

Destination Reputation Mediates The Effects Of Digital Marketing And E-Wom

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ABSTRAK

This study aims to analyse the influence of social media-based digital marketing and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on tourists' interest in visiting, with destination reputation as a mediating variable, at Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta. The study employed a quantitative approach using a survey method targeting tourists who were aware of or had previously visited Kampung Batik Kauman Surakarta. Data were collected via a questionnaire and analysed using Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results indicate that social media-based digital marketing and e-WOM enhance destination reputation and tourists' intention to visit. Destination reputation was also found to increase visitation interest whilst mediating the influence of digital marketing and e-WOM on visitation interest. These findings confirm that strengthening destination reputation is a key mechanism in optimising the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies to increase tourists' interest in visiting heritage tourism destinations.

INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology have transformed the way travellers search for information, evaluate alternative destinations and make travel decisions. Social media has evolved into a communication channel that enables tourist destinations to reach a wider audience of potential travellers through visual content, digital interaction and the rapid dissemination of information. In the context of tourism, social media-based digital marketing and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) have become key instruments in building a destination's competitiveness, as they are capable of influencing travellers' perceptions, trust and intention to visit (Bouarar et al., 2025; González-Rodríguez et al., 2022).

This phenomenon is also evident in Kauman Batik Village, Surakarta a heritage tourism destination that has been promoting itself via Instagram, TikTok and Google Maps. According to data from the Surakarta City Central Statistics Agency, tourist visits to SuraLkarta have fluctuated, whilst the average length of stay remains relatively low. This suggests that high levels of digital exposure have not yet been fully converted into sustained visitor interest. On the other hand, Kampung Batik Kauman has received thousands of positive reviews on digital platforms; however, increases in visitor numbers still tend to occur

only during specific periods, meaning a strategy is needed to transform digital interactions into actual decisions by tourists to visit.

Social media-based digital marketing is a marketing activity that utilises digital platforms to create two-way communication between destination managers and tourists. This strategy enables the dissemination of information in real time, broadens the reach of promotions, and increases user engagement through visual and interactive content (Cooper et al., 2021; Musliha & Adinugraha, 2022). Meanwhile, electronic word-of-mouth refers to communication between consumers via digital media that contains experiences, evaluations, or recommendations regarding a destination. Information originating from other tourists is generally perceived as more credible than promotional messages from destination managers and therefore has a significant influence on shaping the perceptions of prospective tourists (Bigne et al., 2019; John & De'Villiers, 2020).

The relationships between variables in this study are explained using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory, which states that external stimuli are processed through psychological mechanisms before producing a behavioural response (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the context of this study, social media-based digital marketing and e-WOM are positioned as the stimulus, the destination's reputation as the organism, and the interest in visiting as the response. From this perspective, destination reputation is viewed as tourists' collective evaluation of a destination's quality, credibility and appeal, formed from digital information and the experiences of other tourists (Alzaydi & Elsharnouby, 2023; Wei et al., 2025).

A number of previous studies have demonstrated that digital marketing and e-WOM have a positive influence on tourists' interest in visiting (González-Rodríguez et al., 2022; Virgin Threisia Br Bangun et al., 2025). Other research indicates that this relationship may be mediated by destination image (Kristia, 2024), brand equity (Ahmad et al., 2023), or tourist satisfaction (Kanwel et al., 2019). However, the majority of studies still treat destination image as a mediating variable, even though destination image more accurately reflects short-term perceptions. Conversely, destination reputation is a collective evaluation formed through the accumulation of experiences, digital communication and social validation; as such, it is better able to explain the process by which digital interactions are converted into a sustained interest in visiting (Su et al., 2020).

Based on these empirical findings and the existing research gap, this study offers a novel approach by positing destination reputation as a mediating variable in the relationship between social media-based digital marketing, e-WOM, and tourists' interest in visiting heritage tourism destinations. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying the formation of tourists' interest in visiting destinations in the digital age.

Based on the above, this study aims to analyse the influence of social media-based digital marketing and electronic word-of-mouth on tourists' interest in visiting, and to examine the mediating role of destination reputation in Kampung Batik Kauman, Surakarta. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of the literature on digital tourism marketing, whilst also providing guidance for destination managers in designing promotional strategies aimed at strengthening the destination's reputation.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationship between social media-based digital marketing, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), destination reputation, and tourists' interest in visiting. The quantitative approach was chosen as it is capable of explaining the relationships between variables through empirical hypothesis testing using numerical data.

The subject of this study is the Kauman Batik Village in Surakarta, as one of the heritage tourist destinations in the city of Surakarta. The study population comprises tourists who are aware of or have visited the Kauman Batik Village in Surakarta. Sampling was carried out using purposive sampling, with the criteria being that respondents must be aged 18 or over, be aware of or have visited the Kauman Batik Village in Surakarta, and have accessed information about the destination via digital media. The sample comprised 200 respondents, which met the recommended sample size for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) analysis.

Primary data was collected via an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The research instrument was developed based on indicators adapted from previous studies and had undergone validity and reliability testing prior to its use in the main study. The variables measured included social media-based digital marketing, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), destination reputation, and tourists' interest in visiting.

Data analysis was carried out using the Structural Equation Modelling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method with the aid of SmartPLS 4 software. The analysis included an evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) through tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). Furthermore, the structural model (inner model) was evaluated by testing the variance inflation factor (VIF), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), model fit, path coefficients, and mediating effects using the bootstrapping procedure. Prior to hypothesis testing, the study also carried out data screening and common method bias (CMB) testing to ensure data quality and minimise potential measurement bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics Of Respondents

This study involved 200 respondents who met the criteria of being tourists who were aware of or had visited Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta. The respondents' characteristics were analysed according to gender, age, educational level and place of residence to provide an overview of the study respondents' profile.

Table 1 Characteristics of Respondents

No	Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Men	116	58 %
		Woman	84	42 %
2	Age	18–26 years old (Generation Z)	97	48,5 %
		27–41 years old (Millennials)	81	40,5 %
		42–57 years old (Generation X)	20	10 %
		>57 years old (Baby Boomers)	2	1 %
3	Education	High School	43	21,5 %
		Associate's Degree	34	17 %
		Bachelor's Degree	104	52 %

		Postgraduate	19	9,5 %
4	Domicile	Soloraya	155	77,5 %
		Outside the Soloraya region	45	22,5 %

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

According to Table 1, the study's respondents were predominantly male, numbering 116 (58.0%), whilst female respondents numbered 84 (42.0%). By age group, the majority of respondents were from Generation Z (aged 18–26), totalling 97 people (48.5%), followed by the Millennials (aged 27–41), totalling 81 people (40.5%). Furthermore, in terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (S1), totalling 104 people (52.0%), whilst in terms of place of residence, the majority of respondents were from the Soloraya region, totalling 155 people (77.5%). These characteristics indicate that the respondents were predominantly from the productive age group and were highly educated, actively utilising digital media as a source of information when searching for tourist destination recommendations.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis aims to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions of the research variables. The interpretation is based on the mean value of each variable, using the categories of a five-point Likert scale. The results of the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Research Variables

No	Variable	Mean	Category
1	Social Media-Based Digital Marketing	3,484	Height
2	Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)	3,323	Currently
3	Destination Reputation	3,565	Height
4	Interest in Visiting	3,598	Height

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

According to Table 2, the 'Interest in Visiting' variable achieved the highest average score (3.598) and was classified as 'high'. These results indicate that respondents have a strong inclination to visit Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta. The 'Destination Reputation' variable also falls into the 'high' category with an average score of 3.565, indicating that respondents hold a positive perception of the quality, credibility and image of Kampung Batik Kauman as a cultural tourist destination.

Furthermore, the Social Media-Based Digital Marketing variable achieved an average score of 3.484 and fell into the 'high' category. This finding indicates that digital marketing activities conducted via social media are considered capable of conveying destination information in a way that is engaging, informative and easily accessible to tourists. Conversely, the Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) variable scored an average of 3.323, placing it in the moderate category. This suggests that the frequency of reviews, recommendations and the exchange of information regarding Kampung Batik Kauman via digital media could still be improved.

Overall, the results of the descriptive analysis indicate that respondents gave positive ratings for digital marketing, destination reputation and interest in visiting. Meanwhile,

perceptions of e-WOM remain at a moderate level, making this an aspect with potential for strengthening within the destination's digital marketing strategy. These results provide an initial indication that digital marketing, e-WOM, and destination reputation have the potential to influence tourists' interest in visiting, which is subsequently tested through SEM-PLS analysis.

Evaluation Of The Measurement Model (Outer Model)

An evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) was carried out to test the construct validity and reliability of the research. The tests included convergent validity, construct reliability and discriminant validity. According to Hair et al. (2022), an indicator is considered to meet the criteria for convergent validity if it has an outer loading of ≥ 0.70 and an average variance extracted (AVE) of ≥ 0.50 . Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, with a minimum value of 0.70, whilst discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which must be less than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Results of the Outer Model Evaluation

No	Variable	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Notes
1	Electronic Word of Mouth	0,808–0,920	0,927	0,945	0,774	Valid and Reliable
2	Interest in Visiting	0,799–0,972	0,947	0,960	0,830	Valid and Reliable
3	Digital Marketing	0,849–0,968	0,950	0,962	0,834	Valid and Reliable
4	Destination Reputation	0,855–0,936	0,937	0,952	0,800	Valid and Reliable

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

Based on Table 3, all indicators have outer loading values above 0.70 and therefore meet the criteria for convergent validity. Furthermore, all constructs have Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70, as well as an AVE exceeding 0.50. Consequently, all indicators are deemed valid and reliable and are therefore suitable for use in structural equation modelling.

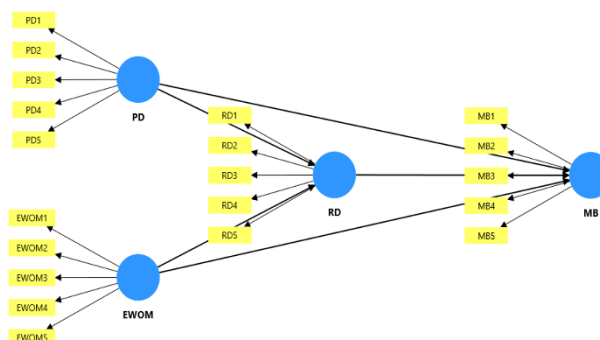


Figure 1. Structural Model of the Study Using SmartPLS 4

Source: Primary data analysed using SmartPLS 4 (2026)

Figure 1 shows the structural model resulting from the analysis using the bootstrapping method. All relationships between variables are positive, with levels of significance subsequently tested using path coefficients, t-statistics and p-values. The bootstrapping method was chosen because it produces stable parameter estimates without requiring a normal data distribution, making it suitable for analysis using SEM-PLS (Hair et al., 2022).

Evaluation Of The Structural Model (Inner Model)

An evaluation of the structural model (inner model) was carried out to assess the model's ability to explain the relationships between latent variables. The tests included the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to detect multicollinearity, the coefficient of determination (R^2) to measure the model's predictive power, the effect size (f^2) to determine the magnitude of the influence of each exogenous construct on the endogenous construct, and goodness of fit using the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI). The model was deemed to meet the criteria if the VIF value was < 5 , the SRMR was < 0.08 , and the NFI was > 0.90 (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 4. Results of the Inner Model Evaluation

No	Aspect	Indicator	Value	Interpretation
1	Collinearity (VIF)	EWOM $\rightarrow$ MB	1,057	There is no multicollinearity
		EWOM $\rightarrow$ RD	1,007	There is no multicollinearity
		PD $\rightarrow$ MB	1,071	There is no multicollinearity
		PD $\rightarrow$ RD	1,007	There is no multicollinearity
		RD $\rightarrow$ MB	1,104	There is no multicollinearity
2	Coefficient of Determination (R^2)	Interest in Visiting	0,380	Medium category
		Destination Reputation	0,338	Medium category
3	Effect Size (f^2)	EWOM $\rightarrow$ MB	0,068	Minor effect
		PD $\rightarrow$ MB	0,030	Minor effect
		RD $\rightarrow$ MB	0,150	Moderate effect
		EWOM $\rightarrow$ RD	0,093	Minor effect
		PD $\rightarrow$ RD	0,247	Moderate effect
4	Model Fit	SRMR	0,049	Model fit
		NFI	0,906	Model fit

Source: Primary data analysed using SmartPLS 4 (2026)

Based on Table 4, all VIF values fall within the range of 1.007 to 1.104, which is less than 5.00, thus indicating that there is no evidence of multicollinearity amongst the exogenous variables. The coefficient of determination indicates that the model is able to explain 38.0% of the variation in visitation interest and 33.8% of the variation in destination reputation, whilst the remainder is influenced by other factors outside the research model. Consequently, the model's predictive ability falls into the 'moderate' category according to the criteria set out by Hair et al. (2022).

The results of the effect size tests indicate that the influence of digital marketing on destination reputation has a moderate effect ($f^2 = 0.247$), whilst the influence of destination reputation on visitation interest also falls into the moderate category ($f^2 = 0.150$). Conversely, the effect of electronic word-of-mouth on destination reputation and visitation interest, as well as the effect of digital marketing on visitation interest, fall into the small effect category.

Furthermore, the results of the goodness-of-fit evaluation showed an SRMR value of 0.049, which is below the maximum threshold of 0.08, and an NFI value of 0.906, which exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.90. These results indicate that the structural model has a good level of fit and is therefore suitable for testing the relationships between variables in this study (Hair et al., 2022).

Hypothesis Testing (Path Coefficient)

Hypothesis testing was carried out using the bootstrapping method in SmartPLS 4. The decision to accept a hypothesis was based on a t-statistic value > 1.96 and a p-value < 0.05 , as recommended by Hair et al. (2022). The results of the path coefficient tests are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results (Path Coefficients)

Hypothesis	Relationships Between Variables	Path Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H1	Electronic Word of Mouth $\rightarrow$ Interest in Visiting	0,229	3,735	0,000	Diterima
H2	Electronic Word of Mouth $\rightarrow$ Destination Reputation	0,265	4,102	0,000	Diterima
H3	Digital Marketing $\rightarrow$ Visitor Interest	0,162	2,473	0,013	Diterima
H4	Digital Marketing $\rightarrow$ Destination Reputation	0,432	6,963	0,000	Diterima
H5	Destination Reputation $\rightarrow$ Interest in Visiting	0,375	5,690	0,000	Diterima

Source: Primary data analysed using SmartPLS 4 (2026)

Based on Table 5, all research hypotheses were accepted as they had t-statistic values above 1.96 and p-values below 0.05. These findings indicate that electronic word-of-mouth and social media-based digital marketing have a positive and significant effect on both destination reputation and tourists' interest in visiting. Furthermore, destination reputation was also found to have a positive and significant effect on tourists' interest in visiting. These results suggest that the more effective the digital marketing activities and the more positive the information circulating via digital media, the better the reputation of Kampung Batik Kauman Surakarta and the higher the interest among tourists in visiting.

Of all the relationships tested, the effect of digital marketing on destination reputation showed the largest path coefficient ($\beta = 0.432$), and can therefore be interpreted as the strongest relationship in the research model. Conversely, the effect of digital marketing on visitation interest had the smallest path coefficient ($\beta = 0.162$), although it remained statistically significant. These findings indicate that an increase in tourists' interest in visiting

is influenced not only directly by digital marketing activities, but also through the mechanism of building a positive destination reputation (Hair et al., 2022).

Testing For Mediation Effects (Specific Indirect Effects)

A mediation analysis was conducted to determine the role of destination reputation in mediating the effects of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and digital marketing on tourists' interest in visiting. The analysis was carried out using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4. A mediating effect was considered significant if it had a t-statistic value > 1.96 and a p-value < 0.05 (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 6. Results of the Mediation Effect Test (Specific Indirect Effects)

Hypothesis	Relationships	Path Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
H6	Electronic Word of Mouth $\rightarrow$ Destination Reputation $\rightarrow$ Interest in Visiting	0,099	3,387	0,001	Diterima
H7	Digital Marketing $\rightarrow$ Destination Reputation $\rightarrow$ Interest in Visiting	0,162	4,133	0,000	Diterima

Source: Primary data analysed using SmartPLS 4 (2026)

Based on Table 6, the destination's reputation was found to significantly mediate the effects of electronic word-of-mouth and digital marketing on tourists' interest in visiting. This is indicated by a t-statistic value exceeding 1.96 and a p-value of less than 0.05 for both mediation pathways. These findings indicate that information, reviews and recommendations conveyed via digital media, as well as digital marketing activities, not only have a direct effect on visitors' interest in visiting, but also help to build a positive reputation for Kampung Batik Kauman Surakarta, which in turn increases tourists' interest in visiting.

Furthermore, the direct effect of electronic word-of-mouth on visitation interest and the direct effect of digital marketing on visitation interest remain significant, whilst the indirect effect via destination reputation is also significant. Thus, destination reputation acts as a partial mediator in both relationships. These results indicate that destination reputation is an important mechanism that reinforces the effectiveness of digital communication in driving tourists' interest in visiting Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta.

Digital Marketing Builds Destination Reputation

The research findings indicate that social media-based digital marketing has a positive and significant influence on destination reputation, with a path coefficient of ($\beta = 0.432$; $p < 0.001$). Compared with the relationships between other variables, this path has the largest coefficient, suggesting that digital marketing is the most dominant factor in shaping the reputation of Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of digital communication serves not only as a medium for conveying information but also as a primary means of shaping tourists' perceptions, credibility and trust in a destination.

The dominant influence of digital marketing can be explained by the behavioural characteristics of tourists in the digital age. Before travelling, tourists tend to seek information

via social media, search engines, official destination websites, and visual content platforms. This information forms the basis for travellers to evaluate the quality of a destination, its tourist attractions, accessibility, and the experiences they might have. Consequently, the quality of digital communication provided by destination managers plays a crucial role in shaping travellers' initial perceptions of the destination. Content that is informative, authentic, consistent and visually appealing will boost travellers' confidence that the destination can deliver an experience that meets their expectations.

This finding can be explained by Signalling Theory, as proposed by This theory explains that when there is information asymmetry between service providers and consumers, the provider will send a signal to reduce uncertainty in the decision-making process. In the context of tourism, digital marketing functions as a signal that represents the quality of a destination through photographs, videos, stories, testimonials and information about tourist attractions. The more credible and consistent the signals received by tourists are, the higher the level of trust in the destination, which in turn shapes the destination's reputation positively. Thus, a destination's reputation is not formed spontaneously, but is the result of the accumulation of digital communication capable of creating a perception of quality in the minds of tourists.

The findings of this study are consistent with the research by Molinillo et al. (2022), which found that digital marketing activities contribute significantly to the formation of a destination's reputation by increasing tourist interaction and engagement on social media. The study by Chou et al. (2025) also shows that integrated digital communication can enhance a destination's credibility, thereby strengthening its reputation and competitiveness in the tourism market. Furthermore, the study by Bouarar et al. (2025) concluded that digital marketing strategies utilising various social media platforms have a greater influence on tourists' perceptions than conventional promotion, as they are able to deliver more personalised, interactive and sustainable communication.

Although the findings of this study support previous research, there is a significant difference that constitutes the contribution of this study. Most previous studies have positioned digital marketing as a direct determinant of visitation interest or destination image. In contrast, this study shows that the greatest influence of digital marketing is actually on the destination's reputation, rather than directly on visitation interest. These findings suggest that tourists do not simply decide to visit merely because they see digital promotions, but first form an assessment of the destination's credibility, quality and reliability. The destination's reputation then acts as a mechanism that reinforces the influence of digital marketing on tourists' decisions to visit.

This finding can be explained through Signaling Theory, originally introduced by Spence (1973, as cited in Connelly et al., 2025). The theory explains how signals reduce information asymmetry between information providers and receivers. This study demonstrates that digital communication acts as a signal that shapes a destination's reputation, whilst reputation serves as an intangible asset that determines the success of digital marketing strategies. Consequently, the effectiveness of digital marketing cannot be measured solely by content reach, the number of impressions, or engagement levels, but also by its ability to build a positive and sustainable destination reputation.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study suggest that the managers of Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta need to develop digital marketing strategies focused on

building reputation, rather than merely increasing social media exposure. Such a strategy can be realised through the presentation of authentic content regarding the historical and cultural value of Kampung Batik Kauman, consistency in the destination's visual identity, the provision of accurate information, and responsive interaction with tourists via various digital platforms. It is hoped that this approach will strengthen public trust in the destination whilst enhancing the competitiveness of Kampung Batik Kauman as a heritage tourism destination in the digital age.

Destination Reputation Encourages Visiting Interest

The research findings indicate that a destination's reputation has a positive and significant effect on tourists' interest in visiting, with a path coefficient of ($\beta = 0.375$; $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that the more positive the reputation of Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta, the greater the likelihood that tourists will visit it. A destination's reputation reflects tourists' collective assessment of the quality, credibility and experiences associated with that destination. Consequently, reputation not only influences tourists' initial perceptions but also shapes their confidence that the destination will meet their expectations prior to their visit.

The significant influence of a destination's reputation on visitors' interest in visiting indicates that tourists' decisions are influenced not only by exposure to digital information, but also by the level of trust that has been established in the destination. In the tourism industry, particularly in heritage tourism, travellers face a relatively high level of uncertainty as the travel experience cannot be assessed directly prior to the visit. Consequently, travellers use a destination's reputation as a basis for reducing their perception of risk and increasing their confidence in the quality of the experience they will receive. In other words, reputation serves as a psychological assurance that helps travellers make decisions about visiting.

These findings can be explained using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory developed by Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell (1974). This theory explains that an individual's behaviour is the result of a psychological evaluation process of various stimuli received from the environment. In this study, digital marketing and electronic word-of-mouth act as stimuli, whilst destination reputation acts as the organism that is, the internal process reflecting tourists' evaluations of a destination's quality, credibility and appeal. These evaluations subsequently generate a response in the form of an interest in visiting. Thus, destination reputation serves as the psychological mechanism linking digital information to tourists' behavioural decisions.

In the context of heritage tourism destinations, reputation plays a more significant role than it does in recreational or entertainment destinations. Heritage tourism offers experiences centred on historical value, culture, local identity and authenticity. These characteristics mean that tourists consider not only physical facilities, but also cultural authenticity, heritage conservation, the quality of historical interpretation, and the experiences they expect during their visit. Consequently, a destination's reputation serves as a representation of the overall values inherent in the destination and influences travellers' confidence that the cultural experience on offer is genuinely authentic. In the context of Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta, a good reputation is built not only through the quality of the batik products but also through the area's image as a centre for the preservation of batik culture, the presence of traditional artisans, and the educational experiences gained by travellers during their visit.

The findings of this study are consistent with the research by Molinillo et al. (2022), which showed that a destination's reputation is a key determinant in shaping tourists' intention to visit by increasing their trust in the destination. Similar findings were also reported by Omeish et al. (2024), who found that destination reputation has a more stable influence than destination image because it is built through the accumulation of tourist experiences, service quality, and ongoing public communication. Furthermore, research by Ahmad et al. (2023) indicates that a destination's reputation can enhance tourists' behavioural intentions, as reputation is perceived as a more credible indicator of quality than promotional messages conveyed by destination managers.

Nevertheless, this study offers a different perspective from most previous research. The majority of earlier studies identified destination image as the primary factor influencing the desire to visit. Destination image generally reflects tourists' initial perceptions, which are formed through short-term promotion or information received. In contrast, this study demonstrates that destination reputation plays a more comprehensive role, as it is shaped through the accumulation of travellers' experiences, digital communication and ongoing social validation. Consequently, reputation not only reflects how travellers view a destination, but also indicates the level of public trust in the destination's quality and credibility.

These findings make a theoretical contribution to the development of Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory in the context of digital tourism marketing. This study demonstrates that a destination's reputation is the 'organism' component that explains how stimuli in the form of digital marketing and electronic word-of-mouth are translated into behavioural responses, namely an interest in visiting. In other words, the psychological processes occurring in tourists do not stop at the formation of perceptions, but develop into a collective evaluation of the destination's reputation, which ultimately determines the decision to visit. This approach enriches the literature, which has hitherto placed greater emphasis on the role of destination image without explaining the process of trust formation in greater depth.

From a practical perspective, the research findings indicate that the managers of Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta need to view reputation as a strategic asset that must be consistently built up. Such efforts cannot rely solely on digital promotion, but must also be supported by the provision of authentic tourist experiences, high-quality service, the preservation of cultural values, and the management of relationships with tourists following their visit. A positive reputation will strengthen public confidence in the destination and encourage a sustained increase in visitor interest. Consequently, strategies for developing heritage tourism destinations should not only focus on increasing short-term visitor numbers but also on building a reputation capable of ensuring the destination's long-term competitiveness.

Mediating Role Of Destination Reputation

The main findings of this study indicate that destination reputation mediates the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and social media-based digital marketing on tourists' interest in visiting. The indirect effect of e-WOM on visitation intention via destination reputation was found to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.099$; $p = 0.001$). Similarly, the indirect effect of digital marketing on visitation intention via destination reputation yielded positive and significant results ($\beta = 0.162$; $p < 0.001$). At the same time, the direct effects of e-WOM and digital marketing on visitation intent remained significant.

This pattern indicates that destination reputation acts as a partial mediator in both relationships. Thus, digital communication can drive visitation intent directly, but its impact becomes more comprehensive when such communication first establishes a positive destination reputation.

Partial mediation suggests that a destination's reputation is not the only mechanism linking digital communication to an interest in visiting. Tourists may be directly attracted after viewing engaging social media content or reading positive reviews from other travellers. Visual content relating to heritage sites, batik-making activities, local products and cultural experiences can immediately spark interest. Similarly, relevant and credible recommendations can immediately allay the doubts of prospective travellers. However, the findings of this study suggest that part of this influence operates through a more nuanced process. Digital information received on a consistent basis shapes assessments of a destination's quality, credibility and reliability. These assessments develop into a positive reputation, which in turn reinforces the interest in visiting.

These findings explain why the indirect effect of digital marketing on destination reputation is greater than that of e-WOM. The relationship between digital marketing and destination reputation is the strongest in the research model ($\beta = 0.432$), whilst the relationship between e-WOM and destination reputation has a lower coefficient ($\beta = 0.265$). These results indicate that, in the context of Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta, consistently managed digital communication is the primary source of reputation formation. Content that is informative, authentic, easily accessible and visually appealing provides a more structured signal regarding the destination's identity and quality. Conversely, e-WOM stems from more diverse individual experiences. Whilst still important and credible, this information cannot be fully controlled by destination managers. Therefore, these two sources of digital communication operate through different channels but converge on the same mechanism: the formation of the destination's reputation.

These findings reinforce the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory proposed by Mehrabian & Russell (1974). In this research model, digital marketing and e-WOM act as external stimuli. The destination's reputation serves as the organism, representing the traveller's internal evaluation process. Interest in visiting becomes the response that emerges after tourists have processed this information. The significance of both mediation pathways provides empirical evidence that digital stimuli do not merely generate behavioural responses directly. These stimuli also operate through the formation of psychological evaluations of the destination. Thus, the destination's reputation explains the process occurring between exposure to digital communication and the emergence of interest in visiting.

The main theoretical contribution of this study lies in the use of destination reputation as a mediating mechanism. Previous research has more frequently used destination image, brand equity, perceived value, or tourist satisfaction to explain the relationship between digital communication and behavioural intent. Whilst these variables are important, reputation possesses distinct characteristics. Destination image primarily describes the impressions or associations that individuals hold regarding a particular place. In contrast, reputation reflects a broader, accumulated evaluation of a destination's credibility and quality. Reputation is formed through the interaction between destination-managed communications, tourist experiences, and social validation that develops over time. Consequently, reputation provides

a more appropriate framework for understanding how digital information disseminated through various sources can be converted into an intention to visit.

These findings also modify our understanding of the role of reputation within the S-O-R framework. The 'organism' component is often described in terms of individual internal responses, such as emotions, value perceptions, satisfaction or self-image. This study demonstrates that the 'organism' component can also be represented by evaluations of a destination's reputation. Although reputation develops through collective assessment, travellers use this reputation as the basis for their internal evaluations when considering a destination. Consequently, this study broadens the application of the S-O-R framework by showing that travellers' psychological evaluations can be formed from the accumulation of digital signals and social validation inherent in a destination's reputation.

The nature of heritage tourism reinforces the importance of such mechanisms. Tourists do not merely purchase access to a site; they also consider its authenticity, historical value, cultural identity and the quality of the experience factors that cannot be verified prior to their visit. This situation creates a higher degree of uncertainty. Reputation helps to reduce this uncertainty by providing an indication of the extent to which a destination is trusted to deliver an authentic and high-quality experience. In Kampung Batik Kauman, digital content and tourist reviews become more effective when they jointly build confidence that the area possesses authentic, credible cultural value and is worth visiting. This explains why reputation does not replace the direct influence of digital communication, but rather reinforces the process of generating interest in visiting.

From a practical perspective, the research findings indicate that the managers of Kampung Batik Kauman should not focus solely on reach, views, follower numbers or the volume of reviews. Digital strategies need to be geared towards building reputation. Managers must ensure consistency between digital messaging and the actual experience of visitors. Content regarding the area's history, the batik-making process, artisan profiles, cultural events, accessibility and the tourist experience must be presented accurately and consistently. At the same time, managers need to encourage authentic reviews, respond to comments professionally and address negative experiences openly. A discrepancy between digital promotion and the actual experience has the potential to undermine reputation, even with a high level of digital exposure.

Overall, the novelty of this research lies in the evidence that destination reputation acts as a strategic mechanism linking two forms of digital communication with the intention to visit in the context of heritage tourism. Partial mediation indicates that digital marketing and e-WOM still exert a direct influence, but reputation provides an additional pathway that reinforces the impact of both. These findings shift the focus of destination marketing strategies from merely increasing visibility towards building long-term credibility. For the tourism marketing literature, the research results confirm that the success of digital communication must be assessed not only in terms of tourists' immediate responses, but also in terms of its ability to build a reputation that can transform information exposure into a stronger and more sustainable interest in visiting.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study demonstrates that digital marketing based on social media and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) increases tourists' interest in visiting through two channels. Both

are capable of directly stimulating interest in visiting whilst simultaneously shaping the destination's reputation, which in turn reinforces tourists' interest in visiting Kampung Batik Kauman in Surakarta. Digital marketing plays the strongest role in building a destination's reputation, whilst the destination's reputation is a key factor in transforming exposure to digital information into tourist behaviour. The main finding of the study is the role of destination reputation as a partial mediator in the relationship between digital marketing and e-WOM and the intention to visit. These results indicate that digital visibility alone is not sufficient. Digital communication becomes more effective when it is able to build credibility and trust in the destination.

Theoretically, this study extends the application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory to the context of heritage tourism by positing destination reputation as an evaluative mechanism linking digital stimuli and tourists' behavioural responses. These findings also enrich the literature which has previously relied more heavily on destination image as a mediator by demonstrating that reputation can explain the accumulation of judgements regarding the quality and credibility of a destination more broadly.

In practical terms, the managers of Kampung Batik Kauman need to prioritise digital strategies focused on building reputation, rather than merely increasing social media reach and engagement. Such strategies require authentic content, consistent information, tourist experiences that match the promotional material, and active management of visitor reviews.

This study is limited to a single heritage tourism destination and employs a cross-sectional design; consequently, it does not capture changes in reputation and visitor interest over time. Future research could employ a longitudinal design, compare several heritage destinations, and incorporate variables such as trust, perceived authenticity and visitor engagement to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how visitor behaviour is shaped in the digital environment.

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