

## **Role of Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Determining Destination Place to Visit: A Study in Lembang, Bandung**

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### **Abstract**

Nowadays word-of-mouth becomes an effective marketing communication strategy. Consumers prefer to gather information about their destinations, through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). The purpose of this research is to determine the role of electronic word-of-mouth that occurs in tourism in Bandung, Indonesia. Qualitative methodology was chosen and analyzed with case studies. In this research, a new attractive destination in Lembang selected as a case study because many photos that taking in that destination going viral recently. The data are collected by conducting interviews with tourist that visiting an attractive destination in Lembang. In order to decrease the data bias, the interview was conducted in that destination. The findings in this research, electronic word-of-mouth becomes a consideration while tourist choosing destination place, especially if it comes from the people around them as society, friends, and family.

*Keywords: eWOM; destination; tourism; Bandung; marketing*

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### **Introduction**

Nowadays, the tourism sector has gained rank 5th in making a local income in Indonesia (Koestantia et. al., 2014). It makes tourism sectors become one of the potential sectors to contribute to the Indonesian economy. The contribution of tourism will keep running if tourism is also growing, and tourism development is largely determined by movements in tourism. In the tourist movement, there are five stakeholders that involved. They are tourist, travel agent, transportation providers, accommodation providers, and tourist destination providers. In this tourism movement, the important key is tourist.

Bandung is now ranked four of the most favorite destinations in Asia after Bangkok, Seoul, and Mumbai by CNN (2015). This brings up several new tourist attractions. Moreover, since all the information becomes digital. The result of the APJII research in 2014 is approving, there are around 88.4 million internet users in Indonesia. The tourists can easily search for information about the desired destination over the internet.

Since the development of the Internet in the early 1990s, the way consumer search for information is changing. Currently the Internet has facilitated the interconnection of consumers. The occur of word-of-mouth face to face interaction between consumers is no longer needed. The Internet allows consumers to share information much easier than before. Changes in information technology introduced consumers to the various applications that can be used for kinds of activities by the majority of internet users, the applications that develop are social media.

Along with the advancement of internet technology, word-of-mouth based on the World Wide Web, or better known electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become increasingly widespread. A visitor from a destination can publish their thoughts, opinions, feelings and can also upload a photos or videos of the destinations. The visitors can also send it directly to the intended company or companies will be able to know from publications made by these visitors (Schindler and Bickart, 2005).

Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth can spread more widely and more quickly. As a result, the potential impact of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer behavior can be more powerful than traditional word-of-mouth. In addition, the electronic word-of-mouth referrals are usually unsolicited information providers, namely the information providers can provide information to recipients who are not looking for information or to recipients who have no interest in such information.

This gave rise to several new popularity destinations in the city, especially Bandung. Through the internet a destination can become viral and attract the attention of tourists.

One destination that becomes the talk on the internet is “European Village” in Lembang. According detik.com, this destinations become popular because it is considered one of the destinations that instagenic. Instagenic itself means to produce gorgeous photos for upload on Instagram. Destination that instagenic can provide their visitor to take more selfie.

“European Village” is one of the sights in Lembang, Bandung. European Village offers several spots by the beautiful scenery to take pictures like European-style home, gardens, artificial waterfalls, padlock of love, and the most famous one is the view of the "European House". The spot is unique because it has a view like a house in the popular Hollywood movie with the surrounding scenery in Europe titled “The Lord of The Rings”. In addition to the European House, visitors can feed and take pictures with various animals such as rabbits, goats, and sheep. Tourists can also take pictures while putting on traditional European costumes and buy typical of Europe and Indonesia handicrafts.

Tourism sector plays the pivotal role in Indonesian economic development. Meanwhile, the advancement of information technology changes the way people interact and the spread of information. Electronic word-of-mouth becomes effective marketing tools to introduce or promote a new destination. Thus, understanding how electronic word-of-mouth can be leveraged to introduce or promote tourism destination. This research aim is to describe how tourists’ destination place in Bandung can be a content of electronic word-of-mouth.

## Literature Review

Word-of-mouth has been found to exist in interactions between consumers since 1950. The study of Kotler (2012) showed that when consumers check information about the experience of other consumers buy the unknown product. Many consumers see the advertising in the mass media every day, consumers will no longer believe in the ads and prefer to listen to friends or other sources they trust. This happens because the information from friends or people around will be faster trustworthy than information obtained from advertising. Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA, 2012) defines word-of-mouth marketing as permission to talk about products or services, and provide a media to talk about it. This is referred as the art and science of establishing active communication from consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-marketers. Many marketers have noticed its strength and adopt it as a marketing strategy.

Before the internet era, according Sutisna (2002) most human communication process is by word-of-mouth. Each person every day talks with each other, mutual exchange of ideas, information exchange competitiveness, commented to each other, and other communication processes. The consumer may show consumer confidence. Consumers shared the product-related experiences through traditional word-of-mouth between family and friends by way of private conversations.

In the internet era, consumers are becoming more open about what they want. Through conversations in social media, consumers can easily give feedback or comments about the particular product or service. Information obtained from consumers what was discussed and how the experience of using the product or service with social media can lead to electronic word of mouth and emerges as a new channel of word-of-mouth (Dwyer, 2007).

In his research, Jansen *et al.* (2009) mentions that although similar to the traditional form of word-of-mouth before, electronic word-of-mouth offers a variety of ways to exchange information, many of them in the form of an anonymous or confidential. Online conversations may offer an easy and cost-effective opportunity. It is easier than private conversations that only happen when meet each other. In the last few years, researchers have been actively examining the effect of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer behavior.

Electronic word-of-mouth allow consumers to use information related to a product or service not only provided by people they know but also by a vast network of people who have already experienced the product or service (Jalilvand et al., 2011). The online communication refers to all contents published on the web via different network. Thus, new concepts and appeared to deal with the evolution of the information and communication technology such as viral marketing strategy that became word-of-mouth.



It is important for companies to adapt new communication channels, trends and integrate online networks into their online communication strategy. By taking part in different online communities, in that case for social media that consumers sharing their experiences through testimonials, pictures and videos, companies could communicate in a more effective way as well as better manage what it is said about them on the internet.

Additionally and since the coming of internet the social media never stopped gaining in importance leading to a new communication accepted point of view (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Within online communication greatly increased forcing companies to take them into consideration and integrate a new dimension into their online communication strategy. By integrating this dimension into their online communication strategy, companies open up new interesting opportunities to stimulate electronic word-of-mouth as well as then manage and control it.

Many factors can lead to electronic word-of-mouth. Nowadays, people are always taking photos anywhere, from the food they eat to the places they visit. No exception to the tourists. The tourists will immortalize their visit through the photos and then upload them to social media to show where they have been. According Schau and Gilly (2003), it becomes very important for them to build their self-image. To build a self-image they need a media that can be reached easily by the average person, that is social media.

In social media, the most of any uploading for improving their self-image. They will show off what they eat, what they do and wherever they visit. But the tourists do not necessarily upload all the photos they take wherever they visited. Uploads or not a place can also be affected by the satisfaction they get when visiting the place. Things to be generally considered is the uniqueness or the beauty of scenery from the destinations.

Self-image is formed by one person raised the perception of others. These perceptions form a concept of how a person sees the image of the other person. We can control how the perceptions of others towards us through the image that we want to build. The formation of self-image is formed concept called the reflected appraisals of self (Schlenker, 1980). And everyone will choose to show the positive side of them, which want to make an impression in others mind (Ratner and Kahn, 2002). That's the impression given to encourage an electronic word-of-mouth both positive and negative (Holmes and Lett, 1977).

According Kim et al. (2015), there are three factors that consumers themselves can influence the occurrence of electronic word of mouth.

1. Reflected appraisal of self.

Consumers want to create the image of themselves as what they want to show in front of others. They will showcase any product or service they have purchased, or whichever destination they have visited to gain recognition from others.

2. Conspicuous.

Consumers feel if they buy a particular product or service and show it off to others, then their value will increase.

3. Self-image congruity.

Consumers find products or services they buy is suitable to them or even reflect how they are.

## Methodology

This research aims to describe how tourists' destination place in Bandung can be a content of electronic word-of-mouth used qualitative methods. The data collection was conducted by interviewing the 13 interviewers who all were visitors the attractive destination in Lembang that has been selected. That destination selected as a case study because this destination was discussed in social media. The target population in this study was visitors of the attractive destination in Lembang that has been selected. In this study used primary data obtained from interviews. The interview last for about 20 minutes each.

One attractive destination in Lembang selected as a case study. The data collection conducted using the interview method. Interviews consisted with some questions about the reasons how they obtain the information about destination and whether they would recommend that destination to others. The interview was conducted



by semi-structured with open questions. This was done in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the interviewees.

## Results and Discussion

Based on interview that conducted with 13 respondents, this is the results that get by elaborate from 13 interviews. Most of the interviewees are female with age about 18 until 35 years old. Most of them are college student that who study around Bandung and were on vacation with their friends. Meanwhile, there are also interviewees that vacationing with family.

### *How tourists obtain information*

According to the interviews conducted, most of interviewee to get information about the destination from social media. Most of interviewee mentioned that their information search on that destination comes from Instagram. Among social media used, interviewee said that Instagram easier for them to get information because Instagram is social media to share photos. They say that with the photos they can instantly be able to see the view of the destinations they will visit. Meanwhile, there are other visitor that gets information from the newspaper or on others social media such as Facebook and What's App Messenger.

According the interviewee that on Instagram, they can see photos of others that they do not know in many ways. If they already know the destination that they seek, then they only need to include the name of the destination in the search field. They can also find photos from other people who have been loved by their friends or the photo will appear in explore column if the destination is following their preferences. In addition, tourists can also find a destination from Instagram account that does contain destination in Bandung.

Several interviewees mentioned that they got the information from Instagram account on tourism in Bandung, namely @explorebandung. The account is created with the aim that anyone who wants to surround Bandung, can see the photos from destinations in Bandung as a reference. The account also facilitates tourists who have surrounded Bandung to share his experiences through photos on the account. Tourists who upload their pictures of a destination can be included #explorebandung in the caption column, then the @explorebandung will re-post the photo to be seen by other travelers who may not know each other. On that account, the tourists are also allowed to leave comments or ask each other about their experiences at a particular destination. By including #explorebandung in caption column, then the @explorebandung will have the right to re-post the images to others.

The interviewees said that by looking at the number of posts photos of that destination, making them more curious how that destination. Curiosity is what makes them seek further information as reference and decided to visit their own. This can be interpreted if photographs of destinations appear frequently on Instagram, it can stimulate the curiosity of tourists to visit it directly.

### *Trigger of the electronic word-of-mouth*

Curiosity is what attracts them to visit these destinations. After visiting this place and see the famous spot directly, the interviewee said they would take photos on that spot and then upload it to their own social media. More and more tourists want to take photos on the site meet one of electronic word-of-mouth dimensions mentioned by Goyette et al. (2010), namely intensity. The number of photos uploaded it creates an intensity and create electronic word-of-mouth.

Kim *et al* (2015) states that there are three things that trigger an electronic word of mouth based on the self-tourists. That destination may encourage tourists to meet these three factors.

#### 1. Reflected appraisal of self.

The higher the intensity of tourists who upload photos with background in that destination, someone who has never taken a picture of that destination be not up to date. A interviewee stated that the second visit was only for taking photos at the same spot. Because on his first visit, a photo that is not good, then he would not be able to upload photos to social media. So to be able to upload it, he took the time to go back to that



destination just to take a photo once again on the spot. Other interviewees said that they definitely upload their photos to Instagram. Their goals upload those photos to show off themselves that they never visited that destination.

2. Conspicuous value.

The interviewees said that they upload their photos to let others know that they visited this destination. By visiting these destinations, they feel their value increases due to have visited a destination that is trending topic.

3. Self-image congruity.

All respondents indicated that the destination is a comfortable and suitable for them. Because location of this destination place in Lembang where a plateau, most of interviewee feel comfort with the cool air and it is brings up enjoyable.

### *Information circle*

All the interviewees mentioned that they get information about that destination from friends. The interviewees said that the friend is a source that can be trusted, especially if the friend had visited the place. The information exchange could be through online and direct conversation. Direct conversation happened when they met in college and the workplace or while they hang out in cafes with their friends. They usually talk about vacation and destinations that have never visited. Most of interviewees said that they also talk about that topic in social media such as Blackberry Messenger, What's App, and comment in friend's photos in Instagram. In Blackberry Messenger and What's App, they talk private from one user to another user. They asked to their friends who has visited Bandung about popular destination. In other condition, Blackberry Messenger and What's App provide to make small group conversation, interviewee said that their friends who has visited this destination and tell about their experience. Different with Blackberry Messenger and What's App, in Instagram, interviewee said that they see their friend's photo. If they want to seeking for another photos, most interviewees said that they search through hashtag that follow with name of this destination, meanwhile some interviewees said that they search through @explorebandung.

Not necessarily all the friends they can trust. A interviewee said that initially a group in What's App was give him information. But the interviewee feels the information is less reliable because there are no photos as evidence and he was not very familiar with the person providing the information. The next moment he received the information from a close friend, so the interviewee ended up seeking further information on Instagram. Whatever user posted in What's App, their friend can not see it because confidential. In What's App, the user only can send to another user, only one user to another one user. What's App allow the user to create a group, which is one user can share to many people, but that group has capacity limit. Different with What's App, in Instagram, all photos that upload can be seen with all people either following or not, except the user make it private that make only friends who follow that can see but quantity of people who follow has no limit. This is following Beerli and Martin (2004), which the information obtained from informal sources such as friends and relatives will be more influential than ads in determining a person's decision to come to a tourist destination or not.

For summary, tourist who has visited a destination and feel satisfied, will notify information about these destinations to which another friend who had never visited. It is forming a circle of information (Figure 1.) that ultimately created the electronic word of mouth if that circle occurs over and over. Where a tourist who had never visited that destination view photos from a friend who uploaded to Instagram, then it raises curiosity and made the tourists seeking additional information. After getting the desired information, the tourists will visit these destinations. That stage when a tourist raises their curiosity, seeking information then decide to visit the destination is inclusive in decision making process.

If tourists are also felt satisfaction when visiting these destinations, then the tourists will upload their pictures while in these destinations and viewed by other friends, and that friends will experience the same phase. This is following Sernovitz (2006) who said that one of the things that became the basic motivation of word of mouth is their satisfaction on his experience when visiting the tourist destinations place.



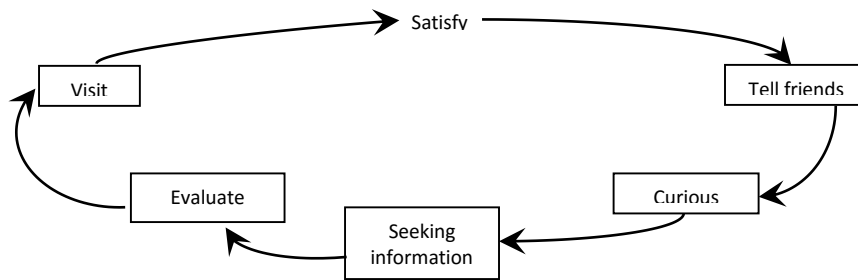


Figure 1. Information Circle

## Conclusion

The aim of this research is to describe how tourists' destination place in Bandung can be contain electronic word-of-mouth. Tourists would consider visiting a tourism destination they had not yet visited by electronic word-of-mouth which electronic word-of-mouth has experience of other visitors. The electronic word-of-mouth emerged a curiosity, and they search more information in social media, especially Instagram. In Instagram they can find a lot of selfies which taken in that destination. Based on the photos, they want to visiting that destination themselves. They want to take photos and upload it in Instagram too. Word-of-mouth would be more trustworthy if sourced from the people nearby like community, friends, and family.

Information circle can be used as part of a marketing strategy especially in Instagram. Destination places that have had a unique concept and instagenic, can create unique hashtag that is specific to the destination by way repost photos that have been uploaded and added the caption with the hashtag. But it also can take advantage of the cooperation to be promoted through @explorebandung account. This can help photos of this destination places more often appeared on Instagram and finally into electronic word-of-mouth.

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