Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth on Tourist Attitude and Intention to Visit Islamic Destinations

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Abstract— **Banda Aceh is Muslim majority population and new tourism halal destination appointed by Indonesian government in 2017. As a new halal destination, it is important to find out why tourists want to visit Banda Aceh in order to understand tourists intention by advancing tourist positive attitudes via electronic word of mouth (EWOM). Therefore, EWOM plays an important role in directing tourists' intention to visit tourism places because it is a new phenomenon of digital era where people depend so much on information from online social media to help those determining places or tourism object to visit. Thus, tourism stakeholders have to consider EWOM as one factor that will influence tourists' attitude and intention to visit tourism places. Sample of this study are 500 respondents of international tourist who come to Banda Aceh to visit several famous tourist destinations and attractions. This study was executed using descriptive quantitative method. Data were obtained from survey using questionnaire with Likert Scale. We evaluate the data using Structural Equation Model (SEM). The results of this study confirm the relationship of EWOM to increase tourist intention by boosting tourist' positive attitude to visit Islamic destination. We conclude that EWOM can be utilized as communication marketing strategy development to attract more tourists to come to Banda Aceh.**

Keywords— electronic word of mouth (EWOM), attitudes, intention, and Islamic destination

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a massive industry that interrelated with other industry that contributes to the social economic benefits for its stakeholders. Richardson & Fluker (2007) mentions that "tourism is modern activities with significant economic consequences for governments, local communities and businesses and it also has important impacts on social, cultural and environments". Furthermore, According to World Travel and Tourism Council (2017), by the end of 2016, travel and tourism will contribute US$7.8 trillion or about 10% of total GDP. International tourist arrivals worldwide grew by a remarkable 7% in 2017 to reach a total of 1,322 million (UNWTO, 2018). This strong momentum had expected to continue in 2018 at a rate of 4%-5%. In addition, tourism development is depending so much on the massive use of internet and digital information in tourism industry in this online era.

Aceh is one province in Indonesia that is located in the northwest of Sumatra Island with the area of approximately 57,365.7 km square and the capital of Aceh province is Banda Aceh. It consists of 119 islands, 73 major rivers and 2 lakes. Aceh surrounded by Malacca Strait in the north, Indian Ocean in the south and the west. In 2013, Aceh Province divided into 18 districts and 5 cities, consisting of 289 sub districts, 779 Mukims and 6,474 villages. Location of natural reservation/natural tourist attraction in Aceh are located in 12 places namely: Taman Buru Lingga Isaq Park, Serbajadi Natural reservation, Sabang/Weh Island Marine Park, Jantho Natural reservation, Gunung Leuser National Park, Banyak Islands, Rawa Singkil Wild Life, Aceh Besar Tourism Park, Pocut Meurah Intan Grand Forest, Subulussalam Park, Simeulue Grand Forest and Lampuuk and Lhoknga Beaches. Tourism in Aceh is still a new business alternative for investors.

The fact that Aceh had been in internal conflict with Indonesian government for 31 years made this province isolated not only for international visitor but also for national and local traveller who were feared to travel in Aceh. However, when Tsunami hit Aceh on December 26, 2004, then only Aceh started to draw attention from national and international communities and agencies that provided aids and assistances for the disaster victims. The Tsunami also brought a light on the peaceful agreement between The Acehnese Rebel Movement (GAM) who had been fighting for independence against the Indonesia authorities for years. The signing of the peace agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) in Helsinki, Sweden a year after the Tsunami on October 15, 2005 resulted in that Aceh remain as a province of Indonesia. Since then, the peace process has been quite smooth, without major incidents, The AAM (Aceh Monitoring Mission) funded by the European Union oversaw the process.

Even though, some of the most beautiful Aceh tourism and historical sites and beaches have been damaged by the massive earthquake and Tsunami disaster. However there are some other new tourism objects flourish that attract more tourists to come such as the Tsunami heritages and rural tourism. Furthermore, Aceh also is rich of events, attraction and unique cultures that will fascinate people. Some well-known tourist spots such as The Baiturrahman Great Mosque, The Museum Tsunami Aceh, Kapal Apung heritage, Aceh State Museum, The Grave of Sultan Iskandar Muda, Ujong Batee and Lampuuk beaches, Hot water pool, Gunung Leuser National Park and Sabang island, most of the them are located in the village areas.

Tourism industry is an interrelated industry consists of transportation industry, accommodation industry, food and beverages industry, souvenirs industry and services industry. All of this tourism industries use internet as tool in promoting and selling their product and services. At the same time, tourist depend so much on information provided on internet relating to the product and services that this tourism industry provided. The massive boost of tourism is related to the substantial use of internet technology by customers when they make tourism planning and informing others about their tourism experience. Nowadays, more tourist love to write comment online through internet about their travel experience. This is done because they feel satisfy with the tourism product and service or in contradictory they feel disappointed. This online comment can be referral for other tourist when they plan their travel.

Usually tourist post their trip in online social medias to express their journey experiences, for example telling stories through blogs, posting pictures on blogs, sharing experience through Facebook etc. which is called electronic word of mouth. Therefore, social media became an important tool to express their experience. Tourist activities or experience that been shared through the internet is part of electronic Word of mouth which is an independent, objective communication and is not influenced by certain interests. In fact, the internet has become the main channels for travellers to gain tourism information. Travellers may read other travellers' online reviews to understand the situation of tourist scenic spot. Electronic word of mouth (EWOM) can have an influence to travellers' travelling decision making. In network era, EWOM information is becoming an important influential factor for travellers to choose the travelling destination, moreover it also has superiority which is nearly zero cost to propaganda (Zhu & Lai, 2009).

Tourists usually search information from online social media to look information about flight, hotel and especially for places to visit. Only through social media that word of mouth from a consumer can be heard all over the world. A study by Gretzel (2007) showed that almost 96,4 % of information that tourist used to plan their tourism is come from internet. Such as when tourist plan to travel to one place he will search for information as reference before actually decided to visit the place. The information can be find from many trusted web, blog and other social media such as, TripAdvisor, flight and hotel official web reviews etc. All of this electronic word of mouth information or EWOM give confident for tourist to purchase the product and services. Therefore, EWOM become essential in determining tourist attitude and intention to actually choosing a tourism place. In addition, EWOM is an effective and sustainable marketing tool to promote a tourism place as well as other tourism products and services.

Therefore, the purposes of this study is to increase tourists intention to visit Aceh as Islamic destination by advancing tourist positive attitudes via EWOM. So that, it is important to study the attitude and intention of tourists because it gives a new perspective for marketers in promoting Islamic destinations. In addition, studies of intention and attitude in Islamic tourism have widely been researched. However, study of EWOM related to attitude and intention in Aceh as tourism Islamic destination has not been conducted yet.

Word of mouth (WOM) is communication about products and services between people who are considered independent and the company that provides information about the product or service using media that is considered independent of the interests of the company (Silverman, 2001). While electronic word of mouth (EWOM) can be defined as all informal communication channels planned for consumers through internet which is related to product and service characteristics (Westbrook, 1987). The massive use of internet in people daily life in Aceh and the boost of social media such as Facebook, twitter, Myspace, etc. have made spreading the word of mouth information accessible. Especially in tourism, the use of EWOM through social media is enormous. This has led an intense interaction among tourists, travel agents, government bodies, hotel owner and businessman involved in an online networking. Tourists can update and upload their tourism activities, write stories, share their tourism pictures and comment about their experience including their impression and suggestion about one destination positively or negatively. Then, it can be as a referral for other tourists to plan their travel to the destination.

Traditionally, a decision to visit a destination can be interpreted as a rational calculation of the costs/benefits of a set of alternative destinations, which were derived from external information sources, including EWOM (word-of-mouth) or travellers' blogs (Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014). Findings of this study suggest that tourists may only consult blogs that are subjectively perceived to be relevant to their information needs and concentrate on this limited information to build a destination image (Chen et al., 2014). Moreover, the impact EWOM on a tourism destination choice is significant because it build a positive destination image and, more important, to increase tourists' intentions to travel. Positive EWOM is generated by a satisfactory destination experience such as hotels, transportation, and entertainments. Thus, understanding the types of

experiences that are likely to trigger positive EWOM is useful. Tourists' positive experiences of services, products, and other resources could lead to repeat visits and to disseminate positive EWOM about the destination among tourists. In fact, recommendations originated from previous visits can be taken as the most reliable information sources for potential tourists. Recommendations to other people in online environments are one of the most important types of information for tourists interested in travelling (Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini, & Yaghoubi Manzari, 2012). A study by Ladhari & Michaud (2015) confirms that the comments by Facebook "friends" have an influence on hotel-booking intentions. Internet users who have been exposed to positive comments about a particular hotel report significantly higher booking intentions than those who viewed negative comments concerning it (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015).

Attitude is the degree to which a person has an evaluation or assessment in the form of happy or less happy in evaluating behavior (Ajzen, 2001). Attitude is considered to have a major role in the consumer behavior of tourists, it is formed based on previous experiences; it refers to a predisposition for liking or disliking specific stimuli, which include actions, ideas and objects. Attitude is comprised of three components; beliefs (cognitive), which involve the knowledge an individual has about the object of attitude; emotions (affective) which consist of the feelings of individuals towards a stimuli and are based on their beliefs; and finally, intentions (cognitive) which refers to how individuals are likely to respond towards an object based on their emotions and beliefs. EWOM is acknowledged to play a considerable role in influencing and forming consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Jalilvand et al., 2012). The study by Na, Onn, & Meng, (2016) using Theory of Planned Behavior explained that attitudes can be antecedent for tourist intention to travel to one place. In addition, Research has shown that attitude has more important antecedent of intentions and actions (Ajzen, 2001).

Intention can be defined as a struggle to achieve one goal; or traits that can be distinguished from psychological processes, which include references or links to an object. An influential factor in the theory of planned behavior is the individual's intention to perform a given behavior. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior. As a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely should be its performance (Ajzen, 1991). An empirical study regarding tourist attitude and intention in visiting Islamic tourism destination has been carried out in Iran (Jalilvand, Ebrahimi, & Samiei, 2013). They conducted an empirical study to find out what constituted the attitude and intentions of foreign tourists on a visit to Iran. As a result they get a positive influence between attitudes and intentions in visiting Islamic tourist destinations. Intentions to perform behaviors of different kinds can be predicted with high accuracy from attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control; and these intentions, together with perceptions of behavioral control, account for considerable variance in actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, Ajzen also explains that intentions provide the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior. Intention would be expected to influence performance to the extent that the person has behavioral control, and performance should increase with behavioral control to the extent that the person is motivated to try. Moreover, intention also explains consumer behaviour to respond to positive service quality and intention to revisit or recommend to others (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). In addition, Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard (2003) defined intention as purchase intention as part of individual evaluation toward products and services in a certain condition. Therefore, intention to visit tourism objects or places is tourists' trend to revisit Islamic destionation before actually visiting the places.

Aceh as an Islamic destination is appointed by ministry of tourism of Indonesia in 2017 due to its famous religious and historical places such mosques, Tsunami heritage and museums. According to Nassar, Mostafa, & Reisinger (2015) there are several attributes that lead tourists travelling to Islamic destinations namely the availability of Muslim-oriented amenities and services that cater for Muslim travellers and Islamic hospitality. Then, it is also related to Islamic Syariah law that is executed specially only in Aceh province. The Islamic Syariah law support the tourism in a way it perform unique practice in people daily life such as wearing hijab for women, prohibiting all alcohol food and drinks in public shop, etc. Understanding tourists' comment from electronic social media through EWOM will provide information for Aceh Cultural and Tourism Department to develop and improve a more creative and realistic Islamic tourism objects in Aceh and to map the marketing concept and suitable social media accordingly.

Based on the literature reviews justification, the hypotheses for this study are:

H_1: EWOM has positive and significant effect on tourist attitudes in visiting Islamic destination.

H_2: Attitudes has positive and significant effect on tourist intention to visit Islamic destination.

H_3: EWOM has positive and significant effect on intention to travel to Islamic destination.

H_4: EWOM has positive and significant effect on Intention to travel to Islamic destination mediated by attitudes.

II. METHOD

The aim of this study is to find out the relationship between EWOM toward attitude and intention to visit Islamic Destination. The methodology used to achieve the purposes is a descriptive quantitative study that utilizes survey method to collect data by distributing questionnaires. The questionnaire was prepared using a Likert scale with 5 points of scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to scale 5 (strongly agree). Questionnaires items were arranged based on studies conducted previously by scholars (Jalilvand et al., 2012). Data from 500 questionnaires were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. A pilot study to test questionnaires validity and reliability was conducted of 30 respondents. Population of this study are international tourists who came to Aceh who can easily find in several famous tourism objects in Aceh as primary data, while secondary data are obtained from journals, articles, and books. This study used a multivariate Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique with program AMOS 22 & SPSS 22 for descriptive analysis of study object. Based on consideration that SEM has the ability to combine measurement model and structural model simultaneously, compared to others multivariate techniques.

Operational variable are used to measure indicators and to test the questionnaires validity. Content validity is measurement items which is representation of theory's concept (Cooper, D. R., Schindler, P. S., & Sun, 2006). The independent variable of this study is EWOM, which is measured using 6 items statement. According to (M. F. Chen, 2009) The dependent variable is intention which is measured using 3 items statements and the mediation variable is attitude which is measured using 3 time statements.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Respondent's characteristics are analyze base on gender, age, purposes to visit Islamic destination, type of accommodation, length of stay and social media uses to get information about destination . It can be said that male respondent are dominated (304 tourist or 60,8 %) the rest are female (196 tourists or 39,2 %). While if we look at the age, the highest is between 26-33 years (238 tourists or 47,6%). In addition, the reason to visit Islamic destination are for business, vacation and sport/art, and the percentage are 25%, 23,2% and 15%, consecutively. Most tourists prefer to use hotel as type of accommodation and the rest uses home stay and family's house and for the length of stay most tourist stay between 3-6 days in Aceh (214 tourists or 42,8%). Furthermore, for main social media, most tourists (43,6%) use social media to get information and also tourists use recommendation or information from friends and family to find information regarding the destination. Its convince that EWOM is used relatively high for tourist when looking at information about travel destination and attractions.

To run data process in SEM there are several assumptions that have to be fulfilled before building measurement model. Those assumptions are outlier, normality, and multicollinearity. The assumption of outlier is tested using Mahalanobis distance method. The assumption of normality is tested with skewness value and kurtosis value. The result shows that the values of skewness and kurtosis in this study were fully eligible and normal. After performing the test of the measurement model by the CFA method, the overall item for each variable yields the value of the factor loading that are qualified, all values ≥ 0,6 except for EC3 and APB4. Next, the evaluation of criteria Goodness of Fit was conducted to evaluate of the feasibility of a model with several criteria of conformity index and cut off value to declare whether a model can be accepted or rejected.

TABLE I.   SUMMARY OF GOODNESS OF FIT INDICES FOR THE MEASUREMENT AND STRUCTURAL MODEL

Fit Indices	DF	P	CMIN/DF	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI
Default Model	51	0,000	5,743	,050	,966	,943	,910	,975
Independence Model	66	0,000	49,551	,312	,332	,210	,000	,000
Suggest Value		>0,01		>0,07	>0.8	>0.9	>0,9	>0,9

Structural equation modelling analysis relies on a two-step procedure called measurement model and structural model analysis (Gerbing & Anderson, 1992). The measurement model is used to assess the validity and reliability of the items used to measure the constructs. If the loadings are more than 0.5 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014), average variance extracted is more than 0.5 (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982) and composite reliabilities are more than 0.7 (Chin, 2010) then we can assume that the measures are valid. From table 1 we can see that our measure values all exceeded the cut-off values recommended in the literature. As suggested by Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics (2009), the second option for verifying discriminant validity is by examining that the loadings of the indicators should be higher than the cross loadings on other constructs. When SEM model is fit, then the direct, indirect and total effects ware tested. Figure 1. Displays the effect of each variable including the mediation variable.
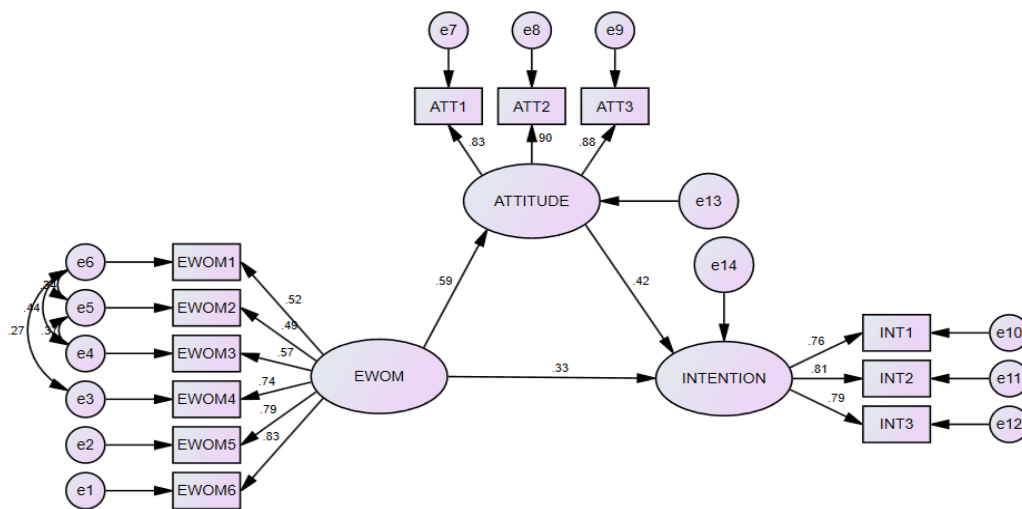
FIGURE I.   SEM ANALYSIS MODEL

The results of hypothesis tested show in table II explain that all values of t_{value} greater than t_{table} = 1,968 (n=500). First, the direct effect of EWOM toward attitude (0.591 and p<0.000) shows that EWOM positively and significantly influences attitudes. Second the direct effect of attitude towards intention (0.416 and p<0.000) is positive significant. Third the direct effect of EWOM toward intention (0.327 and p<0.000) is significant. Fourth, the direct effect of EWOM toward intention mediated by attitude show positive and significant effect (.328 and p<0.000). The overall results of the states that all hypotheses in this study are accepted.

TABLE II.   RESULT OF HYPOTHESES TEST

Hypotheses Tested		Direct Effect			
		Estimates (β value)	S.E	C.R (t-value)	P
H₁ EWOM ⟶ Attitude		.591	.047	11.696	0.000
H₂ Attitude ⟶ Intention		.416	.050	7.077	0.000
H₃ EWOM ⟶ Intention		.327	.047	5.508	0.000
H₄ EWOM ⟶ Intention Attitude		.328	.048	5.627	0.000

The findings of this research provide some contributions to the tourism and consumer behaviour literature. Basically, we test the relationship between attitude and intention through EWOM as new conceptual model for Aceh Islamic Destination. Further, the results verify previous study that tourists' positive experiences yield hypotheses intention as well as positive EWOM influences to recommend the place to others.

IV.   CONCLUSION

The results of this study explain that of EWOM has a positive and significant effect on tourist attitudes and intentions to travel to Banda Aceh as Islamic tourist destinations due to information spread on social media about Aceh as Muslims majority population and Islamic tourism spots. This results support the previous study conducted by Jalilvand et al., (2012) which indicate the same findings. It is in accordance with the study conducted by Gretzel (2007) who explains that 80% of tourists state that they read travel review in social media to improve confidentiality in making decision to make travel plan. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is important to develop good EWOM on online social media to influence tourist attitude and intention, by satisfying tourists experience while in Aceh in order to create good EWOM from tourists. According to (Chung, Han, & Joun, 2015) information technology such as smart tourism tool that give information about destinations and attractions will maximize tourist satisfaction that will lead to improve tourist intention in visiting new destination.

Therefore, next study should be conducted in regard with improving EWOM and linking with tourist satisfaction. It is recommended that the results of this study can be used as a reference to plan and create a marketing communication strategy to market tourism in Banda Aceh especially for Aceh Cultural and Tourism Department to optimize the number of tourists visiting Islamic tourism destinations in Aceh through one of the marketing communications namely EWOM. In general, positive reviews in internet will increase tourism product and services selling. The result of this study imply that the more tourists who write positive experiences in online social media while they are in Aceh the better the tourist attitude and intention to visit Aceh which in turn will increase the number of tourists who visit Aceh. Therefore, all stakeholders of tourism should provide the best services and product in order to build positive reviews from tourists.

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