

The Nexus Between Social Media Activities, Destination Brand Awareness and Destination Brand Image

Benny Hutahaeyan*

Departement of Business Administration, Brawijaya University
bennyhutahayan@ub.ac.id*

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*Korespondensi Penulis

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the nexus between social media activities, destination brand awareness, and destination brand image in the destination of Kota Batu, East Java, Indonesia. The theoretical framework is grounded in customer-based brand equity, leveraging the role of social media activity in interacting with destination brand equity. This research employs a quantitative approach, distributing questionnaires to domestic tourists visiting the destination of Kota Batu. The determination of the sample size in this study utilizes the Slovin formula with the assistance of an online tool (www.qualtrics.com). This calculation also considers data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Batu City regarding the total number of domestic tourists in 2022. Consequently, based on this calculation, 271 respondents were determined as the sample, particularly focusing on domestic tourists visiting tourist destinations in Batu City. The research findings suggest that destination brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between interaction, trendiness, e-WOM, and destination brand image. A mediating variable implies that it can influence the relationship. The findings of this research indicate that the dimensions of social media activity have a positive and significant impact on destination brand awareness. Meanwhile, destination brand awareness positively and significantly influences destination image. Regarding the mediating role of destination brand awareness, it has a positive and significant effect.

Keyword: Social Media activity; Destination Brand Image.

INTRODUCTION

The role of digitalization has transformed the way tourists seek information for their travel (Buhalis et al., 2019), presenting opportunities for enhancing destination branding activities (Ampountolas, 2018; Qu et al., 2011). Especially, social media platforms have created virtual activities that connect users, enabling interactive information sharing (Lim et al., 2020; Lund et al., 2018). This phenomenon aligns with the role of digitalization, particularly through social media, in the tourism sector, branding destinations to differentiate products and services from competing tourist destinations (Ampountolas, 2018). Therefore, the connection with customer-based brand equity in the tourism sector becomes highly relevant in line with the growth of social media users. In Indonesia, We Are Social (2023) reported 191 million active social media users in January 2022, representing a 12.35% increase. Consequently, tourist engagement in spontaneous interactions with developing destination branding contributes to brand equity. As explained by So et al. (2014), these social media platforms have strong implications in marketing activities crucial for destination managers in their branding strategies. The nexus between social media activity and customer-based brand equity has been linked to elements that help foster the attachment of tourists and destinations through positive emotions (Di Matteo and Cavuta, 2016; Kladou and Kehagias, 2014).

The availability of information on social media platforms has become a valuable channel for prospective tourists in searching for their intended travel destinations (Kang, 2018). Uşaklı et al. (2017) stated that the role of social media activity can trigger destination brand awareness through connectivity within social media platforms, spontaneously generating inherent activities. This is achieved through content available on social media platforms that users can access in real-time, impacting the awareness

of tourists in their decision-making process to visit a destination (Dedeoğlu et al., 2019). Furthermore, Uşaklı et al. (2017) emphasized the crucial role of connectivity within social media platforms, where interactions and connections among users create a complex information network. When one user shares a positive experience about a specific destination, that information can rapidly spread to various other users. This is referred to as a domino effect within the social media community, where one post can trigger a chain reaction, leading to an increase in awareness of that destination. The importance of real-time content cannot be overlooked (Dedeoğlu et al., 2019). Through social media, users can instantly access information about a destination. In this context, social media activity not only serves as an information channel but also plays a key role in building and strengthening destination brand awareness (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2022; Stojanovic et al., 2022; Tatar et al., 2016). Destinations that are active on social media, sharing engaging content, participating in interactions with users, and responding quickly to questions or feedback, can enhance their brand awareness. The higher the level of brand awareness for a destination, the greater the likelihood that the destination will be considered by prospective tourists when choosing a travel destination.

Moreover, social media activity is also highlighted in various literature on destination marketing, indicating a strong correlation with destination brand image. Findings from Stojanovic et al. (2018) reveal that the intensity of social media usage creates boundless interactions, impacting not only brand awareness but also brand image. This aligns with Keller (1993), who emphasizes that brand awareness is crucial for the formation of brand image, stemming from the extension of branding. Therefore, content containing information generating activities on social media platforms can stimulate and influence the formation of destination brand image (Bruhn et al., 2012; Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015). Especially, tourists, after visiting and having a positive experience that meets their expectations, can share this on social media platforms, contributing to the formation of destination brand image (Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015). Thus, various previous studies have highlighted the interconnection between destination brand awareness and destination brand image (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2020; Stojanovic et al., 2018).

A more in-depth investigation into the influence of social media activities on elements of customer-based brand equity can shed new light on the tourism context. Social media activities, through platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, have become the primary channels for tourists to interact with destinations and brands. However, how these activities directly impact elements such as brand awareness and brand image remains an area of research that is not fully explored. Within the framework of customer-based brand equity, it is crucial to understand how user interactions with content on social media can build loyalty to specific destinations, associate them with positive values, enhance brand awareness, and influence perceptions of destination quality, ultimately leading to the formation of destination brand image. The extent to which the role of social media activity influences the interaction between destination brand awareness and image needs further investigation. By understanding these mechanisms, destination managers can design more effective social media strategies to build and maintain strong relationships with tourists, as well as enhance the value and brand image of the destination in consumers' minds. This research will provide a more holistic insight into how social media activities can be used as a strategic tool to build strong brand equity in the tourism sector.

Customer Based Brand Equity

Washburn et al. (2004) define customer-based brand equity as brand equity viewed from the customer's perspective. Tasci (2018) describes brand equity as the overall value and usefulness of a brand compared to competitors based on consumer perceptions. There are several dimensions that encompass brand equity, including awareness, image, quality, and loyalty (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Specifically, Keller (2016) divides the concept of Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) into two main components: 1) brand awareness, consisting of brand recall and recognition by consumers, and 2) brand image, characterized by the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of various attributes and associations beneficial to the brand. In the context of tourism, destination brand equity can create differentiation and enhance the competitiveness of tourist destinations (Huang et al., 2013). The current use of social media marketing activities is a considered strategy to boost destination brand equity. Findings from Kim and Ko (2012) explain that social media marketing activities have a positive influence on brand equity. Research by Shen and Bissell (2013) states that the use of social media can enhance brand awareness

and brand image, resulting in strengthened brand loyalty. Furthermore, social media marketing activities facilitate interactions between companies, brands, and customers, enhancing their experiences and feelings towards a brand, in this case, a tourist destination (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Pham & Gammoh (2015) note that based on previous research, social media marketing activities, in general, can have a positive impact on brand equity.

Interaction on Destination Brand Awareness

Interaction plays a crucial role in creating significant changes in the connectivity between products, services, and users in social media marketing (Sharmin et al., 2021). Khan & Hashim (2020) explain that social media facilitates interactions and the exchange of perspectives between business owners/managers and consumers regarding products and services. Another study by Langaro et al. (2018) mentions that the use of social media marketing is an essential component in shaping perceptions of a brand. Brand awareness signifies the potential availability of a product/service in the consumer's mind, a prerequisite for considering the use of products/services. Therefore, the creation of brand awareness is crucial (Keller, 1993; Langaro et al., 2018). In the context of tourism, brand awareness can enhance the potential interest in a destination compared to others (Kladou and Kehagias, 2014a). Sustainably creating brand awareness enables the provision of optimistic information and positive emotions that can motivate potential tourists to visit a destination (Baldauf et al., 2003). Nikabadi et al. (2015) argue that communication channels are a means that facilitates the creation of destination brand awareness among consumers and should be considered. Therefore, the current use of the internet and social media is the primary choice as the two most important communication channels determining brand awareness (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020), where interaction is one of its crucial components.

H1: Interaction positively and significantly influence on destination brand awareness

Trendiness on Destination Brand Awareness

Trendiness is defined as the provision of up-to-date information about products or services (Godey et al., 2016). In this context, social media marketing is increasingly utilized because social media is considered capable of providing the latest information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Seo (2018) also states that the widespread use of social media marketing drives the emergence of new trends and efficiently expresses ideas about experiences that will be obtained online, serving as a means to maintain/establish relationships with consumers. Furthermore, Sharmin et al. (2021) agree that the use of technology is providing innovative sustainable business models for tourism organizations and setting trends as a priority for destination marketing industries. This is supported by the fact that the use of social media platforms brings a pleasant (even personal) focus and becomes a new trend in sharing information. Clark and Melancon (2013), Khan (2019), and Seo (2018) affirm that social media marketing positively relates to customer satisfaction, provides a means to build and maintain relationships, serves as a feedback mechanism, enhances the quality of products or services, and increases brand awareness. In the context of tourism, destination brand awareness plays a crucial role in determining destination quality perceptions, wherein consumers have positive perceptions of the image of a tourist destination. Therefore, it can be concluded that trendiness as a part of social media marketing plays a crucial role in the formation of destination brand awareness, serving as one of the destination management strategies to develop sustainable business practices.

H2: Trendiness positively and significantly influence on destination brand awareness

E-WOM on Destination Brand Awareness

Consumers tend to always seek information about products/services they intend to use to minimize unpleasant experiences when using the offered products/services. In this context, word of mouth is a common choice for obtaining such information (Yoon and Kim, 2010). With the rapid advancement of technology, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) becomes an alternative for obtaining needed information about products/services. e-WOM is defined as the communication process among consumers to exchange positive or negative information acquired through direct or indirect experiences about a particular company, product, or service (Abubakar, 2016; Lim, 2010). Bronner & de Hoog (2011) argue that e-WOM is an effective form of online reviews in assisting customers in decision-making regarding intangible products/services like tourism. The use of e-WOM allows consumers to access information quickly and widely (Luo and Zhong, 2015). Cheung and Lee (2012) explain that

there are at least four components that distinguish e-WOM from traditional WOM: e-WOM spreads faster and more extensively, e-WOM enables persistent and easily accessible communication, communication in e-WOM can be measured, and e-WOM reduces the recipient's ability to assess the credibility of the obtained information. In the context of tourism, e-WOM can be a choice to enhance destination brand awareness, generating positive perceptions about a destination that may lead to an intention to visit (Ngan & Chinh, 2020). Furthermore, e-WOM is a powerful advertising tool that can raise brand awareness, supporting brand visibility.

H3: E-WOM positively and significantly influence on destination brand awareness

Destination Brand Awareness on Destination Brand Image

Brand equity is recognized as the overall value and usefulness of a brand compared to competitors based on consumer perceptions (Tasci, 2018). In the context of tourism, there are several components to consider in enhancing destination brand equity, with two crucial dimensions being destination brand awareness and destination brand image (Saeed & Shafique, 2019; Tran et al., 2019). According to Keller (2003), destination brand awareness and destination brand image are the primary dimensions of destination brand equity. Ngan & Chinh (2020) explain that improving destination brand awareness and destination brand image is necessary to attract more tourists to a destination. Increasing destination brand awareness can be achieved by paying attention to the emotions and specific connections between tourists and the destination (Murphy et al., 2007). On the other hand, brand image relates to consumer sentiments towards a specific brand, encompassing a set of brand associations in the consumer's mind and aiding in brand recall (Chi et al., 2019). In the context of tourism, destination brand image is defined as an individual's psychological expression of beliefs, emotions, and overall perceptions of a specific destination (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Ngan & Chinh (2020) agree that destination brand image is used to enhance awareness of destination attributes that differentiate it from competitors. Therefore, destination brand awareness and destination brand image become focal points in marketing strategies to achieve desired goals, particularly in the context of increasing and sustaining tourism destinations.

H4: Destination brand awareness positively and significantly influence on destination brand image

The Mediating Role of Destination Brand Awareness

According to Yuwo (2013) and Ngan & Chinh (2020), destination brand image can be perceived as everything that connects visitors' thoughts about the attributes of a specific destination (which could be a country, island, or city), an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, emotions, visual impressions, and the intention to visit a destination. In this context, there is also a need for an increase in destination brand awareness. Brand awareness, in itself, depicts the potential availability of a product/service in the minds of consumers, a prerequisite for considering the choice of using a product/service (Langaro et al., 2018). In the era of widespread technology use, the creation of destination brand awareness and destination brand image as part of marketing strategies is inseparable from the use of social media (social media marketing activities). Yadav & Rahman (2017) explain that social media marketing activities are a process to create, communicate, and offer a product/service using social media platforms, aiming to build and maintain relationships and convey offers. Several components support social media marketing activities, including interaction, trendiness, and word-of-mouth. Interaction allows companies and consumers to interact and exchange views on products and services (Khan & Hashim, 2020). Regarding trendiness, social media marketing is considered a means to provide up-to-date information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Meanwhile, Ngan & Chinh (2020) elaborate that in this context, e-WOM becomes a powerful strategy to increase brand awareness. Setiawan's (2014) research found that e-WOM has a direct influence on destination image. In other words, in the context of social media marketing activities in the tourism industry, interaction, trendiness, and word-of-mouth are interconnected with the achievement of destination brand awareness and destination brand image, crucial for the development of destinations.

H5: Destination brand awareness mediates positively and significantly between interaction and destination brand image

H6: Destination brand awareness mediates positively and significantly between trendiness and destination brand image

H7: Destination brand awareness mediates positively and significantly between E-WOM and destination brand image

METHOD

This research employs a quantitative design approach through the distribution of questionnaires to domestic tourists visiting tourist destinations in Kota Batu. The determination of the sample size is based on the calculation using the Slovin formula, facilitated by an online sample size solution that provides the minimum required sample size (www.qualtrics.com). This calculation also considers data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Batu City regarding the total number of national tourists in the year 2022. Consequently, based on this calculation, 271 respondents are selected as the sample, specifically targeting domestic tourists visiting tourist destinations in Kota Batu. Meanwhile, the data collection technique utilizes simple random sampling, where every individual in the population has an equal chance of being chosen, necessitating a random selection process.

In terms of data processing analysis, the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach is employed as a causal modeling approach, aiming to maximize the explained variance of the dependent latent construct. PLS is grounded in an iterative combination of principal component analysis and regression to elucidate the variance of constructs in the model (Chin, 1998). This approach enables researchers to sidestep biased and inconsistent parameter estimates, serving as an effective analytical tool for testing interactions by reducing errors and facilitating analysis using small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2014). Beyond that, PLS is utilized for hypothesis development, prediction in complex situations, and features that facilitate multivariate data analysis. In contrast to previous Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which relies on theoretical evidence with parametric assumptions that must be met (Hair et al., 2019), PLS-SEM is the statistical method employed in this research, particularly in the fields of social sciences and business, to analyze complex relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, PLS-SEM is used to test the conceptual model connecting various variables and to determine the extent to which the model fits the collected data (Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2017). Reliability measurement in PLS-SEM involves Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with a standard indicator loading of 0.70, while validity employs the average variance extracted (AVE) with an acceptable value of more than 0.50, following Hair et al.'s recommendations (2014). The questionnaire was designed based on previous research in the same context, adopting construct measures. This study utilizes several variables from the construct, namely social media activity, which is measured by interaction (five items), trendiness (five items), and E-WOM (four items), each measured using scales developed by Kim and Ko (2012). Destination brand awareness is measured with four items developed by Boo et al. (2009), and destination brand image is measured with three items developed by Barreda et al. (2020).

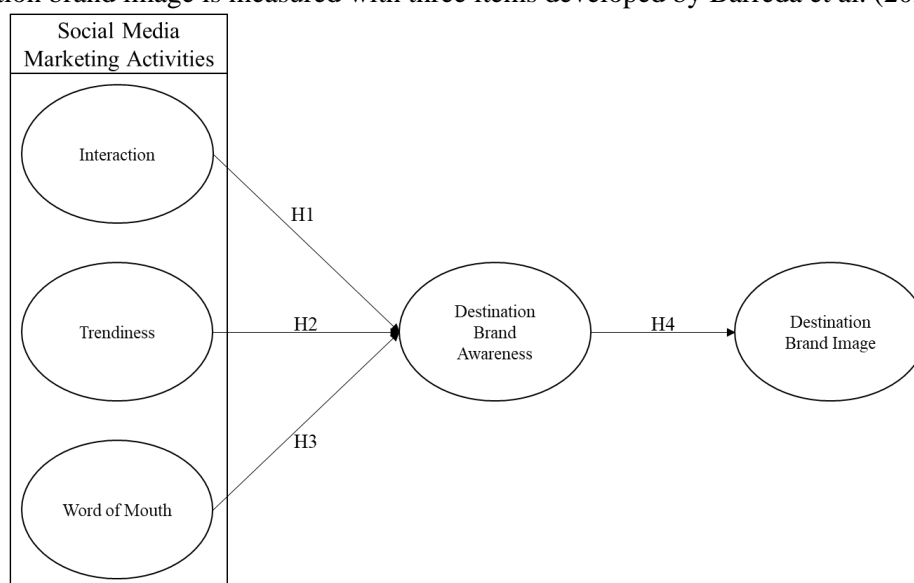


Figure 1. Research Model
Sources: Author (2024)

RESULT and DISCUSSION

Result

The demographic profile of the respondents can be observed in Table 1 below, which presents information on gender, respondent age, level of education, and travel expenses.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Profile

	Demography	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	144	53.13
	Female	127	46.80
Age	21-25	75	27.67
	26-30	83	30.62
	31-35	60	22.14
	>36	53	19.55
Social Media Users	Tiktok	117	43.17
	Instagram	105	38.74
	Facebook	49	18.08
Travel Expenses	<Rp 500.000	89	32.84
	Rp 500.001-1.000.000	104	38.37
	Rp 1.000.001-1.500.000	52	19.18
	>1.500.001	26	9.59

Sources: Author (2024)

Partial least squares are used to test research hypotheses while simultaneously evaluating measurement and structural models. The PLS analysis revealed two main results, including the inner model and the outer model. The inner model refers to the latent variable relationship in the form of a structural model or path matrix, and the outer model is represented by the validity and reliability values of the configuration. Table 2 below is a construct measurement that tests validity and reliability. As recommended by Hair et al (2019) which explains that the reliability value that refers to the Cronbach's value and composite reliability must be greater than 0.7 while the validity refers to the value generated based on the average variance extracted (AVE). Therefore, the results of the reliability measurement in this study revealed that all variables have Cronbach's values even greater than 0.9, including interaction (0.872), trendiness (0.904), E-WOM (0.849), destination brand awareness (0.816) and destination brand image (0.886). Furthermore, related to the composite reliability value, all variables in this study resulted in more than 0.9, including interaction (0.908), trendiness (0.922), E-WOM (0.895), destination brand awareness (0.882) and destination brand image (0.929). Thus, both reliability measurements have been met based on the resulting values, are declared acceptable and guarantee adequate reliability. Meanwhile, related to validity, it was proven by calculating the AVE value and it was even revealed that all variables had an AVE value greater than 0.5, including interaction (0.667), trendiness (0.705), E-WOM (0.687), destination brand awareness (0.657) and destination brand image (0.814). Thus, the constructs measured in this study indicated to have met a strong validity value and the discriminant validity score for each configuration was higher than the correlation with other configurations in the model (see Table 3).

Table 2. Construct Measurement

Variable	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbachs' Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Interaction	INT1	4.192	0.478	0.872	0.908	0.667
	INT2	4.225	0.567			
	INT3	4.173	0.466			
	INT4	4.221	0.566			
	INT5	4.077	0.686			
Trendiness	TREND1	4.376	0.647	0.904	0.922	0.705
	TREND2	4.295	0.632			
	TREND3	4.295	0.627			
	TREND4	4.221	0.731			
	TREND5	4.292	0.625			

E-WOM	E-WOM1	4.446	0.663			
	E-WOM2	4.339	0.684			
	E-WOM3	4.454	0.685			
	E-WOM4	4.446	0.684			
				0.849	0.895	0.687
Destination Brand Awareness	DBA1	4.218	0.682			
	DBA2	4.332	0.719			
	DBA3	4.225	0.685			
	DBA4	4.066	0.639			
				0.816	0.882	0.657
Destination Brand Image	DBI1	3.908	0.673			
	DBI2	3.882	0.714			
	DBI3	3.863	0.783			
				0.886	0.929	0.814

Sources: Resources, 2024

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

	Destination Brand Awareness	Destination Brand Image	E-WOM	Interaction	Trendiness
Destination Brand Awareness					
Destination Brand Image	0.569				
E-WOM	0.451	0.239			
Interaction	0.533	0.317	0.456		
Trendiness	0.381	0.484	0.589	0.379	

Sources: Author (2024)

Table 4 presents the results of the statistical analysis conducted through bootstrapping in PLS-SEM to assess model-fit and path coefficients, which are quantities used to determine the overall effect of the relationship on the inner model and in line with the designed hypotheses (Figure 1). A partial sequential model was determined for statistical analysis, revealing the relationship between variables and resulting in coefficient of determination (R^2) values for destination brand awareness (0.276) and destination brand image (0.237). Based on the analysis, the relationships between interaction ($\beta=0.316$; $p\text{-value}>0.05$), trendiness ($\beta=0.159$; $p\text{-value}>0.05$), and E-WOM ($\beta=0.186$; $p\text{-value}>0.05$) with destination brand awareness have a positive and significant impact, thus accepting H1, H2, and H3. Meanwhile, the relationship between destination brand awareness and destination brand image has a positive and significant effect ($\beta=0.487$; $p\text{-value}>0.05$), accepting H4. Furthermore, destination brand awareness significantly and positively mediates the relationships between interaction, trendiness, E-WOM, and destination brand image, thus accepting H5, H6, and H7.

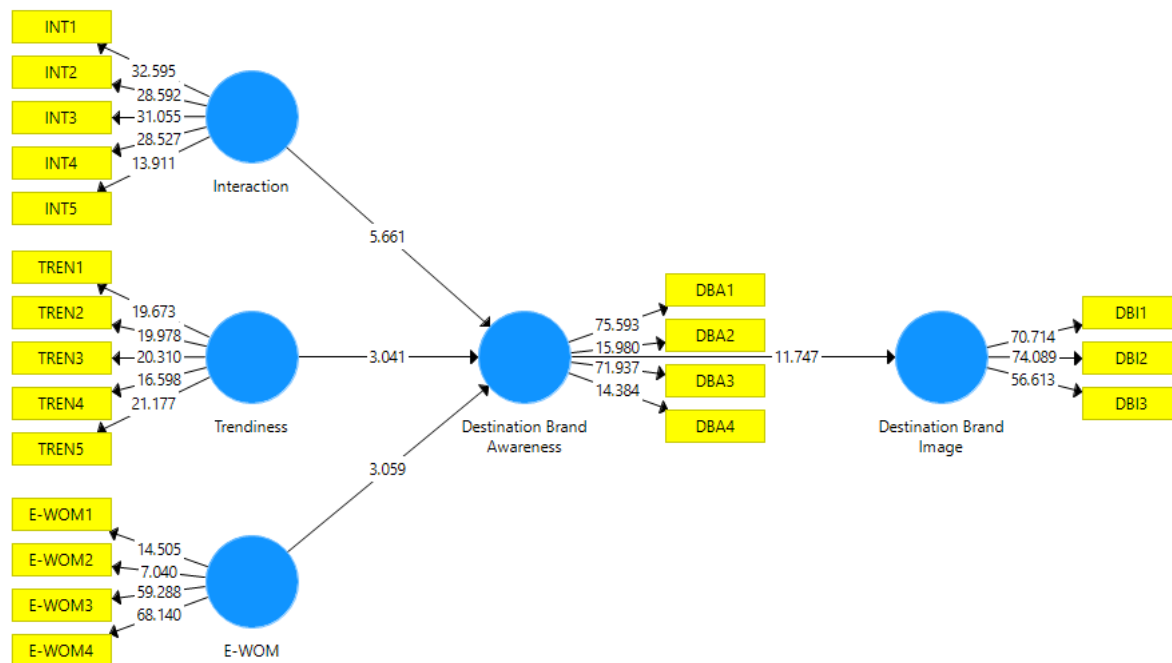
Table 4. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Direct Effect (β)	Indirect Effect (β)	T Score	P Values	Conclusion
INT \rightarrow DBA	0.316		5.661	0.000	Accepted
TREND \rightarrow DBA	0.159		3.041	0.002	Accepted
E-WOM \rightarrow DBA	0.186		3.059	0.002	Accepted
DBA \rightarrow DBI	0.487		11.747	0.000	Accepted
INT \rightarrow DBA \rightarrow DBI		0.154	4.918	0.000	Accepted
TREND \rightarrow DBA \rightarrow DBI		0.078	2.828	0.005	Accepted
E-WOM \rightarrow DBA \rightarrow DBI		0.091	2.908	0.004	Accepted

N= 271

R^2 = DBA (0.276); DBI (0.237)

Sources: Author (2024)



Discussion

The aim of this study is to identify the relationships among the variables of interaction, trendiness, E-WOM, destination brand image, and destination brand awareness, ultimately impacting the development of the tourism industry. Based on the theoretical framework, Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) views brand equity from the customer's perspective, where brand equity is defined as the overall value and utility of a brand compared to competitors based on consumer perceptions (Tasci, 2018; Washburn et al., 2004). The rapid development of technology, particularly in marketing, has introduced new strategies, such as using social media or social media marketing activities. The utilization of social media can enhance brand awareness and brand image, attributed to social media marketing activities fostering interactions among companies, brands, and customers, thereby enhancing their experiences and feelings toward a brand (Mangold and Faulds, 2009) and leading to strengthened brand loyalty (Shen and Bissell, 2013). In connection with this, research findings indicate that both interaction, trendiness, and E-WOM, components within social media marketing activities, have a positive and significant influence on destination brand awareness. This demonstrates that effective use of social media, by strengthening interactions, creating trends, and utilizing E-WOM effectively, impacts tourists' awareness of a destination. This, in turn, can motivate individuals to visit a tourism destination, revisit, or even attract more tourists by providing positive experiences shared through social media, which serves as a broad information source. The optimization of social media marketing to enhance destination brand awareness also needs to be balanced with the tourism management's ability to provide quality content, considering trendiness, maintaining good relationships with tourists and potential visitors, as well as maximizing E-WOM. Conversely, the absence or suboptimal use of social media or social media marketing in a destination can result in reduced destination brand awareness, negatively impacting the sustainability and continuity of a tourism destination.

Moreover, the research findings indicate that destination brand awareness significantly influences destination brand image. These results conclude that the better the destination brand awareness an individual has for a particular destination, the more positively correlated it is with an enhanced destination brand image. The improvement in destination brand awareness is closely related to the beliefs, emotions, and overall perceptions of tourists toward a specific destination. In this context, these aspects can be achieved through the use of social media marketing, taking into account interaction, trendiness, and e-WOM. Ngan & Chinh (2020) explain that destination brand image is utilized to enhance awareness of destination attributes that differentiate it from competitors. Therefore, the enhancement of both destination brand awareness and destination brand image is essential to attract more tourists to visit a destination. In this context, it is elucidated that when tourism destination

managers successfully increase both destination brand awareness and destination brand image, more tourists are likely to visit the offered tourism destination. Conversely, when a destination has low levels of destination brand awareness and destination brand image, the number of tourists visiting is also likely to be low. Therefore, maximizing marketing strategies, with a focus on social media marketing, should be a priority for tourism managers to achieve sustainable tourism.

Thirdly, the research findings suggest that destination brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between interaction, trendiness, e-WOM, and destination brand image. A mediating variable implies that it can influence the relationship. In this context, it is stated that the better the destination brand awareness, the more positive the relationship between interaction, trendiness, e-WOM, and destination brand image. This is crucial because the destination brand image a destination possesses is needed to attract more tourists who visit, recommend the destination to others, and even intend to revisit. The results of this study illustrate the crucial role of using social media marketing activities (interaction, trendiness, e-WOM) to shape and enhance both destination brand awareness and destination brand image. However, in this context, attention should be given to the quality of generating trendy content and maximizing interaction through social media to create a positive impression. Destination managers who can present these aspects through their social media platforms have great potential to develop their tourist destination through the awareness and image they have cultivated.

Theoretical Contribution

Destination brand equity is mentioned to create differentiation and enhance the competitiveness of a tourist destination (Huang et al., 2013). In this process, the current use of social media marketing activities has become a considered strategy to increase destination brand equity. Findings from Kim and Ko (2012) explain that social media marketing activities have a positive influence on brand equity. Research by Shen and Bissell (2013) states that the use of social media can increase brand awareness and brand image, resulting in strengthening brand loyalty. In line with these findings, this study demonstrates that social media marketing activities have a significant influence on destination brand awareness, as seen from the positive relationship between the components of social media marketing activities (interaction, trendiness, and E-WOM) and destination brand awareness. This positive relationship signals to tourism managers to develop their skills and focus on using social media as a marketing tool. Although experiencing positive impacts from the use of social media must be balanced and accompanied by maximizing the use of social media, such as presenting quality content, staying up-to-date, or even being relatable to the target audience, and more. Furthermore, it is also found that destination brand awareness is positively related to destination brand image. This implies that the better the awareness of potential tourists about a destination, the better the image that the destination holds in the hearts of tourists or potential tourists. This, in turn, becomes one of the driving factors for people to visit and explore a destination.

Practical Contribution

The research findings underscore the crucial role of social media marketing activities in promoting sustainable tourism and emphasize the need for tourism managers to prioritize this aspect as a digital marketing strategy. Effectively utilizing social media can enhance a destination's visibility and resilience. Key components that should be maintained include interaction (where content and the use of social media marketing activities by tourism managers serve as tools to engage with tourists and potential visitors), trendiness (where tourism managers are required to present up-to-date and appealing content), and E-WOM (related to positive reviews that attract other tourists to visit a destination). These three elements are critical considerations for tourism managers. The study further reveals that the destination brand awareness held by tourists significantly influences the destination brand image. A positive image and favorable impressions can act as driving factors for potential tourists to visit, for tourists to consider revisiting, and for recommending the destination to others. Therefore, these aspects are integral components of marketing strategies that tourism managers must implement to ensure sustainable development and longevity.

CONCLUSION

Destination brand image and destination brand awareness are two crucial components in brand equity and require careful consideration. In the era of technology, the use of social media has become

the chosen alternative for tourism managers to enhance the destination brand image and destination brand awareness among the public. In this study, social media marketing activities were measured using three dimensions: interaction, trendiness, and e-WOM. The research findings indicate a positive and significant relationship between interaction, trendiness, e-WOM, destination brand awareness, and destination brand image. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of social media marketing activities can be an effective marketing strategy to enhance awareness and image for a tourist destination. Furthermore, it was found that destination brand awareness significantly influences the improvement of destination brand image, and the positive development of both aspects positively impacts the sustainability of the destination. Based on the testing of the mediation variable, destination brand awareness can mediate the relationship between interaction, trendiness, e-WOM, and destination brand image. Effective social media marketing activities that positively impact tourism development demand tourism managers to focus on them. In this context, maximizing social media marketing needs to be balanced with the ability of tourism managers to provide quality content, maintain good relationships with tourists and potential visitors, and maximize e-WOM. The limitations of this study include:

1. The focus of the research is on destination brand image and destination brand awareness in the context of destination brand equity. Subsequent studies can examine other components of destination brand equity, such as Destination Quality and Destination Loyalty.
2. The research only tests the components of interaction, trendiness, and E-WOM in social media marketing activities.
3. The study focuses solely on the use of social media as a digital platform to determine destination brand image and destination brand awareness. Therefore, future studies need to explore the role of other platforms.

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