



UDC 332

## E-WOM ON INTENTION TO VISIT JAPAN AND INDONESIA: QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

The influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) in shaping travel intentions is a critical aspect of the contemporary tourism landscape. This qualitative research explores the role of E-WOM in determining intentions to visit Japan and Indonesia from the perspectives of both Indonesian and Japanese informants. The Indonesian respondents, representing diverse professional backgrounds, underscore the persuasive impact of E-WOM, the convenience it offers, and the significance of aligning travel choices with personal interests. On the other hand, the Japanese respondents, including office workers, estheticians, and lecturers, emphasize the cultural and aesthetic dimensions influenced by E-WOM and its potential for promoting Japan as a travel destination. The findings suggest that qualitative research on E-WOM can uncover the emotional and experiential dimensions that influence travel intentions. The practical implications for marketers, government authorities, and readers are substantial. Marketers are encouraged to leverage E-WOM, emphasize cultural and aesthetic elements, and personalize their strategies. Governments and tourism authorities can benefit from funding research initiatives and improving infrastructure based on E-WOM insights. Readers are advised to critically evaluate E-WOM sources and actively contribute to the E-WOM ecosystem. This research underscores the significance of E-WOM as a potent influencer in travel decision-making and the potential for stakeholders to harness its emotional and cultural dimensions to enhance destination appeal and provide enriching travel experiences. Ultimately, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between E-WOM and travel intentions in the context of Japan and Indonesia.

### KEY WORDS

e-WOM, intention to visit, qualitative study.

In our ever-connected and digital age, the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) has transcended geographical boundaries, transforming the way people make decisions, especially when it comes to travel choices. The allure of exotic destinations like Japan and Indonesia has captivated the imaginations of travellers worldwide (Aulia & Pertiwi (2019); Siripattanakul, et al., (2022).

These two nations, each rich in their unique cultural heritage, historical significance, and natural beauty, have become prominent tourist hubs, attracting visitors from diverse corners of the globe. Within this dynamic and competitive tourism landscape, understanding the role of E-WOM in shaping the intention to visit these destinations is not only academically intriguing but also of paramount practical importance. The advent of the internet and the proliferation of social media have revolutionized the way travellers gather information, share experiences, and make choices (Dewani, et al., 2019). Online platforms have become the go-to sources for travel recommendations, enabling individuals to explore the world vicariously through the stories, reviews, and images shared by others. Amidst this digital cacophony, E-WOM emerges as a critical determinant, offering a social, peer-to-peer channel through which travellers seek guidance, validate their aspirations, and make informed decisions about their next adventure. As the global travel market becomes increasingly competitive, Japan and Indonesia have emerged as compelling and contrasting destinations. Japan's blend of traditional charm and modern innovation, its cultural treasures, and pristine landscapes have beckoned travellers seeking a unique and authentic experience (Rumli, et al., (2022); Roslina & Mahrinasari (2023).



Indonesia, on the other hand, boasts a tapestry of diverse cultures, stunning natural wonders, and an abundance of adventure. The opportunity to explore these two remarkable destinations is undeniably enticing, but the decision-making process that leads travellers to their final choice is both intricate and subject to various influences (Rizky, et al., (2017); Thaothampitak, & Wongsuwatt, (2022); Prayogo & Kusumawardhani (2017).

This qualitative approach seeks to unravel the nuanced narratives and experiences of potential travellers, shedding light on the multifaceted factors that guide their decision-making processes. By blending the voices of travellers, the power of E-WOM, and the enchantment of Japan and Indonesia, this study aims to offer fresh insights into the fusion of digital and cultural landscapes, ultimately contributing to our comprehension of contemporary tourism behavior. In this paper, we embark on a journey through the virtual corridors of E-WOM to understand its pivotal role in shaping intentions and the exciting prospect of exploring Japan and Indonesia. By doing so, we aim to provide valuable knowledge that can inform the strategies of destination marketers, tourism authorities, and businesses in catering to the ever-evolving preferences and expectations of the global traveller.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Philosophical Foundation Underlying eWOM

The eWOM phenomenon that is currently developing can actually be approached with a theory that is the dynamic theory of knowledge creation proposed by Nonaka et al. (2000). It is stated that knowledge is created through interaction between individuals or between individuals and their environment. This dynamic process of knowledge creation involves three elements, namely: (i) SECI process, which is a process of knowledge creation through conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge; (ii) Ba, namely the context of dissemination for knowledge creation; and (iii) assets that include inputs, outputs and moderators of the knowledge creation process. However, in this section, only two elements that are considered most relevant to the eWOM phenomenon are discussed, the first element is SECI model as the process of conversion of knowledge that occurs and the second element is Ba as the place where the conversion process takes place.

In the process, the conversion that occurs between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge takes place through four conversion processes known as SECI models which consist of socialization, externalization, combination and internalization.

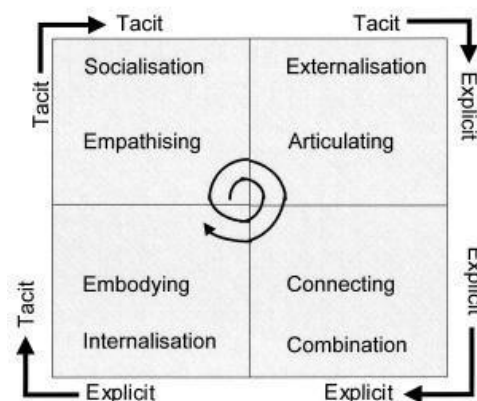


Figure 1 – SECI process (Source: Nonaka et al., 2000)

Socialization is the process of changing tacit knowledge through sharing experiences. Given the nature of tacit knowledge that is difficult to formalize and often depends on a specific space and time context, tacit knowledge can only be obtained through sharing experiences such as spending time together or living in the same environment. Externalization is the process of articulating tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. When tacit knowledge is made explicit, knowledge will become crystallized allowing it to be spread



by other parties. The knowledge disseminated will then become the basis for new knowledge.

Combination is the process of changing explicit knowledge into a series of explicit knowledge that is more complex and systematic. This explicit knowledge is collected from inside or outside the organization or group to then be combined, edited or processed to become new knowledge. The explicit knowledge of the newly generated credit later distributed among members of the organization or group. Creative use of computerized communication networks and databases on a large scale can facilitate the ongoing process of internalization.

The last is internalization, namely the process of changing explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge. Through the process of internalization, explicit knowledge that is created is distributed to all organizations or groups and then transformed into tacit knowledge by each individual. Internalization can also be explained by the 'learning by doing' process.

What needs to be considered here is that the movement through the four types of knowledge conversion process is spiral, not circular. In this case, the interactions that occur between tacit and explicit knowledge are increasingly strengthened through the four kinds of knowledge conversion processes. The scale of the spiral formed will become larger along with the movement through the ontological levels that exist. Knowledge created through the SECI process can trigger the emergence of new spirits of knowledge creation, which then expand both horizontally and vertically throughout the organization.

### Ba Model

The whole process that occurs above is facilitated by what is called Ba, which is a Japanese terminology that means place. The term Ba was originally put forward by a Japanese philosopher, Kitaro Nishida and later developed by Shimizu. Ba is defined as a context in which the knowledge is disseminated, created and utilized. Ba is not only the place where the knowledge conversion process takes place, but also functions to provide energy for the individuals involved in it. Ba itself is not always interpreted as a physical space, but rather a concept of space and time. It can be in the form of office space or virtual space such as e-mail and online networks. There are four types of Ba namely Originating Ba, Dialoguing Ba, Systemizing Ba and Exercising Ba.

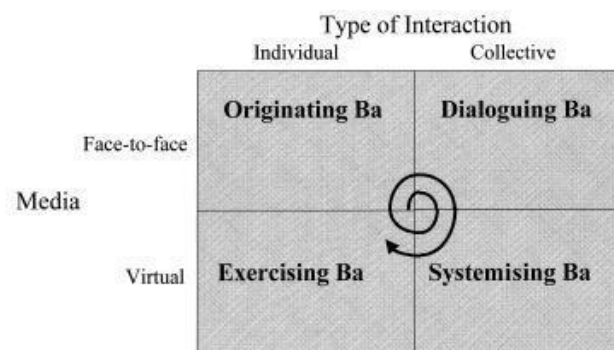


Figure 2 – Ba model (Source: Nonaka et al., 2000)

Originating Ba is a place where individuals share experiences, feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Originating Ba is a context for socialization, given that the interaction between individual faces is the only way to capture all physical feelings and psycho-emotional reactions such as calmness and discomfort which are important elements in the spread of tacit knowledge.

Dialoguing Ba provides a place for ongoing externalization processes where individual thoughts and expertise are disseminated, converted into more general forms and articulated as concepts. In this case, tacit knowledge is disseminated and articulated through dialogue



between participants. Systemizing Ba is characterized by collective virtual interaction, and is a place for the ongoing process of combination of explicit knowledge, given that explicit knowledge is relatively easier to be transmitted to a large number of people if in written form. Information technology which includes on-line networks, groupware, documentation and data banks provides a virtual collaborative environment for systemizing these tools. Exercising Ba is a place where the internalization process takes place, and is characterized by virtual individual interactions. In this case, individuals absorb explicit knowledge communicated through virtual media such as written instructions or simulation programs.

### **eWOM Relevance Related to Dynamic Knowledge Creation Theory**

If viewed contextually, the eWOM phenomenon which is the topic of discussion in this section can be related to the combination process in the SECI model where Systemizing Ba is its container. As explained above, the combination process is an interaction between explicit knowledge that exists, so that it finally forms new explicit knowledge which is then disseminated to the people involved in it through a virtual media. This is certainly very relevant to the process of dissemination and the characteristics of information in the form of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM).

In the process of distributing eWOM, various information and experiences from people that have been articulated in written form, are then disseminated through an internet network that can take the form of social media, mailing lists, news groups and so on. This written information is then captured as new knowledge for other people as parties who seek and need that information. The process of deploying eWOM in this does not require direct face-to-face as with traditional WOM.

However, eWOM's communication process in this combination phase certainly cannot stand alone with other information transformation processes in the SECI model. Actually this combination process is preceded by an externalization process when someone articulates his experience and knowledge in the form of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge in writing to be able to be transferred again to the combination process. Furthermore, it will be followed by an internalization process when the other party adopts the knowledge gained through the eWOM activity and converts it into the form of tacit knowledge that will be practiced later.

In the context of tourism, the eWOM phenomenon can be observed when there is a conversation on a social networking site regarding a particular tourist object or destination. A tourist who has just experienced a truly memorable tour, tends to upload the photos he made when traveling to his social networking account. These photos are usually affixed with statements in the form of information related to the tourist destination where he visits. This activity is fully carried out on its own initiative in the hope that friends who are on the same social networking site can see and read the information they upload.

Photos and comments that have been uploaded on a social networking site will usually be asked or commented on by other people who have an interest to find out more about the things displayed. This is where there will be a process of interaction and conversion between some explicit knowledge facilitated by certain social networking sites as places the process in progress. Various information displayed can be valuable knowledge as well as a reference for prospective tourists who intend to visit the same tourist destination. From the illustration above, it seems implicit that the role of the social networking site here is that it can provide energy and arouse the enthusiasm of those involved in the eWOM process.

### **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**

In addition to using SECI models, the eWOM phenomenon can also be approached by using Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) from Petty & Cacioppo (1986). In ELM it is stated that the message or information delivered can affect consumer attitudes and behavior both centrally and peripherally. Centrally in terms of the nature of the arguments in the message or information itself, while peripherally in terms of issues or themes that are not directly related to the subject of the message.





When this model is applied in the context of internet-based communication, this information adoption model has two propositions namely that the quality of arguments or information is a central influence, while the source credibility is the influence of peripherals. In this case, ELM can be used to explain the influence of eWOM on other variables related to tourist attitudes and behavior such as perceptions of destination image, trust and intention to visit in terms of the benefits provided by information contained in the eWOM forum.

### **Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)**

The term eWOM (electronic word of mouth) was first disclosed by Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004) with reference to the concept expressed by Stauss (2000), namely customer internet communication. This form of communication occurs when customers interact and exchange information associated with the consumption via the Internet. The process of on-line articulation is then aligned with the general concept of WOM communication. In this case, eWOM is defined as a positive or negative statement made by potential, current and former customers regarding a product or company, which is provided for many people and institutions through the internet media (Hennig Thurau et al., 2004).

Meanwhile, according to Litvin et al. (2008) eWOM is defined as informal communication aimed at consumers through internet-based technology, associated with the use or characteristics of a certain goods or services. This includes the communication that occurs between producers and consumers, as well as between consumers themselves. Referring to the second definition above, in the previous study, eWOM is defined as an informal communication that flows through the medium of the internet, both between producers and consumers and among fellow consumers. This communication occurred in the form of positive or negative statements regarding a certain product in the form of goods or services.

According to Cheung and Lee (2012) there are several characteristics of eWOM which also distinguishes it from traditional WOM. First, unlike traditional WOM, eWOM has an unlimited scale and speed of deployment. In the process, eWOM communication can involve various ways of information exchange in asynchronous mode. Second, eWOM communication is more persistent and more easily accessible than traditional WOM. It is given that the majority of text-based information that is displayed on the Internet is a form of archives, so it can be accessed within a period that is not limited. Third, eWOM is more measureable than traditional WOM. The format of the presentation, quantity and persistence of eWOM communication making it easier to observed. Fourth, the electronic nature of eWOM in various applications may reduce the ability of the message recipient to rate the credibility of the sender along with the message it sends.

### **Intention to Visit**

Intention to visit refers to the willingness of a potential visitor to visit the destination (Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014); it is the rational evaluation of the costs/benefits of a set of alternative destinations, which are derived from external information sources, including eWOM or travellers' blogs (Chen et al., 2014). Scholars have supported the notion that positive eWOM has the tendency to increase the likelihood of booking and room sales (Duverger, 2013; Mauri & Minazzi, 2013; Öğüt & Onur Taş, 2012). A vast amount of tourism research has advocated that eWOM has the ability to influence travel intentions (Arsal, Backman, & Baldwin, 2008; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Ye, Law, & Gu, 2009).

## **METHODS OF RESEARCH**

This research is a qualitative research that uses Grounded Research as a methodology. Grounded Research is a common methodology for developing a theory. Grounded Research is one of the scopes in qualitative research, namely research conducted with in-depth interviews and also the experience of the research subject. Grounded Research can also be called a reflexive and open approach, where data collection,



theoretical concept development and literature review take place in a continuous cyclical process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). The population is an area consisting of objects and subjects that have certain characteristics and qualities that are determined by researchers to be studied which will draw conclusions based on the results (Sugiyono, 2011). The population in this study has the following criteria:

- a. Female and Male aged 25 to 40;
- b. Never traveled to Japan (for Indonesian), never travelled to Indonesia (for Japanese);
- c. Have intention to visit Indonesia/Japan;
- d. Minimum education level is bachelor.

The sample is part of the characteristics and number of the population (Sugiyono, 2011). This study uses a sampling technique using non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique that does not have equal opportunities for each population to be selected as a sample. The method used by the researcher is incidental sampling, which is a technique for determining the sample based on chance, that is, anyone who coincidentally meets the researcher can be used as a sample, if that person is suitable as a data source.

The technique used as data collection is interviews. An interview is a form of communication between two other people by asking questions based on certain goals (Mulyana, 2004). An interview is a conversation directed at a particular problem, which is an oral question and answer process, where two or more people physically face each other (Kartono, 1980) in Gunawan (2013). The interview technique used is a semi-structured interview technique, where the interviewer uses a framework of questions to be asked, but how to ask questions and the rhythm of the interview is left to the discretion of the interviewer. Interviewers have the freedom to explore reasons and impetus with a non-rigid probing, so that the direction of the interview is still in the hands of the interviewer (Gunawan, 2013).

This interview is flexible, the question structure and wording in each question can be changed during the interview, adjusted to the needs and conditions during the interview, including socio-cultural characteristics (religion, ethnicity, gender, age, education level, occupation, and so on). . In the in-depth interview, a focused discussion took place between the researcher and the informant regarding the problem under study. Researchers must also be able to control themselves so that they do not deviate far from the main problem, and do not give information an assessment of the right or wrong of the informant's opinion (Gunawan, 2013).

Data revealed through interviews regarding a person's background, motivation, Destination Image, Destination Trust, and Intention to visit tourist destination (Japan/Indonesia),

According to Banister (quoted by Poerwandari, 2005) observation is an activity of paying attention accurately, noting phenomena that arise and considering the relationship between aspects of the phenomenon. The purpose of observation is to describe the setting being studied, the activities that take place, the people involved in the activity, the meaning of the event seen from the perspective of those involved in the observed event.

Researchers will make observations during the interview process and make observations of the subject's movements during the interview process.

Validity and credibility carried out by researchers using the following techniques:

- Peer checks through discussion, in this case Key Informants;
- Triangulation of sources, checking the data from the subject's interview with his friend;
- Triangulation method, checking data from interviews with observations during the interview process;
- Triangulation theory, checking data from interviews with theory.

The qualitative approach used in this study is phenomenology; this study looks at the informant's point of view regarding the factors that influence interest, a person's perception of visiting/touring seen from how the information search process is carried out through social



media/internet. . The use of analytical methods to see and capture new discoveries in this research. content analysis was chosen because it was considered suitable for classifying keywords generated from informants so that a result obtained from words and descriptions of interview excerpts was carried out by in-depth analysis. Researchers use content analysis in this study because content analysis is a method whose one goal is to describe the characteristics of messages through text intermediaries (Gunawan, 2013).

Data analysis for qualitative research is content analysis, namely by making clear descriptions of these cases and the situations that surround them (Creswell, 2007). This method will provide an overview of the research variables of the subject descriptively. This study uses three steps of data analysis, namely:

1. Data Organization.

This first step is called a verbatim transcript, which begins by transferring the results of the interview into written form and produces a columnar verbatim transcript.

2. Verbatim Result Coding

Coding is done by making a column in the verbatim transcript and giving a certain code, namely the code according to the aspect you want to see. The coding is placed behind the questions and answers expressed by the respondents. Coding must really give a deep meaning to the problem being sought.

3. Thematic Analysis

Interpretation is done by conducting thematic analysis to look for patterns from the existing data. This is the process of coding information or data which will then produce a complex list of themes, theme models, or indicators. The emerging themes are expected to be able to describe the phenomena of the results of this study and be useful in interpreting the data results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results of field research related to a person's intentions and perceptions to visit Japan. Research on a person's intention and perception to visit Japan is based on triangulation of sources and data collection methods. The result of this triangulation is in the form of statements from informants that have been collected from in-depth interviews, which together are also carried out direct observations related to the actions of informants and documentation of these actions. Before presenting the results and discussing the research, the profiles of the key informants will be presented first.

1) Indonesian informants:

- a. Name: Febri. Occupation: entrepreneur;
- b. Name: Santika. Occupation: lecturer;
- c. Name: Imbayani. Occupation: office worker;
- d. Name: Wulan. Occupation: entrepreneur;
- e. Name: Suaryana. Occupation: consultant;
- f. Name: Yeyen. Occupation: lecturer.

2) Japanese informants:

- a. Name: Onishi. Occupation: office worker;
- b. Name: Fujii. Occupation: esthetician;
- c. Name: Otsuka. Occupation: lecturer;
- d. Name: Sata Amina. Occupation: worker;
- e. Name: Fumi. Occupation: worker;
- f. Name: Takuma. Occupation: worker.

*Febri (Entrepreneur):*

"As an entrepreneur, I've always been fascinated by the potential of electronic word-of-mouth in shaping travel intentions. Whenever I'm planning a trip, I rely heavily on E-WOM, particularly on social media platforms, travel forums, and review websites. The authentic experiences shared by fellow travellers can be very persuasive. If I see my peers or influencers I follow posting about their incredible experiences in Japan or Indonesia, it



instantly increases my desire to visit these destinations. The power of E-WOM is undeniable."

*Santika (Lecturer):*

"As an academic, I'm well aware of the impact of online information sources on decision-making. In my case, I often encourage my students to explore new destinations, and E-WOM plays a pivotal role. When planning a trip with my family, I consider the online reviews and recommendations from reliable sources. The insights shared by fellow travellers provide a real sense of what to expect, and they influence our travel choices. I believe that a qualitative approach to studying E-WOM will reveal the emotional and cultural dimensions that shape travel intentions in Japan and Indonesia."

*Imbayani (Office Worker):*

"In my busy office life, I don't have much time to extensively research travel destinations. E-WOM makes it convenient for me to gather information quickly. Personal stories and recommendations from friends and online communities are crucial in my decision-making process. When it comes to choosing between Japan and Indonesia, I look for E-WOM that highlights the unique experiences and cultural attractions of these places. It's all about finding a destination that resonates with my interests and aspirations."

*Wulan (Entrepreneur):*

"As an entrepreneur, I value authentic experiences, and E-WOM provides just that. I've used online platforms extensively to plan trips, and the experiences shared by fellow travellers have swayed my travel intentions multiple times. Both Japan and Indonesia offer diverse attractions, and E-WOM helps me decide which one aligns better with my preferences at a given time. Qualitative research on E-WOM will uncover the emotional and cultural factors that make these destinations appealing."

*Suaryana (Consultant):*

"In my line of work, I understand the significance of online reputation and reviews. When considering a visit to Japan or Indonesia, I rely on E-WOM to gauge the overall sentiment about these destinations. The narratives and recommendations from travellers can be persuasive. I'm interested in how qualitative research can shed light on the emotional and experiential aspects of E-WOM, as these factors play a substantial role in influencing my travel intentions."

*Yeyen (Lecturer):*

"As a lecturer, I'm always intrigued by the interplay of culture, communication, and technology. When planning my own travels, I consider E-WOM a valuable source of information. I'm interested in how the narratives and stories shared by fellow travellers capture the essence of a destination. Japan and Indonesia both offer rich cultural experiences, and E-WOM can help me decide which one aligns better with my interests. I'm looking forward to the qualitative insights this research will provide."

*Onishi (Office Worker):*

"As an office worker in Japan, I often rely on E-WOM when considering travel destinations. It's fascinating to see how travellers' personal stories and recommendations can influence one's travel intentions. When it comes to promoting Japan as a travel destination, I believe E-WOM can play a significant role. I'm looking forward to this research, which explores the emotional and experiential aspects of E-WOM, as it could help improve how Japan is perceived by potential visitors."

*Fujii (Esthetician):*

"In my profession, I aim to provide customers with an unforgettable experience, and that's something I seek in my travels as well. E-WOM is a treasure trove of personal





narratives, and it often sways my travel decisions. As an esthetician, I appreciate the cultural and aesthetic aspects of a destination. Both Japan and Indonesia offer unique beauty and culture, and E-WOM helps me decide which one aligns with my interests. This research can illuminate how to harness these aspects to attract more visitors to Japan."

*Otsuka (Lecturer):*

"As a lecturer, I understand the power of information and how it influences decision-making. When planning my travels, I pay attention to E-WOM, especially recommendations from fellow travellers. I believe E-WOM holds the key to promoting Japan as a destination, and qualitative research can uncover the emotional and cultural elements that make Japan an appealing choice. Understanding the nuances of E-WOM is crucial for enhancing the travel industry in Japan."

*Sata Amina (Worker):*

"In my daily life, I'm not always able to dedicate extensive time to research travel destinations. E-WOM is my go-to source for quick insights. The personal stories and recommendations from others are incredibly valuable. Japan and Indonesia have their own unique attractions, and I look to E-WOM to guide my choices based on my interests at the time. Qualitative research on E-WOM can help us understand the cultural and experiential factors that influence travel intentions."

*Fumi (Worker):*

"As a worker, my travel decisions are often influenced by E-WOM. The narratives and reviews shared by fellow travellers can be convincing and informative. Both Japan and Indonesia offer rich cultural and natural experiences, and I look to E-WOM for guidance on which destination aligns better with my interests. This research can help us tap into the emotional and experiential dimensions of E-WOM to make Japan more appealing to potential visitors."

*Takuma (Worker):*

"In my busy work life, I rely on E-WOM to streamline my travel research. The stories, reviews, and recommendations from fellow travellers provide a personal touch to the decision-making process. Japan and Indonesia each have their charm, and E-WOM helps me decide based on the experiences of others. Qualitative research on E-WOM can shed light on how emotions and culture play a role in influencing travel intentions, which is crucial for the Japanese tourism industry."

These responses represent diverse perspectives from the Japanese informants, each emphasizing the importance of E-WOM in shaping their travel intentions and the potential impact of qualitative research on understanding and leveraging this phenomenon to promote Japan as a travel destination.

The Indonesian respondents, including entrepreneurs, lecturers, office workers, and consultants, collectively emphasized the pivotal role of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) in shaping their travel intentions. E-WOM, sourced from various online platforms, serves as a crucial source of information and influence when considering travel destinations. They highlighted the following key points:

- **e-WOM's Persuasive Influence:** E-WOM, particularly from social media, travel forums, and review websites, is a persuasive source of information. Personal experiences and recommendations shared by peers and influencers greatly influence travel intentions;
- **Convenience and Authenticity:** E-WOM offers a convenient way to gather authentic information about destinations, making it easier for individuals with busy lifestyles, like office workers, to make informed decisions;



- Tailoring Travel Choices: Qualitative narratives and recommendations through E-WOM play a significant role in aligning travel choices with personal interests and aspirations;
- Intriguing Insights: Respondents expressed a keen interest in qualitative research on E-WOM, as it promises to unveil the emotional and cultural dimensions that shape travel intentions. They see this as a valuable approach to understanding the multifaceted factors driving travel decisions;
- Applicability in Destination Marketing: These Indonesian informants suggested that insights from qualitative E-WOM research can be applied by destination marketers, tourism authorities, and businesses to cater to the evolving preferences and expectations of global travellers.

In summary, the Indonesian informants view E-WOM as a potent influencer in travel decisions, and they are keenly interested in how qualitative research can uncover the emotional and cultural aspects that underpin E-WOM's influence on intentions to visit destinations like Japan and Indonesia. Their perspectives shed light on the practical implications of this research in the tourism industry.

The Japanese respondents, representing diverse occupations such as office workers, estheticians, lecturers, and various other roles, collectively highlighted the importance of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) in shaping their travel intentions. Their insights can be summarized as follows:

**E-WOM as an Influential Resource:** E-WOM, including personal narratives, reviews, and recommendations shared by fellow travellers, is a valuable and influential resource when deciding on travel destinations. It adds a personal touch and authenticity to the decision-making process.

- Cultural and Aesthetic Appreciation: The Japanese respondents, particularly those in roles related to culture and aesthetics, emphasized the significance of E-WOM in assessing the cultural and aesthetic aspects of potential travel destinations, like Japan and Indonesia. These aspects heavily influence their travel decisions;
- Potential for Promoting Japan: Many of the respondents recognized the potential of E-WOM in promoting Japan as a travel destination. They believe that understanding the emotional and cultural elements that attract travellers can help enhance Japan's appeal to potential visitors;
- Convenience and Quick Insights: E-WOM is a convenient source of quick insights for those with busy lives, enabling them to make informed travel decisions efficiently;
- The Need for Qualitative Research: Respondents expressed a strong interest in the qualitative research focused on E-WOM. They believe that this research can provide deeper insights into the emotional and experiential dimensions that influence travel intentions, which can be invaluable for the Japanese tourism industry;
- Enhancing Attractiveness to Potential Visitors: The Japanese informants recognized that understanding the nuanced facets of E-WOM can aid in enhancing the appeal of Japan as a travel destination, potentially attracting a wider range of international tourists.

In summary, the Japanese respondents stressed the influence of E-WOM in their travel decision-making, particularly regarding cultural and aesthetic factors. They are enthusiastic about the potential of qualitative research to explore the emotional and experiential dimensions of E-WOM, which they see as a valuable tool for both promoting Japan as a destination and enhancing the travel experience for visitors.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The qualitative exploration of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) in shaping intentions to visit Japan and Indonesia has revealed valuable insights from both Indonesian and Japanese perspectives. E-WOM, sourced from various online platforms, stands as a persuasive and authentic source of information, significantly influencing travel choices.



Respondents highlighted its role in aligning travel decisions with personal interests and the cultural and aesthetic aspects that hold sway over their choices.

From the Indonesian side, the informants emphasized the practical implications of this research for destination marketers, tourism authorities, and businesses. The emotional and cultural dimensions unveiled through qualitative research on E-WOM can offer a deeper understanding of traveller behavior and, in turn, be leveraged to cater to the evolving preferences and expectations of global travellers.

On the Japanese side, the informants recognized the potential of E-WOM in promoting Japan as a travel destination. They expressed an eagerness for research that dives into the emotional and experiential aspects of E-WOM. Understanding these nuanced dimensions is essential for enhancing Japan's appeal to potential visitors and enriching the travel experience.

Marketers should actively engage with and encourage positive E-WOM about their destinations. Collaborating with influencers and encouraging travellers to share their experiences can amplify the reach of authentic content. Given the influence of cultural and aesthetic factors on travel decisions, marketers should focus on promoting these unique elements of a destination through E-WOM. Tailor marketing strategies based on the interests and preferences of potential visitors, as identified through E-WOM insights.

Government and Tourism Authorities should invest in qualitative research on E-WOM to understand the emotional and cultural dimensions influencing travel decisions. This can inform policy and marketing strategies. Improve and develop infrastructure to align with the expectations of international tourists as revealed through E-WOM.

Readers should critically evaluate the authenticity of the information they encounter. Look for multiple sources and consider the credibility of reviewers. Readers can contribute to the E-WOM ecosystem by sharing their own travel experiences, which can be valuable for fellow travellers and the tourism industry. In conclusion, E-WOM is a powerful force in shaping travel intentions, and its qualitative exploration offers opportunities for marketers, governments, and readers to make informed decisions, enhance destination appeal, and enrich the travel experience. By understanding the emotional and cultural dimensions that influence E-WOM, stakeholders can work together to create a more satisfying and enriching travel experience for all.

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