in tourists' decision-making processes. Online reviews in the form of comments, ratings, and recommendations are often perceived as more credible than promotional messages because they originate from the real experiences of other travelers. With the rapid expansion of digital platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google Review, and online booking applications, E-WOM provides accessible and widely distributed information that significantly shapes tourists' perceptions before choosing a destination or accommodation (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

E-WOM generally consists of several key characteristics, including information quality, source credibility, valence of opinion, and review intensity. High-quality and accurate information helps tourists better evaluate destinations, while credible sources increase trust in the information provided. Positive and consistent reviews tend to strengthen tourists' perceptions of a destination, whereas negative reviews may reduce expectations and influence their accommodation decisions (Cheung, 2010; Filieri et al., 2021; Şengöz & Eren, 2024).

Within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, E-WOM functions as a stimulus that triggers tourists' cognitive and affective evaluations before forming an internal perception of a destination. Consistent and persuasive digital information contributes to the formation of positive mental representations of a destination, which subsequently influence destination image and tourists' behavioral responses.

### **Destination Image**

Destination image refers to the overall perception of a destination formed through tourists' cognitive evaluations of destination attributes and their affective responses toward the destination. The

cognitive dimension includes aspects such as facilities, accessibility, safety, and tourist attractions, while the affective dimension reflects emotional responses such as comfort, enjoyment, and attraction to the destination atmosphere. A positive destination image is widely recognized as an important predictor of tourists' intention to visit or stay in a particular destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; McCleary, 1999).

The formation of destination image is influenced by various sources of information, including personal experience, mass media, and digital communication channels such as E-WOM. In the digital tourism environment, online reviews significantly shape tourists' initial impressions before they experience the destination directly. As a result, digital narratives and shared experiences from other travelers become crucial factors in influencing tourists' perceptions of a destination (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

From the perspective of the S-O-R framework, destination image represents the organism, reflecting tourists' internal cognitive and emotional processing of external stimuli such as E-WOM. Positive digital information contributes to the development of a stronger and more favorable destination image, which ultimately encourages tourists to engage in behavioral responses, including the decision to stay at the destination.

### **Stay Intention**

Stay intention refers to tourists' tendency or willingness to use accommodation services and stay overnight at a destination based on their evaluation of available information and perceptions of the destination. This construct reflects the readiness of tourists to perform actual behaviors such as booking hotels or selecting particular accommodations. As such, stay intention is considered an important predictor of tourists' actual accommodation decisions (Morosan & Jeong, 2020).

Previous studies highlight that E-WOM plays a significant role in influencing tourists' stay intention. Positive and credible digital reviews can increase tourists' confidence in the quality, comfort, and safety of a destination, thereby strengthening their willingness to stay. Additionally, tourists' perceptions of whether available accommodations meet their needs and expectations become a crucial determinant in shaping this behavioral intention (Widyastuti & Satifa, 2023).

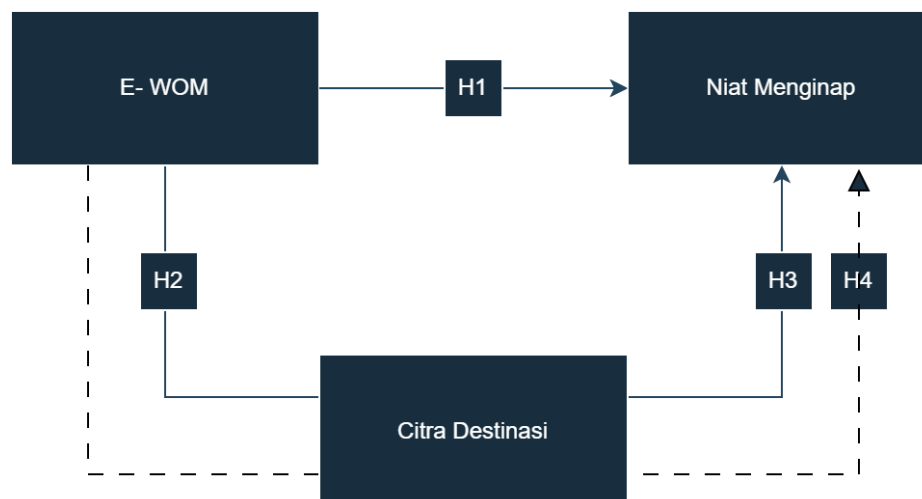
In the S-O-R model, stay intention represents the response, emerging after tourists process digital stimuli and develop an internal perception of the destination. When the destination image is formed positively, tourists are more likely to show stronger behavioral tendencies, such as booking accommodation, recommending the destination to others, or planning to stay again in the future.

### **Conclusion of the Theoretical Review**

The theoretical review highlights that the relationship between E-WOM, destination image, and stay intention can be comprehensively explained using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework. E-WOM acts as the primary stimulus that shapes tourists' initial perceptions through the quality and credibility of digital information. Destination image then functions as the internal evaluation process (organism), reflecting tourists' cognitive and emotional interpretations of the destination.

These internal evaluations subsequently influence tourists' behavioral responses, particularly their intention to stay at the destination. Therefore, this theoretical framework provides a strong conceptual foundation for explaining the relationships among the research variables and serves as the basis for developing empirical hypotheses in the study.

**Figure. 1 Conceptual Framework**



**C. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research approach aimed at examining causal relationships among variables through hypothesis testing. The quantitative method was selected because it allows tourists' perceptions and intentions to be measured objectively in numerical form, enabling statistical analysis to determine the relationships among the research variables. The study specifically analyzes the effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on tourists' stay intention, with destination image functioning as a mediating variable. This research design is based on the growing role of digital tourism marketing, where tourists increasingly rely on online reviews and recommendations as primary sources of information when selecting destinations and accommodations.

The research adopts a verification approach, seeking to confirm theoretical relationships among variables based on prior empirical findings. Tourists' stay intention is understood as a behavioral tendency that emerges after individuals evaluate digital information, including the quality of information, credibility of reviews, and overall sentiment expressed in E-WOM. The data collection process was conducted through a survey approach over a certain period, allowing respondents to participate according to their availability. Consequently, the design is not strictly limited to a single point of time but captures tourists' perceptions and intentions based on their actual experiences.

The population of this study consists of tourists who travel to Cirebon City and potentially use accommodation services such as hotels, guest houses, or homestays. However, the exact population size cannot be determined due to the absence of accurate records regarding the total number of tourists staying across various types of accommodations during the study period. Therefore, the population is categorized as an unknown or infinite population, and the study applies a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, to select respondents who meet certain criteria, including having visited Cirebon, having stayed in local accommodation, and having accessed digital reviews related to the destination.

Data were collected using online questionnaires distributed through digital platforms such as Google Forms. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," to measure respondents' perceptions of E-WOM, destination image, and stay intention. All questionnaire items were developed based on established theories and previous studies to ensure conceptual validity. Prior to distribution, the instrument was reviewed through expert judgment to ensure clarity, relevance, and contextual suitability. This approach was expected to produce reliable and accurate data representing tourists' perceptions of Cirebon as a tourism destination.

**D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Every article that comes from research results must include research methods. Research methods are a series of technical steps that researchers take in their research. It is no longer discussing the definition of a method. In the research method, it is necessary to include the approach taken, the type of research, the data sources, the data collection methods, and the data validity-checking techniques. References must accompany the method used. The research method is formulated briefly and clearly.

**Table. 2 Respondent Characteristics**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	Student/University Student	74	72.5
	Government Employee	3	2.9
	Private Employee	15	14.7
	Entrepreneur	10	9.8
<b>Total</b>		102	100.0
<b>Gender</b>	Male	28	28.4
	Female	74	71.6
<b>Total</b>		102	100.0
<b>Age</b>	<20	25	24.5
	20-30	72	70.6
	30-40	2	2.0
	>40	3	2.9

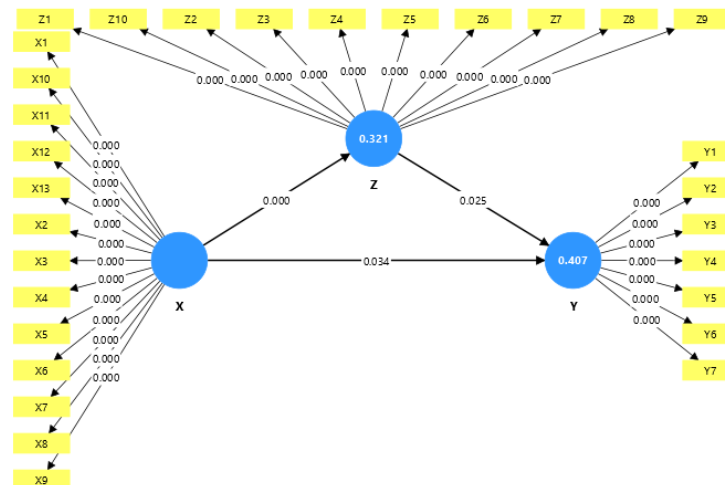
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<b>Total</b>		102	100.0
<b>Domicile</b>	Cirebon Regency	25	24.5
	Indramayu	35	34.3
	Majalengka	1	1.0
	Kuningan	5	4.9
	Subang	1	1.0
	Bandung	9	8.8
	Jakarta	6	5.9
	Bekasi	1	1.0
	Cianjur	1	1.0
	Brebes	1	1.0
	Yogyakarta	3	2.9
	Semarang	4	3.9
	Padang	2	2.0
	Solo	1	1.0
	Bandar Lampung	2	2.0
	Papua	4	3.9
Banda Aceh	1	1.0	
<b>Total</b>		102	100.0

Based on Table 2 the respondent characteristics in this study include occupation, gender, age, and domicile. The research involved 102 respondents who met the predetermined criteria. In terms of occupation, the majority of respondents were students, totaling 74 individuals (72.5%), followed by private employees (15 respondents; 14.7%), entrepreneurs (10 respondents; 9.8%), and government employees (3 respondents; 2.9%). This distribution indicates that the sample is predominantly composed of students.

Regarding gender, the respondents were dominated by female participants, accounting for 74 individuals (71.6%), while 28 respondents (28.4%) were male. In terms of age, most respondents were within the 20–30 years age group (72 respondents; 70.6%), followed by those under 20 years old (25 respondents; 24.5%). Meanwhile, respondents aged 30–40 years and over 40 years represented only a small proportion of the sample.

Based on domicile, respondents originated from various regions, with the largest proportions coming from Indramayu and Cirebon Regency, while others were distributed across several areas both within and outside Java. Overall, the respondent profile reflects young tourists who actively access digital information, making them highly relevant to the context of this study examining Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), destination image, and stay intention.

Figure. 2 Outer Model



**Table. 3 Convergent Validity and Reliability Test Results**

	<b>Indikator</b>	<b>Loading Factor</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Compasite Reability (rho_a)</b>	<b>Compasite Reability (rho_c)</b>
<b>Electronic Word of Mouth</b>	<b>X1</b>	0.718				
	<b>X10</b>	0.779				
	<b>X11</b>	0.762				
	<b>X12</b>	0.762				
	<b>X13</b>	0.743				
	<b>X2</b>	0.782				
	<b>X3</b>	0.821	0.610	0.947	0.951	0.953
	<b>X4</b>	0.852				
	<b>X5</b>	0.833				
	<b>X6</b>	0.758				
	<b>X7</b>	0.752				
	<b>X8</b>	0.775				
	<b>X9</b>	0.803				
<b>Niat Menginap</b>	<b>Y1</b>	0.829				
	<b>Y2</b>	0.814				
	<b>Y3</b>	0.886				
	<b>Y4</b>	0.911	0,751	0.945	0.948	0.955
	<b>Y5</b>	0.844				
	<b>Y6</b>	0.918				
	<b>Y7</b>	0.861				
<b>Citra Destinasi</b>	<b>Z1</b>	0.829				
	<b>Z10</b>	0.814				
	<b>Z2</b>	0.886				
	<b>Z3</b>	0.911				
	<b>Z4</b>	0.844				
	<b>Z5</b>	0.918	0.729	0.959	0.962	0.964

	<b>Z6</b>	0.861				
	<b>Z7</b>	0.829				
	<b>Z8</b>	0.814				
	<b>Z9</b>	0.886				

The results of the convergent validity test presented in Table 4.2 indicate that all indicators for each research variable have loading factor values that meet the minimum required criteria, as well as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding the recommended threshold. These findings suggest that the indicators used in the study adequately represent the latent constructs and demonstrate a strong relationship with the variables they are intended to measure.

Conceptually, convergent validity reflects the extent to which indicators within a construct are closely related and consistently represent the same concept. High loading factor values indicate that each indicator significantly contributes to the formation of the variables Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), destination image, and stay intention, suggesting that the measurement items were developed in accordance with the theoretical foundations of each construct.

Furthermore, AVE values exceeding the minimum threshold indicate that a large proportion of the variance in the indicators can be explained by the latent construct rather than by measurement error. Therefore, the research instrument not only measures the variables accurately but also demonstrates good measurement quality. The fulfillment of convergent validity criteria confirms that the measurement model (outer model) in this study meets the required standards and is appropriate for further structural model analysis.

**Tabel. 4 Discriminant Validity Test Results**

	<b>Electronic Word of Mouth (X)</b>	<b>Niat Menginap (Y)</b>	<b>Citra Destinasi (Z)</b>
<b>Electronic Word of Mouth (X)</b>			
<b>Niat Menginap (Y)</b>	0.564		
<b>Citra Destinasi (Z)</b>	0.570	0.599	

The results of the discriminant validity test indicate that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted ( $\sqrt{AVE}$ ) for each research variable is higher than the correlations between variables. This finding suggests that each construct has a strong ability to distinguish itself from other constructs within the research model.

Conceptually, discriminant validity ensures that each construct measures a distinct concept without excessive overlap with other variables. In this study, the results confirm that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), destination image, and stay intention are related constructs but maintain clear conceptual boundaries. This indicates that respondents can differentiate between digital reviews they receive, their perceptions of destination image, and their behavioral tendency to stay, confirming that the measurement model meets the criteria for discriminant validity and is suitable for further structural analysis.

**Tabel. 5 Coefficient of Determination Test Results**

	<b>R-square</b>	<b>R-square adjusted</b>
<b>Stay Intention</b>	0.407	0.395
<b>Destination Image</b>	0.321	0.314

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is used to assess the ability of independent variables to explain the variation of dependent variables in the structural model. The  $R^2$  value indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous variables that can be explained by the exogenous variables included in the research model. A higher  $R^2$  value reflects stronger predictive capability of the proposed model.

Based on the analysis using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), the R-square ( $R^2$ ) value for the Stay Intention (Y) variable is 0.407, with an adjusted R-square of 0.395. This result indicates that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and Destination Image jointly explain 40.7% of the variance in tourists’ stay intention in Cirebon City, while the remaining 59.3% is influenced by other variables outside the research model.

Furthermore, the R-square ( $R^2$ ) value for Destination Image (Z) is 0.321, with an adjusted R-square of 0.314, indicating that E-WOM explains 32.1% of the variance in destination image perceived by tourists. According to SEM-PLS evaluation criteria,  $R^2$  values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 are considered weak, moderate, and substantial respectively. Therefore, the  $R^2$  values in this study fall within the moderate range, suggesting that the structural model has adequate explanatory and predictive power for further analysis, including path coefficient testing and mediation analysis.

**Table. 6 Path Coefficient Test Results**

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Electronic Word of Mouth (X) -> Stay Intention (Y)	0.331	0.350	0.156	2.117	0.034
Electronic Word of Mouth (X) -> Destination Image (Z)	0.567	0.582	0.075	7.549	0.000
Destination Image (Z) -> Stay Intention (Y)	0.390	0.372	0.173	2.250	0.025

**The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on Tourists’ Stay Intention**

The hypothesis testing results indicate that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has a positive and significant effect on tourists’ stay intention. This is evidenced by a t-statistic value of 2.117, which is greater than the critical value of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.034, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, with a path coefficient of 0.331. These results confirm that the first hypothesis (H1), stating that E-WOM influences tourists’ stay intention, is accepted. Empirically, this finding suggests that digital reviews and information accessed by tourists through online platforms influence their decision-making process when choosing accommodation. Tourists tend to consider the quality of information, credibility of review sources, and the dominance of positive reviews as important factors in forming their confidence before selecting accommodation.

This finding can be explained through the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework proposed by Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell (1974), where E-WOM acts as an external stimulus that triggers tourists’ behavioral responses. Positive digital information helps shape tourists’ initial perceptions and cognitive evaluations, which eventually lead to the intention to stay. The results are consistent with previous studies by Chawla & Chodak (2021), Şengöz & Eren (2024), and Pestana et al. (2024), which confirm that credible and consistent digital reviews significantly influence tourists’ behavioral intentions, including their decision to stay at a destination. These findings further strengthen empirical evidence that E-WOM is a strategic factor in shaping tourists’ stay intention.

**The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on Destination Image**

The results of the second hypothesis test show that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has a positive and significant influence on destination image. This is supported by a t-statistic value of 7.549, which is significantly higher than the critical value of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the significance threshold of 0.05, with a path coefficient of 0.567. Therefore, the second hypothesis (H2)

stating that E-WOM influences destination image is accepted. Empirically, this result indicates that tourists perceive digital information and online reviews as primary references in forming their perceptions of Cirebon City as a tourism destination. Reviews that highlight aspects such as tourist facilities, safety, comfort, and the attractiveness of local attractions contribute to the development of both cognitive and affective perceptions among tourists.

These findings can be explained through Destination Image Theory introduced by John L. Echtner and J. R. Brent Ritchie (1993), which suggests that destination image is formed through the evaluation of information received by tourists before their actual visit. In the digital era, E-WOM serves as a dominant information source that shapes tourists' perceptions of a destination even before they experience it firsthand. Positive and consistent online reviews strengthen both the cognitive and affective components of destination image, thereby improving tourists' perceptions of a destination's attractiveness. This finding is also consistent with previous studies by Absharina (2022), Ajid et al. (2023), and Wibawa et al. (2025), which confirm that E-WOM significantly contributes to the formation of a positive destination image and enhances tourists' trust and preference toward a particular destination.

### **The Effect of Destination Image on Tourists' Stay Intention**

The results of the third hypothesis test reveal that destination image has a positive and significant effect on tourists' stay intention. This is indicated by a t-statistic value of 2.250, which exceeds the critical value of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.025, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, with a path coefficient of 0.390. Accordingly, the third hypothesis (H3) stating that destination image influences tourists' stay intention is accepted. Empirically, these findings suggest that a positive perception of a destination becomes internalized in tourists' behavioral tendencies. Tourists' perceptions regarding facilities, safety, comfort, and the overall attractiveness of Cirebon City significantly influence their confidence in choosing the destination as a place to stay.

This finding aligns with the perspective of Baloglu McCleary (1999), which highlights that destination image is a key predictor of tourists' behavioral intentions. Within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, destination image functions as the organism, representing the internal cognitive and emotional evaluation that mediates the relationship between digital information stimuli and behavioral responses. When tourists develop a positive image of a destination, their intention to stay becomes stronger. These results are also supported by previous studies by Ayu and Riski (2025) and Goeltom and Hurriyati (2024), which demonstrate that destination image significantly influences tourists' accommodation decisions and stay intentions. Therefore, this study further confirms that destination image is an important psychological and perceptual factor shaping tourists' decisions to stay at a destination.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing conducted in this study, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the first hypothesis (H1) is accepted, indicating that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has a positive and significant effect on tourists' stay intention. This finding suggests that the more positive and credible the digital reviews received by tourists, the higher their tendency to stay in Cirebon. Second, the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted, showing that E-WOM has a positive and significant influence on destination image. This result demonstrates that digital information and online reviews play an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions of Cirebon as a tourism destination. Third, the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted, proving that destination image has a positive and significant effect on tourists' stay intention, meaning that a positive destination image can increase tourists' confidence and interest in choosing accommodation in the destination.

Furthermore, the fourth hypothesis (H4) is also accepted, indicating that destination image mediates the relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and tourists' stay intention. This implies that E-WOM influences tourists' intention to stay not only directly but also indirectly through the formation of destination image as an intermediary mechanism. Overall, the results confirm that E-WOM and destination image are crucial factors in shaping tourists' stay intention, both directly and through mediation effects. In terms of practical implications, tourism managers and local governments are encouraged to optimize the use of digital media and tourist reviews as promotional tools while maintaining consistency between online information and the actual conditions of the destination to strengthen its image. Accommodation businesses are advised to improve service quality and actively

manage online reviews to build positive perceptions among tourists. Meanwhile, future researchers are recommended to incorporate additional variables—such as tourist satisfaction, trust, or service quality—and to expand the research scope in order to obtain more comprehensive findings.

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