Antecedents and behavioral outcomes of tourism destination image: The moderating role of travel motivation and tourist's region

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Abstract

The goal of this research is to identify the antecedents and behavioral outcomes of destination image, as well as to investigate the mediating influence of destination image and the moderating effects of tourists' region and travel motivation. A quantitative survey of 400 tourists in Tunisia was done to achieve these goals, and structural equation modeling, a multi-group analysis, and Sobel's test were utilized. The findings indicate that the destination image mediates the relationship between its antecedents (E-WOM and travel experience) and behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the tourist's region and the high level of travel motivation have a moderating impact on the relationship between the destination image and its antecedents as well as the relationship between the destination image and its consequences. These results lead important practical contributions to tourism marketing practitioners on improving the destination image perception as a key element to provide behavioral intentions through exciting memorable experience and positive online contents about a destination. Moreover, tourism businesses can better segment their visitors who have a high level of travel motivation. The results of this paper can bring successful marketing strategies for the tourism industry.

Key Words: destination image, e-WOM, tourism experience, travel motivation, tourist's region, behavioral outcomes
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1. Introduction

Tourism has become a significant industry in many countries in recent years, promoting economic growth and foreign cash. However, the tourism industry has frequently been impacted by shocks such as pandemics, wars, and terrorist acts. To attract more tourists and build a successful destination image, governments and tourism businesses should promote destination safety and security, as well as provide exciting and appealing places to visit, which increases the likelihood of tourists recommending and returning to this destination in the future. The sector can build a favorable tourist attitude toward visiting a tourism location by ensuring a secure environment with great value and attractive and fascinating places to explore. In other words, tourism businesses and managers can increase tourist behavioral intention by creating a successful destination image.

However, any policy or action aimed at enhancing a location's image and expanding and empowering the tourism industry must first get a better understanding of why people travel and what factors influence their behavioral intention to visit a destination. Previous researches have focused on the impact of destination image on conative responses such as the intention to return to the destination (Chen and al., 2014; Aro and al., 2018), the attitude toward visiting a travel destination (Kim and Stepchenkova, 2015; Nguyen and Tong, 2022), and the willingness to recommend a destination (Amaro and al., 2020). However, the outcomes of these investigations on the link between destination image and behavioral intentions have been equivocal and quite varied. Furthermore, only a few studies (Setiawan and Wibawa, 2018; Aprilia and Kusumawati, 2021) examined the impact of travel experience and e-WOM (electronic-word of mouth) on destination image. As a result, the primary purpose of this research is to fill these gaps in the literature by improving the understanding of the idea of destination image and identifying its antecedents and effects.

In addition, other studies (Khan and al., 2017, Dagustani and al., 2018, and Pereira and al., 2019) have investigated the direct effect of travel motivation on destination image. Nonetheless, little research has been conducted on the indirect moderating influence of travel motivation. In this sense, e-WOM and travel experience

influence destination image and may differ depending on visitor motivation level. Earlier studies that investigated the role of destination image as a mediator between travel experience and destination recommendation, as well as between e-WOM and revisit intention, are scarce. Furthermore, because foreign tourists have various cultural values and preferences, their behavioral intentions toward the destination image may range from one geographic region to the next. However, no research has been conducted to determine whether geography changes the effect of destination image on behavioral reactions. As a result, another purpose of this work is to fill these gaps in the literature.

The research that follows proposes a comprehensive model to investigate the various antecedents and behavioral outcomes of the destination image, either directly or indirectly. The goal of this study is therefore: First, identify the variables that have an impact on the destination image. Second, assess the impact of destination image on destination recommendation, attitude toward visiting a trip place, and intention to revisit. Finally, look at the moderating effects of travel motivation and tourist region, as well as the mediating effect of destination image. To achieve these objectives, we chose a sample of international tourists from various regions (Eastern Europe, European Union, Maghreb Arab) for this study, providing important information on destination image that leads to conative reactions. This research is novel in the field of tourism development.

The estimation results indicate that e-WOM can be used as an efficient tool in order to enhance the tourists' views of destination. The tourism industry should engage to build online communities as a potentially valuable strategy for creating effective interactions and communications with tourists. Marketing practitioners and tourism managers should also take into account the destination image as a crucial factor enabling to develop a positive tourists' impressions and perceptions toward a destination.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a review of the literature related to the concept of tourism destination image and the development of hypotheses. In section 3, we perform the data analysis. The final section is devoted to the conclusion and recommendations.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1 The concept of destination image

The destination image is increasingly becoming a term of interest in the context of tourism. It is viewed as the whole appraisal representation of the destination (Kock and al., 2016). According to Agapito and al., (2013), the destination image is described as a subjective representation of a place kept in a tourist's mind, which influences the behavior of tourists throughout three steps that comprise a priori, loco, and posteriori. More precisely, the destination image refers to the acknowledgments, impressions, and perceptions of tourists towards the destination. Tasci and Gartner (2007) distinguished between three components: cognitive, affective, and conative. The cognitive image constitutes the beliefs and knowledge of tourists to the destination. The affective image refers to emotional reactions and tourists' feelings about a destination. And, the collective destination image encompasses tourists' behaviors and their willingness to influence and recommend the destination to others.

Despite defining the destination image as a three-dimensional construct, researchers tend to underline the formative and hybrid nature of the destination image by describing it as a global image (Afshardoost and Eshagi, 2020). In fact, the whole image is considered to be a holistic perception of a tourist destination (Stylidis and al., 2017), which includes both cognitive and affective images (Papadimitriou and al., 2015) or is assigned by cognitive, affective, and conative images (Stylos and al., 2017). In this paper, we follow the theory of Josiassen and al., (2016) and use the term of global image in the same way as the destination image concept, defined as an individual's holistic appraisal perception of a destination.

2.2 Travel experience and destination image

Kim and al. (2012) are among the first authors to examine the approach to memorable tourism experiences. In fact, these authors have defined this concept as "*a tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred that is selectively constructed from tourism experiences based on the individual's assessment of the experience*". Zhang and al. (2018) claim that the travel experience and memorable tourism experience are two interdependent concepts but different in terms of their connotations. Previous studies (Chandralal and al., 2015; Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2014) explained that past memories are considered a source of information when tourists make decisions to revisit a destination. In this sense, the study by Dagustani and al. (2018) proved the positive effect of travel experience on destination image. Therefore, we can test our first hypothesis:

H 1: The travel experience has a positive impact on destination image.

2.3   e-WOM and destination image

According to Hennig-Thurau and al. (2004), electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) can be defined as "any positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which are made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet". e-WOM is more efficient than WOM due to its anonymity and lack of incentives (Abubakar and Ilkan, 2013). The e-WOM has the capacity to affect tourists purchasing decisions, including their interest in visiting a certain destination. Thus, e-WOM promotes the quality of tourist destinations in the positive form of destination image (Aprilia and Kusumawati, 2021). In the context of our research, the e-WOM is seen as a source of information that can influence the destination image. Setiawan and al. (2014), Setiawan and Wibawa (2018), and Aprilia and Kusumawati (2021) stipulate the existence of a positive and significant relationship between electronic word of mouth and the destination image. Furthermore, according to Sundram and al. (2022), electronic word of mouth using diverse platforms and online communities has a positive effect on tourists' perceptions of destination images. In that matter, we can propose our second hypothesis:

H 2: The e-WOM has a positive impact on destination image.

2.4   Destination image and recommendation

Tourists can use various sources of information when deciding where to travel. The destination recommendation provides information about destinations and is considered one of the most valuable sources influencing the travel decision (Pektas and al., 2019). Several studies (Anton and al., 2014; Wu, 2016) have highlighted that when tourists are satisfied with a destination, they are willing to recommend it to others. Similarly, Eid and al. (2019) have suggested that the destination image has a strong impact on tourist satisfaction and the intention to recommend other visitors in the context of the UAE. Moreover, the research of Afshardoost and Sadegh Eshagi (2020) stipulates that the destination image has a positive effect on the intention to recommend other tourists. So, recommending a destination is viewed as a favorable consequence of the destination's image. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H 3: The destination image has a positive impact on destination recommendation.

2.5   Destination image and attitude toward visiting the travel destination

According to Ajzen (1991), attitude toward a behavior is the degree to which individuals evaluate favorably or unfavorably a specific behavior. The link between destination image and attitude has been proven in various contexts. In fact, Kim and Kwon (2018) found that Tanzanian students' affective image of Korea influences their attitudes toward the country. However, Jalilvand and al., (2012) stipulate that the destination's image has a positive effect on tourists' attitudes toward the destination. Furthermore, Kim and Stepchenkova (2015) have identified that the organic image of the destination affects tourists' attitudes. In addition, Nguyen and Tong (2022) have tested the relationship between destination image and attitudes toward visiting a travel destination in Vietnam. The destination's image is considered a crucial determinant of attitudes toward visiting a travel destination. So, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: The destination image has a positive impact on attitude toward visiting a travel destination.

2.6   Destination image and revisit intention

According to Tasci and Gartner (2007), the destination image is seen as the most significant antecedent of tourists' behaviors. Empirical studies (Setiawan and Wibawa, 2018; Zhang and al, 2018; Afshardoost and Sadegh Eshagi, 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al. 2021) found a positive link between the destination image and revisit intention. Papadimitriou and al (2018) have investigated the intentions of past visitors and non-visitors to the city of Athens, incorporated the urban destination, and found positive and significant links between the overall image and the intentions of tourists to visit and revisit a destination. In fact, the more positive tourists' impressions and perceptions of a destination, the more likely they are to return. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H 5: The destination image has a positive impact on revisit intention.

2.7   Travel experience and destination recommendation

Experience is one of the most important factors in predicting a tourist's behavioral intention, such as destination recommendation (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Empirical research has reported the link between the travel experience and behavioral intentions, especially the likelihood to recommend this destination. For instance, several studies (Adongo and al., 2015; Tsai, 2016) stipulate that the travel experience significantly affects behavioral intentions to revisit a destination and recommend it. The study of Kim (2014) has highlighted the effect of travel experience on tourists' behavior to visit Taiwan and spread a positive WOM. Similarly, Barnes and al. (2016) and Kim and al. (2012) have suggested that longer-term memorable experiences have the strongest impact on destination recommendation and the tourist's willingness to talk about and recommend this destination. If tourists have an exciting and enjoyable experience during their travel, their desire to recommend this destination to others will be higher. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H 6: Travel experience has a positive impact on destination recommendation.

2.8   e-WOM and revisit intention

Empirical studies have tested the relationship between e-WOM and behavioral intention. For example, Zarrad and Debabi (2015) found that the e-WOM positively influences tourist's future travel intentions towards visiting a destination. For Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), the e-WOM is considered to be a strong determinant of travel intention. Nevertheless, as part of our research, the e-WOM can be an antecedent to revisit intention. Indeed, e-WOM recommendations provided by previous guests can be seen as the most reliable sources of information for potential tourists. Therefore, recommendations to other people in an online network are considered to be the most valuable kind of information for a tourist who is concerned about traveling. It seems that a favorable online review concerning a destination can increase a tourist's willingness to revisit it. As a consequence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H 7: e-WOM has a positive effect on revisit intention.

2.9   The moderating role of travel motivation between travel experience, e-WOM and destination image

Travel motivation is a tourist's conviction about attainment of internal desires of travel and experience of specific characteristics, which they lead to the appreciation and culmination of visiting a particular destination (Pereira and al., 2019). In the same order of ideas, travel motivation is considered to be the internal desires of an individual and the attributes of destination that motivate them to make a trip to a particular destination.

The online reviews or comments of destination and the positive experience of tourists can boost the destination image through the travel motivation. Tourists with a high degree of motivation, as opposed to those with a low level of motivation, their travel experience and e-WOM can enhance the destination image. Some research states that people are pushed by intrinsic sociopsychological forces, such as praise and money, toward destination. For example, Chang and al., (2014) claim that travel motivation constitutes a force of incentive that stimulates tourists to revisit a particular destination. Several studies (Khan and al., 2017; Dagustani and al., 2018; Pereira and al., 2019) have confirmed the effect of travel motivation on destination image.

Another insight into tourist destination, understanding travel motivation is reflected in the potential to increase the level of pleasure and enjoyment experience of tourists, so it will be better in maintaining tourist loyalty and behavioral intention to revisit this destination (Pratminingsih and al., 2014). Phillips and Jang (2007) have tested the moderating role of travel motivation in the link between destination image and behavioral intention to visit this destination. Consequently, the destination image influences the visit intention might be varied depending on the degree of motivation. The high level of travel motivation with a positive image of destination are more likely to visit this destination than the low degree of travel motivation. Following the theoretical and empirical developments discussed above, our hypotheses regarding the moderating role of travel motivation are as follows:

H 8/a: The travel motivation moderates the link between travel experience and destination image.

H 8/b: The travel motivation moderates the link between e-WOM and destination image.

2.10   The moderating role of tourist's region

Several researches have showed that the revisit intentions of tourists with a specific destination experience varies across nationalities (Lee and Green, 1991; Kang and Moscado, 2006; Kim and Malek, 2017; Dedeoglu and al., 2017). Lee and Green (1991) found that the factors determining consumers repurchase intentions varied between the two groups from south Korea and United States. According to Kang and Moscardo (2006), the national cultures of tourist are relevant to shape their behaviors. Moreover, Kim and Malek (2017) stipulate that culture

differences have a moderating effect on the link between affective destination image and destination loyalty. Likewise, Dedeoglu and al., (2017) have highlighted that the nationality differences (German, Russian) moderate the relationship between destination affective image and the revisit intentions in the context of Turkey.

Nevertheless, studies on tourist's region differences are globally lacking on the relationship between destination image and behavioral outcomes in the context of tourism. Kozak and al., (2004) argued that destination image should be investigated in a cross-cultural context for coherence between tourist's motivations in a different market and the destination's sources of information. According to Weiermair (2000), the destination image may be differently understood due to the cultural norms of international tourists. Therefore, it seems that tourist's region may has a moderating effect on destination image to tourist's behavioral responses. Based on this gap, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H 9/a: The tourist's region moderates the link between destination image and destination recommendation.

H 9/b: The tourist's region moderates the link between destination image and attitude toward visiting a travel destination.

H 9/c: The tourist's region moderates the link between destination image and revisit intention.

2.11   The mediation role of destination image

According to Crompton (1992), destination selection is defined as the process of the choice of a destination from among alternative competitors. The cognitive and emotional processes implied in selecting destinations for a final selection that most effectively meets the needs of tourists (Crompton, 1992). As mentioned earlier, the destination image can be affected by travel experience (Dagustani and al., 2018) and e-WOM (Setiawan and Wibawa, 2018; Aprilia and Kusumawati, 2021). In fact, the destination image can be enhanced through the exciting experience and the online reviews or comments about a particular destination.

Although travel experience and e-WOM are considered to be important antecedents of the tourist's willingness to recommend and to revisit the destination, it is believed that the destination image plays a crucial mediating role in these relationships. According to Rasoolimanesh and al (2021), the improvement of destination image of the host towns can positively influence the decision-making process of tourists. However, only a few studies investigating the mediating role of destination image on the link between the antecedents and outcomes have been done. Moon and al., (2013) have investigated the mediating effect of destination image in the relationship between event quality, perceived value and behavioral intention in the context of sport tourism. While, Nechoud and al., (2021) indicated that there is a mediation effect of destination image on the link between the perceived credibility of e-WOM and intentions to visit a destination. Therefore, we predict that travel experience and e-WOM can improve tourist's perceptions of destination image, which in turn can increase the tourist's willingness to recommend and to revisit a destination. As a consequence, our hypotheses concerning the mediating role of the destination image are as follows:

H 10: Destination image will mediate the relationship between travel experience and destination recommendation.

H 11: Destination image will mediate the relationship between e-WOM and revisit intention.
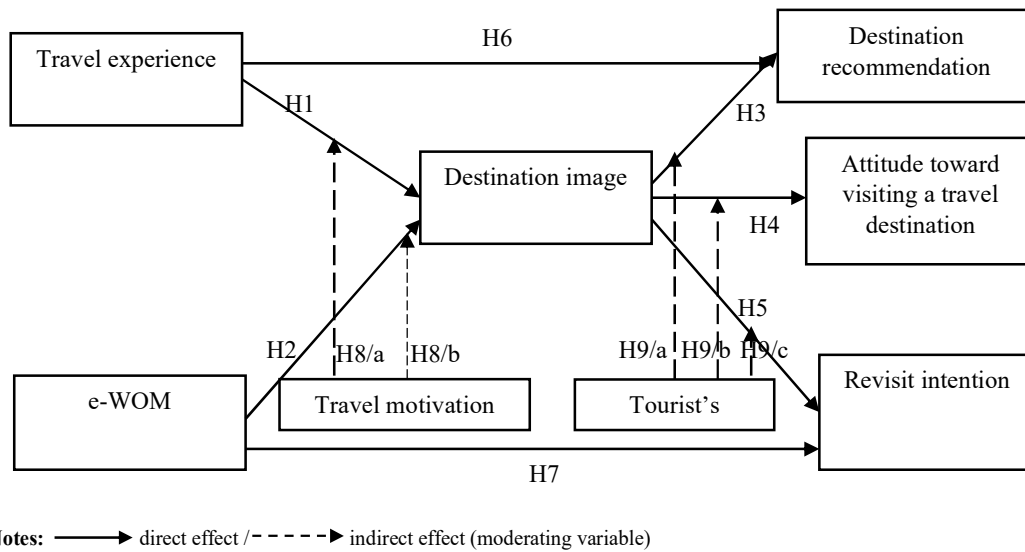
Notes: ———▶ direct effect / ‑ ‑ ‑ ‑ ‑▶ indirect effect (moderating variable)

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

In order to verify the hypothetical relationships, a quantitative study was carried out with a convenience sample of 400 foreign tourists who visited Tunis and agreed to participate in this questionnaire. The data is collected through a questionnaire which is administered online and offline over a three-month period from August 2022 to October 2022. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: First, we presented the aim of this research. Secondly, we collected demographic information, containing a question about tourist's frequency of visiting Tunisia. The final section included the variables of our study. We also added a screening question in order to ensure that tourists had visited Tunisia and who had previous tourism experience. The tourists are aged at least 18 years old and always write or communicate on social media (Facebook, Instagram) about attractive destinations in Tunisia.

Table 1 presents the sample profile using demographic variables such as gender, age, marital status, and region. A large part of the participants is female (58.5%). The majority of those sampled were between 20 and 30 years old (45.25%). Furthermore, 57% of respondents were married. Also, the sample consisted of 200 Maghreb Arabs. Moreover, 49.25% of tourists stated that they visited regularly Tunisia.

Table 1: Sample profile

Demographic variables		Frequency	Rate
Gender	Male	166	41.5%
	Female	234	58.5%
Age	Under 20	81	20.25%
	From 20 to 30	181	45.25%
	From 30 to 40	52	13%
	From 40 to 50	54	13.5%
	Over 50	32	8%
Marital status	Single	172	43%
	Married	228	57%
Region	Earn Europe	120	30%
	European Union	80	20%
	Maghreb Arab	200	50%
Tourist's frequency of visiting Tunisia	Regularly (2 to 3 times a month)	197	49.25%
	Very regularly (several times a month)	115	28.75%
	Infrequently (2 to 3 times a year)	78	19.5%
	Rarely	10	2.5%

3.2 Measurements

This survey includes seven constructs: e-WOM, travel motivation, tourism experience, destination image, recommendation, attitude toward visiting a travel destination, and revisit intention. The e-WOM scale was assessed with five items derived from previous research by Sun et al., (2006) and Kim et al., (2009). The travel motivation was evaluated with seven dimensions obtained from Zhang and Peng (2014). The tourism experience was measured with nine dimensions drawn from anterior studies by Kim (2017). The destination image was estimated using five items derived from the scale of Lee and Lockshin (2011). Three items adapted from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) measured the recommendation. Three items of the attitude toward visiting a travel destination were adapted from studies by Porter and Donthu (2006) and Nguyen and Tong (2022). The latter measured a scale of revisit intention based on three items used in Chen and Chen (2010). All items were developed on a five-point Likert type scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 Common method bias

According to Podsakoff and al (2003), common method bias represents a potential threat to the reliability and validity of items and can have a significant effect on the covariation between latent constructs. Therefore, Harman's single factor test was conducted in order to detect the presence of common method bias. For this purpose, all items of all variables were loaded on a single factor without rotation and exploratory factor analysis was performed. A single factor accounted for less than 50 % of the variance (i.e.,17.974%). Reducing the likelihood of common method bias and the data were appropriate for the validation of the proposed model research.

4.2 Exploratory factor analysis

Exploratory analysis is manifested through the use of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) as well as measures of reliability using SPSS. The results from the principal component analysis show that the KMO index is greater than 0.5, which indicates the existence of an acceptable factorial solution (e-WOM = 0.872; travel motivation = 0.888; tourism experience = 0.900; destination image = 0.855; recommendation = 0.608; revisit intention = 0.704; attitude toward visiting a travel experience = 0.772). Indeed, the Bartlett's sphericity test is significant at a risk of 5%, so we can see that there is a relationship between the observed variables. The reliability was evaluated with the Cronbach alpha, which reflects the internal consistency of the items belonging to each construct. In fact, the alpha coefficient for each variable must be greater than the recommended level of 0.6 (e-WOM = 0.889; travel motivation = 0.851; tourism experience = 0.951; destination image = 0.925; recommendation = 0.741; revisit intention = 0.916; attitude toward visiting a travel destination = 0.946).

4.3   Confirmatory factor analysis

In order to check the validity and reliability of the measurement scale for each variable, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) via AMOS software. The results of CFA show that the reliability was evaluated using the coefficient of Composite Reliability (CR) for the overall constructs, which is above the threshold of 0.7, confirming internal consistency. In addition, we computed the convergent validity using the indicators of Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which are satisfactory because they are over the threshold of 0.5. Moreover, the factor loading of the constructs exceeded the benchmark value of 0.5, which indicates that the items are well explained by their own construct. Furthermore, Discriminant validity is assessed by examining the factorial contributions (loadings) of the items to their respective theoretical constructs. The measures of factor loadings, composite reliabilities, and AVEs values are shown in Table 2. In order to test discriminant validity, we used the approach of Fornell and Larcker (1981). In fact, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is based on the square of convergent validity, that has to be greater than the correlation of the other constructs. In light of the results in Table 3, the square root of the convergent validity of each construct is greater than the inter-constructed correlations. Therefore, we can conclude that the discriminant validity of the measurement models has been proven.

Table 2: Measurements

Variables	Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Travel experience	TEXP1	0.848	0.771	0.612
	TEXP2	0.757		
	TEXP3	0.896		
	TEXP4	0.884		
	TEXP5	0.754		
	TEXP6	0.865		
	TEXP7	0.722		
	TEXP8	0.742		
	TEXP9	0.748		
e-WOM	e-WOM1	0.669	0.848	0.824
	e-WOM2	0.774		
	e-WOM3	0.779		
	e-WOM4	0.852		
	e-WOM5	0.849		
Destination image	DI1	0.682	0.883	0.736
	DI2	0.863		
	DI3	0.955		
	DI4	0.805		
	DI5	0.931		
Destination recommendation	DR1	0.567	0.872	0.821
	DR2	0.542		
	DR3	0.533		
Attitude toward visiting a travel destination	ATT1	0.910	0.742	0.703
	ATT2	0.943		
	ATT3	0.924		
Revisit intention	RINT1	0.936	0.763	0.717
	RINT2	0.979		
	RINT3	0.758		

Table 3: Discriminant validity

	Travel experience	e-WOM	Destination image	Recommendation	Attitude toward visiting a travel destination	Revisit intention
The square of convergent validity	**0.782**	**0.907**	**0.858**	**0.906**	**0.838**	**0.847**
Travel experience	1					
e-WOM	-0.044	1				
Destination image	-0.025	0.039	1			
Recommendation	0.080	0.018	-0.130	1		
Attitude toward visiting a travel destination	-0.005	0.044	0.049	0.089	1	
Revisit intention	0.072	0.006	-0.001	0.573	0.143	1

4.4   Model fit

The model fit allows us to determine the quality of the theoretical model with empirical data. The results of the adjustment indices are satisfactory. In fact, the parsimony index is considered acceptable (CMIN/DF = 2.036), which is less than the threshold of 3. Indeed, the absolute indices GFI = 0.914 and AGFI = 0.941 are greater than 0.9. The residual RMSEA = 0.063 is less than 0.10, and the RMR is close to 0 (RMR = 0.063). Furthermore, comparative indices such as CFI = 0.900 and NFI = 0.958 are greater than 0.9. Thus, our structural model is well adjusted.
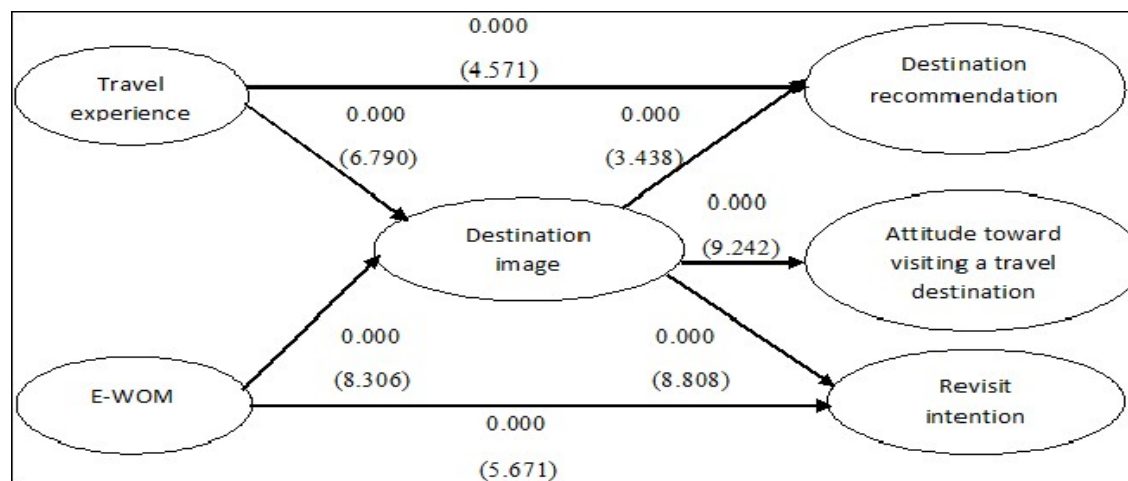
Notes: In brackets are the T-values and above brackets are the P-values (significance at 0.001)

Figure 2: The structural model

5.   Hypotheses testing

Structure equation modeling (SEM) leads to testing hypothetical relationships. As can be seen in Table 4, all the research hypotheses are confirmed and significant because the student test is greater than 1.96 and the P value is significant for a 5% error risk. The results show a strong regression coefficient of the e-WOM (β=0.846, T =

8.306, P < 0.05) and the travel experience (β=0.644, T = 6.790, P < 0.05) on the destination image. This shows that online communications or comments on social media and a pleasant or exciting travel experience are important in influencing positive tourist perceptions toward a destination. The destination image has a significant effect on tourists' behavioral reactions, namely destination recommendation (β= 0.120, T = 3.438, P < 0.05), attitude toward visiting a travel destination (β=0.886, T = 9.242, P < 0.05), and revisit intention (β=0.976, T = 8.808, P < 0.05). Thus, the destination image is considered to be the most variable affecting the revisit intention (β=0.976). Additionally, travel experience (β=0.322, T = 4.571, P < 0.05) was found to be a significant predictor of destination recommendation. The hedonism and novelty of the travel experience can enhance tourists' willingness to recommend this destination to others. Moreover, the results affirm a relationship between e-WOM and revisit intention (β=0.157, T = 5.671, P < 0.05). Based on these results, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7 were supported by the current data.

Table 4: Hypothesis testing

Paths	B	T value	P value	Result
Travel experience---→Destination image	0.644	6.790	0.000	Supported
e-WOM---→Destination image	0.846	8.306	0.000	Supported
Destination image----→Recommendation	0.120	3.438	0.000	Supported
Destination image-------→Attitude toward visiting a travel destination	0.886	9.242	0.000	Supported
Destination image-----→Revisit intention	0.976	8.808	0.000	Supported
Travel experience-----→Recommendation	0.322	4.571	0.000	Supported
e-WOM------→Revisit intention	0.157	5.671	0.000	Supported

In order to test the moderating effect of travel motivation between travel experience, e-WOM, and the destination image and the moderating role of the tourist's region on the link between the destination image and behavioral outcomes such as recommendation, attitude toward visiting a travel destination, and revisit intention, we adopt the multi-Group analysis (MGA). The multi-group analysis allowed comparison between paths assessing high degrees of travel motivation (n = 222) and low degrees of travel motivation (n = 178). Furthermore, the MGA enabled comparison between the paths of tourists' regions in Eastern Europe (n = 120), the European Union (n = 80), and the Maghreb Arab (n = 200).

Table 5: Test of the moderating effect of travel motivation

Causal relationship	Std.coefficient		P value	
	Low	High	Low	High
Travel experience----→Destination image	0.183	0.101	0.371	0.000
e-WOM-------→Destination image	0.139	0.889	0.162	0.000

As shown in Table 5, the MGA indicates that the low degrees of travel motivation do not moderate the relationship between the travel experience, e-WOM, and the destination image because the P-values are not significant. However, the results in Table 5 outline that the travel experience and the e-WOM significantly and positively influence the destination image for high levels of travel motivation. The multi-group analysis highlights that the e-WOM (β=0.889) has a more significant impact on destination image than the travel experience. As a matter of fact, online reviews and comments on social networks about a destination can provide

positive tourist perceptions and feelings toward the destination. Therefore, it is important to ensure the safety or security of this destination and to offer attractive places to visit.

Table 6: Test of the moderating effect of tourist's region

Causal relationship	Std. Coefficient			P value		
	Eastern Europe	European Union	Maghreb Arab	Eastern Europe	European Union	Maghreb Arab
Destination image---→Recommendation	0.450	0.271	0.163	0.000	0.027	0.029
Destination image-----→Attitude toward visiting a travel destination	0.060	0.205	0.398	0.563	0.000	0.000
Destination image----→Revisit intention	0.409	0.366	0.014	0.000	0.006	0.878

As outlined in Table 6, the region (European Union) significantly moderates the relationship between the destination image and behavioral reactions such as the recommendation, attitude toward visiting a travel destination, and revisit intention. The MGA indicates that the destination image is found to be a more significant predictor of revisit intention ($\beta=0.366$) for European Union tourists. This is explained by the fact that tourists coming from the European Union are more likely to revisit a destination when it is safe and offers interesting places and natural attractions. However, the region (Eastern Europe) moderates significantly and positively the link between destination image and conative responses, namely recommendation and revisit intention. The impact of destination image is higher on recommendation ($\beta=0.450$) for Eastern European tourists. This finding suggests that when Eastern European tourists have positive perceptions toward a destination, their likelihood of recommending it is high. Moreover, the destination image has a positive and significant effect on destination recommendation and attitude toward visiting a travel destination for Maghreb Arab tourists. The MGA results indicate that the impact of destination image is high on attitudes toward visiting a travel destination ($\beta=0.398$).

In order to test the mediating effect of destination image between the travel experience and recommendation on the one hand and between e-WOM and revisit intention on the other, we conducted the Sobel test. According to the theory of Baron and Kenny (1986), there are three conditions for verification of the mediating role: the variations of the independent variable significantly influence the variations of the mediating variable; the variations of the mediating variable significantly influence the variations of the dependent variable; and when paths are controlled, the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable is not significant.

Table 7: Test of the mediating effect of destination image

Paths	Sobel test	P value	Result
Travel experience----→Recommendation	2.102	0.035	Partial mediation
e-WOM-----→Revisit intention	6.033	0.000	Partial mediation

In light of the results of the indirect effect of destination image in Table 6, it can be stated that the mediation role of destination image between the travel experience and the destination recommendation is significant (Sobel test = 2.102>1.96; P = 0.035<0.05). Thus, the mediation of destination image is partial since the travel experience

has a significant direct effect on recommendation. This means that the willingness of tourists to recommend a destination will increase if the hedonic and novelty experiences are susceptible to enhancing the destination's image. Furthermore, the destination image plays a role in mediating partially and very significantly (Sobel test = 6.033 > 1.96; P = 0.000<0.05) the incidence of e-WOM on revisit intention.

6. Discussion and implications

This study adds to our theoretical understanding of the antecedents and behavioral consequences of destination image in the context of tourism. The relationship between tourism experience and destination image was discovered to be positive and significant. This result is consistent with that of Dagustani and al., (2018). This demonstrates that travelers who have favorable and memorable encounters improve their impressions of the destination's image. Similarly, Wang and al., (2020) state that the tourism experience in a destination has been continuously displayed in order to produce keepsakes of the visit. As a result, remarkable prior experiences have the potential to create positive impressions and views of tourists toward the location, which is an important component of the tourist decision-making process. An interesting and engaging travel experience can improve a destination's image by increasing safety and providing beautiful sites and natural attractions.

With regard to the effect of e-WOM on destination image, it is confirmed and coincides with previous studies by Setiawan and al., (2014), Setiawan and Wibawa (2018), and Aprilia and Kusumawati (2021). Thus, e-WOM communication and information are useful to enhance the tourists' perceptions of the destination's image. According to Aprilia and Kusumawati (2021), the e-WOM will lead to an improvement in destination image when tourists read online reviews from other travelers, leading to a stronger belief in traveling to a certain destination. Therefore, online reviews or comments on social networking sites are able to enhance positive tourist impressions and perceptions toward a particular destination. The more online information about a destination is shared on social media, the more its image improves in the minds of potential tourists.

The findings also show that there is a favorable and significant association between the destination image and recommendation. According to Pektas and al., (2019), when travelers have good impressions or representations of a destination, they are more likely to promote and discuss about it to other tourists. When a destination is safe and secure, and frequently offers fascinating places to visit and natural wonders, it generates a positive image of the destination, which increases the possibility of the tourist talking about it and recommending it to others. As a result, the destination image may be thought of as a predictor of destination recommendations.

Moreover, the destination's image has a positive impact on attitudes toward visiting a travel destination. The results are coherent with previous researches (Jalilvand and al, 2012; Kim and Stepchenkova, 2015, and Nguyen and Tong, 2022). In fact, positive tourist representations and perceptions toward a destination can engender a favorable attitude toward visiting the destination. The security, natural attractions, and pleasant climate of a destination lead to a positive predisposition among tourists toward visiting a travel destination. Therefore, the destination's image can be a strong determinant of a tourist's attitude.

Similarly, it was discovered that the destination image has a beneficial effect on revisit intention. This finding supports recent research (Setiawan and Wibawa, 2018; Zhang and al., 2018; Rasoolimanesh and al., 2021). As a

result, tourist impressions of places can predict behavioral intentions to return to a location. This suggests that the more positive a destination's image, the more tourists intend to return. Indeed, the destination's image plays a vital role in encouraging tourist behavior by improving the destination's security and natural attractions. Similarly, the safer a destination is and the more beautiful the tourist attractions, the more probable it is that the tourist will return there in the future.

The research results also show that the travel experience positively and significantly influenced the destination recommendation. This finding goes in line with Adongo and al., (2015), Barnes and al., (2016), and Tsai (2016), who stated that the travel experience influences the destination recommendation. According to Barnes and al (2016), long-term memorable experiences can be considered a strong determinant of destination recommendation and the tourist's willingness to talk about and recommend this destination. That is, tourists are more likely to recommend a particular place to others if they have had meaningful and memorable experiences at the destination during their travel. As a consequence, the exciting and hedonic experience can increase the tourist's likelihood of recommending this destination to other tourists.

Additionally, the link between the e-WOM and revisit intention is confirmed and significant. This result is in line with Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), and Zarrad and Debabi (2015) who argue that the e-WOM is considered to be a strong predictor of revisit intention. According to Abubakar and al (2017), the e-WOM communications is a source of information about a destination that have a positive effect on the intention to revisit in the medical tourism context. Therefore, positive online reviews or comments in social media can engender the tourist's willingness to revisit a destination. The greater the quantity and quality of information about a destination in social networking sites, the higher the intention to revisit this destination.

With regards to the moderating effect of travel motivation on the relationship between travel experience, e-WOM, and destination image, our results show that the travel experience and the e-WOM significantly and positively influence the destination image for tourists with a high level of travel motivation. In fact, travel motivation as an internal psychic force can lead tourists to act and fulfill their travel needs. Travel motivation is a crucial factor for tourists to travel in order to escape from their tedious daily lives, to explore new destinations, and to discover the cultures and traditions of some places. Tourists were also motivated by the landscape and the security of the destination, which impacted the destination's image (Pereira and al., 2019). Tourists with a high degree of motivation can have positive perceptions and impressions toward a destination through hedonic, exciting travel experiences and positive online reviews about a destination on social media. According to Phillips and Jang (2007), people with a high level of travel motivation and a positive image of the destination are more likely to visit this destination than those with a low degree of travel motivation.

Moreover, this study affirms the moderating effect of the tourist's region on the destination image and behavioral reactions: destination recommendation, attitude toward visiting a travel destination, and revisit intention. The MGA results highlight that tourists coming from the European Union are more likely to recommend this destination to others, to have a favorable attitude toward visiting a travel destination, and to revisit this place when they have positive perceptions toward this destination. However, our outcomes show that Eastern

European tourists such as those from Russia and Ukraine have positive perceptions toward a destination, and their willingness to revisit a destination tends to be higher than that of European Union tourists. Furthermore, Eastern European tourists' likelihood to recommend a destination is higher than in the European Union and the Maghreb.

Finally, the research results show that the destination image has an indirect effect on the travel experience and recommendation and on the e-WOM and revisit intention. First, the destination image partially mediates the link between the travel experience and the destination recommendation. This means that the likelihood of tourists recommending a destination to others will increase if an exciting and enjoyable experience is able to improve the destination's image. Second, the destination image plays a role in partial mediation between the e-WOM and revisit intention. This finding is consistent with previous research (Aprilia and Kusumawati, 2021; Setiawan and Wibawa, 2018). All online information about a destination on social media can improve its image, which inevitably boosts tourists' willingness to revisit it.

The primary theoretical implication of this research is that it has contributed to a greater grasp and knowledge of the idea of destination image. This information gap motivates our research to take a fresh look at how tourists behave toward a place via their communications, online remarks (e-WOM), and memorable past experiences in order to better comprehend their decision-making process. This will make the destination image more appealing to inspect and investigate more. Our study made a remarkable contribution to the literature by focusing on memorable tourism experience theory, which was rarely studied.

The second contribution is that our research found that e-WOM and travel experience have a considerable impact on the destination image for tourists who are highly motivated to travel. It will undoubtedly bring further insights, notably about the role of travel motivation. The moderating influence of travel motivation, in reality, has received little attention in marketing and tourism studies. This is the first study to investigate the moderating effect of a tourist's region on the relationship between destination image and behavioral outcomes.

The final theoretical contribution investigates the mediating influence of the destination image. Despite the fact that the literature on destination image has been widely debated for four decades, there are only a few researches that have studied the mediating role of destination image (Nechoud and al., 2021). As a result, the mediating role of destination image in tourism remains largely unproven. This study sheds light on the effect of travel experience on destination suggestion, as just a few earlier studies had examined this link.

Our empirical results have valuable practical implications for marketing practitioners and tourism managers to take into account the destination image as a crucial factor enabling them to develop positive tourist impressions and perceptions toward a destination. Tourism businesses should promote the safety and security of destinations with exciting and attractive places to visit, which will increase the likelihood of tourists recommending and revisiting these destinations in the future. The destination image is very relevant to the growth of strong impressions and perceptions toward a destination. Ensuring a secure environment with great value and attractive and interesting places to visit will thus develop a favorable tourist attitude toward visiting a travel destination. In other words, destination marketers and managers can increase tourists' behavioral intentions by building a successful image of the destination.

Considering the e-WOM phenomenon, the tourism industry should participate in building online communities as a potentially valuable strategy for creating effective interactions and communications with tourists. Promoting a good image of a destination should be facilitated by extraordinary experiences when tourists have good relationships with different people and meet the novelty and local cultures.

On another strand, tourism marketers should motivate tourists for escapism, novelty seeking, relaxation, and specific attractions in their destination. Providing memorable tourism experiences has become a suitable policy for tourism practitioners. Tourists tend to revisit destinations when they remember positive experiences. Furthermore, a memorable tourism experience is considered a competitive advantage for the tourism marketplace. The travel motivation and the tourist's region can be considered criteria for the segmentation of tourists. Therefore, tourism businesses should be more sensitive to European Union and Eastern European tourists and should understand and meet their individual expectations.

Finally, travel marketers should stimulate the tourist's willingness to recommend a destination to other tourists by evoking a positive destination image through memorable past experiences. Tourism practitioners should intensify their efforts to make tourists aware of the safety, security, and attractiveness of places, which in turn increases the tourist's revisit intention through positive online contents in social networking. The goal is to ensure that tourists leave with a feeling of well-being and the desire to return. The high degree of travel motivation and the tourist's region can be employed in tourism practitioners' segmentation strategies.

Our study is not without limitations. First, our conceptual model can be enriched by other variables such as destination satisfaction and destination loyalty as outcomes of destination image. Second, a qualitative study could be considered in the future in order to analyze in depth the factors and behavioral responses of the destination image.

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