

DETERMINANTS OF MALAYSIANS' TRAVEL
INTENTION TO LESS TRAVELLED ASIAN
DESTINATIONS

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Author,

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PREFACE

The basis of this research originally stemmed from my passion of travelling to less touristy destinations within the European continent as it is generally more beautiful. However, it has never occurred to me to visit less touristy destinations within Asia as it is significantly associated with terrorism, pollution, natural disasters and diseases.

Additionally, less touristy destinations within Asia may not be well connected and this would not possibly be cost saving. However, as we moved in to an age of digitalization, I stumbled upon an Instagram page named ‘The Gone Goat’ where I was amazed with this Malaysian individual who have been to many less travelled Asian destinations. Her reviews were positive, and the pictures were influencing. Therefore, I wondered what could have been her determinant factor of visiting less travelled Asian destinations and hereby, I progressively committed to this research in extending it to Malaysians’ as a whole.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to study the determinants of Malaysians' travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations. The determinants are word of mouth communications, electronic word of mouth communications, and destination image. Besides that, this research also studies the mediating effect of destination image between electronic word of mouth and travel intention. A five minutes electronic questionnaire was provided to prospective tourists in both of Kuala Lumpur's main international airports and Kuala Lumpur Sentral through a non-probability, cross sectional mono method with limited interference. Reliability of the measurement scale was established through indicator reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Validity of the measurement scale was established through average variance extracted (AVE) to determine convergent validity and crossloading analysis and Fornell-Larcken Criterion to determine discriminant validity. A structural equation model (SEM) analysis was performed to test the relationship among the independent and dependent variables using 223 participants. The empirical results from the structural model suggests that: (1) traditional word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations; (2) electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destination; (3) destination image is a positive and significant determinant on travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations; (4) electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of Asian destination images among Malaysians'; (5) there is a mediating effect of Asian destination images between electronic word of mouth and travel intention among Malaysians. Implications and future research issues were discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

One of the rapid growing sectors in the world is the tourism sector. Steady growths are reported almost every year in the past and the expectations does remain the same for the upcoming years for the tourism sector (Statista, 2015; UNWTO, 2015). Tourism has been reported to become one of the major drivers of global economic recovery, with an important role in job creations, alleviation of poverty, protection for the environment and peace among diverse cultures along with a common understanding across the globe (UNWTO, 2015). According to UNWTO's Annual report in 2015, a total of 1184 million tourists travelled the world which shows a significant increase in 50 million tourists that travelled to an international travel destination in 2015 compared to 2014. Additionally, UNWTO's Annual report in 2016 shows an excellent year in international tourism as international tourism grew up to 1.2 billion, a growth which has not been witnessed since the 1960's. Also, in 2017 for the eighth consecutive year, UNWTO's Annual Report of 2017 shows a significant increase in international tourism by 1323 million tourists out beating 2016.

The growth of tourism is reported to be stronger in Asia and the Pacific from 4% to 5%. Based on UNWTO's Annual Report of 2017, 25% of the 1323 million tourists amounting to an astounding 324 million were reported to have visited Asia. The increase in the growth of tourism has directly contributed to the global economy. Statistics of 2016 also shows that, the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP

in selected Asia Pacific countries is rather substantial.

China being the lead with contribution of 1000.7 billion U.S dollars and followed by India with 208.9 billion U.S dollars contribution with Thailand being the third largest contributor of 82.5 billion U.S dollars, simultaneously Indonesia with 57.9 billion U.S dollars and Malaysia being the top 5 with a contribution of 40.4 billion U.S dollars as part of the increase in the growth of tourism (Statista, 2016).

Besides this, tourism has also been ranked as one of the world's largest industries representing the global service trade in a fraction of one third by its diverse range of products and services such as tour agents, transportations, hotels and restaurants, souvenir suppliers and tour operators (Endo, 2006). However, according to Zahra (2012), due to globalization in the current times, tourists are not only focusing on popular travel destinations such as the Western countries but also not so popular destinations in Asia that are classified as remote and exotic. These destinations in Asia would definitely be attracting tourists' attention every year moving forward.

Destination image plays a big part in influencing tourists for a choice of destination. The term destination image has been widely accepted by researchers and practitioners and it plays a major factor in travel intention and decision (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Additionally, destination image has been evaluated in subject of social science literature where previous studies conducted has shown that tourists are influenced in choosing a travel destination by the destination image itself, moreover, the evaluation of the trip and their travel intention is also influenced based on destination image (McClearly & Baglolu, 1999). According to Um and Crompton (1990), tourists that are exposed to

information sources are highly likely to form a destination image perception prior to visiting the destination. This is further supported by the study that was conducted by Phau, Shanka and Dhayan (2010), which found a considerable influence of information sources on perceived travel intention and destination image.

The effectiveness of word of mouth has been researched for multiple decades now. According to McCleary and Baglolu (1999), the most important and predominant source of information in developing destination is in word of mouth communications. Since then, there has been a significant increase in researcher's attention to online travel word of mouth communication which includes online travel reviews, travel blogs, or travel information searches. With the increase of internet usage by the millennials, the internet has introduced diverse ways in searching, capturing, analyzing, interpreting and managing the influence of tourism through electronic word of mouth (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008).

Promoting tourism is not a standalone aspect as it coincides and is interdependent on traditional word of mouth communications and electronic word of mouth communications. The availability of these information is often regarded highly as an influence in travel intention and perceived destination image (Govers, Go & Kumars, 2007). According to Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini and Mazari (2012), it is crucial to influence a tourist's perception, as tourists often choose destinations with favorable image. They also added that one of the ways to influence the tourist's perception of destination image is by word of mouth communication as it does play roles in influencing attitude and intentions. With current internet usage, electronic word of mouth has also been found to play an important role in acquiring and retaining tourist as virtual interactions takes place among tourists mainly to share information (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008).

1.2 Problem Statement

In the current global environment, it is difficult to promote popular destinations. It is even harder to promote a not so popular destination especially those that do not have a good image (Hanlan & Kelly, 2004). This can be further justified by the following research findings. For example, Fan and Shahani (2014), focused their study on how to change Pakistan's image due to terrorism. Similarly, Marshalls (2007) focused on South Africa's image and Africa as a tourist destination where it was reported that due to the pandemics of HIV/AIDS and crime, prospects for promotion of trade, investment and tourism has failed. Another study conducted by Alvarez and Campo (2014), focusing on the relationship between country image and travel intentions to visit Israel revealed that political conflicts in the nation has damaged their country's image. Additionally, according to the study conducted by Fakharyan, Jalilvand, Elyasi and Mohammadi (2012), Iran as a country, has a strong platform of culture, history and climate which makes it a country with great opportunity in tourism. Unfortunately, tourism has been given too little attention or totally ignored, potentially since Iran was the first of the many countries to be occupied by the Islamic army.

This evidently proves that negative country images are inclined significantly in disrupting the tourism industry at a large scale and as a travel destination that is not favored. Brochures and magazines are commercial sources of information that may be important in developing awareness, however, word of mouth promotions evidently influences destination image formation (McClearly & Baglolu, 1999). Goldenberg et al. (2001) research found that word of mouth promotions by other consumers strongly influences the decision-making process. The effectiveness of word of mouth has been researched for many years that current generation researchers has deviated from their

focus into researching electronic word of mouth from traditional word of mouth, as the importance of electronic word of mouth has prevailed among marketers. According to Yun and Good (2007), influencing tourists' choice of destination and travel intention is significantly contributed by electronic word of mouth as it is considered an important source of information. Based on, Jalilivand and Samiei (2012), it was published that electronic word of mouth has an influence on tourists travel intent and choices in travel destination. There are many studies that can be found on multiple different dimensions of traditional word of mouth promotions and electronic word of mouth promotions in influencing destination images and travel intent.

However, so far, there has been a lack of research that has been conducted to integrate the determinants of Malaysians' travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations. Marketing channels in tourism has evolved due to technology significantly affecting the intent and image created for tourists when deciding to travel to destinations (Assante, Sukalakamala, Wen, & Knudson, 2014). In regards to traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth promotions for destinations in Asia which are less travelled, in literature, there are many that has been studied focusing on one particular country or a non-Asian continent. However, there is a lack of study that refers to an Asian continent by itself.

1.3 Research Objective

This study aims to investigate the following:

1.3.1 General Objective

1. To identify the determinants of Malaysians' travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To investigate the possible influence of word of mouth on Malaysians travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations.
2. To investigate the possible influence of electronic word of mouth on Malaysians travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations.
3. To identify the potential impact of a country's destination image on Malaysians' travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations.
4. To identify the effects of destination image as a mediator between electronic word of mouth and travel intent among Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

1.4 Research Question

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the influences of word of mouth communications on Malaysians travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations?
2. What are the influences of electronic word of mouth communications on Malaysians travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations?
3. What are the influences of destination image on Malaysians travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations?
4. How does destination image mediate the effect between electronic word of mouth and travel intention among Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations?

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Practical Significance

This study has been conducted to understand the determinants of Malaysians travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations. The significant insights that are derived from this study will be of importance to Asians. However, it will be

specifically valuable to, firstly, respondents where they will be able to realize sources of information that could be greatly obtained electronically and face to face which could promote travel intention and a positive image on an Asian destination. Next, Asian tourism government units will benefit from the findings of this study by being able to improve their marketing campaigns based on Malaysians go to source of travel information hosting promotional programs and events in Malaysia. Next, communities, would benefit from the findings of this study as an awareness on the best source of travel information could be obtained which would promote individual's life experiences through learnings on different cultures by travelling. Government of Asian countries also receive many tourists on the basis of the findings on this study as there is an awareness on finding positive travel information which would increase the country's economy. As of future researchers, this study would serve as a catalyst to another research on idea implementations and references for information and facts on tourism studies related to word of mouth, electronic word of mouth, destination image and travel intention.

1.5.2 Theoretical Significance

The theory that will be used in this study is the theory of planned behavior where it is used in research frameworks on decision making which relates to Malaysian choices of travel destination. The findings of this study would firstly, benefit travel agencies as they would have significant awareness on Malaysians decision making on travel intention and the choice of travel destinations. Next, online travel agencies would also benefit from the findings of this study as they would be able to improve their online promotions and marketing basis the behavioral intention of Malaysians inn choosing a destination.

1.6 Chapter Layout

1.6.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the world tourism industry and its contribution to the economy of Asian countries. Besides that, this section also outlines the problem statement of the study, general and specific objectives of the study along with the research questions and the significance of the study.

1.6.2 Literature Review

This section focuses on prior research made dependent variable and the independent variables which are travel intention, electronic word of mouth, word of mouth and destination image. This section also outlines the mediating role of destination image.

1.6.3 Methodology

This section focuses on the research design, the data collection, sampling design and technique, research instrument and data analysis.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

This section focuses on reliability tests, validity tests and significance of hypothesis testing through the PLS-SEM software.

1.6.5 Discussions, Conclusions and Limitations

This section focuses on results findings discussions, conclusion based on research objective and the limitations of the study based on the progression of the research within the period of study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, we first define the dependent variable which is travel intention, followed by independent variables which are traditional word of mouth, electronic word of mouth and destination image. This chapter further elaborates the influence of destination image on travel intention and the mediating role of destination image.

2.1 Travel Intention

Travel intention is the dependent variable of this study. According to Sparks, Ajzen, and Hall-box (2002), the extent of the individual's intentions to perform or not to perform a certain behavior heavily relies on the representation of the travel intention. Apart from that, according to Zarrad and Debabi (2015), readiness to undertake a certain behavior which is then assumed to precede actual behavior are indications of travel intention behaviors. It was also mentioned that motivational factors that influence an individual's behavior is captured by an individual's travel intention. This also coincides with the amount of effort that the respective individual is willing to place on the intention to make it a realization.

According to Jalilivand and Samiei (2012), the theory of planned behavior is often used as a research framework for investigations on decision making process which leads to the choice of travel destinations as well. Besides that, this framework also applies to prediction of behavioral intention in choosing a destination. According to Sparks, Ajzen, and Hall-box (2002), it has been found that generally, an individual's intention to perform a certain behavior would be highly robust based on the propitiousness of the

attitude towards the behavior. The theory of planned behavior is that individuals are foreseen to implement different and diverse types of behavior. These will lead to personal value and approval of behavior, when to perform such behavior, where necessary resources, abilities and opportunities are present (Sparks, Ajzen, & Hall-box; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

The influence of word of mouth promotions has led to the significance importance to research since the revolution of internet technology (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Stokes & Lomax, 2002). According to Yun and Good (2007), word of mouth as an information source is a significant factor in determining tourists travel intentions. Traditional and electronic word of mouth influences of travel intention highly refers to an individual who provides information through recommendation, comments and appraisal through word of mouth or through the internet. For an instance, a good word spread on by a friend or relative on a specific tourist destination or a recommendation or a comment uploaded on the internet would gain attention of the followers, where these actions would act as a factor of influence on travel intention for tourists (Rizky et al., 2017).

The influence of traditional and electronic word of mouth is further supported by Zarrad and Debabi (2015) where, online user generated reviews influences tourist's future of travelling intention towards visiting Tunisia to help improve tourism business performance. Another research by Albarq (2013) supports that, travel intention is influenced by word of mouth. Albarq's (2013) results show that, travel intention to Jordan is positively associated with word of mouth. Also, Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) has also reported that word of mouth significantly increases tourists' intention to travel. This is further proven by the research conducted by Fakharyan (2012) where it was confirmed that tourists' travel intentions are highly dominated by online user reviews.

Furthermore, traditional and electronic word of mouth is set to be the most believable and truthful recommendations that came from experienced tourists' which is taken as reliable information sources to develop travel intention among tourist. This can be further supported by research conducted on travel intention and travel destination decision making by tourist is influenced by online user generated reviews as an important source for tourists (Pan et al., 2007). In reference to Dennis et al. (2009) conceptual framework, it was significantly proven that e-consumers intention to purchase a product from e-retailers is highly influenced by image.

2.2 Traditional Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth

Consumers converse with one another which relates to the concept of word of mouth communication. According to Hawkins, Best and Coney (2004), the word of mouth process allows consumers to picture a favorable or unfavorable image of a specific product or service based on the sharing of opinions and information. According to Carl (2006), the concept of word of mouth has been a constant focus for researchers in the marketing industry to identify the clarity of its definition, however, the word of mouth communications has constantly changed and evolved over time, giving room for its definition to evolve based on globalization. Westbrook (1987), mentioned that word of mouth communication are informal methods of describing the characteristics of a service provided or a product that has been purchased, also in line with the knowledge sharing of the usage of the product and service. It is also to be highlighted that the above which was mentioned in writing was focused solely on the interpersonal communication and not communication through media and its associated mediums and channels to its related consumers. This was later redefined by Carl and Arndt (2006), stating that, word of mouth is a vis-à-vis communication about product or services that

were not main stream.

However, the idea that Westbrook had was indeed debated by Buttle (1998), who argued that word of mouth is not limited to interpersonal communication but also includes electronic mediums which are the current generations marketing practices by companies. With that, it was also argued by Lindgreen and Vanhamme (2005) that the line between electronic and interpersonal communication is within a grey area. Therefore, according to Litvin (2006), word of mouth constitutes the communication of a product and service which are independent of commercial influence. Consumers require distinctive information regarding service products or tourism products which are perceived as high risk (Murray, 1991). The intangibility and uncertainty of the tourism industry can lead tourists to search for information from various sources to ensure that the perceived risks are reduced (Maser & Weiermair, 1998). According to Litvin et. al (2008), this has led traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth to be ranked the most important sources of tourism information when making a tourism purchase and service decision. Recommendations through word of mouth from friends and family are the important sources in forming destination images (McClearly & Baglolu, 2001).

Moreover, according to Beerli and Martin (2004), word of mouth that are concurred is the most reliable, believable, and truthful communication channel which directly influences cognition to perceive destination image. Besides that, it was also mentioned that the intangibility of tourism product has led consumers to seek credible information from sources like news reports as autonomous agents or word of mouth information as solicited and unsolicited agents. According to Litvin et.al (2008), any positive or negative statement that is made by actual, potential or previous customers about a

company or a product which is made available by diverse people and institutions through the internet is known as electronic word of mouth communication. Furthermore, an equally important source of information that influences tourists on destination image, travel intention and choice of destination is electronic word of mouth (Grewal, Cline & Davies, 2003; Soderlund & Rosengren, 2007; Ying & Chung, 2007; Yun & Good, 2007; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012b, 2012c). Apart from that, there are different effects of online reviews on a specific product or service that has been analyzed in recent studies. For example, there is a significant impact on online sales based on online reviews (Ye, Law, Gu & Chen, 2011). As such, since online reviews plays a vital role as being an important source of information to travelers and tourism firms, many studies have been conducted to further understand online traveler reviews (Govers & Go, 2005; Ye, Law & Gu, 2009, Ye, Zhang & Law, 2009).

According to Vermeulan and Seegers (2009), online travel reviews has shown significance influence on traveler's decisions based on previous studies. An experimental study conducted by Vermeulan and Seegers (2009) revealed that exposure on online reviews on tourism enhanced tourists' awareness simultaneously the positive reviews changed and improved the attitudes of travelers towards perceiving destination image. On the other hand, this proves that electronic word of mouth promotes awareness and improves attitudes of tourists which corresponds with the research conducted by Hanlan and Kelly (2004) where it was found that traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth play a role as information sources in the creation of destination image. The outcome of the research conducted shows that destination image is mainly formed through the existence of word of mouth may it be through friends and relative or through the internet. These are autonomous and independent information sources that determine creation of destination image. This can further be

corroborated with the research that was conducted by O'Neill, Palmer and Charters (2002) on Australia's wine tourism where tourists who spread the good word of mouth has significantly impacted the sales of wine within the country.

Additionally, based on a research that was conducted in New Zealand, negative word of mouth that was spread through traditionally and electronically has an unflattering impact upon destination image as dissatisfied tourists were spreading negative comments about their travel experience (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2003). Similarly, several empirical researches found results show that traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth can affect destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Balakrishnan, Nekhili & Lewis, 2011). According to Beerli and Martin (2004), the most truthful and believable communication channel that influences destination image is word of mouth which also coincides with the research conducted by McCleary and Baglolu (2002), that found recommendation through word of mouth was the most important source of information to form destination image. Also, a study that was conducted by Crick (2003) on the Caribbean tourist industry stated that local citizens who show an array of unfavorable emotions to the tourists visiting the destination would result in a negative word of mouth and would instantaneously take a plunge in the industry.

Thus, the following is proposed:

H1: Traditional word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

H2: Electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

2.3 Destination Image

Since the beginnings of the 1970's, studies have been conducted on destination image to identify the role that is played by destination image in tourism development (Hunts, 1975). Destination image is one of the major areas of the tourism industry that has been heavily researched. An individual's overall perception or the total set of impressions of a place is defined as destination image (Phelps, 1986). According to Alhemoud and Armstrong (1996), mental portrayal of a destination is regarded as destination image. Destination image works as a combination of 3 elements which are beliefs, impressions and ideas that would allow tourist to identify and analyze, a destination that satisfies a tourist's mental image and recreational demands (Ahmed, 1991). Much research conducted on tourism suggests that post evaluation of a trip and future intentions are equally important to destination image as the destination selection process and an individual's subjective perception (Prendergast & Man, 2002; Castro, Armario & Ruiz, 2007; Hsu, Huang & Swanson, 2010).

Additionally, the most important factor to promote the intention to visit a destination is determined by the image of the destination as suggested by previous studies (Alcaniz, Garcia & Blas, 2005). Besides that, Lin et.al (2007) also never failed to report that reinforcement of a traveler's preference for a destination is determined by the image of the destination. In a research conducted by Ryu et. al (2007) it was also reported that destination image has a significance impact to travel intention. Last but not least, in a research conducted by Phau et.al (2010) and Lee (2009), findings showed that the main predictor of destination choice intention is destination image. Hence, the following hypotheses is proposed:

H3: Destination image is a positive and significant determinant on travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

2.4 Electronic Word of Mouth and Destination Image: The Mediating

Role of Destination Image.

With the existence of the internet, opinions of individuals are easily accessible for other internet users (Dellarocas, 2003). The findings from Pan et.al (2007) shows that reviews over the internet on tourism destination have become important source of information for prospective tourists. Gretzel and Yoo (2008) found that internet users felt that online information provided by tourists on a destination were more up to date and reliable. Besides that, studies also show that electronic word of mouth is an important source of information for individuals to form a destination image (Yun & Good, 2007; Soderlund & Rosengren, 2007). According to Lopes (2011), an individual can form a destination image based on the information accessible on the internet though they have not visited the destination. Abu Bakar and Ilkan (2016) found that electronic word of mouth affected tourist's destination image on Turkey and electronic word of mouth positively influenced Tehran's destination image (Jalilvand et.al., 2012).

While destination image has been a focus of studies for decades now, however, there are only a small number of studies that has been done in researching the potential mediating role of destination image. It was also studied that one of the untapped fields of tourism is the mediating effect of destination image (McClearly & Baglolu, 2002; Qu et al., 2011). Based on a research conducted by McClearly and Baglolu (2002), it was found that there was a mediating effect of destination image between source of information and travel intention. Therefore, this study has been extended to study the mediating effects of destination image in the Asian continent between electronic word of mouth and travel intention among Malaysians.

Thus, the following hypotheses is proposed:

H4: Electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of Asian destination images among Malaysians'.

H5: There is a mediating effect of Asian destination images between electronic word of mouth and travel intention among Malaysians.

2.5. Hypotheses

There are five hypothesis that has been formulated based on the literature review as above which are as follows:

H1: Traditional word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

H2: Electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

H3: Destination image is a positive and significant determinant on travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

H4: Electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of Asian destination images among Malaysians'.

H5: There is a mediating effect of Asian destination images between electronic word of mouth and travel intention among Malaysians.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The following is the conceptual framework that has been built based on the hypothesis to support the study that would be conducted. The variables that would be the basis of this study would be traditional word of mouth, electronic word of mouth, destination image and travel intention. Furthermore, this study will examine the mediating effect of destination image between electronic word of mouth and travel intention.

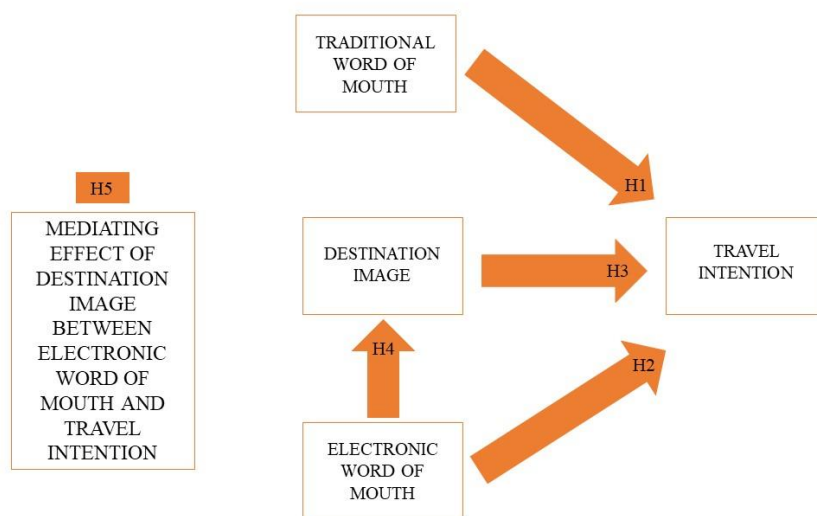


Figure 2: (Source: Own Illustration based on study variables that would be conducted)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The following chapter of this paper will be dedicated to the empirical part of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The research has been conducted on a survey basis where a deductive approach would be utilized to test the five hypotheses that has been developed based on the literature review and shown in the conceptual framework. The constructs that would be tested are destination image, travel intention, traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth. The survey would be conducted based on a cross-sectional mono method. The methodical choice that is selected is quantitative methods and the research strategy that is used would be the self-administered questionnaire method with none to minimal interference.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data is obtained through self-administered survey questionnaire.

3.3 Sampling Design

3.3.1 Target Population

The target population of this study are Malaysians who have travelled internationally at least once prior to this study.

3.3.2 Sampling Frame and Sampling Location

The targeted sample population must be of those who are Malaysian citizens and those who have travelled internationally at least once prior to this study. The dissemination of this survey would be based on voluntary participation of individuals at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (KLIA2) and Kuala Lumpur Sentral which is the largest transportation hub in Malaysia.

3.3.3 Sampling Elements

The respondents of this study comprise of any individuals who are students, self-employed, employed by a firm or unemployed whom have travelled internationally at least once prior to this study.

3.3.4 Sampling Technique

A non-probability judgmental sampling has been used in this study.

3.3.5 Sampling Size

The sample size that is used for the research is 223 as the key characteristics of PLS-SEM software is that there are no identification issues with small sample sizes. It also achieves high level of statistical power with small sample sizes (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017).

3.4 Research Instrument

The questionnaire is built using the 7-point Likert-type scales which would allow the respondents to express their feeling up to different level of intensities (Churchill et al., 2008). A pilot study was conducted with pilot trial sample size of 20 respondents at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) to test the study design prior to performance of a full-scale research project. The full-scale research would be

conducted over a period of 3 weeks.

3.5 Constructs Measurement

The questionnaire construct was adopted from Zarrad and Debabi (2015). The primary scale of measurement is the interval scale where it is tapped on a 7-point Likert scale scaling technique.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaire is computed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and SmartPLS 3 software. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used to generate the descriptive statistical data analysis. SmartPLS is utilized in conducting the structural equation modelling (SEM) procedure in order to test the relationships of the hypotheses (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017). Using his software, reliability assessments through factor loading analysis, indicator reliability, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability is performed. Additionally, it also performs validity assessments through average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity is assessed based on the indicator items Cross Loading and the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. Besides that, significance of path coefficients and coefficient of determination is assessed. In order to assess mediation, statistically significant indirect effect, direct effects and confident intervals are used as support to mediation analysis. (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017)

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	84	37.7	37.7	37.7
Female	139	62.3	62.3	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1: Respondents data by gender

Based on Table 4.1, total number of 223 respondents participated in this study and it was found that 139 respondents were female contributing to 62.3% followed by 84 male respondents contributing to 37.7% of this study.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Under 21 years old	4	1.8	1.8	1.8
22 to 35 years old	122	54.7	54.7	56.5
36 to 50 years old	59	26.5	26.5	83.0
51 to 60 years old	21	9.4	9.4	92.4
over 61 years old	17	7.6	7.6	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.2: Respondents data by age group

Based on Table 4.2, it is found that 122 respondents were within the age group of 22 to 35 years old, followed by 59 respondents within the age group of 36 to 50 years old. Also, there were 21 respondents within the age group of 51 to 60 years old, followed by 17 respondents within the age of over 61 years old and lastly 4 respondents within the age group of under 21 years old.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Primary	2	.9	.9	.9
Secondary	21	9.4	9.4	10.3
University	200	89.7	89.7	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3: Respondents data by education level

Based on Table 4.3, it is found that 200 of the respondents, participated in this study has received university education, followed by 21 respondents received secondary education and 2 respondents received primary education.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Business	20	9.0	9.0	9.0
Holiday	187	83.9	83.9	92.8
Others	16	7.2	7.2	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4: Respondents data based on reason of travelling

Table 4.4 shows that 187 of the respondents that participated in the study travel internationally for holiday purposes and 20 respondents travel for business purposes

followed by 16 respondents who travel internationally for other reasons.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid One	107	48.0	48.0	48.0
Two to Four	84	37.7	37.7	85.7
Four to Five	11	4.9	4.9	90.6
More than Five	21	9.4	9.4	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.5: Respondents data based on travelling frequencies to Asian destinations

Table 4.5 shows that 107 respondents have only travelled once to an Asian destination in the last 12 months, followed by 84 respondents who have travelled to at least two to four Asian destinations. It is also found that only 21 respondents have travelled to Asian Destinations more than five times and 11 respondents have travelled to Asian destinations between four to five times.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Lesser than RM 100	2	.9	.9	.9
Between RM 100 to RM 500	13	5.8	5.8	6.7
Between RM 500 to RM 1000	66	29.6	29.6	36.3
More than RM 1000	142	63.7	63.7	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6: Respondents data based on budget per trip planned within Asia

Table 4.6 reports that, 142 respondents spend approximately more RM 1000 for a trip planned within Asia per person, followed by 66 respondents who spend approximately is between RM 500 to RM 1000 and 13 respondents spend between RM 100 to RM 500 and 2 respondents who spend lesser than RM 100 respectively per person.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	2	.9	.9	.9
More or Less disagree	10	4.5	4.5	5.4
Undecided	12	5.4	5.4	10.8
More or less agree	49	22.0	22.0	32.7
Agree	70	31.4	31.4	64.1
Strongly Agree	80	35.9	35.9	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.7: Respondents data on Asia as a very good tourism destination

Based on Table 4.7, it is found that 80 respondents strongly agree on Asia being a very good destination to visit followed by 70 respondents who agree on Asia being a very good destination to visit and 49 respondents more or less agreed that Asia is a very good destination. Besides that, it was also found that 12 respondents disagreed and more or less disagreed with Asia being a very good tourism destination. Also, 12 respondents were undecided if Asia was a good tourism destination.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	2	.9	.9	.9
Disagree	3	1.3	1.3	2.2
More or Less disagree	9	4.0	4.0	6.3
Undecided	4	1.8	1.8	8.1
More or less agree	43	19.3	19.3	27.4
Agree	82	36.8	36.8	64.1
Strongly Agree	80	35.9	35.9	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.8: Respondents data on Asia as a very valuable tourism destination

Based on Table 4.8, it is found that 80 respondents strongly agree on Asia being a very valuable tourism destination, followed by 82 respondents who agree and 43 respondents who more or less agree on Asia being a very valuable tourism destination. 14 respondents fell under the category of disagreeing with Asia being a valuable tourism destination and 4 respondents were undecided.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	2	.9	.9	.9
More or Less disagree	14	6.3	6.3	7.2
Undecided	15	6.7	6.7	13.9
More or less agree	49	22.0	22.0	35.9
Agree	85	38.1	38.1	74.0
Strongly Agree	58	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.9: Respondents data on Asia as a very pleasant tourism destination

Based on Table 4.9, 58 respondents strongly agreed on Asia as a pleasant tourism destination while 85 other respondents agreed that Asia is very pleasant. It was also found that 49 respondents more or less agreed to Asia being a very pleasant tourism destination. Additionally, 16 respondents strongly disagreed and more or less disagreed on Asia being a very pleasant destination while 15 respondents were undecided.

Source	Frequency
Spouse	50
Family	109
Friend	171
Relative	39
Acquaintance	44
Magazine	13
TV Advertising	14
Travel Agent	8
Newsgroup	23
Website	168
Blog	75
Chat Room	16
Virtual Community	11
Email or instant messaging from people you know	31
Email or instant messaging from company	14
Online Travel Agent	15
Other	5

Table 4.10: Respondents data by source of travel information to Asian Destinations

Based on Table 4.10, It is found that 171 respondents would refer to a friend to gather information regarding travel information, this is followed by 168 respondents who would refer to websites and 109 respondents who would refer to a family member to gather travel information. Apart from that, 75 respondents would refer to blog posts and 50 respondents would refer to their spouses while 44 respondents and 31 respondents would refer to acquaintances and resort to email of instant messages from people, they know respectively to gather travel information. It was also found, lesser than 23 respondents would refer to Magazine, TV advertisings, newsgroups, travel agent, chat

rooms, virtual community, online travel agent, email or instant messaging from company and other sources to gather travel information.

4.2 Scale Measurement

4.2.1 Reliability

Latent Variable	Indicators	Loadings	Indicator Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Travel Intention (TI)	Q8qq	0.729	0.531	0.796	0.860
	Q8rr	0.656	0.430		
	Q8ss	0.757	0.573		
	Q8tt	0.704	0.496		
	Q8uu	0.856	0.733		
Word of Mouth (WOM)	Q8d	0.701	0.491	0.846	0.885
	Q8e	0.790	0.624		
	Q8f	0.788	0.621		
	Q8g	0.843	0.711		
	Q8hh	0.766	0.587		
Destination Image (DI)	Q8v	0.858	0.736	0.574	0.824
	Q8x	0.815	0.664		
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	Q8i	0.742	0.551	0.886	0.916
	Q8l	0.808	0.653		
	Q8m	0.865	0.748		
	Q8n	0.868	0.753		
	Q8p	0.850	0.723		

Table 4.11: Results Summary for Reflective Measurement Model

Reliability of the measurement model is accessible from indicator level and construct level. Indicators are the items that are presented in the questionnaire. For example, Q8qq, Q8rr, Q8ss and Q8tt are indicators of travel intention. According to Carmines and Richard (1979), good reliability of the indicator variables should be at a minimum

threshold value of 0.7. In this study, the reliability indicators used a threshold value of 0.7. Based on Table 4.11, it is found that all of the loadings achieved a threshold of above 0.70 except for the Q8rr indicator, which is found to be 0.656, however, this indicator was not dropped in the study as the value is close to 0.70. Therefore, the indicator variables have good reliability.

Chin (1998) mentioned that Cronbach's alpha is a standard for measuring reliability of the indicator variables where the values would range from 0.0 to 1.0 where the greater the value the higher the reliability. It was also suggested that in a reliability test, the Cronbach's alpha should be greater than a value of 0.7. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha value for variable Travel intention (TI) is 0.796, followed by variable word of mouth (WOM) with a value of 0.846 and variable electronic word of mouth (eWOM) with a value of 0.886. However, only variable destination image (DI) did not meet the threshold of 0.7 where the value was found to be 0.574. This is because, all other variables had more than 3 indicators to support the reliability measurement, however, only variable destination image had 2 indicators to support the reliability (Ruiz et.al., 2010).

Moreover, reflective measurement models tests reliability through composite reliability, which is a test of internal consistency reliability. Firstly, composite reliability value should vary between 0 to 1 where higher value would certainly indicate a higher level of reliability. This is similar to the Cronbach's alpha test, however, because the Cronbach's alpha prioritizes the number of indicators supporting the latent variable giving opportunity to undermine the internal consistency reliability (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017). Therefore, in this study, composite reliability is taken as priority as it measures different outer loadings of all the indicator variables. As such, it is found

based on Table 4.11 that, Travel intention's composite reliability value is 0.860, word of mouth's (WOM) composite reliability value is at 0.885, followed by destination image (DI) with a value of 0.824 and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) with a value of 0.916. This shows that the composite reliability values are closer to value of 1.0 supporting good reliability.

4.2.2 Convergence Validity and Discriminant Validity

Latent Variable	Indicators	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Discriminant Validity?
Travel Intention (TI)	Q8qq	0.552	Yes
	Q8rr		
	Q8ss		
	Q8tt		
	Q8uu		
Word of Mouth (WOM)	Q8d	0.607	Yes
	Q8e		
	Q8f		
	Q8g		
	Q8hh		
Destination Image (DI)	Q8v	0.701	Yes
	Q8x		
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	Q8i	0.686	Yes
	Q8l		
	Q8m		
	Q8n		
	Q8p		

Table 4.12: Convergence Validity and Discriminant Validity

Average variance extracted (AVE) on a construct level is a common measure to

establish convergent validity. As such AVE is defined as the squared loadings mean value of the indicators that are associated with the construct. Therefore, communality of a construct is equivalent to convergent validity. Besides that, an AVE value of 0.50 and greater indicates that, the construct is assessed to be more than half of the variance indicators. If the AVE value is lesser than 0.50, this indicates that there are errors consisting in the variances explained by the construct (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017). In this study, based on Table 4.12, it was found that travel intention has an AVE of 0.552 followed by word of mouth with an AVE of 0.607 and destination image with an AVE of 0.701 followed by electronic word of mouth with an AVE of 0.686. Since all AVE values are more than 0.50, this shows that indicators for each construct share a high proportion of variance.

	Destination Image	Travel Intention	Word of Mouth	Electronic Word of Mouth
Q8d	0.512	0.236	0.701	0.364
Q8e	0.410	0.361	0.790	0.480
Q8f	0.554	0.357	0.788	0.222
Q8g	0.497	0.259	0.843	0.249
Q8hh	0.351	0.533	0.766	0.068
Q8i	0.237	0.269	0.204	0.742
Q8l	0.377	0.389	0.268	0.808
Q8m	0.504	0.427	0.340	0.865
Q8n	0.417	0.458	0.241	0.868
Q8p	0.401	0.464	0.265	0.850
Q8qq	0.476	0.729	0.503	0.260
Q8rr	0.371	0.656	0.535	0.107
Q8ss	0.360	0.757	0.180	0.539
Q8tt	0.273	0.704	0.176	0.343
Q8uu	0.446	0.856	0.388	0.539
Q8v	0.858	0.458	0.406	0.439
Q8x	0.815	0.426	0.568	0.366

Table 4.13: Indicator Item Cross Loading

	Destination Image	Travel Intention	Word of Mouth	Electronic Word of Mouth
Destination Image	0.837			
Travel Intention	0.529	0.743		
Word of Mouth	0.576	0.489	0.779	
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.483	0.496	0.323	0.828

Table 4.14: Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Discriminant validity measures if the constructs are truly distinct from each other. Discriminant validity can be determined by 2 measures which are cross loadings and the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. Firstly, cross loading is an assessment of an indicator's outer loading on its construct being greater than all of its loading on any other construct (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017). In this study, Table 4.13 supports this by showing the indicator items cross loading greater on its own construct compared to the other constructs. This proves that there is a discriminant validity. Secondly, the Fornell-Larcker Criterion is a measure in assessing discriminant validity which is a more conservative approach. The latent variables correlations are compared to the AVE's square root of each construct. As such, the AVE's square root value of the construct should be greater than the highest correlation with any other construct (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017). Table 4.14 shows, the diagonals are the AVE's square root of the latent variables and indicates the highest in any column or row thus indicating discriminant validity between constructs.

4.3 Inferential Statistics

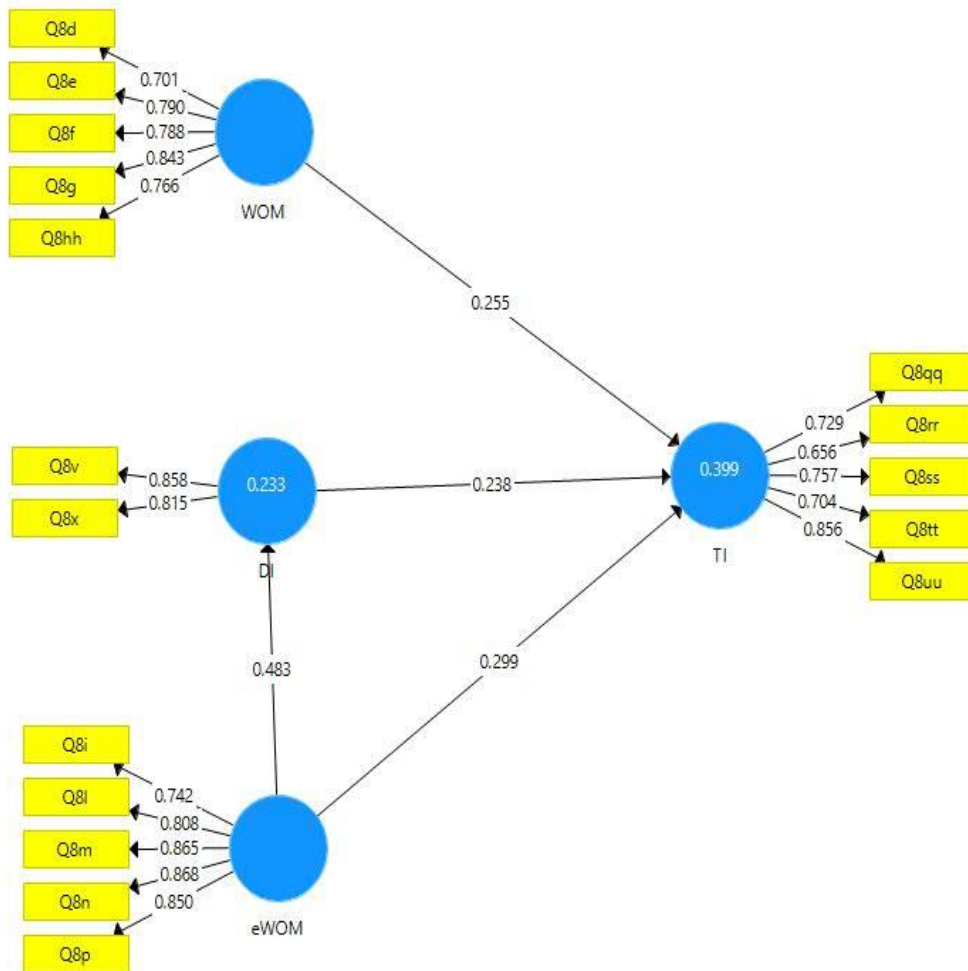


Figure 4.1: PLS SEM Reflective Measurement Model – R square and Path Coefficients

Chin (2010) suggested that the minimum R square value should be more than 0.19 which equals to 19%. In this study, the dependent variable which is travel intention shows a R square value of 0.399 equivalent to 39% measuring the proportion of variability of the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. Also reported on Figure 4.1 is the path coefficients magnitude strength where it is suggested by Hair et.al., (1998) that a value of less than 0.2 is considered weak, a value of 0.2 to 0.5 is considered moderate and a value of more than 0.5 is considered strong. Figure

4.1 demonstrates the relationships between the independent variables (i.e. word of mouth, destination image and electronic word of mouth) through the path coefficients to the dependent variable (i.e. travel intention). Firstly, word of mouth (WOM) has a moderate effect on travel intention with a coefficient value of 0.255. Next, destination image (DI) has a coefficient value of 0.238 which is a moderate effect on travel intention and followed by electronic word of mouth (eWOM) with a coefficient value of 0.299 which also has a moderate effect on travel intention. Lastly, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) showed a coefficient value of 0.483 which also has a moderate effect on destination image.

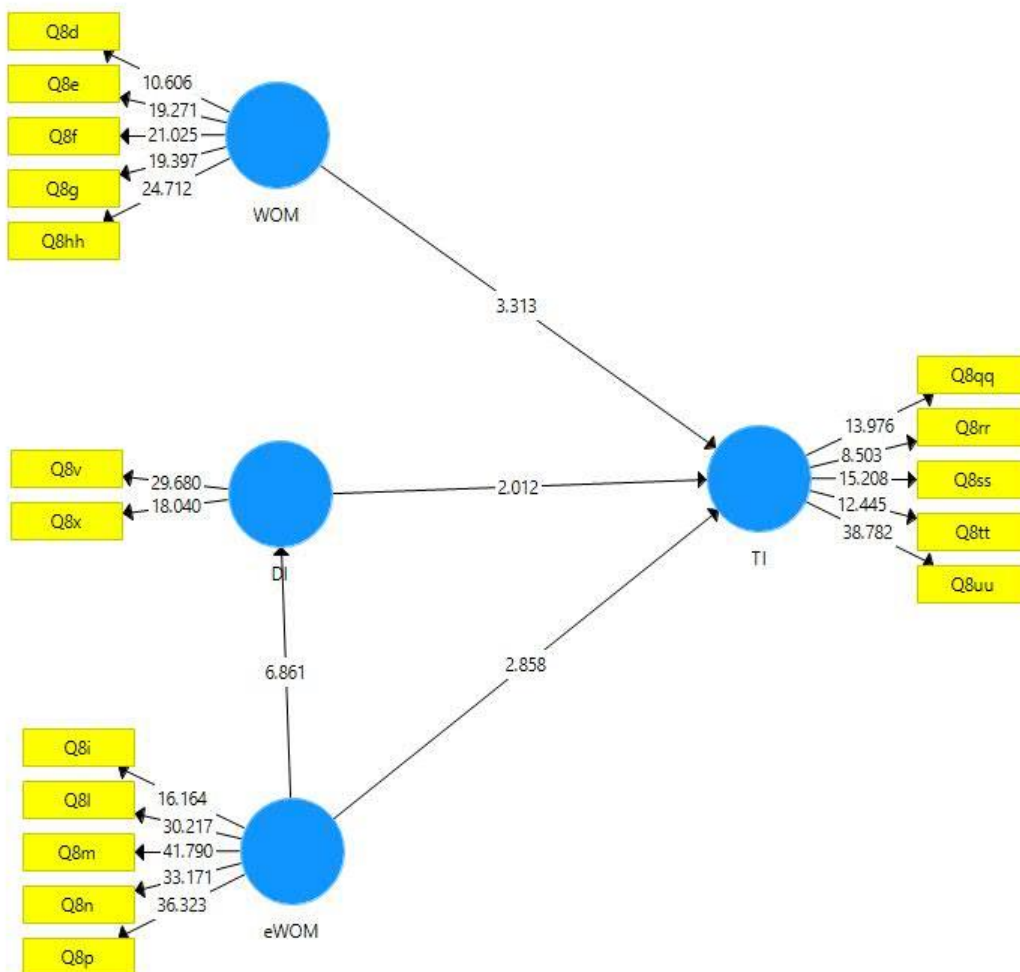


Figure 4.2: PLS SEM Reflective Measurement Model – Bootstrapping

Chin (2010) in his study clarifies that bootstrapping is a technique used to assess statistical significance by determining the standard error of coefficients. Bootstrapping analysis shows validation of the hypothesis between the variables in the model. Figure 4.2 shows the calculation of the t- statistics from the bootstrap of 500 random sample iterations that has been used with a 95% confidence level to assess the significance.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original		Standard Error	t-value [^]	P Values	Decision
		Sample (O) β	Sample Mean				
H1	WOM -> TI	0.255	0.268	0.077	3.313*	0.001	Supported
H2	eWOM -> TI	0.413	0.414	0.078	5.295*	0.000	Supported
H3	DI -> TI	0.238	0.220	0.118	2.012*	0.045	Supported
H4	eWOM -> DI	0.483	0.484	0.070	6.861*	0.000	Supported
H5	eWOM -> DI - > TI	0.107	0.107	0.054	2.122*	0.034	Supported

Table 15: Structural Model Hypothesis testing based on Figure 4.2 model

From Table 15, all path relationships in the model of Figure 4.2 are significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$). The path relationship between word of mouth (WOM) and travel intention (TI) is significant at 0.05 level ($\beta = 0.255$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that the hypothesis relationship between WOM and TI is supported. Hence, H1, traditional word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations. Next, the relationship of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and travel intention is significant at 0.05 level ($\beta = 0.413$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that the hypothesis relationship between eWOM and TI is supported. Hence, H2, electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

Additionally, the path relationship between destination image (DI) and travel intention (TI) is significant at 0.05 level ($\beta = 0.238, p < 0.05$). This indicates that the hypothesis relationship between DI and TI is supported. Hence, H3, destination image is a positive and significant determinant on travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations. Next, the path relationship between electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and destination image (DI) is significant at 0.05 level ($\beta = 0.483, p < 0.05$). This indicates that the hypothesis relationship between eWOM and DI is supported. Hence, H4, electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of Asian destination images among Malaysians'. Besides that, it is found through the specific indirect effects bootstrapping calculation that there is a partial mediating effect of destination image (DI) between electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and travel intention which are significant at 0.05 level ($\beta = 0.107, p < 0.05$). This indicates that the hypothesis relationship between eWOM, DI and TI are supported. Hence, H5, there is a mediating effect of Asian destination images between electronic word of mouth and travel intention among Malaysians.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

According to Endo (2006), tourism is ranked as the world's largest industry. Due to the globalization in the current times, tourists are looking for unpopular and untapped tourism destinations in comparison to the touristy travel destinations (Zahra, 2012). A tourist choice of destination is mainly influenced by destination image. Destination image is a perception that is formed by a tourist prior to visiting the destination (Um & Crompton, 1990). Besides that, Ryu et. al., (2007) found that destination image has a significant impact on travel intention. Phau, Shanka and Dhayan (2010), found that perceived travel intention and destination image is highly influenced by information sources. The most important source of information is traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth (McClearly & Baglolu, 2002).

However, it is difficult to promote unpopular and untapped destinations especially destinations that are connected with negative country images (i.e. Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Israel) which relatively disrupts the formation of travel intention. Therefore, it is highly important to develop awareness among tourists through word of mouth and electronic word of mouth as these mediums strongly influences the decision-making process (McClearly & Baglolu, 2002; Goldenberg et.al., 2001). The lack of research on determinants of Malaysians' travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations has influenced this study on investigating the possible influences of word of mouth, electronic word of mouth and the potential impact of destination image on travel intention. Furthermore, to also examine destination image as a mediator of electronic

word of mouth and travel intentions among Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.

5.2 Summary of Statistical Analysis

Based on the self-administered questionnaire that was carried out between March 12th and April 1st at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (KLIA2) and Kuala Lumpur Sentral (KL Sentral), 258 respondents participated in this survey, however, only 223 respondents' samples were considered valid. 139 respondents were female while 84 other respondents were male. Additionally, 122 respondents were within the age group of 22 to 35 years old contributing to 54.7 percent of the study and the remaining 45.3 percent belong to age groups under 21 years old, 36 to 50 years old, 51 to 60 years old and above 61 years old. It was also found that 200 respondents contributing to 89.7 percent of the respondents received university education as the highest education qualification. 187 respondents have reported to travel internationally for holiday purposes contributing to 83.9 percent of this study. This can be further examined where interestingly 107 respondents only travel once in a year internationally and 84 other respondents a minimum of two and a maximum of four times a year. This could be possible as 142 respondents have responded that it takes more than RM 1000 per trip planned within Asia.

It was also studied that 80 and 70 respondents respectively, strongly agree and agree that Asia is a very good tourism destination. It was also found in this study that 80 and 82 respondents respectively strongly agree and agrees respectively that Asia is a very valuable tourism destination and 85 respondents agree and 58 respondents strongly agree that Asia is indeed a very pleasant tourism destination. The above statistics proves

that the majority of Malaysians have a good impression on Asia to be pleasant and valuable. This is supported by a study from Choi, Chan and Wu (1999), who found Hong Kong to be a shopping paradise and oriental culture who shares common reputations with other Asian countries (i.e. Singapore, Thailand, and Taiwan).

This study further studies sources of travel information that Malaysians' go to and it was found that 168 respondents refer to online websites and 75 respondents would refer to Blog posts which are electronic word of mouth mediums and 109 respondents would refer to a family member while 171 other would refer to a friend which are word of mouth mediums. This shows that word of mouth and electronic word of mouth are mediums that are highly sort after for travel information which influences individuals on travel intention and forming a destination image in this current age. This is further supported by a study conducted by Hanlan and Kelly (2004) to state that traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth play a role as information sources to the creation of destination image thus promoting travel intention.

Additionally, on a scale measurement standpoint, a loading analysis was conducted which showed good reliability of the indicator variables as the loadings achieved the threshold value of 0.7. Further reliability analysis was conducted where the Cronbach's alpha measurement showed all constructs had high reliability except for destination image as there were insufficient indicators to support this construct. In reference to this point, since the Cronbach's alpha prioritises the number of indicators and reliability was not achieved for destination image, a composite reliability test was run which proved that all constructs including destination image has good reliability. Reliability tests are important in data analysis to prove that the scale yields consistent results (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017).

Besides that, validity tests were performed, and it was found in this study that all indicators for each construct share a high proportion of variances through the average variances extraction (AVE). Further test on validity was performed to support discriminant validity which was cross loading and the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. Firstly, discriminant validity was proven as all the indicators outer loading was greater on its own construct compared to any other construct. Adding on, discriminant validity was further supported by the Fornell-Larcken Criterion analysis where the AVE square root values on the latent variables are the highest on its own construct. The PLS-SEM reflective measurement model shows that there is 39 percent R square value for the dependent variable which reflects as a good value (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sartstedt, 2017). The PLS-SEM also found the path coefficients magnitudes of all the independent variable (i.e. word of mouth, electronic word of mouth and destination image) had a moderate effect on the dependent variable (i.e. travel intention).

5.3 Discussions of Major Findings

At the initial phases of this study, five hypotheses were created between the three independent variables (i.e. word of mouth, electronic word of mouth and destination image) and the dependent variable (i.e. travel intention). The PLS-SEM bootstrapping analysis was performed to assess the statistical significance of the hypothesis between the variables. It was found that there were 5 relationships that were modulated which are word of mouth to travel intention, electronic word of mouth to travel intention, destination image to travel intention, electronic word of mouth to destination image and destination image to electronic word of mouth and travel intention. These path relationships were reported to be significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$) and at a t-value of above 1.96. Adding on to that, based on the significance of the path destination image

to electronic word of mouth and travel intention, it is found that there is a partial mediating effect of destination image between electronic word of mouth and travel intention. Therefore, these significances contribute to the support of the hypotheses that was build which are as below:

Research Hypothesis	Results
H1: Traditional word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.	Supported
H2: Electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.	Supported
H3: Destination image is a positive and significant determinant on travel intention of Malaysians' to less travelled Asian destinations.	Supported
H4: Electronic word of mouth is a positive and significant determinant of Asian destination images among Malaysians'.	Supported
H5: There is a mediating effect of Asian destination images between electronic word of mouth and travel intention among Malaysians.	Supported

Table 16: Hypothesis Test Results

Based on the significance of the hypothesis, it is concluded that the determinants of Malaysians' travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations are word of mouth, electronic word of mouth and destination image. Besides that, also, there is significance influence of word of mouth, electronic word of mouth and destination image on Malaysians travel intention to less travelled Asian destination and lastly destination image is a mediator between electronic word of mouth and travel intention. With this, the research objectives have been achieved.

5.4 Implications of the Study

5.4.1 Managerial Implications

Tourism government bodies, travel agencies and marketers would not be able to directly control word of mouth as the information are exchanged in private conversations (Swan & Oliver, 1989; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989) however, observing information that is uploaded on blog posts, websites, news channels, virtual communities and chat rooms could be a precursor in determining tourist perception, intention and behavior (Zarrad & Debabi, 2015).Also, electronic word of mouth communication is also easily managed as the information is accessible online which is timely and cost effective. The results of this study indicates that electronic word of mouth is most significant to travel intention and destination image, however, the influence of word of mouth should not be overlooked either as Table 4.10 in chapter 4 clearly reports that 171 respondents refer to relatives and 109 respondents refer to family members in comparison to 168 respondents who refer to a website for travel information. Therefore, the results of this study also indicate that negative word of mouth would most likely have a large impact on tourists.

In order to analyze the review messages of destination image and the travel intention, electronic word of mouth mediums should incorporate categories that contribute to the positive or negative destination image such as environment, social, culture, and infrastructure. Furthermore, a satisfaction and perception scale can be created for the categories based on a five or seven Likert scale where this information will be quantifiable. Additionally, in order to further study the perception and intent of the tourists a demographic section could also be added. This will be a basic framework to further understand level of tourists' satisfaction, evaluations of the reviewer's demographics and expertise to examine validity of review and most importantly to

assess the tourists travel intention based on destination image. By formulating this framework, the Asian tourism sector would develop and consistently be able to support the countries' economy.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The current study has three limitations. The first limitation is the sample size as this study was initiated to research the determinants of Malaysians' travel intention to less travelled Asian destination where the population of Malaysian as of quarter 4 2018 was 32.6 million, however, only 223 samples were gathered to examine the significance of the hypotheses. The second limitation of this study is time where as a part time student, we are given one short semester and one long semester to complete the research project, hence if more time was provided, better data collection and research can be done. The last limitation is the time of the study, where the respondents are approached at the airport or at the transit to the airport. This could be a limitation factor as the respondent could have been rushing for a flight or train, hence not responding accurately. Therefore, this could not have been a right period to collect data. The limitations of this study is acknowledged but they do not detract from the significance of the findings but merely provides platforms for future research.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended for future research to identify, firstly, how word of mouth and electronic word of mouth affects destination image and travel intention based on the characteristics of the destination and secondly, how brand attribution of electronic word of mouth affects destination image and travel intention.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, Malaysians' travel intention to less travelled Asian destinations is influenced from information obtained via word of mouth communication, electronic word of mouth communication (i.e. blog, website, chat rooms and virtual community). Malaysian' travel intention is also influenced by the image formed of a particular destination based on the information received from word of mouth and electronic word of mouth communications. Additionally, destination image acts as the mediating effect between electronic word of mouth and travel intention.

APPENDICES

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