

ANALYSIS OF I-GENERATION SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION IN CREATING BRAND IMAGE OF DEMAK KOTA WALI DESTINATIONS

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors of i-generation social media communication influencing destination brand image. This research examines the impact of e-WOM on social media on destination brand image. The sample data used in this study were 97 respondents from 4 provinces in Indonesia. Multiple linear regression was used to test the significance of the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The IBM SPSS 25 test results show that e-WOM on social media can positively affect the destination brand image. Local governments can predict tourist behavior through this paper. As for academics, this paper can be used for further research by integrating social media communication as a predictor of destination brand image. Empirically this research helps to improve understanding of how the role of social media communication creates a brand image in a destination.

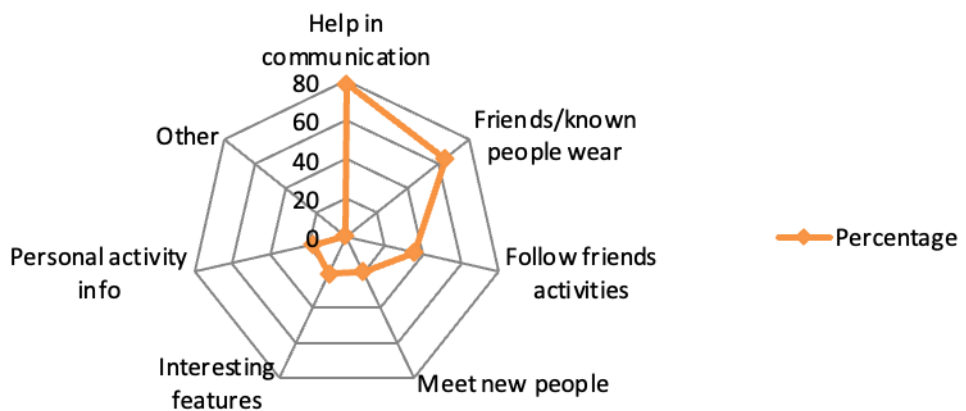
Keywords: social media; e-WOM; destination brand image

Introduction

Social media communication has evolved to receive organizational resources and role status (Carpenter & Lertpratchya, 2016). Communicators who use social media can engage in communication

behaviors that derive from their experience in several fields such as marketing, communications, business, advertising, sales, journalism, and public relations (Verhoeven et al., 2012), which may also mean that scientists have interpreted social media communications from their respective academic field perspectives.

A survey conducted by the Kominfo RI in collaboration with KIC illustrates that communication with social media platforms is growing significantly among the Indonesian people. Data on the use of social media can be seen in graph one below:



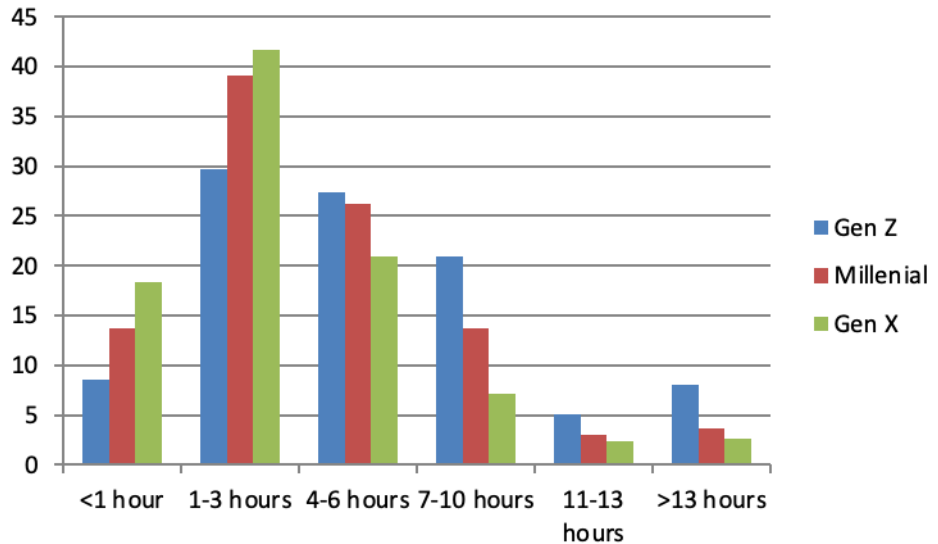
Graph 1. The reason users use social media

Source: RI Kominfo and KIC (Mutia, 2022)

This survey reveals why respondents use social media; as many as 78.6% of respondents use social media to communicate and interact in daily life. But, 64.3% reasoned that friends or people they know also use the same social media. In addition, other reasons for using social media are to follow and understand the circumstances, activities, news from friends/known people (35.4%), get to know new people, and form groups to share interests (19.5%), there are features- features that are interesting to use (20.8%), and information about self and personal activities (17.6%).

Social media itself has been widely used by Generation Z, often known as the i-generation because social media is an internet-based

platform. Alvara Research Center has revealed interesting facts about the behavior of the i-generation in using the internet, which we summarize in graph two below:



Graph 2. Internet user data for each generation

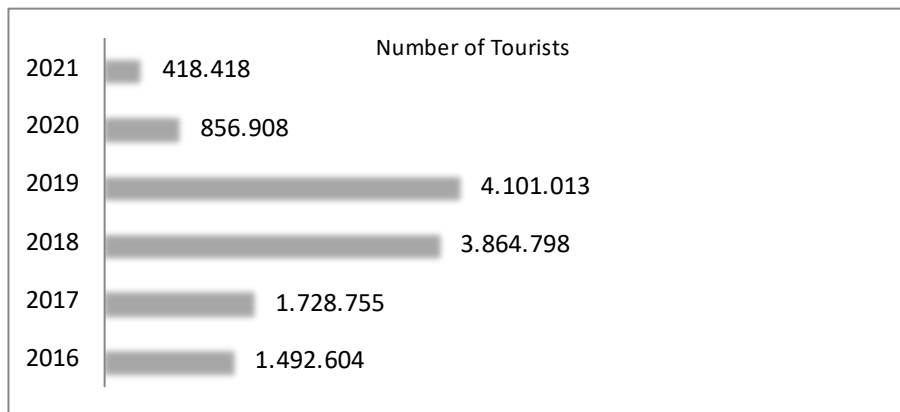
Source: Alvara Research Center (Annur, 2022)

Alvara Research Center research results found that i-generation is included in the category of internet-addicted users, namely people who use the internet more than 7 hours per day. I-generation access the internet between 7-10 hours per day, reaching 20.9%. While the millennial generation is 13.7%, and generation X is only 7.1%. Then the i-generation respondents who use the internet 11-13 hours per day reached 5.1%. While the millennial generation is 3% and generation X is only 2.4%. The i-generation respondents who access the internet more than 13 hours per day reached 8%. At the same time, the millennial generation and generation X are only 3.7% and 2.6%, respectively. From this phenomenon, researchers are interested in observing the behavior of the i-generation on social media.

Social media has been proven to be able to build a person’s brand image as well as a destination. In intense job competitions, ‘self-branding’ is widely recognized as enabling prospective employees to outperform the

competition. Scolere et al. (2018) argue that ‘self-brands’ are not enforced singly but rather as part of a broad social media environment that includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and more. If we look at the tourism industry, social media communication is recognized as improving a destination's brand image. Casaló et al. (2015) research revealed that potential tourists depend on referrals from friends, family members, and social networks. Gradually the destination brand is formed from the tourist social media communication process. Reviews of previous tourists on social media (electronic word of mouth / e-WOM) are considered for the next tourists making visits.

Along with the development and challenges of the tourism industry in the era of disruption (Saifudin, 2022a), destinations develop by offering quality accommodation, beautiful views, and friendly people (Qu et al., 2011). So creating a destination brand image is the right strategy to face increasingly fierce competition (Beishami et al., 2016). However, there is still an interesting phenomenon to be investigated more deeply related to the declining data on religious tourism visits in Demak, as shown in graph three below:



Graph 3. Number of tourist visits to Demak

Source: BPS (2022)

The data above illustrates a significant decrease in tourist visits in 2019-2021. The decline occurred after the increase in visits from 2016-2019. This is allegedly due to the Covid-19 pandemic that hit Indonesia

recently (Kasdi & Saifudin, 2020). From some of the phenomena above, researchers are interested in observing the communication behavior of the i-generation on social media in its influence on the brand image of the Demak destination.

Literature Review

Social Media Communication

Social media are internet-based channels that allow users to interact opportunistically and selectively present themselves, either in real-time or asynchronously, with a broad and narrow audience who derive value from user-generated content and perceptions of interaction with others (Carr & Hayes, 2015).

Social media practices have evolved from informal to formal communication, as evidenced by the number of organizations adopting social media policies (Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013). The number of social networks requires communicators to be able to collect, filter, assess, and organize information from various sources. Practitioners contribute information related to the organization's goals, expertise, mission, and functions on the platform (Leonardi et al., 2013).

Social media communication technology is more unique when compared to communication technology via email or messaging applications. Messages in social media are persistent because they are more likely to persist over time, content is easy to edit, and such communication behaviors tend to be centered on maintaining social bonds. Overall, a review of the social media literature suggests several possible dimensions, including using it for promotion, research, community-building, and nation-building purposes (Carpenter & Lertpratchya, 2016).

With the increasing number of citizens using social media to communicate information and connect with people in recent years, it becomes an interesting question about how social media as a community storytelling agent has the potential to shape the image of a destination. Social media in this study refers to online-based applications that allow users to produce various messages, information, and content as well as to communicate with each other through online networks (Choi & Shin,

2017), such as social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). Furthermore, based on its unique nature, social media can function as an emerging storytelling agent (Choi et al., 2021).

Electronic Word of Mouth

WOM (word of mouth) is one communication medium between communities about products and services that are trusted and independent, so there is no intervention from the company (Reza Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). E-WOM (electronic word of mouth) refers to the perception of positive and negative customer statements about a product or company made by people and institutions through online media or the internet (Reza Jalilvand et al., 2012). Currently, the development of technology makes everyone able to carry out activities with other people using the internet and even create virtual communities that make it seem as if many people are bound to each other so that they will trust each other's opinions and wills (Alkailani, 2016). Therefore, communication between users makes e-WOM thrive on social media.

Casaló et al. (2015) stated that e-WOM significantly impacts the tourism industry, mainly due to the intangible nature of tourism service. Also, e-WOM is the most emphasized source of information for consumers, and the most inspiring to be doubled compared to traditional advertising. Hence, potential tourists rely on referrals from friends, family members, and social networks (Casaló et al., 2015). Scholars often cite E-WOM as a strong predictor of building brand image (Chan & Ngai, 2011; Putra et al., 2020). E-WOM has indicators such as reading online reviews of other travelers, consulting online with other travelers, and collecting information from online reviews of other travelers and online reviews of tourists, making them confident to visit a destination (Quoquab et al., 2021). Then a hypothesis can be formulated:

H0: e-WOM does not have a positive effect on the destination brand image

H1: e-WOM has a positive influence on the destination brand image

Destination Brand image

The brand image of tourist destinations is an essential concept (Saifudin, 2018) because it influences intentions (Kusumawati & Saifudin, 2020) and the decision of potential tourists to visit a destination (Kasdi & Saifudin, 2019). Growing parallel with marketing disciplines and urban studies (Giovanardi, 2012), 'place branding' was understood as selling and promoting a destination in its early years. The urban policy literature is discussed in two separate directions. First, the historical approach views the sale and promotion of destinations as natural consequences driven by socioeconomic changes (Freire, 2005). Second, a critical process that refuses to treat destinations as commercial products because marketing such destinations will ignore social and cultural realities (Novy & Colomb, 2013).

A brand must represent the good name of an entity that is ideally associated with its identity, provides good value, and acts as a shortcut to inform decisions or behavior change (Gelder, 2005). Destination image is information, beliefs, impressions, attitudes, and emotional thoughts that individuals have concerning a place (Crouch, 1994). Destination image in tourism research is an overall representation of a tourist destination's beliefs, ideas, and impressions (Lee & Lockshin, 2011). Referring to Tran et al. (2019), the destination brand image has several indicators, including the suitability of the destination with the tourist personality, the consistency of the destination image with the tourist image, and the destination can reflect the character of the tourist.

Research Method

Quantitative research methods were chosen because the data used were in the form of numbers and were obtained directly at the research site (Sugiyono, 2016). Questionnaires were distributed to respondents between September-October 2022, using a Likert scale (range 1 to 5). If you look at BPS data, it is found that a population of 34,870 tourists per month in the current year (BPS, 2022), so the researchers determined the sample using the purposive sample technique and obtained 97 respondents. The respondent's criteria are tourists who visit the Demak destination and are included in the i-generation category. The demographics of the respondents are presented in table 1 below:

Table 1. Demografi responden

Demographic	Percentage
Gender	
Male	18.6
Female	81.4
Age	
17-20	39.2
21-25	60.8
Province	
Jambi	1.0
West Java	1.0
Central Java	96.9
East Nusa Tenggara	1.0
Income per month	
Less than 2 million	86.6
2-5 million	10.3
6-10 million	3.1

Source: Data processed 2022

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents who researchers can meet; female respondents dominate as much as 81.4%, and the remaining 18.6% are male. When viewed in terms of age, most respondents were aged 21-25 years, namely 60.8%, and the remaining 39.2% were aged 17-20 years. Tourists who dominate are from Central Java province, as much as 96.9%; the rest come from outside provinces, namely Jambi, West Java, and East Nusa Tenggara. Furthermore, when viewed from their income, as much as 86.6% is less than 2 million per month. This is reasonable because the average i-generation does not have income from their work but from parental gifts. However, there are still those with a gain of more than 2 million per month, which is 13.4%.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.500
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	9.807
	df
	1

Sig.

0.002

Source: Data processed 2022

Furthermore, table 2 above shows that the KMO value is 0.500, which means the value is good. The significance value of Bartlett of Sphericity is 0.002, which means the test results are significant. So it can be concluded that the samples taken in this study were declared sufficient (Ghozali, 2018).

Table 3. Convergent Validity and Reliability Test

Item	r-count	r-table	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
EWOM1	0.643	0.361	0.891	valid and reliable
EWOM2	0.711	0.361		
EWOM3	0.655	0.361		
EWOM4	0.796	0.361		
EWOM5	0.850	0.361		
EWOM6	0.707	0.361		
DBI1	0.719	0.361	0.818	valid and reliable
DBI2	0.686	0.361		
DBI3	0.660	0.361		

Source: Data processed 2022

Then table 3 above shows that the results of testing the validity and reliability of the research instrument have met the requirements. The test results show that the value of the validity of each instrument is more than r-table 0.361. Cronbach alpha for the e-WOM variable is 0.891, and the destination brand image variable is 0.818. If Cronbach's alpha is more significant than 0.60, it can be concluded that the research instrument is reliable (Ghozali, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Results

Hypothesis testing in this study uses multiple linear regression to measure how much influence the independent variable has on the dependent variable. This test was carried out with the help of IBM SPSS 25 software. The test results can be seen in table 4 below:

Table 4. Determinant Coefficient and Adjusted R Square and Result of t-test and F-test

	e-WOM to DBI
Determinant Coefficient and Adjusted R	
R	0.314
R ²	0.099
Adjusted R Square	0.089
Standardized Coefficient Beta	
T	3.223
Sig.	0.002
Result of F test	
F	10.389
Sig.	0.002

Source: Data processed 2022

Hypothesis testing shows an R-value of 0.314, an R Square value of 0.099, and an Adjusted R Square value of 0.089. From the R Square value, it can be interpreted that the proposed model affects 1% of the destination brand image. In other words, 99% of the destination brand image is influenced by variables other than e-WOM communication on social media, meaning that there are still many factors that can affect the formation of the destination brand image. Furthermore, the results of the F test are 10,389, with a significance value of 0.002. These results can be interpreted that e-WOM awareness affects the destination's brand image. A significance value smaller than 0.05 means that if e-WOM can be improved, the brand image of the destination will also increase.

Discussion

The SPSS test results show that the t-count value is 3.223 with a significance of 0.002, meaning that this hypothesis is accepted. So it can be stated that e-WOM by i-generation in their social media can affect the destination brand image of religious tourism in Demak.

Based on the researchers' observations, tourists from the i-generation often claimed to read online reviews of other tourists on social media to find out which destinations could give them a good impression. It is undeniable that social media has caused more and more people to use the internet to access information about information from a tourist destination to visit. Online comments or reviews about destinations strongly influence the tourism industry (Casaló et al., 2015). Even some service providers also take advantage of the role of social media influencers to attract their consumers (Puspita & Saifudin, 2020).

Tourists from the i-generation who visit Demak have also made sure that they visit the destination because they often read online reviews of other tourists who have previously visited Demak. Sometimes they also consult online with other travelers to help choose the right travel destination. From this fact, it can be analyzed that social media has created a new type of communication in platforms that make it possible to provide information to consumers (Saifudin, 2022b). Access to reports using social media has led to more information about a tourist destination's brand image.

I-generation often collects information from online reviews before they visit religious tourism destinations, for example, about the availability of halal accommodation (Saifudin, 2021; Saifudin & Puspita, 2020). Sometimes they even worry about their decision to come to Demak if they don't read the online reviews of tourists before visiting the destination. In the past, traditional advertising was indeed quite effective in marketing (Saifudin, 2019), but this does not apply to the current i-generation. E-WOM on social media is the most emphasized source of information for today's i-generation travelers, inspiring them more than twice as much as traditional advertising. Social media communication has a social influence on providing informal communication or providing information to others about something. Information or reviews from social media can also influence the image of the Demak destination as a center for religious tourism. Furthermore, the image of the destination

can be used as a basis for management in formulating the next marketing strategy (Saifudin, 2018).

The results of this study support previous research conducted by Chan & Ngai (2011) and the research of Putra et al. (2020), which states that e-WOM has a positive impact on destination brand image. Social media communication has proven to impact a destination's brand image.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, it can be concluded that e-WOM in social media communication impacts the brand image of a destination. Therefore, as a recommendation, the local government, as the destination marketer, should organize and create service activities to present information on social media, aiming to improve the image of the Demak destination as the Kota Wali. Furthermore, destination marketers should take advantage of this social media to increase their destinations' attractiveness and profits.

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