



# Elaboration Likelihood Model in Marketing Communication Through Social Media for Tourism in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Tourism is considered one important sector of Indonesia's development, and the government has launched 'Five Super Priority Tourism Destinations' to enhance the industry; however, the pandemic has decreased the number of foreign tourists, and the limitation to travel abroad actually creates an opportunity to increase domestic tourist visits to these destinations. As social media nowadays has become an important channel in marketing communication in this sector due to its visual representation, this research aims to investigate the persuasion process through social media content to give the intention to travel to the destinations using Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) framework. Data was collected through a survey of 365 respondents and was analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling Partial Least Square (SEM PLS). The results give insights into how the persuasion process changes consumer behaviour through social media to provide suggestions for marketing strategies using social media to promote tourism destinations.

**Keywords:** Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) · social media content · perceived destination image · intention to travel

## 1 Introduction

In 2017, Indonesia was ranked 20th as the world's largest tourism industry and 9th as the fastest-growing tourism sector worldwide [1, 2]. With this potential, in 2018, Indonesian President Joko Widodo placed tourism as one of the three leading sectors for development. To support the Tourism Sector Development Strategy and Policy, the government has launched the 'Super priority Tourism Destinations' program [3]. These five destinations aim to promote tourist attractions and develop a creative economic ecosystem [4]. They are Lake Toba, Borobudur Temple, Mandalika, Labuan Bajo, and Likupang.

However, along with the pandemic, tourism is affected by the travel restriction policy, with the number of foreign tourist arrivals to Indonesia in January 2021 decreasing by 89.05% compared to January 2020 due to the pandemic and travel bans [5], and it is suggested to rely on domestic tourists to boost Indonesia's tourism industry.

Tourism is an intangible product containing various types of risks [6], including financial, psychological, and social views of other people [7]. Therefore, decisions related to

traveling are high-involvement decisions [8]. The perceived destination image is one of the most important predictors in the decision-making process and plays an essential role in destination selection [9].

Most tourists rely on visual cues as an important source of information in tourism [10] and travel photography as an indirect and virtual experience for travellers to build narratives about their trip experiences [7] and other travellers to determine whether a destination is worth visiting [11] to assist them in making travel decisions. Nowadays, many people take pictures with their mobile phones and share them via social media [12]; social media has become an essential tourism component. By participatory culture, sharing consumption experiences on social media, consumers and other stakeholders contribute to creating the destination image as a product of stakeholder discussion on social media platforms [7, 13]. As a result, social media has permeated all aspects of tourism, resulting in significant changes in how tourists plan, consume, evaluate, and advertise their experiences [14]. Moreover, social media has a pronounced effect on overall travel sentiment, and it was found to have a significant mediating role in reducing travel worries [15]. According to a survey report, social media penetration in Indonesia is high, more than 86% [16]; social media has become one important communication medium for Indonesia's domestic tourism.

The study aims to investigate how individuals process visual content and then measure the impact of social media content on behaviour, i.e., tourists' intentions to travel to a specific destination. There is numerous research on social media marketing in tourism; however, there is a scarcity of studies assessing the influence of visual signals on consumers' learning about destinations and their decisions to visit [17]. Thus, this research tries to address the gap by investigating both the persuasion routes of the ELM framework on visual content in social media for domestic tourism.

Petty and Cacioppo conceptualized the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) in 1983, which can be related to other theories about attitude change [18]. It is found to be effective in predicting individual attitudes toward marketing communications by advertisers and marketing experts is [19, 20].

ELM framework proposed two different routes in the persuasion process to behaviour change, namely the central and peripheral routes [20, 21]. The central route is the route that is generally chosen with high involvement as a result of cognitive processing [22]; it is message-related and argument-oriented [23]. Tourism considers many important factors, ranging from destination choices to attractions to visit at the destination [24]; hence, it commonly takes the central route after a person's careful consideration of the information, a high level of audience involvement, analytical processing, and elaboration by evaluating the quality of content or message arguments, [25] before leaving for a trip.

The second route is the peripheral route which is informed by peripheral factors such as source attractiveness, perceived credibility, or message repetition [26, 27] or consensus and aesthetics [25]; it is process cue oriented [23]. Attitude change occurs through peripheral pathways because the problem or attitude object is associated with positive or negative cues in a persuasive context, such as previous users, previous related personal experiences, and credibility or because the person makes simple conclusions [23].

Furthermore, in the ELM theory, decisions are related to variations in a person's level of elaboration, which ranges from low to high [22]. His motivation determines a person's place on the elaboration continuum and ability to process information, and one can move from one route to another or experience different elaborations by simple cues such as client attractiveness at the low end and all available information analyzed to develop a reasoned judgment at the high end [22]. So, it is important to understand information processing in central and peripheral routes to identify the diversity of consumer behaviour [28].

ELM suggests that the most effective messages depend on consumers' persuasion route. Consumers' direction determines which aspects of marketing communications will succeed and which will be ignored [19]. Therefore, it is significant to examine the differences in the process of persuasion to consumers on social media content through two routes of persuasion of ELM framework to contribute to the planning of marketing differentiation strategies by customer segment using social media as interaction and communication, especially in tourism.

Argument quality is one of the most important aspects of persuasion. It allows the audience to evaluate the usefulness and relevance of information embedded in the message [23] and determines attitude change [29]. Because of the high involvement, tourists search for visual information from various sources in reviews, images, and videos of potential tourist destinations [8], as visual media plays a crucial role in influencing travellers' desire to take a specific trip [30]. The research [8, 20, 30] show that when more high-quality information is available, audiences are more likely to form a positive image of a destination, which influences travel intentions. Thus, this study proposed that:

H1. Argument quality (AQ) of visual content in social media has a positive and significant effect on the perceived destination image (PDI) of super priority destinations.

As in the previous discussion, one of the abilities to elaborate is motivation; and this is influenced by factors such as involvement, personal relevance, individual needs, and arousal levels [19]. The concept of audience involvement tries to understand the viewing experience of an active audience in a way that is more experience-oriented entertainment related to instant responses to media content in terms of ongoing feelings and emotions [31]. Based on the discussion above, the communication of social media visual content with higher argument quality leads to greater audience involvement. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1a. Argument quality (AQ) of visual content in social media has a positive and significant effect on audience involvement (AI).

When the audience finds the content of the message interesting and relevant, they are more motivated to process it, resulting in higher levels of cognitive engagement and more predictable individual behaviour [20]. Moreover, it is mentioned that repeated viewing of tourism advertisements, films, or videos featuring a destination can improve the perceived image of a destination among its audience. Therefore, audience involvement can enhance tourism experience, tourism product marketing, and destination promotion [32] and stimulate audience travel intentions [33]; thus, the hypothesis proposed is

H2. Audience involvement (AI) has a positive and significant effect on perceived destination image (PDI) of super priority destinations.

According to ELM theory, source credibility is a peripheral cue for individuals during low-elaboration probability situations; when the power of the message communicated is insufficient or the quality of the argument is poor, people rely on external cues such as the nature of the communication source to guide attitudes and decisions [21].

It is concluded that the characteristics of source credibility to behaviour are significant in consumers' perceptions of the credibility and usefulness of information, intention to purchase, and adoption of information [34]. Therefore, the source credibility of visual content on social media has a direct positive effect on the image of the destination perceived by the audience, and thus, the proposed hypothesis:

H3. Source credibility (SC) of visual content in social media has a positive and significant effect on the perceived destination image (PDI) of super priority destinations.

Audience engagement is the extent to which media viewers find the message being communicated worthy of attention, and the level of attention and effort put into transmitting the message [20]. Interaction and audience engagement on social media are dependent on the source's trust and credibility [35]. Therefore, this study predicts that higher perceived credibility of the information communicated will lead to higher audience engagement, and the following hypothesis is:

H3a. Source credibility (SC) of visual content in social media has a positive and significant effect on audience engagement (AE).

Audience engagement is a manifestation of customer behaviour toward a brand or company due to motivational drivers such as word of mouth activities or writing reviews [36]. Digital technology, such as eWoM, has a positive impact on a destination's image and can affect tourists' perceptions and intentions to visit a destination [37]. With audience engagement in the form of reviews or visual content, the image of a destination will increase; therefore, the hypothesis is:

H4. Audience engagement (AE) has a positive and significant effect on perceived destination image (PDI) of super priority destinations.

A positive correlation between destination image and visit intention has been discovered. A favourable image of a specific destination strengthens tourist preferences for that destination and confirms the correlation between destination image and visit intention [38]. Attitudes and tourists' perceived destination image are the most influential factors on tourists' readiness and willingness to travel or have a positive effect on future tourist behaviours [9, 33]. As a result, the following hypothesis is:

H5. The perceived destination image (PDI) of the super priority destinations has a significant and positive effect on the intention to travel (IT) to the destinations.

## 2 Research Method

The study applied a quantitative research method using a survey to carry out the measurement process by collecting highly structured information to produce comparable data from the sample [39]. Purposive sampling was applied to get respondents with similar characteristics, experiences, or attitudes [39].

The 41-item questionnaire adapted from the study by John & De' Villiers (2020) was distributed online through social media using Google Forms. It uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree', 5 = 'strongly agree') to express one's level of agreement

or disagreement with a series of statements about the stimulus objects [40]. In total, 404 respondents filled in the online survey; however, data from 39 respondents were excluded as they did not fulfil the research criteria. Thus, only 365 data were used for analysis with Structural Equation Modelling using Partial Least Square (SmartPLS3).

### 3 Results and Discussion

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the demographic profile of the majority of respondents were women (241, 66%) and in the age range of above 40 years old (132, 36.2%). The majority of respondents reside in Greater Jakarta (295, 80.8%), with the majority having bachelor's degree (183, 50.1%).

Therefore, the majority of respondents were highly educated. The average month's expenditure was within IDR 5–10 m (101, 27.7%), signifying that respondents might have a budget for vacation. For the pattern of consumer consumption behavior, the majority used social media between 1–3 h (140, 38.4%). Before the pandemic, the

**Table 1.** Demographics of Respondents

Items		Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	124	34
	Female	241	66
Age	<20 years old	92	25.2
	21–30 years old	72	19.7
	31–40 years old	69	18.9
	>40 years old	132	36.2
Resident	Greater Jakarta	295	80.8
	Java	52	14.3
	Kalimantan and Sulawesi	4	1
	Sumatera	10	2.8
	Bali and Nusa Tenggara	4	1.1
Education	<High School	3	0.8
	High School and Diploma	90	24.7
	Bachelor's degree	183	50.1
	Master's degree	88	24.1
Expenditure	<IDR 1 m	91	24.9
	IDR 1–2.5 m	37	10.1
	IDR 2.5–5 m	71	19.5
	IDR 5–10 m	101	27.7
	>IDR 10 m	65	17.8

(continued)

**Table 1.** (continued)

Items		Frequency	(%)
Social Media used per day	<1 h	19	5.2
	1–3 h	140	38.4
	3–5 h	103	28.2
	>5 h	103	28.2
Travelling frequency before pandemic in a year	1 time	127	34.8
	2–3 times	177	48.5
	4–5 times	34	9.3
	>5 times	27	7.4
Travelling frequency after pandemic in a year	<1 time	180	49.3
	1 time	93	25.5
	2–3 times	75	20.5
	4–5 times	12	3.3
	>5 times	5	1.4

**Table 2.** Super Priority Destinations on Social Media Content

Items	Destination not visited yet		Destination not yet visited but watched on social media	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Borobudur, Central Java	63	17.3	13	3.6
Danau Toba, North Sumatera	230	63	46	12.6
Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara	317	86.8	189	51.8
Likupang, North Sulawesi	327	89.6	16	4.4
Mandalika, West Nusa Tenggara	318	87.1	101	27.7
Total	365	100	365	100%

majority of respondents traveled 2–3 times a year (177, 48.5%); however, since the pandemic (March 2020) majority traveled less than once a year (180, 49.3%); in other words, not traveling.

In this study, respondents chose one of the five super priority destinations that they had not visited but watched the social media content. Table 2 shows super priority destinations on social media content. According to Table 2, Likupang is destination that the majority have not visited (327, 89.6%), while Labuan Bajo (189, 51.8%) is the most-watched destination, and YouTube (180, 49.3%) is the social media posted by influencers (234, 64.1%).

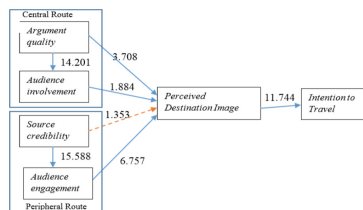
The measurement and the structural model of the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) were analyzed using Smart PLS3. Reliability is measured based on Composite Reliability (CR), with the values above 0.70 being good [40]. AVE is a more conservative measure than Composite Reliability (CR), and based on the CR alone, the researchers can conclude that the convergent validity of the constructs is adequate. However, more than 50% of the variance is caused by errors [40]. The model has good convergent validity if loadings are equal to or more than 0.50 [41]. Therefore, one construct from audience involvement, i.e., AI7, was deleted due to the invalidity of the construct. The construct is about the identification of respondents toward the speaker in the content, which the other construct can represent with similar meaning in AI5.

The structural model is measured to see the relationship between endogenous and exogenous constructs. The most important evaluation metrics are collinearity, R2 and f2 [42]. Based on the results of the f2 (See Table 3), the highest value of exogenous contribution to the R2 value of perceived destination image is the audience engagement (0.129) and the argument quality (0.044). The variable with the highest f2 value is audience engagement from source credibility with a value of 0.525 and followed by audience involvement from argument quality of 0.503. The contribution of perceived destination image to intention to travel is 0.292. Audience engagement has the highest effect on perceived destination image, followed by argument quality.

The next step is to test the Significant Path of Coefficients [43]. To measure the significance of the effect, the P-value 0.05 is considered the significance value or the t-value  $\geq 1.645$  [43]. The statistical results of the hypothesis can be seen in Table 4 and Fig. 1.

**Table 3.** f2 Effect Size Results

	AQ	AI	SC	AE	PDI	IT
AQ		0.503			0.044	
AI					0.012	
SC				0.525	0.007	
AE					0.129	
PDI						0.292



**Fig. 1.** Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results with t-value

**Table 4.** Hypothesis Testing Results

Path	Original Sample	S.D	T-value	P-value	Result
AQ -> PDI	0.579	0.041	3.708	0.000	Supported
AQ -> AI	0.207	0.056	14.201	0.000	Supported
AI -> PDI	0.112	0.059	1.884	0.030	Supported
SC -> PDI	0.587	0.038	1.353	0.088	Not supported
SC -> AE	0.086	0.064	15.558	0.000	Supported
AE -> PDI	0.397	0.059	6.757	0.000	Supported
PDI -> IT	0.475	0.040	11.744	0.000	Supported

The first hypothesis is the impact of the quality argument on perceived destination image with a t-value of 3.708 and a P-value of 0.000, which can be concluded that the positive influence of the quality argument is significant to the perceived destination image, and thus, H1 is supported. The second hypothesis regarding the influence of argument quality on audience involvement has a t-value of 14.201 and a P-value of 0.000, showing a significant impact. Therefore, hypothesis H1a is supported. Hypothesis H2 also shows a significant impact with a t-value of 1.884 and a P-value of 0.030 of audience involvement in perceived destination image. Thus, hypothesis H2 is supported.

Hypothesis H3 shows a t-value of 1.353 and a P-value of 0.088, which means the impact of source credibility is not significant on perceived destination image. Thus, hypothesis H3 is not supported.

The next hypothesis analyzed is the impact of source credibility on the audience engagement with a t-value of 15.588 and a P-value of 0.000, which means the positive effect of source credibility is significant on the audience engagement. Thus, hypothesis H3a is supported. Both hypotheses H4 and H5 are also supported. H4 has a t-value of 6.757 and a P-value of 0.000, showing that the positive influence of audience engagement is significant on perceived destination image. The last hypothesis, H5 shows a t-value of 11.744 and a P-value of 0.000, meaning the positive effect of perceived destination image is significant on intention to travel.

## 4 Conclusion and Limitation

From the study results, we can conclude that the perceived destination image positively influences the intention to travel to super priority destinations. In the central route, argument quality has a positive impact on perceived destination image and audience involvement, which also positively impacts the perceived destination image. Through the peripheral route, source credibility does not significantly impact the perceived destination image but through audience engagement. The study confirms the previous study [20]. The results of this study based on the effect size also confirm the previous study [20] that the peripheral routes regarding audience engagement have a higher effect than the central route. This study has limitations to be considered for further research. Most of



the respondents live in Greater Jakarta, which causes the sample characteristics to be less diverse from all regions of Indonesia to determine whether other regions have the same characteristics of answers. Because the five super priority destinations are government programs to develop Indonesian tourism, further research throughout Indonesia needs to be carried out. By taking more comprehensive data in all areas, both a general picture and a specific picture per area can be obtained to provide more specific suggestions.

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