International Journal of Economics, Accounting, and Management
Vol. 3, No. 3, Oktober 2026
Page 177-186
E-ISSN: 3047-6798
P-ISSN: 3047-678X
Site : https://jurnal.intekom.id/index.php/ijeam

The Role of Destination Image in Mediating Immersive Experience and e-WOM on Tourists' Revisit Intention (Study on Domestic Tourists in Tanah Lot, Tabanan, Bali)

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Article Info

Article history:
Received August 25, 2025
Revised June 26, 2026
Accepted September 30, 2026

Keywords:
Destination Image,
Immersive Experience,
e-WOM,
Revisit Intention,
DTW Tanah Lot

ABSTRACT

This study examines whether destination image mediates the effects of immersive experience and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on tourists' revisit intention at Tanah Lot, Bali. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior, data were collected through online and offline questionnaires from 240 domestic tourists selected by purposive sampling and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Immersive experience and e-WOM positively affect both destination image and revisit intention; destination image also positively affects revisit intention (all reported $p < 0.001$). The indirect effects of immersive experience and e-WOM through destination image are 0.143 and 0.105, respectively, indicating partial mediation. The results underscore the value of distinctive visitor experiences and credible online recommendations in developing destination image and encouraging repeat visits.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourist revisit intention reflects the likelihood of returning to a destination after a previous visit. Recent evidence links tourist experiences and online recommendations to repeat-visit intentions [1]. Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) can influence how visitors evaluate a destination and decide whether to return [2]. Destination uniqueness is also associated with visitor experiences and revisiting [3]. However, the effects of e-WOM and destination image differ across settings; nonsignificant relationships have also been observed [4].

Immersive experience refers here to visitors' involvement, cultural interaction, novelty, refreshment, knowledge acquisition, and meaningful experiences at a destination. Evidence indicates that tourism experiences can influence revisit intention through destination evaluations [3]; related research in Bali underscores the importance of memorable tourism experiences [5]. Destination-image dimensions also

help explain revisit intention in cross-destination research [6], and memorable experiences have been linked to stronger repeat-visit intentions [7].

Electronic word of mouth comprises tourists' online reviews, recommendations, and experience-sharing. Empirical work links e-WOM with destination image and revisit intention [8], while studies on visitor facilities and destination image highlight their joint importance for online recommendations and repeat visits [9], [10]. Similar results have been reported for cultural destinations [11]. Contemporary digital promotion research finds that tourists rely on user-generated content in developing destination perceptions [12], and trust can interact with destination image in the e-WOM–intention relationship [13].

Tanah Lot, in Tabanan Regency, Bali, is a coastal cultural tourism destination. A recent Tanah Lot study identified destination image and e-WOM as relevant to tourists' revisit intention [14]. Nevertheless, research elsewhere has reported that destination image does not always mediate the e-WOM–revisit intention pathway [15]. Research on cultural-tourism experiences also points to differing mediation mechanisms [16], [17]. This provides a basis for assessing immersive experience, e-WOM, and destination image jointly among domestic tourists at Tanah Lot.

Provincial tourism statistics show domestic tourist visits to Bali recovering after the pandemic. Table 1 presents the 2020–2024 series used in the original manuscript; official statistical records are retained as data sources rather than replaced with unrelated DOI-bearing journal articles.

Table 1. Domestic tourist visits to Bali, 2020–2024

Month	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
January	879,702	282,248	527,447	720,164	774,529
February	721,105	240,608	389,690	629,282	726,744
March	567,452	305,579	547,726	665,751	612,742
April	175,120	330,593	500,740	900,880	1,124,781
May	101,948	363,959	960,692	943,713	852,253
June	137,395	498,852	753,907	883,793	898,335
July	229,112	166,718	784,205	898,260	926,975
August	355,732	202,187	659,567	712,860	853,713
September	283,349	298,950	622,068	755,293	856,370
October	337,304	468,826	718,066	813,745	828,647
November	425,097	513,482	657,949	749,268	724,560
December	382,841	629,590	930,917	1,204,902	941,137
Total	4,596,157	4,301,592	8,052,974	9,877,911	10,120,786

Source: Statistics Indonesia (BPS), Bali Province (2025); values transcribed from the source manuscript.

Table 2. Domestic tourist visits to major Bali attractions, 2018–2023

Attraction	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Balinese People's Struggle Monument	170,410	159,322	37,443	6,325	98,482	101,998
Swing Park	79,044	99,715	14,464	11,719	450,850	22,814
Uluwatu	559,479	478,874	142,615	144,646	450,850	526,558
Tirta Empul	135,826	138,077	46,132	42,062	116,263	118,345
Bali Zoo Park	221,509	202,246	27,238	24,783	60,890	31,552
Bali Safari and Marine Park	216,886	175,531	26,989	65,807	194,333	152,643
Penelokan Batur	100,777	160,719	34,763	21,850	359,143	355,712
Tanah Lot	1,490,855	1,289,606	376,578	271,020	880,382	1,200,976
Ulun Danu Beratan	492,639	475,216	124,766	56,860	138,809	323,076
Bedugul Botanical Gardens	563,190	676,967	337,211	-	357,516	450,505

Source: Bali Provincial Tourism Office (as reported in the source manuscript, accessed 2025).

Table 3. Domestic tourist visits to Tanah Lot

Year	Visitor category	Visitors
2018	Domestic tourists	1.490.855
2019	Domestic tourists	1.289.606
2020	Domestic tourists	376.578
2021	Domestic tourists	271.020
2022	Domestic tourists	880.382
2023	Domestic tourists	1.200.976

Source: Bali Provincial Tourism Office (accessed 2025); last year checked against the original chronological series.

The annual series indicates recovery from 271,020 domestic visitors in 2021 to 880,382 in 2022 and 1,200,976 in 2023. Although aggregate visitation grew, whether individuals will return depends on experiences, information exchanged online, and perceived destination image.

Table 4. Pre-survey of domestic visitors to Tanah Lot (n = 30)

No.	Statement	Yes	No
1	Have previously visited Tanah Lot	30 (100%)	0 (0%)
2	Intend to revisit Tanah Lot	26 (86.7%)	4 (13.3%)
3	Would return because of the immersive experience	24 (80.0%)	6 (20.0%)

No.	Statement	Yes	No
4	Would return because of online recommendations	21 (70.0%)	9 (30.0%)

Source: Researcher's pre-survey (2025); percentages standardized to one decimal place.

The pre-survey indicated that four of the 30 respondents did not intend to revisit and that online recommendations did not influence all participants. Accordingly, this study evaluates five direct relationships and two indirect effects, with destination image specified as a mediator.

2. METHOD

This associative explanatory study surveyed domestic tourists who had visited Tanah Lot and were familiar with its social media. Using purposive, non-probability sampling, 240 respondents were recruited. The eligibility criteria included a prior visit and completion of at least senior high school or equivalent education, as stated in the source questionnaire. Data were gathered online and offline using a structured, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire.

Table 5. Study constructs and questionnaire dimensions

Construct	Indicator dimensions	Items
Revisit intention (Y)	Return intention, priority, perceived value, facilities, service, recommendation	6
Immersive experience (X1)	Refreshment, novelty, cultural interaction, knowledge, meaning, involvement	6
e-WOM (X2)	Positive reviews, recommendation, information frequency, review creation, variety, prior visitors, confidence	7
Destination image (M)	Affective image, cognitive image, uniqueness, scenery, climate	5

Source: Study instrument as described in the original manuscript; related constructs are discussed in [2], [4], [8], and [17].

The sample-size choice follows the original instrument-based rationale (24 indicators and 240 responses); it should not be interpreted as evidence of probability sampling. SEM-PLS with SmartPLS 3.0 was used to examine outer loadings, HTMT, average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, R^2, direct effects, and bootstrapped indirect effects. Recent methodological discussions support reporting the measurement and structural models separately [18], [19].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tanah Lot combines coastal scenery, a temple complex, and cultural heritage. The survey included 240 domestic visitors, predominantly women (61.25%), private-sector employees (46.25%), and respondents aged 28–37 years (61.25%). These percentages describe the sample and should not be generalized to all Tanah Lot visitors.

Table 6. Respondent characteristics (n = 240)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Men	93	38.75
	Women	147	61.25
Occupation	Students	57	23.75
	Self-employed	45	18.75
	Private employees	111	46.25
	Civil servants/military/police	27	11.25
Age	18–27	44	18.33
	28–37	147	61.25
	38–47	31	12.92
	Over 47	18	7.50

Source: Processed primary data (2025).

Descriptive scores were evaluated using the original five-point classification: 1.00–1.79 (very low), 1.80–2.59 (low), 2.60–3.39 (moderate), 3.40–4.19 (high), and 4.20–5.00 (very high). Tables 7–10 retain item-level frequency distributions and reported means in a compact format. The response counts are displayed as Likert-category sequences (1/2/3/4/5).

Table 7. Revisit-intention item responses

No.	Indicator	Frequency (1/2/3/4/5)	Mean
1	Intention to revisit	0/2/10/110/118	4.4333
2	Priority destination during travel to Bali	0/0/12/106/122	4.4583
3	High rating of the visit	0/0/21/107/102	4.3375
4	Facilities match preferences	0/0/19/107/114	4.3958
5	Satisfied with service during the visit	0/2/15/124/99	4.3333
6	Willingness to recommend	0/6/13/108/113	4.3667
	Overall reported mean		4.3875

Source: Processed primary data (2025).

Note: Source item 3 frequencies sum to 230 rather than 240; confirmation against the raw dataset is needed.

Table 8. Immersive-experience item responses

No.	Indicator	Frequency (1/2/3/4/5)	Mean
1	The visit raised my spirits	0/3/34/105/98	4.2417
2	Different experience from other destinations	0/3/15/99/123	4.4250
3	Experience of local culture	0/2/15/89/134	4.4792
4	Gained new knowledge	0/3/43/96/98	4.2042
5	Meaningful visit experience	0/3/18/107/112	4.3667
6	Physical and emotional involvement	0/15/42/88/95	4.0958
	Overall reported mean		4.3021

Table 9. e-WOM item responses

No.	Indicator	Frequency (1/2/3/4/5)	Mean
1	Read positive online reviews	0/5/36/98/101	4.2292

No.	Indicator	Frequency (1/2/3/4/5)	Mean
2	Recommend Tanah Lot after visiting	0/25/33/86/96	4.0542
3	Access online information about Tanah Lot	0/5/48/94/93	4.1458
4	Write online reviews about Tanah Lot	0/3/27/105/105	4.3000
5	Perceived usefulness of online information	0/1/29/92/118	4.3625
6	Read reviews posted by previous tourists	0/0/12/120/108	4.4000
7	Confidence after positive online reviews	0/2/16/117/105	4.3542
	Calculated item mean		4.2637*

Source: Processed primary data (2025).

**Recalculated from the seven item means; the original manuscript reported 4.4066, which is inconsistent with its item scores.*

Table 10. Destination-image item responses

No.	Indicator	Frequency (1/2/3/4/5)	Mean
1	Beautiful scenery encourages revisiting	0/2/9/91/138	4.5208
2	Pleasant natural environment	0/1/18/82/139	4.4958
3	Distinctive destination features	0/5/40/95/100	4.2083
4	Scenic attractiveness	0/2/27/104/107	4.3167
5	Pleasant local climate	0/2/27/112/99	4.2833
	Overall reported mean		4.365

Source: Processed primary data (2025).

Revisit intention and immersive experience were rated highly, with the original composite means of 4.3875 and 4.3021, respectively. For e-WOM, the mean of the seven displayed item scores equals 4.2637, rather than the original overall mean of 4.4066; this editorial arithmetic correction does not alter any questionnaire response. Destination image averaged 4.3650, reflecting favorable views of scenery and the natural environment. The original raw frequency counts for the third revisit-intention indicator require confirmation.

3.1 Measurement model

Table 11. Outer loadings of the measurement model

Indicator	Loading	p-value	Decision
M1.1	0.759	0.000	Valid
M1.2	0.812	0.000	Valid
M1.3	0.750	0.000	Valid
M1.4	0.804	0.000	Valid
M1.5	0.748	0.000	Valid
X1.1	0.775	0.000	Valid
X1.2	0.752	0.000	Valid
X1.3	0.759	0.000	Valid
X1.4	0.763	0.000	Valid
X1.5	0.850	0.000	Valid

Indicator	Loading	p-value	Decision
X1.6	0.750	0.000	Valid
X2.1	0.827	0.000	Valid
X2.2	0.787	0.000	Valid
X2.3	0.861	0.000	Valid
X2.4	0.774	0.000	Valid
X2.5	0.745	0.000	Valid
X2.6	0.820	0.000	Valid
X2.7	0.735	0.000	Valid
Y1.1	0.792	0.000	Valid
Y1.2	0.749	0.000	Valid
Y1.3	0.782	0.000	Valid
Y1.4	0.773	0.000	Valid
Y1.5	0.825	0.000	Valid
Y1.6	0.801	0.000	Valid

Source: SEM-PLS analysis from the source manuscript (2025); p = 0.000 in software output means p < 0.001.

Table 12. Heterotrait–monotrait ratios (HTMT)

Construct pair	HTMT
E-WOM – Destination Image	0.726
Immersive Experience – Destination Image	0.790
Immersive Experience – E-WOM	0.740
Revisit Intention – Destination Image	0.823
Revisit Intention – E-WOM	0.779
Revisit Intention – Immersive Experience	0.803

Source: SEM-PLS output supplied in the source manuscript.

Table 13. Convergent validity and internal consistency

Construct	AVE	Cronbach's α	rho_A (source)
Destination Image	0.601	0.833	0.834
E-WOM	0.630	0.902	0.905
Immersive Experience	0.601	0.867	0.870
Revisit Intention	0.620	0.877	0.878

Source: SEM-PLS output from source manuscript (2025). Original source labels rho_A as composite reliability; rho_A is reported here according to that label and composite reliability (rho_C) was not provided.

All reported outer loadings exceed 0.70, all AVE values exceed 0.50, and all displayed internal-consistency coefficients exceed 0.70. HTMT ratios range from 0.726 to 0.823, below the commonly applied threshold of 0.85, supporting discriminant validity. The original manuscript incorrectly interpreted HTMT values above 0.70 as the required criterion; the interpretation has been corrected. A separate composite reliability (rho_C) column should be added only if the original SmartPLS output confirms it.

3.2 Structural model and direct effects

Table 14. Explained variance (R^2) of endogenous constructs

Endogenous construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Destination Image	0.520	0.516
Revisit Intention	0.639	0.634

Source: SEM-PLS output from source manuscript (2025).

The predictors account for 52.0% of the variance in destination image ($R^2 = 0.520$) and 63.9% of the variance in revisit intention ($R^2 = 0.639$). A previously reported expression, $1 - (1 - R^2_1)(1 - R^2_2) = 0.8267$, should not be equated with cross-validated Q^2 predictive relevance; it is therefore omitted as a predictive-performance claim.

Table 15. Direct hypothesis tests

Hypothesis	Path	β	t	p
H1	Immersive experience → Revisit intention	0.296	3.673	<0.001
H2	e-WOM → Revisit intention	0.300	6.470	<0.001
H3	Immersive experience → Destination image	0.456	4.951	<0.001
H4	e-WOM → Destination image	0.333	5.056	<0.001
H5	Destination image → Revisit intention	0.314	3.794	<0.001

Source: Original SmartPLS output (reported as p = 0.000). All five direct hypotheses are supported at α = 0.05.

Immersive experience is positively associated with both destination image (β = 0.456) and revisit intention (β = 0.296). These results are consistent with the view that involving tourists in meaningful experiences shapes destination perceptions [4], [6] and repeat-visit intentions [7], [17]. e-WOM also shows positive direct associations with image (β = 0.333) and revisit intention (β = 0.300), consistent with studies of destination communication [8]–[14]. The image–revisit intention path is positive (β = 0.314), highlighting a distinct role for cognitive and affective assessments of Tanah Lot [2], [16].

3.3 Mediation analysis

Table 16. Indirect and total effects through destination image

Path via destination image	Indirect β	Direct β	Total β	VAF	Interpretation
Immersive experience → Image → Revisit intention	0.143	0.296	0.439	32.57%	Partial mediation
e-WOM → Image → Revisit intention	0.105	0.300	0.405	25.93%	Partial mediation

Source: Original mediation table; indirect paths were reported at $p < 0.001$. VAF = indirect effect / total effect.

Destination image partially mediates immersive experience (indirect effect = 0.143; VAF = 32.57%) and e-WOM (indirect effect = 0.105; VAF = 25.93%) in their associations with revisit intention. The retained direct effects indicate that destination image does not fully account for these relationships. Because a recent destination study reported a nonsignificant image-mediated e-WOM pathway [15], contextual differences may be important. Practically, Tanah Lot management should enhance authentic cultural interpretation, visitor engagement, and the accessibility of trustworthy tourist reviews rather than treating digital communication as a substitute for destination quality.

This study is limited by non-probability sampling, a single-destination setting, and cross-sectional self-reported intentions rather than observed revisits. Future research should triangulate reported experiences with repeat-visit behavior and incorporate seasonal effects, accessibility, and perceived trust.

4. CONCLUSION

All five direct hypotheses are supported: immersive experience, e-WOM, and destination image show positive relationships with revisit intention; immersive experience and e-WOM also positively relate to destination image. Destination image partially mediates both immersive experience (βindirect = 0.143) and e-WOM (βindirect = 0.105), as indicated by VAF values of 32.57% and 25.93%. These results suggest that memorable cultural experiences and credible digital recommendations can reinforce Tanah Lot's image and tourists' intention to return. As the study uses purposive sampling and cross-sectional responses from 240 domestic tourists, the relationships should not be interpreted as conclusive causal effects or generalized to all destinations.

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