



Does tourism experience matter in cultural tourism destinations? Predicting future tourist behavior

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Article History

Received : 2024-01-27

Revised : 2024-02-27

Accepted : 2024-03-03

Published : 2024-03-05

Keywords:

Cultural tourism; tourist experience; learn local culture; e-WoM; destination image.

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DOI:

10.20885/AMBR.vol4.iss1.art8

Abstract

Cultural tourism, as a niche market in the service-intensive tourism industry, has distinctive characteristics, experiences, and different individual consequences. The primary objective of this study is to explore the underlying substantial dimension of cultural tourism experiences in predicting tourists' behaviors to stimulate electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM) and shaping the cultural destination image. A quantitative approach was conducted with PLS-SEM to analyze data for tourists visiting the culture tourism village at Gorontalo, in Indonesia. The bootstrapping procedure is used to test the mediation effect, with direct and indirect effects analyzed. The results indicate that among the various components of the cultural tourism experience, relaxation and learning about the local culture are particularly significant in generating tourist e-wom behavior. The study also acknowledges the crucial role of e-WoM in cultural tourism as a mediator among relaxation, learn local culture, and destination image. Ultimately, these findings emphasize the importance of cultural tourism in showcasing experiences that provide relaxation and new knowledge originating from destinations. This research contributes to an enhanced understanding of the diverse impact of the cultural tourism experience dimension and its consequences for tourist behavior.

Introduction

The tourism industry in Indonesia has emerged as an excellent sector for driving national development. Nowadays, the economic and marketing orientations switch from product-dominant logic to service-dominant logic, or also known as the industrial toward the service economy (Prebensen et al., 2018). Also, according to the Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) in 2021, Indonesia's ranking has increased from 44th to 32th in the world, and it is leading in Southeast Asia on the cultural resources pillar (World Economic Forum, 2022). This becomes an opportunity for the tourism industry in Indonesia. On the other hand, typical tourist destinations become complex because it not only emphasize destination attributes but also facilitate the consumer experience while visiting a destination (Masiero & Qiu, 2018). There are various customer experience characteristics emerge from brief interactions at the destination, necessitating the need for tourism service providers to anticipate them.

The perceived value of an experience is important in the tourism sector and affects the potential of future tourist behavior (Wong et al., 2019a; Zhang et al., 2022). Experiences in tourism that are intangible and memorable have great value because they are more attached to the individual (Kim & Kim, 2019). Some research on tourism experiences focuses more on tourism memories in general, while the number of studies on cultural tourism is still limited (Seyfi et al., 2020; Zare, 2019). Most of the empirical evidences on tourism experience are carried out in contexts such as sport and wellness tourism (Sharma & Nayak, 2018), nature-based tourism (Hapsari, 2018; Hasan & Neela, 2022), culinary and gastronomy (Kodaş & Özel, 2022), city and rural tourism (Kastenholz et al., 2018). A bibliometric study conducted by Strandberg et al. (2018) also indicates that cultural

topics have represented a mere 2.7% of research in the field of tourism in the past decade. This illustrates that cultural tourism research is still lacking attention among researchers and leave a slight void in the literature.

The core business of tourism which service-intensive is offering experiences. Cultural tourism experiences, as a niche market, have their own distinguishing characteristics in the tourism industry. Consequently, there is no common experience but instead varying experiences for different types of tourist (Masiero & Qiu, 2018). Essentially, memorable tourism experiences should be distinct from other types of destinations, with more typical experiences produced if a tourist visited a cultural tourism site (Wong et al., 2019a). Although cultural tourism has been acknowledged as an important component of tourism destinations, the significant factors that shape the overall cultural tourism experience remain largely unexplored (Seyfi et al., 2020). Also, various research discusses general tourist experiences, but there is still a scarce empirical study regarding the elements of culture in exploring tourism experiences (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Zare, 2019). This does not sufficiently address the cultural tourist's experiences as a distinctive market segment. However, the constructs of the cultural tourism experience are complex and specific. Therefore, it is critical to identify the relevant factors of experiences that occur in cultural tourism studies.

Although tourism experience serves as a strong predictor of future tourist behavior, certain research shows a weak causal relationship between cultural tourism experience and its varied influence on future tourist behavior (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Wong et al., 2019b). Furthermore, there have been numerous empirical investigations that have examined the influence of tourism experiences on diverse outcome variables. For instance, satisfaction (Kastenholz et al., 2018; Kim & Kim, 2019; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022), revisit intention (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). However, several past studies have found more favorable results and demonstrated that the destination image directly influences satisfaction (Hapsari, 2018; Sharma & Nayak, 2019). Satisfaction and revisit intention occurs when someone has acquired information. The accumulation of information obtained by tourists can shape the destination image. This suggests the significance of a tourist destination's image in the assessment of a tourist destination by travelers. Personal emotions, feelings, and impressions of the traveler have an impact on and shape the destination's image (Sharma & Nayak, 2018). Therefore, this study focuses more explicitly on how cultural tourism experiences affect destinations' reputations.

The tourism industry places great significance on destination image, as it is closely linked to tourists' desire to visit. The popularity and recognition of a destination are greatly influenced by the accessibility of information obtained by tourists. The increasing use of the internet and online media has made it increasingly convenient for travelers to obtain information virtually. Given the evolving consumer behavior driven by the growing usage of smartphones and the internet, electronic word of mouth (e-WoM) is expected to exert a substantial impact on the tourism and hospitality sectors (Bu et al., 2020; Bui, 2022). Tourism as an intangible product can only be assessed after consuming the experience, so a positive tourism experience strongly influences customers' future decisions and behavior, often serving as the most trusted source for e-WoM (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). This makes studies into the relationship between tourism experiences and e-WoM interesting to be further explored.

The significance of cultural tourism experience in determining future behavior, such as e-WoM and destination image, holds a critical within tourism studies. However, not abundant studies have been conducted to investigate the relationships among these constructs. To date, the exploration of interrelationships between these constructs within a comprehensive model of cultural tourism remains scarce in the field of tourism studies. The relationships among these conceptualized constructs are complex and not yet well established in the cultural tourism setting. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to explore the underlying substantial dimension of cultural tourism experiences in predicting future tourists' behaviors to stimulate e-WoM and shaping the image of cultural destinations. The current study contributes to expanding the body of knowledge on tourism experiences by enriching the analysis of cultural tourism and its consequences for tourist behavior.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Cultural Tourism Experience

The concept of tourism experience refers to personal subjective responses related to tourism activities. Experience reflects value-in-use in the context of customer value and service-dominant logic, which involves the interaction between a destination provider and consumer (Prebensen et al., 2018; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In the services-intensive tourism and hospitality sectors, there has been a shift towards an emphasis on experienced utility as a root experience economy (Chang, 2018). Some researchers use terms as diverse as memorable tourism experience (MTEs) (Hosseini & Cortes-Macías, 2022; Sharma & Nayak, 2019), bleisure experience (Chung et al., 2020), religious tourism experience (Kim & Kim, 2019), and tourism experiencescapes (Chen et al., 2020). This study, on the grounds that it focuses on the context of cultural tourism, it uses cultural tourism experiences.

Customer experience transcends individual encounters, being shaped by a series of interactions within a destination, often co-created through collaborative interplay among multiple parties, thereby rendering customer experience management a complex challenge (Kim & So, 2022). In discussing the concept of tourism experience, many scholars refer to the memorable tourism experience (MTE) framework, which exposes the dimensions of hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge (see Hosseini et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). However, these concepts focus more on traveling experiences in general and do not specifically address the typology of cultural tourism (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Seyfi et al., 2020; Sthapit et al., 2019). Accordingly, Saleem and Umar (2023) suggest aspects of memorable cultural tourism experiences, namely authenticity, engagement, culinary attraction, atmospherics, and quality of service. Meanwhile, Seyfi et al. (2020) developed six elements, namely, prior experience, engagement, authenticity, culinary charm, cultural exchange, and service quality. Sthapit et al. (2019) also extended MTEs to accommodate local culture dimensions called novelty seeking, experience co-creation, servicescape, experience intensification, and choice overload. Given the similarities in the various dimensions proposed by scholars, as well as their availability and suitability for the research location, this study employs dimensions from Kay (2009) which introduces dimensions such as novelty, relaxation, social consumption, and understanding local culture.

Tourism experience that involves emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual tourists. The emphasis on the tourism experience is on the personal aspect, so it is closely intertwined with tourist engagement. In the realm of cultural tourism, visitors can encounter a range of experiences emanating from the destination including those rooted in history, arts, tradition, and the cultural heritage associated (Chen & Rahman, 2018). These issues manifested in dimensions such as novelty (authenticity, new culture, attractive scenery), relaxation (the feeling of liberating, refreshing, exciting, pleasant), social consumption (combines consuming refreshments, culinary, souvenirs, and social prestige), learn local culture (information, knowledge, experience the local culture).

Destination Image

Destination image is described as a concept that involves elements of cognitive, affective, and conative. The concept of the destination image is seen as a bunch of an individual's perception, beliefs, or knowledge of tourists, which involves psychological and functional aspects of a destination's attributes (Kim, 2018). Destination attractiveness is related to various attributes and impressions encompassing the natural environment, human elements, and the presence of infrastructures and facilities at tourist sites. This is particularly crucial since it highlights the destination's distinctive impression when consumers are choosing a certain destination, making the destination image a substantial theme in tourism studies to assess consumer decisions and future behavior (Santana & Gosling, 2018; Suhartanto et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2023b).

Destination image is considered as an overall evaluation of travelers' post-visit impression of tourist sites. The on-site destination experience is the main determinant in establishment of an impression for tourists on the destination (Sharma & Nayak, 2019). Novelty is considered the

manifest of the tourist experience that visitors are looking for in a destination when compared to previous experiences (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). In traveling, tourists gain refreshment and relaxation so that embedded in their bodies and minds. When the experience elicited accords with the advantages enjoyed by visitors, it has a positive effect on their perception of the destination. Furthermore, Hsu and Scott (2020) discovered that food consumption in a travel destination is a necessary pleasurable experience that influences the visitor's image. Tourism has also become an attempt to demonstrate tourists' social status. In cultural tourism, the individual gains knowledge and learns about the art and history of a destination, thereby establishing the destination's reputation. This is consistent with Shi et al. (2019) claim that sharing tourist information, interactions, or activities increases tourists' knowledge and provides a comprehensive understanding of the local culture or destination. Previous studies also revealed a substantial impact of the tourism experience on a destination's image (Sharma & Nayak, 2019; Shi et al., 2019).

Consequently, based on previous studies and tourism literature, the causal relationship among cultural tourism experiences, particularly novelty, relaxation, consumption, and local culture knowledge, with destination image during on-site tourism has been established. Thus, the proposed hypothesis is:

- H_{1a}: Novelty has a significant influence on destination image.
- H_{2a}: Relaxation has a significant influence on destination image.
- H_{3a}: Social consumption has a significant influence on destination image.
- H_{4a}: Learn local culture has a significant influence on destination image.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WoM)

The rapid progression of internet technology has resulted in a growing trend among tourists to utilize the internet to acquire information regarding tourism destinations, subsequently to the emergence of e-WoM as a noteworthy concern. E-WoM described as informal transmission regarding the use of certain goods and services among consumers using internet-based technology (Litvin et al., 2018; Pandey & Sahu, 2020). E-WoM is regarded as a primary construct in tourism because it allows visitors to share their experiences, feelings, and related ideas and serves as a significant information source influencing travel intention and destination choice.

Many tourists told them stories about their experiences at the destination on social media to assist other travelers in planning for the trip. An enjoyable and rich tourism experience strongly influences customers' future decisions and behavior, often serving as the most trusted source for e-WoM messaging (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Tourists are inspired to generate extra value following their visit by the perceived value of tourism experiences, such as learning and escapism, leading them to share these experiences on social media (Antón et al., 2018). According to earlier studies, it has also been shown that the tourism experience positively affects electronic word-of-mouth behavior (Kim, 2018; Wong et al., 2019b). When tourists obtain uniqueness, relaxation, good consumption, and local culture in a cultural destination, they immediately share their positive experiences with others on social media.

Based on above description, the following hypothesis is formulated:

- H_{1b}: Novelty has a significant influence on electronic word-of-mouth.
- H_{2b}: Relaxation has a significant influence on electronic word-of-mouth.
- H_{3b}: Local consumption has a significant influence on electronic word-of-mouth.
- H_{4b}: Learn local culture has a significant influence on electronic word-of-mouth.

e-WoM and Destination Image

Social media has emerged as the most powerful marketing tool for the travel and tourism sectors because it can assist travelers in researching destinations and making informed decisions about their trips (Wang et al., 2023a). Quality and reliable social media information sources, such as e-WoM, are critical for tourists in evaluating the process of destination image formation (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). E-WoM are a representation of the experiences and opinions of the travelers regarding the destination during their visit (Wang et al., 2023a). Additionally, Gholamhosseinzadeh et al. (2023) suggest that digital information from online media act as a trigger

in generating the destination image. Tourists who obtain information about destinations via social media will be more comprehensive in assessing the destination image. Some studies have revealed the significant influence of electronic word-of-mouth on destination images (Bui, 2022; Soliman, 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis were developed:

H₅ : E-WoM has a significant influence on destination image.

Mediating Effect of e-WoM

Some tourism literature reveals that destination image is formed by individual (e.g., experience) and information source aspects (e.g., e-WoM) (Chu et al., 2022; Santana & Gosling, 2018; Wang et al., 2023b). When tourists have a memorable experience at a destination, they tend to intensify their personal involvement and have a strong desire for interaction on social media, thus contributing to shaping the destination's image (Antón et al., 2018; Hasan & Neela, 2022). E-WoM, which is amplified on social media, is seen as an autonomous, trusted, and voluntary source of information that influences the image of the destination (Lin & Rasoolimanesh, 2022; Nechoud et al., 2021). The researchers revealed that the formation of a destination image through an experience-driven process is determined by post-trip personal and destination perceptions (Wang et al., 2023a; Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020). In post-trip situations, destination experiences dealing with personal involvement become a source of organic information for visitors in assessing their impressions of a destination (Santana & Gosling, 2018; Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020). This indicates that e-WoM is a bridge between the post-trip personal and destination-based processes in the relationship of variables to explain destination image.

H₆ : E-WoM mediates the relationship between cultural tourism experiences (novelty, relaxation, social consumption, and learn local culture) and destination image.

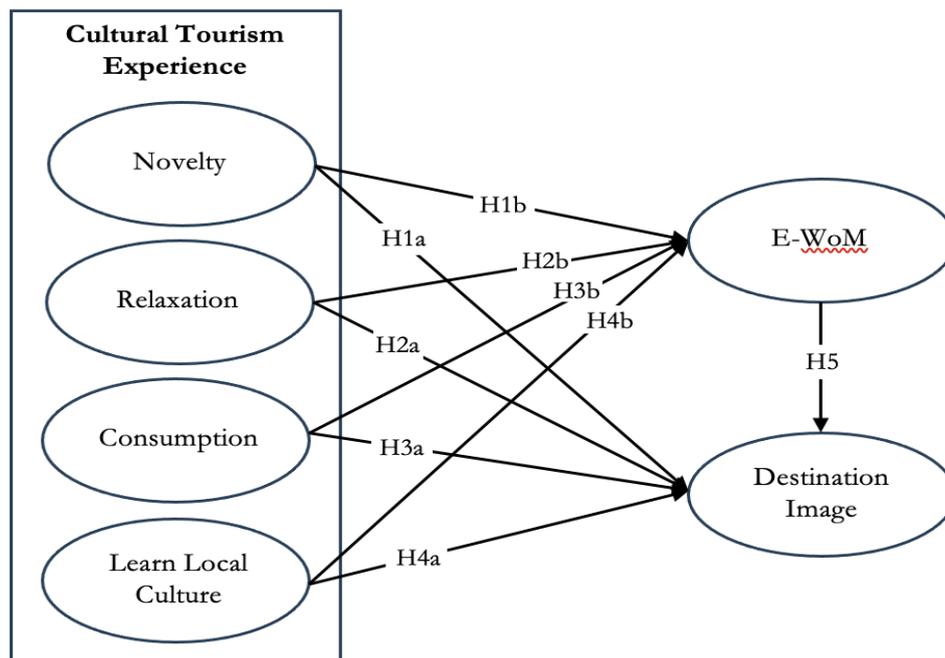


Figure 1. Research Framework

Research Methods

This study used a quantitative approach, which is an explanatory type of research that tests all hypotheses. The object of study is the cultural tourism village of Bubohu, Gorontalo. This site is known as a tourism destination with the concept of religious culture, which is famous in Gorontalo. There are several cultural events and activities such as the 'Walimah/Maulid' celebration, wooden fossils, Wombohe (traditional houses), and royal history. The sampling technique combines purposive and snowball sampling to increase the response rate because the sampling frame is

unavailable. The main criteria for determining the sample are tourists who have visited the Bubohu cultural tourist destination in the last two years. Data collection was assisted by several enumerators who had been briefed to understand the questionnaire for data distribution. In the end, data from 134 respondents who were willing to fill out the questionnaire was collected.

All research instruments were adapted from the measurement scale in previous studies. The measurement scales using from Kay (2009) for cultural tourism experience were categorized with four dimensions (novelty, relaxation, local consumption, knowledge of local culture). While the destination image is derived from Prayag and Ryan (2012). Then, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM) was measured using items was adapted by Bu et al. (2020). All items of measurement are adjusted in the cultural tourism destination using a 5-point Likert scale, with a range representing (1) strongly disagree up to (5) strongly agree.

The hypotheses were investigated and tested using PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling), a suitable approach for assessing the complexity of the proposed models with a relatively small sample. Testing the feasibility of the study with a systematic procedure following, first, the reliability and validity of the constructs were assessed by evaluating the composite reliability value higher than 0.7, the recommended threshold > 0.5 for average variance extracted (AVE), and the factor loading indicator (Hair et al., 2014a; Hair et al., 2012). Also, assess all values of the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) inference criterion to determine discriminant validity. Second, evaluating the structural model with path coefficient and R Square (coefficient of determination). Then, an analyze of the mediation type with check estimates of the variance accounted for (VAF) was conducted to examine the significant indirect and direct effects.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile

All respondents are people who have visited Bubohu, a religious tourism village. Among all respondents, the number of females was higher than that of males by 66.4% and 33.6%, respectively. A large number of respondents are below 35 years old (young people), as many as 92%. The majority of respondents had a monthly economic income of IDR 2,000,000 or less. Furthermore, the educational background of respondents was dominated by senior high school and undergraduate, implying that the majority of them were on duty as students.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents (n = 134)

Demographics	Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	45	33.6
	Female	89	66.4
Age (years old)	Less than 21	26	19.4
	21 - 25	66	49.3
	26 - 35	31	23.1
	36 - 45	9	6.7
	46 and above	2	1.5
Monthly Income	Less than IDR 1,999,000	89	66.4
	IDR 2,000,000 – IDR 3,999,000	28	20.9
	IDR 4,000,000 and above	17	12.7
Education Background	Senior High School	69	51.5
	Undergraduate	60	44.8
	Graduate	5	3.7
Occupation	Student	68	50.7
	Public Employee	18	13.4
	Private Employee	22	16.4
	Entrepreneur	14	10.5
	Housewife	4	3
	Other	8	6

Measurement Models

The quality of all measurements in PLS was assessed through reliability, discriminant, and convergent validity. Based on the results, nearly all factor loadings exceeded 0.7 (with the exception of CE1.3 = 0.691), which is still acceptable because it is close to recommendations. Additionally, value of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were higher than the threshold (> 0.7), so the results indicate adequate internal consistency. The assessment of average variance extracted (AVE) exceeds the criterion of 0.5 for all constructs, so it is concluded to have good convergent validity. Furthermore, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) inference criteria were selected as suggested by Henseler et al. (2015) to assess discriminant validity. In addition, the HTMT ratio of correlation of all pairs were less than (< 1) the threshold and within the confidence interval range. Thus, the results represent good discriminant validity, so that each construct is statistically distinctive from the others. Overall, the results (Table 2 and 3) provide evidence of the adequate validity and reliability of all measurements.

Table 2. Analysis of the Measurement Model

Variables Measurement		Factor Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
<i>Novelty</i>					
CE1.1	Have a change from my everyday activity	0.790			
CE1.2	Forget the demands of everyday routine	0.811			
CE1.3	Satisfy my curiosity	0.691	0.635	0.897	0.857
CE1.4	Do something I want to do	0.854			
CE1.5	Have a high quality experience	0.830			
<i>Relaxation</i>					
CE2.1	Relax physically	0.868			
CE2.2	Relax mentally	0.956	0.836	0.939	0.901
CE2.3	Entertained by others	0.917			
<i>Social Consumption</i>					
CE3.1	My ability to travel	0.779			
CE3.2	Somewhere safe	0.800			
CE3.3	Goods and souvenirs	0.865	0.638	0.913	0.886
CE3.4	Value for money	0.726			
CE3.5	Consume food and drinks at cultural destination	0.811			
CE3.6	Increase my social position	0.806			
<i>Learn Local Culture</i>					
CE4.1	To learn about local culture	0.884			
CE4.2	To learn about local history	0.918	0.787	0.937	0.910
CE4.3	To learn about local performing arts	0.892			
CE4.4	To enjoy something unique in the destination	0.854			
<i>Destination Image</i>					
DIm1	Having cultural and historical attractions	0.821			
DIm2	Offer a cultural diversity	0.875			
DIm3	Having variety and quality of accommodation	0.895			
DIm4	Provide general level of service	0.844	0.678	0.936	0.920
DIm5	Having accessibility of the destination	0.700			
DIm6	Have a good reputation of the destination	0.843			
DIm7	Exoticness of the landscape	0.773			
<i>E-WoM</i>					
Ew1	Encourage my friends or others to visit the religious tourism object of Bubohu Village on social media	0.899			
Ew2	Recommend this cultural destination on social media to others who seeks my advice	0.887			
Ew3	Recommend this destination culture tourism to others on social media actively	0.855	0.760	0.927	0.894
Ew4	I would say positive things about this tourism destination to other people	0.844			

Note: AVE (average variance extracted); CR (composite reliability)

Table 3. Evaluation of Discriminant Validity Result

Variables	Novelty	Relaxation	Consumption	Local Culture	E-WoM	Dest. Image
Novelty						
Relax	0.922 [0.858; 0.975]					
Consumption	0.913 [0.850; 0.970]	0.887 [0.825; 0.937]				
Learn Local Culture	0.805 [0.716; 0.875]	0.868 [0.796; 0.922]	0.875 [0.805; 0.926]			
E-WoM	0.707 [0.589; 0.811]	0.767 [0.662; 0.860]	0.695 [0.591; 0.783]	0.728 [0.628; 0.822]		
Dest. Image	0.746 [0.623; 0.859]	0.807 [0.699; 0.897]	0.781 [0.671; 0.875]	0.805 [0.697; 0.888]	0.889 [0.835; 0.938]	

Note: Result based on HTMT criterion; Marked in bold indicate ratio and values in brackets represent confidence interval (CI)

Hypothesis Testing

The assesment of structural model PLS-SEM show the explanatory power (R^2) for destination image and e-WoM are 0.752 and 0.519, respectively (see Table 4). These effects of magnitude in the structural model are categorized high and middle. Results of the hypotheses testing, summarized in Table 4, also indicate that the path coefficients for the dimensions of cultural tourism experience, novelty ($\beta = 0.011$; $p > 0.1$), relaxation ($\beta = 0.121$; $p > 0.1$), social consumption ($\beta = 0.135$; $p > 0.1$), and learn local culture ($\beta = 0.199$; $p < 0.05$) to destination image only support hypotheses H4a, while H1a, H2a, and H3a are rejected. Meanwhile, effect the dimensions of cultural tourism experience, novelty ($\beta = 0.143$; $p > 0.1$), relaxation ($\beta = 0.342$; $p < 0.05$), social consumption ($\beta = 0.026$; $p > 0.1$), and learn local culture ($\beta = 0.264$; $p < 0.05$) on electronic word-of-mouth supported hypotheses H2b and H4b whereas H1b, and H3b is rejected. In addition, electronic word-of-mouth had a significantly and positively influenced destination image ($\beta = 0.505$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that hypothesis H5 is supported.

Table 4. Result of the Hypothesized Model

Hypothesized Paths	R^2	Path	STDEV	T-value	Decision
H1a: Novelty → Destination Image		0.011	0.101	0.112ns	Not supported
H2a: Relax → Destination Image		0.121	0.100	1.210ns	Not supported
H3a: Consumption → Destination Image	0.752	0.135	0.092	1.479ns	Not supported
H4a: Local Culture → Destination Image		0.199	0.100	1.993**	Supported
H5: E-WoM → Destination Image		0.505	0.096	5.240***	Supported
H1b: Novelty → E-WoM		0.143	0.109	1.311ns	Not supported
H2b: Relax → E-WoM	0.519	0.342	0.139	2.460**	Supported
H3b: Consumption → E-WoM		0.026	0.119	0.220ns	Not supported
H4b: Local Culture → E-WoM		0.264	0.122	2.174**	Supported

Note: *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; ns = not significant

Testing the Mediation Effect

The bootstrapping procedure is used to test the mediation effect, with direct and indirect effects analyzed. The findings revealed that only path coefficients of relaxation and learn local culture have an impact on e-WoM and destination image, indicating their mediating role. Notably, the indirect effects of relaxation (coefficient of 0.173; $p < 0.05$) and learn local culture (coefficient of 0.133; $p < 0.05$) through e-WoM also significant. Meanwhile, the results of the indirect effect of novelty and social consumption are not significant for both the e-wom and destination image. According to Hair et al. (2014b), when the indirect effect is significant, determining the proportions of the indirect on the total effect in deciding the mediation category is determined by assessing the variance accounted for (VAF) value. According to variance accounted for (VAF: 20% - 80%), we conclude that electronic

word-of-mouth partially mediates the relationship between learn local culture and destination image. Meanwhile, e-WoM acts as a full mediator between the effects of relaxation and the destination image. Finally, it can be concluded that hypothesis 6 is partially supported.

Table 5. Mediation Testing

	Electronic Word-of-Mouth				Decision
	Direct	Indirect	Total	VAF	
Novelty → Destination Image	0.011	0.072	0.084	-	No Mediation
Relaxation → Destination Image	0.121	0.173**	0.294***	100%	Full Mediation
Social Consumption → Dest. Image	0.135	0.013	0.149	-	No Mediation
Learn Local Culture → Dest. Image	0.199**	0.133**	0.333***	40.1%	Partial Mediation

Note: *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; VAF (Variance Accounted For)

This study highlights the importance of the interplay between tourism experience dimensions and e-WoM in shaping destination impressions within cultural destinations. While many studies have been explored the influence of tourism experiences on future tourist behaviors, this study specifically classifies the distinct dimensions in cultural tourism destinations and their impact on e-WoM and destination image. Previous studies only considered the overall construct of the cultural tourism experience without addressing its components (e.g., Kim, 2018; Sharma & Nayak, 2019). Among these dimensions, current study revealed that not all dimensions of tourist experience have an effect on tourist behavior in cultural tourism destinations. In the realm of tourism experience, the elements of relaxation and local culture play a prominent role and exert a substantial influence tourist to share their experience by electronically. In advancing knowledge, results show that only particular dimensions of cultural tourism experiences, specifically local culture knowledge, positively influence destination image evaluations. Additionally, electronic word-of-mouth has a notable influence on promoting the destination image.

The result of the study found certain types of cultural tourism experiences that could potentially encourage future tourist behavior. This shows that the tourism experience as a whole is not fully recognized as being good or important in cultural destinations. In terms of the tourist experience, activities at cultural destinations that offer a chance to learn about local culture are more likely to establish an image for tourists. The critical aspects of learning in tourist-seeking behavior, as individuals seek to satisfy their desire for innovative learning through cultural experiences (Suhartanto et al., 2018). This demonstrates how understanding the local culture can encourage the creation of a destination image in a cultural tourism setting. In other streams, the impact of e-WoM can be leveraged to improve the destination image. This implies that tourists articulating e-WoM when having a good experience could lead to the spread of positive e-WoM about destination attributes on social media. The e-WoM behavior becomes an opportunity and helps other tourists increase their understanding and build a positive destination image. This finding is in line with previous studies by Bui (2022) and Soliman (2021), which claimed that destination image is influenced by e-WoM.

On the other side, the provision of uniqueness, relaxation, and social consumption is unable to realize the tourism experience that creates destination image. However, this result suggests that aspect learn local culture of the tourism experience might be able to better predict destination image than novelty, consumption and relaxation seeking. In tourism studies, there is plausible elucidation associated with the complex characteristics of novelty and enjoyment (Mitas & Bastiaansen, 2018; Skavronskaya et al., 2019). They argue that a destination is unique if they enjoy new experiences and relaxation, which assign novelty as an emotional aspect. Another reason, novelty or authenticity, refers to a mechanism of positive emotions expressed in their novel perceptions that distinctively represents original historical truth (Mitas & Bastiaansen, 2018; Seyfi et al., 2020). Literature indicates that authenticity in cultural tourism is contingent not on the genuine sense of authenticity but rather on tourists' perceived authenticity or the distinct meaning attributed to the site's characteristics (Seyfi et al., 2020). This is related to the location of the Bongo village since it was established deliberated to preserve local culture so that it is more of an artificial

site in “reproduction of the originality”. Apart from that, visitors who are dominated by local tourists most likely do not perceive the uniqueness of a destination as a novelty because they have been used to visiting it or know about it. Some tourists are beginning to be aware of and care about tourist destination objects that are made up in such a way as to seem traditional but raise doubts about their authenticity (Wong et al., 2019b). This finding is in line with previous studies that discovered novelty and relaxation have no impact on activating the tourism experience (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018).

This study also exposes the substantial influence of tourism experiences on electronic word-of-mouth in cultural destinations. The dimensions of the cultural tourism experience (except novelty and social consumption) have a great influence on online word-of-mouth activity. Previous studies also revealed that the authenticity aspect of the destination was unable to activate e-WoM behavior by tourists (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Currently, social media plays a crucial role in bridging the consumer experience gained from word-of-mouth. This result accords with Chen et al. (2021) finding that when tourists perceive high levels of pleasantness or relaxation, they are more likely to provide positive word-of-mouth for that destination on social media. The finding suggests that availability of relaxation, and learn local culture from destination willing to motivate the tourist to generate a good e-WoM. The social consumption aspect does not affect e-WoM behavior because the culinary side of the tourist destination is not too prominent in activating social media engagement among tourists. Culinary activities that serve traditional cake menus only take place at certain moments such as ‘Mawlid/Walimah’ as a celebration of Prophet Muhammad’s birthday. The results of a netnography study by Saleem and Umar (2023) also confirm that the culinary attraction factor is relatively small in the coverage of cultural tourism experiences.

In addition, only two components of experience (i.e., relaxation and local culture) were successfully mediated by e-WoM to the destination image. Furthermore, the findings pinpointed that electronic word-of-mouth mediates the components of the tourism experience (relaxation and learn local culture) on the destination image. Assuming the S-O-R framework and drawing support from previous research (Bui, 2022; Cham et al., 2021; Soliman, 2021; Wong et al., 2019a, 2019b) to analyze the relationship among variables, e-WoM is considered an organism (O) due to the emotional reactions elicited by stimulus factors from experiences, subsequently generating a response to the destination image. Therefore, the relationship of perceived value of tourism experience and destination image can be mediated by e-WoM. The possible reason is that relaxation and local culture contain entertainment, fun, and new insights, so that more social media-friendly for tourists, who are dominated by younger. It indicates that tourists’ e-WoM activity will mediate the relaxing experience and knowledge of local culture in order to generate an emotional impression of the destination. The stimulus-organism-response (SOR) approach to analyzing E-WoM as a mediator is widely employed in the context of retail products, and this study represents one of the efforts to contribute to existing debates in the tourism literature.

Implication and Conclusion

These findings provide a valuable contribution to the literature by exploring the distinct elements of the cultural tourism experience as precursors of both destination image and the electronic word-of-mouth. A noteworthy theoretical contribution from this research is understanding how specific tourism experiences (such as novelty, relaxation, social consumption, and acquiring knowledge about local culture) stimulate future tourist behaviors. This understanding is achieved through empirical investigation, elucidating the interplay among the tourism experience, e-WoM, and destination image within the realm cultural tourism. Understanding cultural tourism experiences is crucial due to the distinctive kinds of experiential reactions brought on by visitors from the site location. The current study demonstrated that of all the components of the cultural tourism experience, only relaxation and learn local culture are adequate to generate e-WoM tourist behavior. In addition, learn local culture and e-WoM identified as key predictors to enhance the destination image on the cultural tourism site. Overall, among these dimensions, the tourist experience in cultural tourism is particularly noteworthy when it emphasizes relaxation and gaining insights into the local culture.

This study also recognizes and highlights the significance of electronic word-of-mouth as a bridge between the tourism experience and the image of the destination within the cultural tourism. However, the finding suggests that experiences that provide relaxation of mind, mentality, and entertainment as well as new knowledge for tourists can be mediated with e-WoM towards creating destination images. Therefore, electronic word-of-mouth plays a pivotal role in facilitating a tourist's experience that is refreshing, fun, or gives new insight into establishing an image of the destination. The recent tourism industry has witnessed substantial growth with the advent of technology, as tourists now utilize mobile devices to share their activities online through electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM). Consequently, the tourism industry is compelled to adapt accordingly. Finally, the findings of this study highlight more deeply how important cultural tourism needs to be to exploit and expose things that relax the mind and provide new knowledge originating in destinations so that tourists can feel them. This further reinforces the thought that, basically, cultural tourism services offer knowledge-intensive products. The finding demonstrated the idiosyncrasies of cultural tourism within the broader tourism industry.

Although this study reveals insight into experience mechanisms in cultural tourism, it also has a few limitations. This study is site-specific, so caution needs to be exercised when generalizing to other sites. In particular, only the elements of the tourist experience that involve learn local culture stimulate word-of-mouth behavior and create the tourist's destination image. While the relationship between novelty and relaxation-seeking toward the destination image was nonsignificant. The results also indicate the need to redesign the model framework by combining other relevant dimensions. It is noteworthy that this study focused solely on the cultural village of Bongo, limiting the generalizability of the results to other cultural tourism contexts with diverse types of cultural experiences. Consequently, future research is needed to explore the role of different cultural tourism sites in shaping tourist behavior. In addition, related to destination sites, data collected for this study predominantly consisted of local or native tourists, resulting in a relatively homogenous sample. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the established model, future studies should consider expanding the sample to include tourists from other regions in Indonesia. This would provide a broader perspective and generate more robust findings.

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