

Destination Experience, Local Wisdom, and Electronic Word of Mouth: The Mediating Role of Tourist Satisfaction

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the influence of tourism destination experience and local wisdom on tourists' Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), with tourist satisfaction as a mediating variable.

Methodology: Grounded in Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory, this study employed a quantitative approach using a survey of 210 repeat visitors to tourist destinations in Sikka District, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed to test the relationships among the variables.

Results: The findings indicate that tourism destination experience and local wisdom do not significantly directly affect E-WOM. However, tourist satisfaction has a significantly positive effect on E-WOM. Additionally, both tourism destination experiences and local wisdom significantly influence tourist satisfaction. Mediation analysis showed that tourist satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between tourism destination experience and E-WOM, as well as between local wisdom and E-WOM.

Conclusions: Tourist satisfaction plays a crucial role as a mediating mechanism linking tourism experiences and local cultural values to tourists' willingness to share their experiences online.

Limitations: This study is limited by a sample dominated by young domestic tourists and the use of a cross-sectional research design.

Contributions: This study contributes to the tourism marketing literature by highlighting the mediating role of satisfaction and providing practical insights for enhancing digital promotion strategies through E-WOM.

Keywords: *Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), Local Wisdom, Tourism Destination Experience, Tourist Satisfaction*

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1. Introduction

Tourism has become one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to economic development, employment generation and cultural exchange. In recent years, the rapid development of digital technology and social media platforms has transformed the way tourists search for information, evaluate destinations and share their travel experiences. One of the most influential forms of online communication in the tourism industry is Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), which refers to information about products or services shared by consumers through Internet-based platforms such as social media, review websites, blogs, and online forums. According to [Reyes-Menendez, Saura, and Martinez-Navalon \(2019\)](#), E-WOM plays a critical role in shaping tourists' travel decisions because

online reviews and recommendations are perceived as credible sources of information by potential visitors.

Tourism has become a strategic sector for driving regional economic growth, particularly in emerging destinations with unique cultural resources. The advancement of digital technology has also transformed tourist behavior, where Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) plays a significant role in shaping destination image and influencing travel decisions. In this context, understanding the factors that drive tourists to share their experiences online is essential for enhancing destination competitiveness and improving marketing strategies. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of tourism destination experiences and local wisdom in influencing tourist behavior. A meaningful and memorable tourism experience can enhance emotional engagement and lead to higher levels of satisfaction, which subsequently encourages positive e-WOM. Likewise, local wisdom, reflected in traditions, cultural practices, and community values, has been recognized as a key element in creating authentic tourism experiences.

However, most existing studies have focused on well-developed or popular destinations, while limited attention has been given to emerging destinations with strong cultural identities but relatively underdeveloped tourism systems. Several studies conducted in emerging destinations, such as rural tourism areas and culturally based destinations in Asia and other developing regions, indicate that tourist satisfaction plays a crucial mediating role between experience and behavioral intentions. Nevertheless, the findings across these destinations remain inconsistent, particularly in explaining the direct influence of tourism experiences and cultural elements on E-WOM.

Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the world's leading tourist destinations because of its diverse natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage. With more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia offers a wide variety of tourism attractions, ranging from tropical beaches and volcanic mountains to unique cultural traditions and local communities. This combination of natural beauty and cultural diversity has attracted domestic and international tourists seeking authentic travel experiences. In the context of tourism development, destination competitiveness is strongly influenced by the ability of destinations to create satisfying tourism experiences and to encourage positive online communication among visitors.

One region with considerable tourism potential is Kabupaten Sikka, located on Flores Island in Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), Indonesia. Despite its relatively small geographical size, Sikka Regency offers a wide range of tourism attractions, including coastal destinations such as Pantai Koka, marine tourism in Teluk Maumere, cultural tourism in Desa Tenun Watublapi, historical collections at the Museum Blikon Blewut, and spiritual tourism at Gereja Tua Sikka. In addition, several natural attractions, such as Gunung Egon and various waterfalls and beaches, contribute to the tourism potential of the region.

However, tourism performance in Sikka Regency has fluctuated in recent years. According to data from the regional tourism office, tourist arrivals between 2019 and 2024 did not consistently meet annual targets. In 2019, for example, the number of tourist visits reached only 44,168 of the targeted 80,000 visitors. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021, tourism activities declined significantly, forcing the government to lower its target for tourist arrivals. Although the number of visits began to recover in 2022 and 2023, the realization still fell short of the expected targets. In 2024, tourist arrivals by mid-year reached only 33,970 out of the target of 55,000 visitors. This situation was partly influenced by external disruptions, including the eruption of Gunung Lewotobi and the temporary closure of the Bandara Frans Seda.

In addition to fluctuations in tourist arrivals, the digital exposure of tourism destinations in Sikka Regency remains relatively low. Preliminary observations and a pre-survey conducted with 30 tourists visiting several tourism sites revealed that 20% of respondents did not read reviews about tourism destinations in Sikka on social media platforms, while 12% did not provide reviews of the destinations online. Furthermore, 42% of the respondents stated that they had never shared their travel experiences on social media. These findings indicate that the performance of E-WOM promotion for tourism destinations in Sikka is not fully optimized. Additional observations on several online review platforms

show that many tourism destinations in Sikka still receive limited digital attention. For instance, Pantai Koka, one of the leading tourism destinations in the region, has only a small number of reviews on travel platforms, while other attractions, such as Museum Blikon Blewut and Desa Tenun Watublapi, receive very limited user-generated content. This low level of digital engagement suggests that the promotional potential of E-WOM has not yet been maximized to support tourism development in the region.

Previous studies have highlighted that tourists' online communication behavior is strongly influenced by their travel experiences and the authenticity of cultural interactions during their visits. [Suhartanto et al. \(2024\)](#) found that tourism experience and cultural authenticity can simultaneously enhance tourist satisfaction and encourage the generation of positive E-WOM. Similarly, [Rasoolimanesh, Seyfi, Hall, and Hatamifar \(2021\)](#) demonstrated that experiential value and cultural interactions contribute to tourists' willingness to share their experiences online through the mediating role of satisfaction. [Yoo and Gretzel \(2021a\)](#) also revealed that destination experience and cultural heritage experience significantly influence tourist satisfaction and positive E-WOM communication.

In the tourism context, tourist satisfaction plays a crucial role in shaping post-visit behavioral responses. Satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend destinations to others and share their experiences on digital platforms. [Yoo and Gretzel \(2021a\)](#) found that tourist satisfaction significantly influences both the frequency and content of E-WOM communication. Likewise, [Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler \(2023\)](#) emphasize that satisfied tourists tend to provide detailed positive reviews and actively recommend destinations to their social networks. However, some studies suggest that satisfaction alone does not always lead to e-WOM behavior. [Jeong and Jang \(2020\)](#) for instance, argue that social motivations and external incentives may also influence tourists' willingness to share experiences online.

In addition to satisfaction, local wisdom and cultural authenticity have been widely recognized as important factors in tourism development. Local traditions, cultural practices, and interactions with local communities can enrich tourism experiences and enhance visitors' emotional engagement. Studies by [Xiang \(2020\)](#); [Huang and Hsu \(2021\)](#) indicate that meaningful cultural experiences can strengthen tourists' perceptions of authenticity and encourage positive E-WOM behavior. However, other researchers argue that factors such as price, service quality, and information accessibility may sometimes have a stronger influence on E-WOM than cultural elements alone [Munar and Jamal \(2021\)](#); [Wang and Fesenmaier \(2019\)](#).

Another important factor influencing tourist satisfaction and online communication behavior is destination attributes, which include elements such as attractions, facilities, accessibility, service quality, and the environment. According to [Kotler and Keller \(2020\)](#), well-managed destination attributes can enhance tourists' overall experience and increase their satisfaction. Empirical evidence suggests that strong destination attributes positively influence tourist satisfaction and recommendation behavior ([Kim & Hall, 2020](#); [Zhang, 2023](#)). However, some studies have reported inconsistent findings regarding the influence of destination attributes on satisfaction. For example, [Huh and Uysal \(2019\)](#) found that personal motivations and expectations may play a more dominant role in shaping tourist satisfaction than destination attributes. In this regard, a significant research gap exists in Sikka Regency, Nusa Tenggara Timur. Despite its rich cultural diversity, strong local wisdom, and unique tourism attractions, empirical studies examining the relationship between tourism destination experience, local wisdom, tourist satisfaction, and e-WOM in Sikka Regency are still very limited. Moreover, there is a lack of studies that position tourist satisfaction as a mediating variable in this relationship in the local context.

Furthermore, compared to other emerging destinations, Sikka Regency presents distinctive characteristics that require specific investigations. While studies in other regions show that cultural authenticity and tourism experiences can directly influence E-WOM, it remains unclear whether similar patterns occur in Sikka, where tourism development is still evolving and digital engagement among tourists may differ. This indicates the need for a comparative understanding to enrich the literature on emerging destinations. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of tourism destination experience and local wisdom on E-WOM, with tourist satisfaction as a mediating variable in Sikka

Regency. By addressing this gap and providing comparative insights into other emerging destinations, this study contributes to the development of tourism research and offers practical implications for enhancing destination competitiveness through culturally grounded strategies.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 *Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)*

This study is grounded in Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory, originally developed by [Oliver \(2021\)](#). The theory explains how satisfaction or dissatisfaction is formed through a comparison between consumers' expectations and the actual performance of a product or service. When perceived performance exceeds expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs, resulting in satisfaction, whereas performance below expectations leads to dissatisfaction. In tourism, EDT is widely used to explain how tourists evaluate their experiences. Tourists typically form expectations before visiting a destination based on promotional information, social media reviews, and their previous experiences. After the visit, they compared these expectations with their actual experiences. According to [Oliver \(2021\)](#), tourist satisfaction results from a comparison between pre-travel expectations and the actual travel experience. When experience meets or exceeds expectations, tourists are more likely to develop positive behavioral intentions, such as recommending the destination or sharing their experiences online.

2.2 *Tourism Destination Experience*

Tourism destination experience refers to the overall experience tourists gain through interactions with various destination elements, such as the physical environment, tourism services, activities, and social interactions. According to [Rather \(2019\)](#), tourism experiences emerge from tourists' interactions with destination components, which generate emotional engagement and behavioral responses. Similarly, [Ortega and Franco \(2019\)](#) argue that tourism experiences form the foundation of value creation in tourism because they shape tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty. In addition, [Ayyildiz \(2021\)](#) highlighted that tourism experience is a subjective phenomenon influenced by tourists' perceptions, emotions, and interactions with the destination environment.

2.3 *Local Wisdom*

Local wisdom refers to the traditional knowledge, cultural values, and practices developed by local communities over time. According to [Munar \(2020\)](#), local wisdom reflects cultural traditions that preserve heritage and support sustainable community development. Similarly, [Lee \(2020\)](#) described local wisdom as traditional knowledge that enables communities to adapt to their environment and manage resources sustainably. Integrating local wisdom into tourism activities can strengthen destination authenticity and enrich the tourist experience.

2.4 *Tourist Satisfaction*

Tourist satisfaction refers to the level of fulfillment that tourists experience after visiting a destination. According to [Oliver \(2021\)](#), satisfaction results from evaluating whether a service or experience meets expectations. Likewise, [Manning \(2022\)](#) defined tourist satisfaction as tourists' evaluation of their experiences with various aspects of a destination, including facilities, services, and overall travel experience. High levels of satisfaction often lead to positive behavioral intentions, such as destination loyalty and recommendations.

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

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) refers to online communication among consumers about products or services through digital platforms. According to [Kotler and Keller \(2020\)](#), E-WOM includes information shared by consumers through social media, blogs, and review websites that can influence consumer perceptions and decisions. Similarly, [Solomon \(2019\)](#) describes E-WOM as digital word-of-mouth communication where consumers share reviews and recommendations online. In tourism, positive e-WOM can enhance destination reputation and attract potential visitors.

2.6 *The Effect of Tourism Destination Experience on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)*

Previous studies have examined the relationship between tourism destination experiences and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). Several studies have indicated that memorable tourism

experiences significantly encourage tourists to share their travel experiences through online platforms ([Rather, 2019](#)). Positive destination experiences often create emotional attachment and satisfaction, motivating tourists to recommend destinations to others through digital communication channels. However, other studies argue that tourism experiences do not always directly influence e-WOM behavior. For example, [Yoo and Gretzel \(2021b\)](#) found that social motivations and the desire to share travel stories online can be stronger drivers of E-WOM than the experience itself. Similarly, [Munar \(2020\)](#) suggests that online community engagement may play a more important role in stimulating E-WOM behavior.

H₁: Tourism destination experience has a significant effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

2.7 The Effect of Local Wisdom on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

Local wisdom plays an important role in enhancing tourists' experiences and shaping their perceptions of tourism destinations. Authentic cultural elements, such as traditional customs, art, local cuisine, and community lifestyles, can create unique and memorable experiences for visitors. When tourists encounter meaningful cultural experiences, they are more likely to share their travel stories with others on digital platforms. Previous studies have highlighted the role of cultural authenticity in encouraging online communication behaviors among tourists. For instance, [Xiang \(2020\)](#) found that strong local cultural elements in tourism destinations can create memorable experiences that motivate tourists to share their experiences through Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM).

Similarly, [Adekuajo, Otokiti, and Okpeke \(2025\)](#) reported that tourists who appreciate local traditions and cultural uniqueness tend to share their experiences on social media and online reviews. Furthermore, [Jamu and Sari \(2022\)](#) emphasized that integrating local wisdom into tourism products can strengthen destination attractiveness and generate positive E-WOM because tourists often share authentic and meaningful travel experiences with others. However, some studies argue that e-WOM behavior is also influenced by other factors such as service quality, price, and tourist satisfaction ([Gheta, 2025](#)). Despite these mixed findings, local wisdom remains an important factor that can enrich tourism experiences and encourage tourists to share their experiences. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: Local wisdom significantly affects Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

2.8 The Effect of Tourist Satisfaction on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

Tourist satisfaction plays a crucial role in influencing tourists' communication behavior, particularly in generating Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). When tourists feel satisfied with their travel experiences at a destination, they are more likely to share positive reviews, photos, and recommendations on various digital platforms, such as social media, blogs, and online review websites. Positive e-WOM generated by satisfied tourists can enhance the reputation and attractiveness of a tourism destination, as potential visitors often rely on online reviews when making travel decisions. Conversely, dissatisfied tourists may share negative experiences, which can harm the destination's image and reduce the interest of potential visitors. Therefore, maintaining and improving tourist satisfaction is essential to maximize the positive impact of e-WOM at tourism destinations.

Previous studies have consistently found a positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and e-WOM behavior. [Kuo and Nakhata \(2019\)](#) suggested that satisfied tourists have a stronger intention to share online reviews and recommend destinations to others on digital platforms. Similarly, [Joudeh et al. \(2024\)](#) found that tourist satisfaction is a strong predictor of positive E-WOM, as satisfied visitors tend to become active advocates of the destinations they visit. Furthermore, [Yoo and Gretzel \(2021a\)](#) revealed that tourist satisfaction directly influences both the frequency and content of E-WOM, where satisfied tourists are more likely to share detailed and favorable experiences online. This finding is also supported by [Zeithaml et al. \(2023\)](#), who emphasized that satisfied tourists are more willing to provide detailed online reviews and recommendations to their networks.

However, some studies have reported different results. [Saleem, Yi, Bilal, Topor, and Căpușneanu \(2022\)](#) found that in certain contexts, satisfied tourists are not always motivated to write online reviews, particularly when their experiences merely meet expectations without providing significant positive

surprises. Likewise, [Jeong and Jang \(2020\)](#) argued that tourist satisfaction alone does not always lead to E-WOM behavior, as other factors such as internal motivations, incentives, or social influence may also affect tourists' willingness to share their experiences online.

H₃: Tourist satisfaction has a significant effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

2.9 The Effect of Tourism Destination Experience on Tourist Satisfaction

Tourism destination experience is considered a key factor influencing tourist satisfaction. Destination experience refers to the overall impressions and feelings that tourists obtain through their interactions with the attractions, local culture, services, and physical environment of a destination. A positive and memorable tourism experience can enhance tourists' emotional responses and perceptions of the destination, ultimately leading to higher satisfaction levels. When tourists enjoy meaningful activities, unique cultural interactions, and high-quality services during their visit, they tend to evaluate the destination positively and feel satisfied with their travel experience.

Previous studies have demonstrated that tourism destination experiences significantly influence tourist satisfaction. For example, [Liu, Zhou, and Sun \(2023\)](#) found that tourism experiences have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction because memorable experiences enhance tourists' emotional engagement with a destination. Similarly, [Ramesh and Jaunky \(2021\)](#) revealed that a positive tourism experience contributes significantly to destination satisfaction, particularly when tourists perceive authenticity and uniqueness during their visits. In addition, [Taslim, Karo, and Badollahi \(2023\)](#) reported that dimensions of tourism experience, such as novelty, involvement, and meaningfulness, significantly improve tourist satisfaction levels.

However, several studies have reported inconsistent results. [Chen and Phou \(2019\)](#) suggested that tourism experience does not always directly influence tourist satisfaction, as perceived value may play a more dominant role in shaping satisfaction. Likewise, [Eviana \(2025\)](#) found that tourist experience did not significantly affect tourist satisfaction at certain destinations, indicating that other factors, such as destination image or service quality, may have stronger effects. Despite these mixed findings, tourism destination experience remains an important factor in shaping tourists' evaluations of their travel experiences. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₄: Tourism destination experience has a significant effect on tourist satisfaction

2.10 The Effect of local wisdom on Tourist Satisfaction

Local wisdom plays an important role in shaping authentic tourism experiences that influence tourist satisfaction. Local wisdom refers to the cultural values, traditions, customs, and lifestyles of local communities that are preserved and integrated into tourism. When tourists experience local wisdom through cultural performances, traditional cuisine, handicrafts, and interactions with local communities, they may develop a deeper emotional connection to the destination. Such authentic experiences often enhance tourists' perceptions of uniqueness and cultural richness, contributing to higher levels of satisfaction during their visit.

Previous studies have found that local wisdom significantly influences tourist satisfaction. For example, [Sthapit, Coudounaris, and Björk \(2019\)](#) stated that local cultural traditions and interactions with local residents contribute positively to tourist satisfaction because they create authentic and memorable experiences. Similarly, [Arismayanti \(2021\)](#) emphasized that cultural elements such as traditional arts, handicrafts, and cultural festivals play a significant role in enhancing tourist satisfaction by providing meaningful and immersive experiences. Furthermore, [Hernández-Rojas and Huete Alcocer \(2021\)](#) revealed that integrating local wisdom into tourism activities, such as traditional culinary experiences and cultural customs, significantly improves tourist satisfaction because visitors gain new knowledge and an understanding of the culture. [Su, Huang, and Hsu \(2018\)](#) also found that cultural uniqueness and traditional activities reflecting local wisdom can increase tourist satisfaction by strengthening tourists' emotional attachment to the destination.

However, some studies have reported different results. [Wang and Fesenmaier \(2019\)](#) suggested that local cultural elements do not always become the primary determinant of tourist satisfaction, as many

tourists tend to prioritize convenience factors, such as transportation accessibility and comfortable accommodation. Likewise, [Zhao, Zhan, Du, and Wei \(2024\)](#) found that local wisdom does not always significantly affect tourist satisfaction because some tourists focus more on practical aspects such as price, accessibility, and service quality rather than cultural experiences. Despite these mixed findings, local wisdom remains an important factor that can enrich tourism experiences and contribute to tourists' overall satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₅: Local wisdom significantly affects tourist satisfaction

2.11 The Role of Tourist Satisfaction in Mediating the Effect of Tourism Destination Experience on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

Previous studies suggest that tourist satisfaction plays an important role in explaining the relationship between tourism destination experience and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). Positive tourism experiences often lead to higher levels of tourist satisfaction, which in turn encourages tourists to share their travel experiences through digital platforms ([Rather, 2019](#); [Wang & Fesenmaier, 2019](#)). Satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend destinations and provide positive online reviews that influence potential visitors' decisions. However, other studies have argued that satisfaction does not always mediate this relationship. For instance, [Yoo and Gretzel \(2021b\)](#) found that tourists may share travel experiences online because of social motivations rather than satisfaction alone. Similarly, ([Kim & Hall, 2020](#)); [Munar \(2020\)](#) reported that memorable tourism experiences can directly influence E-WOM behavior without the mediating role of satisfaction.

H₆: Tourist satisfaction mediates the effect of tourism destination experience on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

2.12 The Role of Tourist Satisfaction in Mediating the Effect of Local Wisdom on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

Tourist satisfaction plays an important role as a mediator in the relationship between local wisdom and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). When tourists experience the positive and authentic aspects of local wisdom, such as traditions, cultural practices, and interactions with local communities, their satisfaction tends to increase. This satisfaction encourages tourists to share their experiences through Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), either via social media, online reviews, or recommendations to friends and family. Therefore, local wisdom not only influences E-WOM directly but can also influence it indirectly through increased tourist satisfaction, which strengthens tourists' intention to share positive experiences. This indicates that destinations that effectively integrate local wisdom into tourism activities can enhance their promotional impact through E-WOM by ensuring high levels of tourist satisfaction.

Previous studies support the mediating role of tourist satisfaction in this relationship. [Lee \(2020\)](#) found that tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between local wisdom and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM). Their study emphasized that satisfying experiences related to local culture increase tourists' willingness to recommend destinations to others through online platforms. Similarly, [Huang and Hsu \(2021\)](#) revealed that tourist satisfaction mediates the influence of local wisdom on E-WOM. The study highlighted that satisfaction derived from cultural experiences and local traditions contributes to more positive e-WOM behavior.

However, several studies have reported different results. [Tojiri \(2026\)](#) found that tourist satisfaction does not always mediate the relationship between local wisdom and e-WOM. Their research suggests that strong and meaningful cultural experiences may directly influence tourists' intention to share experiences online without necessarily passing through satisfaction as an intermediary variable. Similarly, [Gheta \(2025\)](#) reported that tourist satisfaction does not always mediate the relationship between local wisdom and e-WOM. Their findings indicate that aspects such as cultural uniqueness and authenticity can directly influence E-WOM, regardless of tourists' satisfaction levels. Based on these arguments and previous empirical findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₇: Tourist satisfaction mediates the effect of local wisdom on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

Based on the literature review and the hypotheses developed above, the proposed research model can be illustrated in Figure 1.

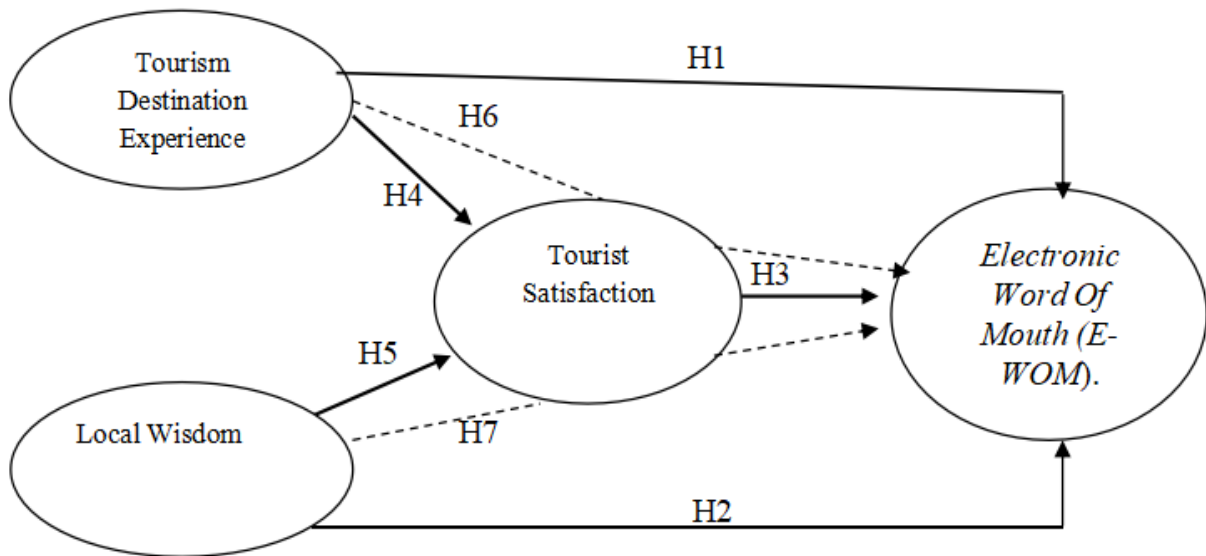


Figure 1. Research model

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey method to examine the relationships among tourism destination experience, local wisdom, tourist satisfaction, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling, specifically accidental sampling, where respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate at the research site. This approach was considered appropriate because of the practical constraints and exploratory nature of the study in the context of an emerging tourism destination. However, the use of accidental sampling may limit the representativeness of the sample and restrict the generalizability of the findings. Despite this limitation, the selected respondents were deemed relevant as they consisted of repeat visitors with sufficient experience with the destination, thus providing meaningful insights into the studied variables.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population in this study consists of all tourists who are visiting various tourist attractions in Sikka Regency, with an unknown total number. The sample size for PLS-SEM should be determined based on the complexity of the model and the desired level of significance. Generally, the minimum sample size is between five and ten times the number of indicators or structural paths, although a larger sample size is always preferable to obtain more reliable results. Therefore, the minimum sample size used in this study was calculated by multiplying 21 indicators by the highest value of 10, resulting in a total sample size of 210 respondents. The allocation of the sample based on the type of tourist attraction was determined disproportionately. The types of tourist attractions and the number of research samples are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of tourist attractions and number of samples

Type of Tourist Attraction	Number of Samples
Natural Tourism	54
Cultural Tourism	52
Religious Tourism	52
Art and Cultural Studios	52
Total	210

This study used a non-probability sampling technique, specifically accidental sampling, meaning any tourist at the tourist attractions in Sikka Regency who happened to meet the researcher and was considered to meet the sample criteria, with the requirement that the tourist must have visited more than once and be at least 17 years old.

3.3 Data Analysis Technique

The researcher decided to use an alternative approach, namely Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), with the assistance of SmartPLS software.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

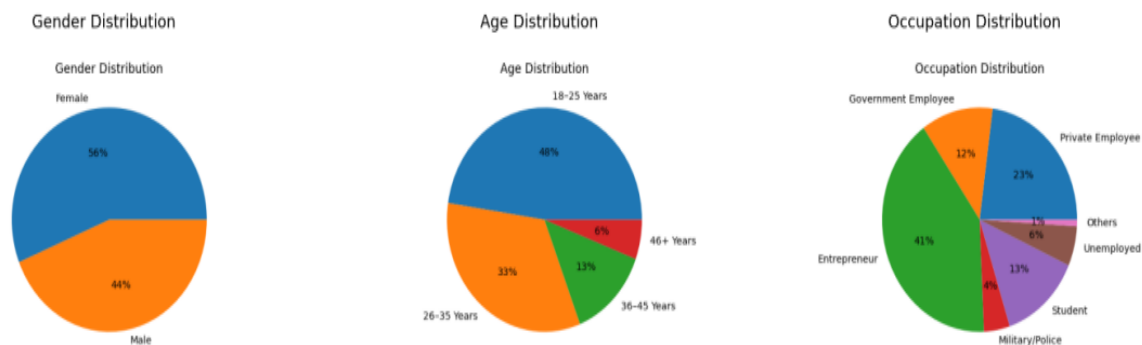


Figure 2. Respondent characteristics

Figure 2 shows the tourists consisted of 92 males (44 %) and 118 females (56 %). Based on occupation, the respondents were dominated by students/university students, totaling 86 people or 41%, followed by a smaller portion of private employees, totaling 48 people or 23%, entrepreneurs totaling 28 people or 13%, and others totaling 25 people or 12%. There were 12 civil servants (6 %), 9 unemployed respondents (4 %), and 2 military/police personnel (1 %). Based on age, the respondents were dominated by those aged 18–25 years (100 people or 48 %), followed by those aged 26–35 years (70 people or 33 %), 36–45 years (28 people or 13 %), and 46 years and older (12 people or 6 %).

4.2 Convergent Validity

The loading factor value must be greater than 0.7 or more to be considered as having sufficiently strong validity to explain the latent construct ([Ghozali, 2021](#)).

Table 2. Outer loading

Variables	Indicator	Factor Loading	Information
Tourism Destination Experience (TDE)	Sensory Experience (TDE1)	0.848	Valid
	Affective Experience (TDE2)	0.734	Valid
	Intellectual/Cognitive Experience (TDE3)	0.850	Valid
	Behavioral Experience (TDE4)	0.882	Valid
	Social Experience (TDE5)	0.846	Valid
Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)	Volume of e-wom (E-WOM1)	0.899	Valid
	Sentiment of e-wom (E-WOM2)	0.913	Valid
	Credibility of e-wom (E-WOM3)	0.926	Valid
	Engagement with e-wom (E-WOM4)	0.911	Valid
	Influence of e-wom on Tourist Behavior (E-WOM5)	0.877	Valid
Local Wisdom (KL)	Traditional Cultural Practices (KL1)	0.879	Valid
	Traditional Ecological Knowledge (KL2)	0.923	Valid
	Social and Ethical Values (KL3)	0.923	Valid
	Cultural Diversity (KL4)	0.937	Valid

	Community Participation (KL5)	0.912	Valid
Tourist Satisfaction (KW)	Service Quality (KW1)	0.851	Valid
	Perceived Value (KW2)	0.868	Valid
	Facility Quality (KW3)	0.773	Valid
	Destination Attractiveness (KW4)	0.892	Valid
	Social Experience (KW5)	0.874	Valid
	Expectation Fulfillment (KW6)	0.919	Valid

Based on the analysis in Table 2, the loading factor values for all indicators of the latent variables, namely Tourism Destination Experience, local wisdom, tourist satisfaction, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), are greater than 0.7.

4.3 Discriminant Validity

The standard value used for cross-loading is that it must be greater than 0.7, or by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct with the correlations between the construct and other constructs in the model.

Table 3. Cross Loading

	Tourism Destination Experience (TDE)	Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)	Local Wisdom(KL)	Tourist Satisfaction (KW)
TDE1	0.848	0.595	0.746	0.654
TDE2	0.734	0.445	0.458	0.497
TDE3	0.850	0.516	0.640	0.574
TDE4	0.882	0.576	0.681	0.596
TDE5	0.846	0.668	0.773	0.768
E-WOM1	0.627	0.899	0.635	0.725
E-WOM2	0.616	0.913	0.671	0.756
E-WOM3	0.630	0.926	0.690	0.769
E-WOM4	0.618	0.911	0.619	0.694
E-WOM5	0.595	0.877	0.668	0.696
KL1	0.723	0.609	0.879	0.679
KL2	0.735	0.666	0.923	0.760
KL3	0.762	0.701	0.923	0.774
KL4	0.754	0.668	0.937	0.766
KL5	0.712	0.671	0.912	0.765
KW1	0.673	0.658	0.716	0.851
KW2	0.616	0.671	0.699	0.868
KW3	0.616	0.651	0.587	0.773
KW4	0.631	0.708	0.722	0.892
KW5	0.691	0.737	0.775	0.874
KW6	0.677	0.742	0.736	0.919

Based on Table 3, the cross-loading values for each item are greater than 0.70, and each item has the highest value when associated with its respective latent variable compared to when it is associated with other latent variables.

4.4 Composite Reliability

In SmartPLS, the reliability of a construct can be measured in two ways: using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability.

Table 4. Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Conclusion
Tourism Destination Experience (TDE)	0.890	0.903	0.919	0.695	Reliable
Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM)	0.945	0.946	0.958	0.820	Reliable
Local Wisdoml (KL)	0.951	0.953	0.963	0.837	Reliable
Tourist Satisfaction (KW)	0.932	0.934	0.946	0.747	Reliable

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that the reliability test values for all variables, both using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, show figures greater than 0.70. Meanwhile, the validity test using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) shows values greater than 0.50. Therefore, it can be concluded that the variables tested have been proven to be valid and reliable, allowing the structural model testing to be conducted.

4.5 Inner Model

The evaluation of the structural model, or inner model, aims to predict the relationships between the latent variables. The assessment of the structural model is carried out by observing the percentage of variance explained, namely through the R-squared values for the endogenous latent constructs, as well as using AVE to assess predictive power.

Table 5. R-Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)	0.665	0.660
Tourist Satisfaction (KW)	0.696	0.694

Based on Table 5, it can be concluded that the variables of Tourism Destination Experience and local wisdom have an effect on tourist satisfaction of 0.694, which can be interpreted as the variability of the Tourism Destination Experience and local wisdom constructs being 69.4%, while the remaining 30.6% is explained by other variables outside this study. Similarly, the model of the effect of Tourism Destination Experience and local wisdom on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) yields a value of 0.660, which can be interpreted as the variability of the tourism destination experience and local wisdom constructs being 66.0%, while the remaining 34% is explained by variables outside this study.

4.6 Hypothesis

In the SmartPLS application, the bootstrapping results provide parameter coefficient values and t-statistic values, which are used to determine the significance of the relationships between the variables. The criteria for hypothesis testing were based on the t-statistic (t-value) and p-value. Specifically, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted if the t-value is greater than 1.96 or the p-value is less than 0.05 at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 5\%$). Conversely, the null hypothesis (H_o) is accepted if the t-statistic is less than 1.96, or the p-value is greater than 0.05.

Table 6. Path coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	t Statistics (O/STDEV)	p Values	Information
Tourism Destination Experience (TDE) → Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)	0.115	1.766	0.078	Influential and not significant
Tourism Destination Experience (TDE) → Tourist Satisfaction (KW)	0.266	2.932	0.004	Significant influence
Local Wisdom (KL) → Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)	0.134	1.832	0.067	Influential and not significant

Local Wisdom (KL) → Tourist Satisfaction (KW)	0.605	5.926	0.000	Significant influence
Tourist Satisfaction (KW) → Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)	0.608	9.061	0.000	Significant influence

As shown in Table 6, tourism destination experience has an effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), but it is not significant. The t-statistic value for this variable's effect is $1.776 < 1.96$, and the p-value is $0.078 > 0.05$. Therefore, the first hypothesis, which states that tourism destination attributes have a significant effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), is rejected. The tourism destination experience variable significantly affects tourist satisfaction. This is based on a t-statistic value of $2.932 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.004 < 0.05$. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis, which states that tourism destination attributes have a significant effect on tourist satisfaction, is accepted.

The local wisdom variable has an effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), but it is not significant. This is based on a t-statistic value of $1.832 < 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.067 > 0.05$. Therefore, the second hypothesis, which states that local wisdom has a significant effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), is rejected. The local wisdom variable significantly affects tourist satisfaction. This is based on a t-statistic value of $5.926 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis, which states that local wisdom has a significant effect on tourist satisfaction, is accepted. Tourist satisfaction has a significant effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). This is based on a t-statistic value of $9.061 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, the third hypothesis, which states that tourist satisfaction has a significant effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), is accepted.

Table 7. Indirect effect

	Original Sample (O)	t Statistics (O/STDEV)	p Values	Information
Tourism Destination Experience (TDE) → Tourist Satisfaction (KW) → Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)	0.162	2.994	0.003	Mediating
Local Wisdom (KL) → Tourist Satisfaction (KW) → Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)	0.368	4.571	0.000	Mediating

It can be seen from Table 7 that the effect of tourism destination attributes on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) mediated by tourist satisfaction is still significant, with a t-statistic of $2.994 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.003 < 0.05$. The tourism destination attributes variable has a direct effect On Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) that is not significant, whereas the indirect effect of tourism destination attributes on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) through tourist satisfaction is significant. This relationship indicates the presence of mediation and is classified as a full mediation. To determine the extent to which tourist satisfaction can mediate the effect of local wisdom on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), an indirect effects table can be examined. It can be seen from the table that the effect of local wisdom on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) mediated by tourist satisfaction is still significant, with a t-statistic of $4.571 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. The local wisdom variable has a direct effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) that is not significant, whereas the indirect effect of local wisdom on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) through tourist satisfaction is significant. This relationship indicates the presence of mediation and is classified as full mediation.

4.7 Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence on how tourism destination experiences and local wisdom influence Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) through the mediating role of tourist satisfaction. The results indicate that tourism destination experience and local wisdom do not directly affect e-WOM. Instead, their influence is fully mediated by tourist satisfaction, highlighting the critical role of satisfaction as a psychological mechanism that motivates tourists to share their experiences. These

findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that social motivations, emotional engagement, and post-visit evaluations are essential drivers of E-WOM behavior ([Munar & Jamal, 2021](#); [Yoo & Gretzel, 2021a](#)).

Tourism destination experiences significantly enhance tourist satisfaction, confirming that memorable, engaging, and culturally meaningful experiences increase emotional attachment and positive evaluations of a destination ([Munawar & Handayani, 2023](#); [Tassawa & Banjongprasert, 2019](#)). Similarly, local wisdom significantly contributes to satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of authentic cultural elements, such as traditional arts, cuisine, and community interactions, in shaping tourists' overall experiences ([Sthapit et al., 2019](#)). These results suggest that destination managers should prioritize cultural authenticity and immersive experiences to enhance visitor satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction was found to directly and significantly influence E-WOM, indicating that satisfied tourists are more likely to engage in online reviews, social media sharing, and recommendations, which enhance destination visibility and reputation ([Yoo & Gretzel, 2021b](#)). The mediating role of satisfaction underscores that creating memorable experiences alone is insufficient to stimulate E-WOM; destinations must ensure that these experiences translate into positive evaluations that motivate online sharing.

The results indicate that tourism destination experience and local wisdom do not significantly directly affect Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). This finding requires further interpretation, as it contrasts with several previous studies that have reported a direct positive relationship between these variables. One possible explanation is that tourists in Sikka Regency may not immediately translate their experiences into online sharing behaviors. Although tourism experiences and local wisdom contribute to cognitive and emotional evaluations, they may not be strong enough to directly trigger E-WOM without a higher level of satisfaction. In this case, tourist satisfaction acts as a necessary psychological mechanism that transforms experience into behavioral intention.

Another explanation relates to the characteristics of Sikka Regency as an emerging tourist destination. Compared to more developed destinations, tourists in Sikka may have lower levels of digital engagement or different motivations for sharing their experiences online. Limited access to digital infrastructure, lower social media activity, or the dominance of domestic tourists may reduce the likelihood of immediate E-WOM behavior, even when the experience is perceived positively. Cultural factors may also play a role. Local wisdom in Sikka is deeply rooted in traditional values and may be appreciated on a personal or emotional level rather than being actively shared in digital spaces. This suggests that while local wisdom enhances authenticity and satisfaction, it does not necessarily translate directly into online communication.

These findings are consistent with recent studies on emerging destinations, which suggest that the relationship between experience and E-WOM is often indirect and mediated by satisfaction. Therefore, the nonsignificant direct effects observed in this study highlight the importance of considering mediating variables when examining tourist behavior. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of integrating local culture and high-quality destination experiences to promote tourist satisfaction and leverage E-WOM as a strategic marketing tool. For destination managers, these results reinforce the importance of designing authentic, memorable, and emotionally engaging experiences to cultivate satisfied tourists who act as voluntary ambassadors and amplify destination visibility in the digital environment.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that tourism destination experience does not directly influence Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM); however, it has a significant positive effect on tourist satisfaction, which subsequently drives E-WOM. This indicates that tourist satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between tourism destination experience and e-WOM. Similarly, local wisdom does not have a direct effect on e-WOM, but it significantly enhances tourist satisfaction, which in turn encourages tourists to share their experiences online. This finding confirms that tourist satisfaction fully

mediates the relationship between local wisdom and E-WOM, emphasizing the importance of authentic cultural experiences in stimulating online communication behavior.

Furthermore, tourist satisfaction plays a pivotal role in generating E-WOM, as satisfied tourists are more likely to share positive experiences on digital platforms, thereby strengthening destination visibility and reputation. These findings suggest that destination managers should prioritize developing authentic, culturally rich, and memorable tourism experiences to enhance tourist satisfaction. Thus, tourists are more likely to engage in positive E-WOM, which can serve as a cost-effective and influential marketing strategy. Overall, this study confirms the critical role of tourist satisfaction as a full mediator linking tourism destination experience and local wisdom to E-WOM. This underscores the importance of integrating cultural authenticity and high-quality experiences into tourism planning to strengthen digital word-of-mouth promotion, particularly in emerging tourist destinations.

5.2 Research Limitations

Despite providing valuable insights into the relationships between tourism destination experience, local wisdom, tourist satisfaction, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), this study has several limitations. First, the use of accidental sampling limits the generalizability of the findings, as the sample may not fully represent the broader tourist population of Sikka Regency. Second, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be subject to response bias, including social desirability and recall bias. Third, the research focuses exclusively on a single geographic region, which may limit the applicability of the results to other destinations with different cultural, social and infrastructural contexts.

Additionally, this study considered only a limited number of variables, focusing on destination experience, local wisdom, and tourist satisfaction. Other potentially influential factors, such as service quality, price perception, digital engagement, and demographic characteristics, were not included and may affect e-WOM behavior. Finally, the cross-sectional design of the study does not allow for the examination of causal relationships over time, limiting the ability to assess the long-term effects of experiences and satisfaction on E-WOM. Future research should consider using probability sampling techniques, expanding the geographic scope, including additional predictors, and employing longitudinal designs to provide more robust and generalizable findings.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

From a practical perspective, these findings have important implications for tourism managers. First, destination managers should prioritize creating meaningful, memorable, and emotionally engaging tourism experiences that enhance tourist satisfaction. This can be achieved by improving service quality, ensuring consistency in tourism offerings, and designing experience-based tourism activities. Second, local wisdom should be integrated into tourism products through storytelling, cultural performances, and community-based tourism initiatives to enhance authenticity and visitor engagement.

Collaboration is essential for broader stakeholders, including local governments, tourism operators, and communities, to develop sustainable tourism strategies. Local governments should support infrastructure development and digital accessibility, and tourism businesses should innovate to deliver high-quality services. Simultaneously, local communities play a crucial role in preserving cultural authenticity and ensuring that local wisdom remains a distinctive value of the destination. In terms of digital promotion, this study offers strategic insights into enhancing e-WOM.

Tourism managers should actively encourage user-generated content by motivating tourists to share their experiences through social media platforms, online reviews, and travel blogs. This can be facilitated by creating “shareable moments,” such as visually appealing attractions, unique cultural experiences and interactive activities. Additionally, leveraging digital marketing strategies such as influencer collaborations, hashtag campaigns, and destination branding can further amplify online visibility. Providing incentives, such as rewards or recognition for online sharing, may also increase tourist participation in e-WOM. Overall, this study emphasizes that improving tourist satisfaction is key to strengthening digital promotion through E-WOM. By aligning experience design, cultural integration,

and digital engagement strategies, tourism stakeholders can enhance destination competitiveness and sustainability, particularly in emerging destinations such as the Sikka Regency.

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Author Contributions

YDPR contributed to the conceptualization of the study, research design, data collection, analysis, and manuscript drafting. YT was responsible for the methodology development, data analysis supervision, and critical revision of the manuscript. NHM contributed to the data collection, data processing, and initial drafting of the manuscript. LMJO assisted with the literature review, data interpretation, and manuscript editing. APKG contributed to the conceptual refinement, theoretical framework development, and manuscript revision. YM was responsible for overall supervision, validation of results, and final approval of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be held accountable for all aspects of the work.

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