

## **Antecedents of Electronic Word-of-Mouth Intention for Heritage Tourism Destinations in Kuala Lumpur**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Research on behavioural intentions in heritage tourism is relatively new, requiring more focus to deepen understanding. This study examines key factors influencing the tourists' electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) intentions in heritage tourism. Using a cross-sectional design, 203 surveys were gathered from local tourists who visited heritage sites in Kuala Lumpur, including Dataran Merdeka, the National Monument, and the Sultan Abdul Samad Building. The Structural Equation Modelling through the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) technique reveals that visitor engagement, destination image, destination authenticity, and visitor trust are significant antecedents driving the tourists' eWOM intentions in heritage tourism. These findings provide valuable insights for marketers and heritage destination managers, emphasising essential factors for encouraging the eWOM activities. Such online sharing is crucial as it influences potential tourists' visit intentions, supporting the destination's growth, and sustainability. This study contributes in advancing the heritage tourism strategies by identifying critical elements that can enhance visitor experiences and encourage positive, influential eWOM behaviour among tourists.

*Keywords:* Authenticity, destination image, eWOM, heritage tourism, tourist intentions

### **INTRODUCTION**

The emergence of social media and digital platforms has also given rise to electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM). Generally, the eWOM is associated with the tourists' experience-sharing activities, whether positive or negative, with others via online platforms. It widely refers to interpersonal and non-commercial communication between consumers or internet users

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regarding their experiences with a service, brand, destination, or organisation (Mohamad et al., 2022).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Nowadays, the eWOM is recognised as a significant component of the tourists’ behavioural intentions. However, research on the behaviour of heritage tourists remains inadequate and requires clearer attention for better understanding. The literature shows that predictors for the tourists intention to perform the eWOM, particularly for heritage tourism, have received little attention from previous scholars (Khan et al., 2024). Previous study on heritage products mainly focussed on sustainability, including strategies and practices to protect heritage destinations from social, economic, and environmental perspectives (Pandey & Sahu, 2020). However, little attention has been given to the eWOM as a primary outcome of behavioural intention (Pandey & Sahu, 2020). Thus, the aim of this study is to identify the influence of visitor engagement, destination authenticity, destination image, and visitor trust on the eWOM intentions among local tourists.

These antecedents are significant as they reflect the tourists’ emotions, cognitive engagement, and involvement with heritage sites. Primarily, they contribute to positive perceptions and experiences, encouraging the visitors to share their experiences and thoughts on various digital platforms, ultimately recommending and promoting the heritage destinations (Aditya & Piartrini, 2023; Chu et al., 2023; Seyfi et al., 2024).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study highlight two main research questions:

- RQ1: What are the antecedents of the tourists’ eWOM intention towards heritage tourism destinations in Kuala Lumpur?
- RQ2: What is the most significant antecedent of the tourists’ eWOM intention towards heritage tourism destinations in Kuala Lumpur?

Table 1 demonstrates the results of the reliability test conducted among 203 respondents.

The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique was implemented to conduct an inferential statistical analysis. The research hypotheses were tested by following the assessment procedures for both models known as the reflective and structural. The evaluation towards the reflective measurement model revealed that all constructs were well above the limits including the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ),

Table 1  
*Reliability test analysis*

Variable	Alpha	Decision
Destination Authenticity	0.901	Reliable
Destination Image	0.899	Reliable
eWOM Intention	0.883	Reliable
Visitor Trust	0.891	Reliable
Visitor Engagement	0.936	Reliable

Source: Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021)

composite reliability (CR), factor loading ( $\lambda$ ) and AVE values for. Analysis on cross-loading value indicated that the discriminant validity was achieved since all indicators were loaded in its own construct (Hair et al., 2014).

An analysis also indicated that all the antecedents exhibited no collinearity issues, as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value for each antecedents was below five. Additionally, an analysis of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) revealed that the constructs of visitor engagement, destination authenticity, destination image, and visitor trust can jointly explain 63.5% ( $R^2 = 0.635$ ) of the variance on the eWOM intention. These results indicate that all the antecedents have moderate to strong  $R^2$  values in relation to the construct of the eWOM intention.

The path analysis revealed that all antecedents influence the endogenous construct significantly. Figure 1 illustrates the structural model, which displays the influence of visitor engagement, destination authenticity destination image, and visitor trust on the endogenous construct of the eWOM intention in heritage tourism.

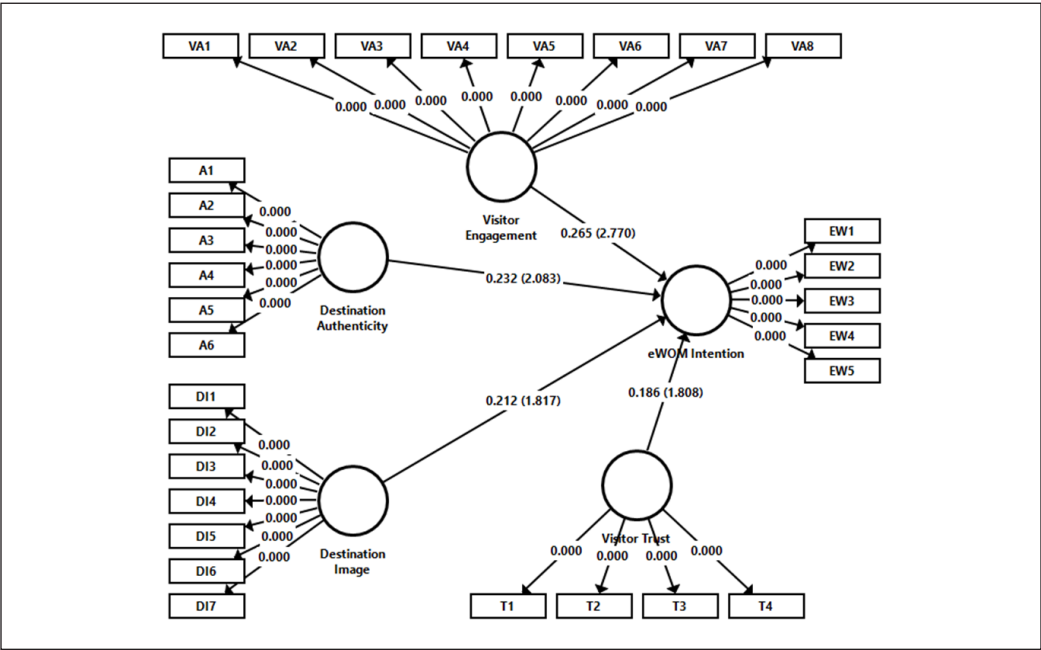


Figure 1. Structural model (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research findings highlight the importance of digital media in heritage tourism destination marketing. As tourists increasingly rely on social media to gather and share information about destinations, the heritage tourism marketers are encouraged to deepen their understanding of social media’s nature and its potential to influence the

tourists' behaviours. It is essential for marketers to carefully manage their social media strategies to ensure they provide accurate, engaging, and culturally sensitive content that aligns with the values and uniqueness of the heritage sites they promote.

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