

Like, Tag and Share: Bolstering Social Media Marketing to Improve Intention to Visit a Nature-based Tourism Destination

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Like, Tag and Share: Bolstering Social Media Marketing to Improve Intention to Visit a Nature-based Tourism Destination

ABSTRACT

Purpose

This paper explores the influence of social media marketing on tourists' intention to visit a botanical garden, which is one of the popular nature-based tourism destinations in Indonesia.

Design/methodology/approach

We sent questionnaires to 400 followers of the botanical garden's Facebook account who responded to our initial calls for participation and declared that they have not visited the garden before. Analyses were conducted on 363 valid responses using the Structural Equation Model (SEM).

Findings

The findings revealed several key determinants influencing the image of the botanical garden and its future value proposition, particularly in supporting the endeavour to shift from a mere recreational destination to a nature-based tourism destination offering educational experiences.

Originality/value

This paper offers a fresh look into the roles of social media marketing in increasing the intention to visit a tourism destination that is considerably affected by the destination image.

Keywords: Social media marketing, destination image, visit intention, nature-based tourism destination, edu-tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology brings some disruptions in the tourism industry and plays a significant role in travel decisions made by tourists (Stylos, 2020). Amongst many technological innovations, the Internet, mobile devices and social media have empowered tourists to co-create value in their travel experiences (Buhalis, 2019; Zhang, 2020). The prevalence of social media today has conceived a profound marketing experience that is entirely new and more ubiquitous than ever before (Chuang, et al., 2017)– so vast that today there is hardly a single business that does not utilise social media (Saundage & Lee, 2011).

With social media marketing, companies can extend their customer base much more extensively (Khan & Jan, 2015) and open up new markets (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014), making it one of the most worthwhile strategic positioning tools. Companies also employ social media marketing to

increase customers' awareness of their products further, hence strengthening customer loyalty (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014). The ease, simplicity and convenience with which consumers access social media, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., especially from mobile devices, have unfolded almost endless opportunities for the uptake of social media marketing beyond businesses, to include entertainment sectors and tourism industries (Öz, 2015).

As the world's largest archipelago, Indonesia is blessed with vast natural resources. A large variety of flora and fauna in the country has reinforced Indonesia's potential as one of the world's top nature-based tourism destinations, hereby defined as those destinations promoting ecological conservation to attract visitors/tourists (Bhandari & Heshmati, 2010). The botanical garden (referred to as BG hereafter) where this research is based, is amongst the oldest and most renowned nature-based tourism destination in the country. BG offers the preservation of natural habitat and a wide variety of plants as their main attractions, combined with man-made attractions, for instance, the museum within the BG. BG strives to continue its mission to provide environmental education services, also known as *edu-tourism* (Ankomah & Larson, 2000), for its visitors, especially students and learners (Figure 1).

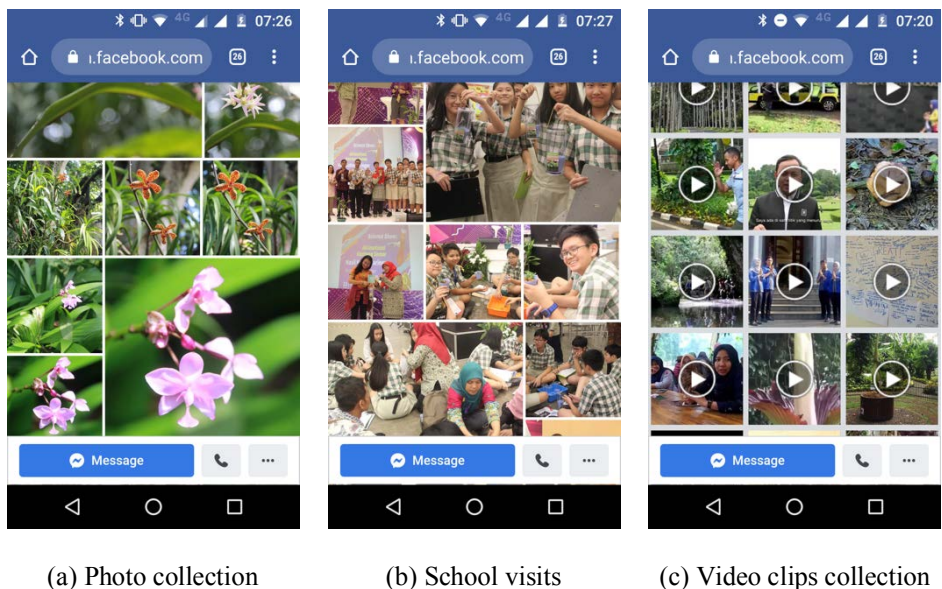


Figure 1 – Facebook page of the botanical garden

In recent years, however, BG has seen a decline in visitor numbers. From 2014 to 2016 alone, the decline rate reached almost 20% for general visitors and just under 45% for group visitors. BG usually enjoyed a high number of visitors during Eid and other public holidays, until around 2018 and 2019, when the garden was hit with a decrease of more than 5,000 visitors. Upon the initial discussion with the BG management, it was revealed that one of the possible reasons for the decline was the mismatch between the 'image' created by BG management and the 'image' formed in the public's perception

(Firdaus & Abdullah, 2015). The BG management's image was instigated from the organisational vision, which is to become one of the best BGs in the world for conserving and researching tropical plants, environmental education and tourism; however, disappointingly, the public perceived the BG as merely a recreational venue.

To boost the visitor numbers, BG promotes itself via several social media, although Facebook notably occupies the highest traffic of its online activities. The official Facebook account of BG portrays the garden for being green and impressive. The vision and mission of BG are also clearly presented on the Facebook page, with more than 5,000 followers to date. Although the Facebook page is reasonably busy with news and programmes happening at the garden, shared news tends to be minimal and so do the 'likes'. Overall, although BG has taken advantage of social media, this uptake does not appear to be extensive.

Various studies have also deliberated the roles of social media in the tourism industry. Hays et al. (2013) analysed how tourism destinations used social media as marketing tools and implemented various strategies in relation to their usage of social media. Rathore et al. (2017) added how tourists have utilised social media for their travel plans. They also revealed several challenges faced by tourists when using social media. With regard to the impacts of social media towards destination image, Oliveira & Huertas-Roig (2019) examined how destination marketing organisations (DMOs) recover destination images through their official Twitter platforms. Other studies have also analysed the role of social media in forming a destination image (Kim et al. 2017; Lim et al., 2012).

Leung et al. (2019) pointed out that most of the previous social media research concerning its impact on consumers involved social media's role in changing behavioural intentions. Koo et al. (2016) found that mass and social media exposure could influence the tourist's intention to visit a destination. In a study by Chang et al. (2015), the usability of social media was the most substantial factor that affects the participants' perceived functional and hedonic quality, which later on influence intention to visit a destination. Moreover, Leung (2019) found that destinations' Facebook pages could affect fans' visit intentions. She then suggests that DMOs should focus on raising the number of their Facebook fans. Kim et al. (2019) conducted a study on US travellers' perception and intention to visit South Korea. They found that destination familiarity could enhance travellers' knowledge about a destination, and their affective perceptions positively influenced their intention to visit the destination.

Molinillo et al. (2018) examined the influence of participants' involvement towards destination image and intention to visit a destination, including the moderating effect of Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) online platforms (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram). Although they included social media in their study, they did not discuss it as a marketing tool, as described in this study. Therefore, based on the aforementioned studies, it is noticeable that those studies tend to focus on either the influence of social media on destination image, social media on visit intention, or destination image on visit intention. At the time of this study was conducted, there were no studies discussing the influence of social media marketing on destination image and tourist's intention to visit a destination.

The study described in this paper aims to explore the influence of social media marketing on the visit intention. The investigation was conducted using a survey of 363 followers of the official BG Facebook account, who have not visited BG before. The survey instrument was devised from the theoretical lens of social media marketing and other factors acting as the determinants of success. The survey data were then analysed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM). The findings revealed a number of key factors that need to be considered by BG to shape and strengthen its brand image. The paper provides a more thorough understanding of the roles of how social media marketing in influencing the destination image and tourists' visit intention.

2. THEORETICAL LENS

2.1. Social Media Marketing

In order to attract potential visitors, a tourism destination often implements an effective marketing strategy that is thoroughly planned (Morrison, 2013). The strategy has to be centred on visitors and the potential economic and cultural development of that destination, which integrates and balances the interests of tourist, service industry and community (Gaffar et al., 2018; Hassan, 2000; Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Promotion is one of the known marketing strategies that has traditionally been used to inform consumers about the products offered, so as to increase sales and improve market share (Rowley, 1998).

The marketing literature often describes promotion within several dimensions of the marketing communication mix. These include advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct and database marketing, personal selling, mobile marketing and online social media marketing (Chen & Xie, 2008; Duncan & Caywood, 1996). Each dimension is capable

of delivering product-related information to consumers, nevertheless, due to the ubiquity of the Internet and smartphone technologies, social media marketing is today being used widely as a promotional tool (Castronovo & Huang, 2012; Hanna et al., 2011).

Social media marketing is defined as “the utilisation of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offerings that have value for an organisation’s stakeholders” (Tuten & Solomon, 2018, p. 53). According to As'ad & Alhadid (2014), there are five dimensions of social media marketing, namely online community, interaction, content sharing, accessibility and credibility.

The online community is referred to as “a collective group of entities, individuals or organisations that come together either temporarily or permanently through an electronic medium to interact in a common problem or interest space” Plant (2004). Businesses use social media to build an online community whose members share a common interest around a product (Culnan et al., 2010). If managed properly, an online community can promote progressive discussions amongst the consumers leading to increased brand loyalty that can subsequently contribute to the improvement of the business (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008; Teece, 2010).

Amongst others, a basic definition of interaction is given by Wagner (1994) as a “reciprocal event that requires at least two objects and two actions”. Online social networking sites offer significant interaction to their communities through up-to-date broadcasts and relevant consumer information (Fischer & Reuber, 2011). For example, the way the interactivity is built in a Facebook page or Twitter account allows their followers to quickly respond and share information.

Content is “the critical information the website, application, intranet, or any other delivery vehicle was created to contain or communicate” (Halvorson & Rach, 2012, p. 28), which is something that people come to read, learn, see, or experience. Content is central in effective inbound marketing (Holliman & Rowley, 2014); it tells a story about products and services, and also puts the company’s brand into customers’ hearts and minds (Wuebben, 2011). In the context of social media, good content is often characterised by richness, interactivity and currency of the content itself (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 596). In order to ensure the content currency, social media often enable content sharing, allowing individuals not only to create their own materials but also make changes and distribute the contents (Hays et al., 2013; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Accessibility is defined as the “ease of reaching destinations” (Levine & Garb, 2002), which in their study, was referred to as the official social media account of the tourist destination. One of the

strongest points of social media is that it can be accessed quickly (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The ease with which potential visitors reach the tourism destinations will therefore depend on the degree of accessibility, which is often determined by the user-friendliness of social media (Bertot et al., 2012; Scheufele, 1999).

The last dimension in social media marketing is credibility. The core point of credibility is focused on how a business can deliver a clear message to the targeted consumers, build an emotional connection with them, motivate potential buyers and generate loyal customers (Dick & Basu, 1994; Tarmedj et al., 2018). Flanagin & Metzger (2008) extended the definition of credibility as “a complex concept that revolves around the believability of some source or information based on notions of its trustworthiness and expertise”.

2.2. Destination Image

Gunn (1972) categorised a destination image into organic and induced images. The organic image is an image formed in the minds of tourists without any influence of information from tour operators/agents, whilst the induced image is an image that is created as an effect of promotional activities designed by third-party tour operators/agents (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Lian & Yu, 2017).

The destination image can be considered as “the sum of cognitive opinions and affective impressions that an individual collects and remembers about a specific destination” (Akgün et al., 2019). For this reason, the cognitive image and affective image can be considered as the two dimensions of destination image (Tan & Wu, 2016). The cognitive destination image refers to an individual’s own knowledge and beliefs about the destination, while affective destination image is an emotional response from an individual towards a destination (Smith et al., 2015). In other words, the affective destination image tends to be subjective, compared to the cognitive destination image.

2.3. Visit Intention

Consumer intention is a consumer’s plan for a particular object (Amanah et al., 2018). In the realm of tourism studies, tourists’ visit intention refers to the likelihood of tourists actually visiting a particular tourism destination (Luo & Ye, 2020).

There have been many discussions about tourist behavioural intentions because a visit intention can create a strong desire for a tourist to visit a destination (Koo et al., 2016). An intention is a representation of an individual’s commitment to performing a behaviour (Hunter, 2006), and may

become an important initial factor of one's behaviour in doing something. In support of this statement, Hallmann et al. (2015) clarified that intention to visit is a cognitive dimension of a destination image. Furthermore, tourists' intention is often divided into two phases of tourists' behaviour. The first is the intention to visit that occurs before visiting the destination, and the second is the future visit intention, which occurs after the tourists have visited the destination (González-Rodríguez et al., 2016).

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

3.1. Social Media Marketing and Destination Image

Kim et al. (2017) argue that tourism information quality in social media has an impact on creating a destination image. This argument is consistent with Koo et al. (2016), who stated that social media experience would be a crucial point in formulating destination images. One related study has revealed how the Twitter platform can be used by destination marketing organisations to recover and improve the image of a destination after a terrorist attack crisis (Oliveira & Huertas-Roig, 2019). Similarly, social media platforms such as Facebook played an important role to help restore the destination image following an earthquake in Nepal (Ketter, 2016).

Previous studies have also indicated that the process of image formation and visit intention can vary depending on the platform used by tourists (Molinillo et al., 2018). The results of those studies showed that official websites, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram were the most prominent platforms used by tourists. Based on the results of the previous studies, the first hypothesis proposed in this study is:

H1 Social media marketing has a positive influence on destination image.

3.2. Social Media Marketing and Visit Intention

Previous studies have found that social media channels on websites have a particular influence on visitors' behaviour (Aluri et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2015; Koo et al., 2016; Leung, 2019). Specifically, the perceived enjoyment of social media embedded channels on hotel websites was found to have a positive influence on purchase intentions (Aluri et al., 2016).

Subsequently, the functional quality of social media could increase the awareness that, in the end, will raise the intention to visit a destination (Chang et al., 2015). Moreover, Leung (2019) described

how intention to visit increased after social media users followed a destination's Facebook page. This finding was in line with the study of Koo et al. (2016), which indicated that social media experience could have a positive effect on tourists' travelling desire. Based on those rationales, the second hypothesis can be stated as:

H2 Social media marketing has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit.

3.3. Destination Image and Visit Intention

Kim & Jun (2016) argued that destination image was instrumental in increasing awareness of a tourism destination. In terms of the influence of destination image on tourist behaviour, numerous previous studies tend to focus more on the post-visit destination image, since those studies set revisit intention as the dependent variable (Akgün et al., 2019; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Hallmann et al., 2015; Tan & Wu, 2016). As an illustration, Hallmann et al. (2015) examined how destination image affects the intention to revisit winter sports destinations. They found that both cognitive and affective images affected the tourists' revisit intention in the future.

Furthermore, the study by Tan & Wu (2016) revealed that the cognitive destination image regarding fame and activities had no role in moving the potential tourist to visit tourist destinations. However, non-visitors' intention to visit a destination was affected by both the affective destination image and cognitive destination image, especially those that are concerned with the basic infrastructure.

In line with the affective destination image, Akgün et al. (2019) affirmed that affective destination image, as well as attractions and the value aspects of the cognitive destination image, could influence tourists' intention to revisit. The effect of destination image on intention to visit was also confirmed in a study by Molinillo et al. (2018). Their study showed that the tourists influenced both cognitive and affective images so that their perspective-based destination image will generate a positive effect on the intention to visit. Thereby, this study proposes the third hypothesis as:

H3 Destination image has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit.

Based on the above hypothesis, the research model in Figure 2 has been developed to illustrate the three hypothetical relationships between variables.

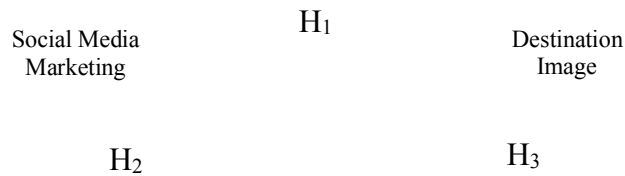


Figure 2 - Research model

4. METHOD

4.1. Sample and Procedure

A cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect the data for this research. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, where participants were chosen randomly within the segment of the population, which matches the characteristics of interest (Guarte & Barrios, 2006). All of the samples were online followers of the official Facebook account of BG; based on the list of followers of the account, we targeted those who have not visited BG before and sent the questionnaires to 400 followers who responded to our initial calls for participation. 363 out of 400 distributed questionnaires were valid, i.e. a response rate of 90.75%.

The description of the sample, given in Table 1, showed that gender distribution was 37.2% male and 62.8% female. The majority of the respondents was >20 years old (32%), followed by 30-35 years old (31.1%), >35 years old (21.5%), and 25-30 years old (15.4%). The highest proportion of occupation (32.5%) fell into housewife, followed by students (27.3%), employees (15.7%), government officers (14.9%), and entrepreneurs (9.6%). The respondents reported a variety of sources of information. The highest frequency was social media (32.8%), followed by friends (30.3%), family (17.9%), website (15.4%) and others (brochures, other websites and blogs).

Table 1 - Description of the respondents (n=363)

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	135	37.2
	Female	228	62.8
Age	>25 years old	116	32
	25-30 years old	56	15.4
	30-35 years old	113	31.1

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Occupation	>35 years old	78	21.5
	Student	99	27.3
	Entrepreneur	35	9.6
	Housewife	118	32.5
	Employee	57	15.7
	Government Officer	54	14.9
Annual Income	<£632	68	18.7
	£632 - £1580	52	14.3
	£1580 - £3158	112	30.9
	>£3158	131	36.1
Source of Information	Social Media	119	32.8
	Website	56	15.4
	Family	65	17.9
	Friends	110	30.3
	Others	13	3.6

4.2. Measures

The questionnaire consists of 24 items; of which 14 are related to the variable of social media marketing, seven items for the variable of destination image and three items to assess tourists' intention to visit the destination. All items measured in this research were adopted from the previous studies. The construct of social media marketing was measured using the scales from As' ad & Alhadid (2014) while destination image was from Akgün et al. (2019) and Tan & Wu (2016). To evaluate the tourists' visit intention, three items from Sánchez et al. (2018) were adopted. The items are listed in Table 2. The respondents were asked to provide a response/feedback to each measurement item using a 5-point Likert scale representing some quality criteria for a particular measurement item or disagreement/agreement to a statement (see Appendix).

Table 2 - Research model measures

Construct and Source	Dimension	Measures	Remarks
<i>Social Media Marketing</i> (As' ad & Alhadid, 2014; Kim & Ko, 2012)	<i>Online Communities</i>	Liveliness of online community	Measuring the liveliness of Facebook <i>Community</i> (the degree of horizontal marketing) in sharing activities, news etc., related to BG
	<i>Interaction</i>	Interaction between the admin and the followers	Measuring the frequency of interaction between by the official account of BG and the followers
		Online polls	Measuring the number of polls filled out by BG's social media followers
		Feedback	Measuring the number 'likes and comments' shared by the official account of BG
	<i>Sharing of Content</i>	Quantity of information shared	Measuring the quantity of information shared by the official account of BG
		Attractiveness of information	Measuring the attractiveness of the information shared by the official account of BG
		Quality of information	Measuring the quality of information shared by the official account of BG
		Variety of information	Measuring the variety of information shared by the official account of BG
		Results of online reviews	Measuring the results of online reviews about the official account of BG
	<i>Accessibility</i>	Ease of accessing the account	Measuring the ease with which the social media followers can access the official account of BG
Ease of finding information		Measuring the ease with which the social media followers can find information in the official account of BG	
<i>Credibility</i>	Clarity of information about facilities	Measuring the clarity of the information about facilities in BG shared by the official account of BG	

Construct and Source	Dimension	Measures	Remarks
		Accuracy of information	Measuring the accuracy of information shared by the official account of BG
		Credibility of the information	Measuring the credibility of information shared by the official account of BG
<i>Destination Image</i> (Echtner & Brent, 2003; Akgün et al., 2019; Tan & Wu, 2016)	<i>Cognitive Destination Image</i>	Knowledge about the attractiveness	Measuring the extent to which the social media followers have a great deal of knowledge regarding the attractiveness of BG
		Knowledge about the facilities	Measuring the extent to which the social media followers have a great deal of amount of knowledge about the facilities in BG
		Reputation	Measuring the extent to which the social media followers consider that BG has a good reputation
	<i>Affective Destination Image</i>	Arousing feeling	Measuring the perception that BG will offer an arousing experience
		Exciting feeling	Measuring the perception that BG will offer an exciting experience
		Pleasant feeling	Measuring the perception that BG will offer a pleasant experience
		Relaxing feeling	Measuring the perception that BG will offer a relaxing experience
<i>Intention to Visit</i> (Sánchez et al., 2018)		Future visit	Measuring the intention to visit BG in the future
		Future choice	Measuring the extent to which BG will be chosen as the future holiday destination
		Preferential choice	Measuring the preference to visit BG rather than other tourist destinations

5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and the Structural Model

Prior to the data analysis, it was necessary to examine both the measurement model and the structural model to test the hypotheses relationships (Hoyle & Smith, 1994). SEM was adopted to evaluate how the proposed conceptual model fits with the data collected (Moss, 2009). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then conducted to test the validity and reliability of the scales (Geldhof et al., 2014), using AMOS 20 and the maximum likelihood estimation technique. This was also done to confirm the factor loading of the three constructs (i.e. social media marketing, destination image and visit intention), as well as to assess the model fit (Geldhof et al., 2014).

The model adequacy was assessed by the fit indices (Hooper et al., 2008). The analysis showed that two aspects lay below the standard criteria, i.e. chi-square and RMSEA; however, the other aspects showed that the model fits, as shown by GFI=0.901, FRI=0.916, NFI=0.905 and CFI=0.914 (see Table 3).

Table 3 - Structural model fit indices

	Criteria	Indicators
X ² test		209.419.
X ²	P>0.05	0.000
X ² / df	<5	8.726
Fit indices		
GFI>0.90	0.90	0.901
RFI>0.90	0.90	0.916
NFI>0.90	0.90	0.905
CFI>0.90		0.914
RMSEA<0.08		0.146

An absolute fit determines how well *a priori* model fits the sample data (McDonald & Ho, 2002) and demonstrates which proposed model has the most superior fit. These measures provide the most fundamental indicator of how well the proposed theory fits the data (see Table 4).

Table 4 - Validity measurement of constructs

Measurement Model	λ	P	R ²	Error	CR _i
SMM					
SM1 ← SMM	.705	***	.4970	.503	.78
SM3 ← SMM	.994	***	.9880	.011	
SM4 ← SMM	.870	***	.7569	.243	
SM5 ← SMM	.891	***	.7940	.206	
DI					
DI1 ← DI	.764	***	.5837	.416	.75
DI2 ← DI	.791	***	.6257	.374	
VI					
VI1 ← IV	.668	***	.4462	.554	.78
VI2 ← IV	.735	***	.5402	.459	
VI3 ← IV	.672	***	.4516	.548	

Based on the results of the significance test, the estimated coefficient of loading factor from all of the items had a significance level below 0.05, meaning that each item had adequate validity in measuring each research variable (see Figure 3). However, there was one item whose value was below the standardised value, namely SM2 where the value was -0.132. This indicates that the item was not reliable in measuring the variable being studied, so it had to be removed from the model.

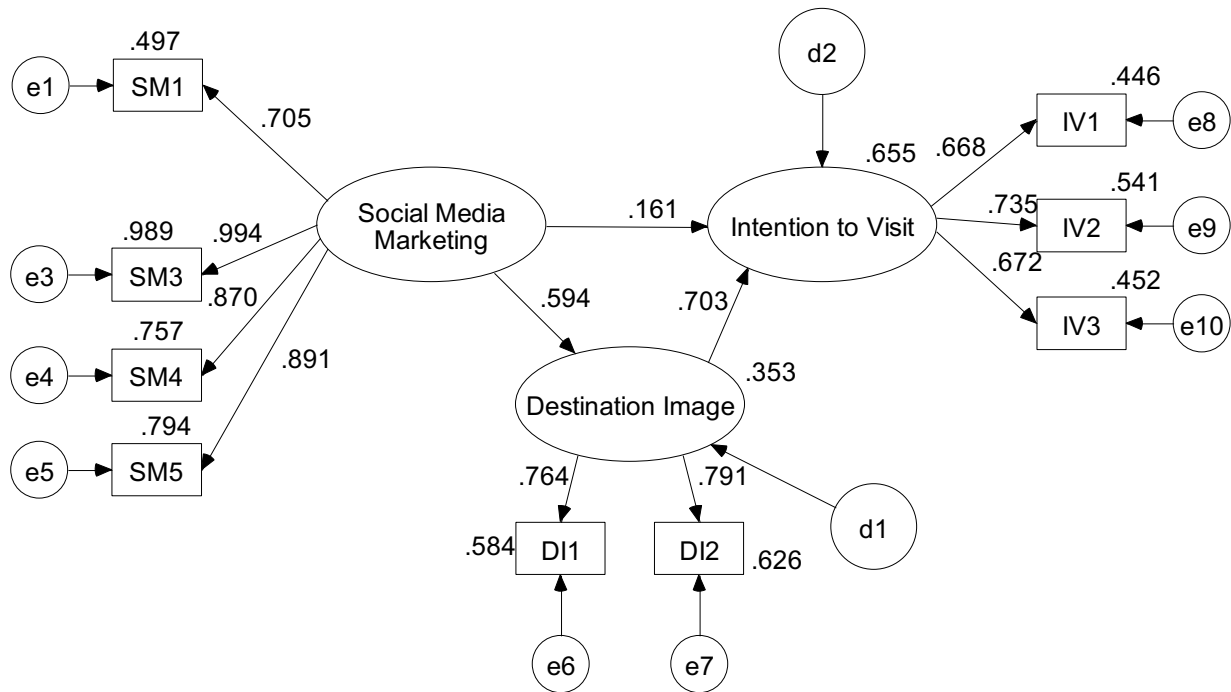


Figure 3 - The Structural Model

5.2. Analysis of Mediating Factor

From the structural model in Figure 3, we can see that social media marketing has positive and significant influence on visit intention ($\beta = 0.161$; $p < 0.05$). Social media marketing also has positive and significant influence on destination image ($\beta = 0.594$; $p < 0.05$), whilst the destination image positively influences visit intention ($\beta = 0.703$; $p < 0.05$). We want to evaluate whether the destination image is mediating the direct relation between social media marketing and visit intention. The direct influence between social media marketing and visit intention is 0.161. The indirect influence between social media marketing and visit intention is 0.418 (0.594×0.703).

If the indirect influence is non-significant, but direct influence is significant, then there is no mediating effect. If indirect influence is significant but direct influence is not significant, there is total mediation. If both indirect and direct influences are significant, there is partial mediation. For the latter, we can then calculate whether it is a complementary or competitive mediation. As both paths indicated significant indirect and direct influences, and since $0.418 \times 0.161 = 0.067$ is positive, there is a partial, complementary mediation between social media marketing and intention to visit the tourism destination.

This finding also reveals that the β of social media marketing increases from 0.161 to 0.418 when the mediator variable is involved. This shows that social media marketing does lead to a potentially higher visit intention, but the influence is even stronger through the increased destination image.

5.3. Hypothesis Testing

To test the three hypotheses, SEM was conducted using AMOS 20. The results of the hypotheses testing demonstrated that social media marketing has a positive influence on destination image and impacts on visit intention. The results will be discussed in this section, and are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 - The results of the hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Estimate		SE	CR	P	R ²
	RW	SRW				
H ₁ : Social media marketing has a positive influence on destination image	.570	.594	.056	10.117	***	.3530
H ₂ : Social media marketing has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit.	.048	.161	.021	2.301	.021	.0260
H ₃ : Destination image has a positive influence on tourists' intention to visit	.218	.703	.030	7.327	***	.4942

Hypothesis 1

The statistical results in Table 5 indicate that social media marketing has a positive and significant influence on destination image ($\beta = 0.594$; $p < 0.05$). Tourists use social media as an influential source for obtaining tourism information. In this study, content sharing is the most crucial factor in predicting destination image. The result shows that an attractive destination image can be created by understanding various pieces of information about nature-based edu-tourism destinations from online sources and online reviews.

This is consistent with Miguéns et al. (2008) and Munar (2012), who argued that digital social networking could influence a tourism destination image. Therefore, a shared content of tourism information in social media can be used to develop a brand identity, demonstrate a positive relationship, and construct a more exciting tourism destination image (Jalilvand, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2012). With regard to the impact of social media marketing on brand equity, As' ad & Alhadid (2014) reported that factors, such as accessibility and interaction, played an important role,

where online communities and content sharing did not necessarily affect brand equity. Kim et al. (2017) stated that various aspects of tourism information quality in social media, i.e. content cues and non-content cues, are positively associated with the different types of destination image.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis in this study is that social media marketing has a positive impact on tourists' intention to visit the destination. The statistical results in Table 5 demonstrate that there is a positive and significant influence of social media marketing on visit intention ($\beta = 0.161$; $p < 0.05$).

This study also reveals that the influence of social media marketing on tourists' intention to visit a nature-based edu-tourism is significant, but the value of the influence was the lowest. This result is aligned with the findings of previous studies (Chang et al., 2015; Koo et al., 2016; Leung, 2019; Rudez & Vodeb, 2015). By observing the contents shared by the official social media account of BG, it can be seen that most of their content is focusing on providing the learning materials about the plantation and formal events held at the destination rather than creating fun and engaging contents. This is a possible explanation for why the shared content could impact the destination image more than tourists' intention to visit.

Hypothesis 3

Table 5 also shows that destination image has a positive and significant influence on visit intention to a tourist destination ($\beta = 0.703$; $p < 0.05$). This finding is also in line with previous studies (Hallmann et al., 2015; Molinillo et al., 2018), where either cognitive image or affective image can influence tourists' intention to visit or revisit a tourism destination.

The destination image was represented by two dimensions, namely cognitive image and affective image. The cognitive image needs to be formed by disseminating information related to cognitive content from a destination such as infrastructures, cleanliness, facilities, and security (Molinillo et al., 2018) while affective image is related to the emotional responses of the customer (Smith et al., 2015).

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Improving interaction and two-way communication

This study found that social media marketing could effectively build the image of the tourist destination through several measures, represented in five dimensions, namely online communities,

interaction, content sharing, accessibility and credibility. However, the dimension of interaction was proven to be insignificant, as demonstrated by the Facebook page of BG. This fact is in contrast to the theory of As' ad & Alhadid (2014), which states that interaction is one of the dimensions of social media marketing. Upon further investigation, it is apparent that the information contained in the BG Facebook page is more focused on one-way information where the management provides information about BG and the various activities carried out within it. The two-way interaction, however, is almost non-existent as the administrator of the page tends to share news that, to a large extent, is informational with few or almost no comments given by BG followers. When someone commented, the admin rarely responded, which is probably one of the possible reasons for the poor interaction.

There are numerous ways the interactivity can be improved. For instance, the Facebook admin could be more proactive in sharing the news on the Facebook page in such a way that could stimulate the enthusiasm of its followers to comment and discuss the news. Thought-provoking news may grab the attention of followers and subsequently inspire them to respond. The admin could also be more contextually-aware of current issues and use them as a 'hook' to broadcast impactful news, thus subsequently increasing the intention to respond to the news. Nonetheless, in this study, the interaction alone does not lead to the achievement of the goals of social media marketing, thus does not seem to warrant a strong brand image or improved intention to visit.

6.2. 'Rules' of Engagement

Engagement is believed to affect interaction via social media, so it is vital for the management of BG to continually engage with the local community and, whenever possible, to involve the local community in events that are held by BG. Hipperson (2010) and Lim et al. (2012) supported this argument, stating that a two-way interaction and communication in social media enables followers to engage more in creating the brand identity and image of the destination. So far, BG has not been seen to embrace the local community as much as it should, for instance, involving them in various events organised by BG. What is seen so far, however, is that although there appears to be a community surrounding BG, local community engagement remains low.

In addition to improving social media interaction, a horizontal marketing strategy is needed by an organisation to reach out to wider markets. A good engagement will enable the win-win solution between BG and its local community. On the one hand, BG will benefit from the availability of local volunteers and a fan base, who will further help shape the image of BG, e.g. as a nature-based edu-

tourism destination. On the other hand, the community will feel that its existence is recognised, and consequently it will further strengthen the bond or emotional ties with BG.

6.3. Destination Image as a Mediating factor of Visit Intention

The social media marketing run by BG through Facebook has been proven to be effective in shaping their image as a nature-based tourism destination. Various pieces of information about BG, its vision, mission and objectives, activities, and the photo gallery of the destination, have been presented appropriately. This information will subsequently help shape the image of BG as a tourism destination, serving the dual function of being a nature-based tourism destination and a centre for horticultural conservation.

Whilst having positively boosted its image, social media marketing has actually had a small direct effect on the visit intention, and this contrasts with Chang et al. (2015), Koo et al. (2016), Leung, (2019) and Rudez & Vodeb (2015), who argued that social media marketing has a direct, significant effect on visit intention. In the case of BG, the image of BG mediates the effect of social media marketing on the intention to visit, and this mediating effect was also found to be significant. This means, going forward, whilst intensifying their social media marketing campaigns, the management of BG has to pay attention to any endeavour that will have a direct impact on the destination image.

6.4. The Relevance of Education and Learning

BG has so far extensively used social media marketing in educating the public on two fronts: as nature-based and edu-tourism destinations. Learning is, therefore, an important facet to be fostered and nurtured at BG, as it is a continual process rather than a one-off activity. As an edu-tourism destination, BG offers various educational and learning programmes, especially those that are related to the ecology, such as the flora tourism programme. The latter is considered a smart learning strategy that is complementary to the formal school curricula, by introducing various topics on plants, horticultural biodiversity and environmental issues to students from kindergarten through to high school. Unfortunately, this programme is yet to appear on the BG Facebook page. Other educational features at BG exist, but at the moment, these have not been well exhibited on the BG Facebook page; these are the games for young children. These fun-packed educational games can help shape the image of BG as a centre for conservation, education and recreation.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The study described in this paper provides a more thorough understanding of how social media marketing influences destination image and tourists' visit intention. The results suggest that if they want to shift from a mere recreational destination to a nature-based tourism destination offering educational experiences, then BG should be more attractive and interactive. The interaction should not only be in the form of sharing information but also in establishing a more engaging portal between the online community of potential visitors and the management.

7.1. Theoretical implications

The influence of Internet technology on tourism has become more apparent than ever before. A recent study by de Souza, Mendes-Filho and Buhalis demonstrated that today's travellers are more attuned to Internet contents than to other traditional marketing media, showing the various potentials that social media marketing can bring to tourism sectors (de Souza et al., 2020). The study of Koo et al. (2016) found that social media exposure to the cultural content of a tourism destination played an important role as a marketing tool in increasing the intention to visit that destination. Furthermore, Leung's research claimed that increasing the number of followers or fans on their Facebook pages was key to improved interest in tourism destinations (Leung, 2019).

Our study, to a large extent, supports the abovementioned research. Nonetheless, our model indicates the roles of social media marketing in increasing the intention to visit are considerably affected by the tourism destination image. By comparing both their direct and indirect influences, we therefore argue that social media marketing will be more effective in increasing the intention to visit if it has previously succeeded in forming a good destination image. Our finding also affirms and, at the same time, extends the work of Kim et al. (2017) that emphasised the importance of quality of information contained on social media. We concur that quality of information can strengthen the cognitive understanding and also will help form positive affective feelings about the destination in the minds of potential tourists, hence the destination image.

The mediating effect of destination image has demonstrated the relevance of improving the sum of cognitive opinions and affective impressions, which is believed to further influence the intention to visit the tourism destination. This was clearly demonstrated by our research model.

7.2. Practical implications

Social media marketing does influence the destination image of a nature-based tourism destination such as BG. The credibility of the information shared could also influence the creation of BG

destination image, indicated by the relatively large influence. Linking the above theory and practice, BG needs to focus on strengthening its destination image by strengthening the quality and quantity of contents shared by BG via their social media (Facebook), again, as clearly shown in our model. As a nature-based edu-tourism destination operating under the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, BG has many advantages in terms of the accuracy, credibility and quantity of information they share, so that in theory, the source of the information shared will be publicly trustworthy.

Our study shows that the above strategy can be accomplished by actively involving the online social media community to participate in the event programmes held at the tourism destination and by changing the way the tourism destination engages with their Facebook followers. Promoting the brand image of the destination can increase people's awareness; this needs to be further demonstrated by BG as part of its endeavour towards becoming Indonesia's finest nature-based edu-tourism destination.

7.3. Future work

We intend to continue our work to look into the comparative impact of social media marketing between nature-based and non-nature-based tourism destinations, and may include other social media such as Instagram, Twitter or YouTube, and perhaps should compare social media marketing with traditional media marketing to look at the impacts on destination image and visit intention.

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Table A1 – The questionnaire items

No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Liveliness of Facebook <i>Community</i> in sharing activities, news etc., related to BG	Very low			Very high	
2.	Frequency of interaction between by the official account of BG and the followers	Very low			Very high	
3.	Number of polls filled out by BG's social media followers	Very low			Very high	
4.	Number 'likes and comments' shared by the official account of BG	Very low			Very high	
5.	Amount of information shared by the official account of BG	Very little			Very much	
6.	Attractiveness of the information shared by the official account of BG	Very unattractive			Very attractive	
7.	Quality of information shared by the official account of BG	Very low			Very high	
8.	Variety of information shared by the official account of BG	Very low			Very high	
9.	Results of online reviews about the official account of BG	Very poor			Very good	
10.	Ease with which the social media followers can access the official account of BG	Very easy			Very difficult	
11.	Ease with which the social media followers can find information in the official account of BG	Very easy			Very difficult	
12.	Clarity of the information about facilities in BG shared by the official account of BG	Very unclear			Very clear	
13.	Accuracy of information shared by the official account of BG	Very inaccurate			Very accurate	
14.	Credibility of information shared by the official account of BG	Very incredible			Very credible	
15.	The extent to which the social media followers have a great deal of knowledge regarding the attractiveness of BG	Very low			Very high	
16.	The extent to which the social media followers have a great deal of knowledge about the facilities in BG	Very low			Very high	
17.	The extent to which the social media followers consider that BG has a good reputation	Very low			Very high	
18.	Perception that BG will offer an arousing experience	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
19.	Perception that BG will offer an exciting experience	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
20.	Perception that BG will offer a pleasant experience	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
21.	Perception that BG will offer a relaxing experience	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
22.	Intention to visit BG in the future	Very low			Very high	
23.	The extent to which BG will be chosen as the future holiday destination	Very low			Very high	
24.	The preference to visit BG rather than other tourist destinations	Very low			Very high	