LEX LOCALIS-JOURNAL OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT
ISSN:1581-5374 E-ISSN:1855-363X
VOL. 23, NO. S4(2025)

THE ROLE OF DESTINATION IMAGE IN MEDIATING SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT AND RISK PERCEPTION ON VISIT DECISION

Arif Siaha Widodo[1], Dendi Aam Priyatna[2], Saptaningsih Sumarmi[3], Tasrim[4]

[1]Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta, department of Magister Management, faculty of Business and Law, DIY, Indonesia, https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0933-2647
[2]Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta, department of Management, faculty of Business and Law, DIY, Indonesia, https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5881-9665
[3]Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta, department of Magister Management, faculty of Business and Law, DIY, Indonesia, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3165-6232
[4]Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta, department of Magister Management, faculty of Business and Law, DIY, Indonesia, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0077-2874

*** Corresponding authors name and email address: Arif Siaha Widodo, arifsw@upy.ac.id**

arifsw@upy.ac.id[1]
dendiaampriyatna@gmail.com[2]
sapta@upy.ac.id[3]
tasrim@upy.ac.id[4]

Abstract.
Aim: This study investigates how social media content and perceived risk influence tourists' visit intention, mediated by ecotourism destination image.
Materials and Methods: A quantitative causal design was employed, collecting data from 315 tourists via questionnaires, analyzed using PLS-SEM**.**
Results and discussions: Social media content and perceived risk significantly affect visit intention directly and indirectly through destination image, which acts as a strong mediator. Notably, well-managed risk perception positively enhances destination evaluation and intention.
Conclusions: Destination managers should leverage engaging social media and transparent risk communication to boost ecotourism destination image and tourist visits.

Key words: Social Media Content, Risk Perceived, Destination Image, Visiting Decision

Introduction

In the digital era, social media has transformed the landscape of tourism marketing by enabling destinations to communicate directly with potential travelers through visually compelling content, user-generated reviews, and influencer endorsements (Liu et al., 2022; Wijaya, 2024). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become essential tools for destination branding, shaping tourists' perceptions and emotions, and often driving travel desires through mechanisms such as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and peer engagement (Mariani et al., 2022, 2023). As a result, social media content plays a strategic role not only in promoting destinations but also in influencing tourists' cognitive and affective evaluations that lead to travel decision-making.

While the persuasive power of social media is well documented, tourists' decision-making is not determined solely by positive exposure. Psychological factorsparticularly risk perceptionhave emerged as equally influential, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, where safety, accessibility, and reliability became central concerns in travel behavior (Karl et al., 2021; Sarkady & Egger, 2021). These concerns are further amplified in emerging destinations, where

digital visibility often coexists with underdeveloped infrastructure, fluctuating service quality, and limited crisis communication systems (Ramachandran et al., 2023). Ecotourism, as a growing sector that emphasizes environmental sustainability, community empowerment, and authentic experiences, presents a unique context for examining the dual influences of media-driven expectations and perceived risk. While its potential to support local economies and sustainable development is widely recognized (Nigar, 2021), the success of ecotourism relies heavily on public perception, which is shaped both by strategic digital content and trust in destination safety and reliability.

A critical variable linking these factors is destination image, which functions as a cognitive and emotional schema through which tourists interpret external stimuli and form behavioral intentions. Prior research acknowledges the mediating role of destination image in the relationship between information exposure and visit intention (Stylidis, 2018). However, most studies have examined this mechanism in isolation, focusing either on media content or risk perceivedrather than their combined effects within a unified empirical framework (Rather, 2021). Moreover, existing literature is primarily centered on urban or established tourist destinations, while studies that explore these dynamics in the context of ecotourismparticularly in emerging regionsremain scarce.

This study aims to address these research gaps by investigating how social media content and risk perceivedinfluence tourist visit intention, with destination image serving as a mediating variable in the specific context of Indonesian ecotourism. The research is positioned at the intersection of digital marketing, tourist psychology, and sustainable tourism, offering an integrative perspective that reflects the complexity of modern travel decision-making.

The novelty of this study lies in three key aspects:

1. The development of a comprehensive model that simultaneously incorporates social media content, risk perception, and destination image to explain visit intention a structure not commonly explored in prior research.
2. The focus on destination image as a mediator between potentially conflicting factorsdigital attraction and perceived riskoffers new theoretical insight into how cognitive dissonance may be resolved in tourist behavior.
3. The empirical investigation of emerging ecotourism destinations represents an under-researched yet critical area for sustainable tourism development, particularly in the context of post-pandemic recovery efforts.

By filling these gaps, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital strategies can be designed not only to inspire but also to reassure, ultimately enhancing the competitiveness and resilience of nature-based tourism destinations

Materials and Methods

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: S-O-R and TPB

This research adopts the StimulusOrganismResponse (S-O-R) paradigm (Jacoby, 2002) as its primary theoretical lens. Social media content and risk perceivedserve as external stimuli (S), the destination image represents the internal organismic state (O), and the visiting decision is the final response (R). This model has been widely applied in post-pandemic tourism behavior research (Rather, 2021), highlighting how external cues impact internal evaluations that guide decisions. Additionally, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a complementary

perspective. Within this framework, destination image reflects the "attitude" component, while risk perceived can influence perceived behavioral control or subjective norms. A more favorable destination image implies a more positive attitude, which in turn increases behavioral intention to visit (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021).
By integrating S-O-R and TPB, the proposed framework explains how media-driven and risk-related stimuli influence travel intentions via the mediating role of internal cognitive-affective evaluations of destinations.

Social Media Content and Visiting Decisions
Social media content, particularly user-generated content (UGC) in the form of photos, stories, and reviews, has emerged as a key factor influencing destination image and travel intentions (Abidin, 2021; Malik et al., 2019). Due to its perceived authenticity and relatability, user-generated content (UGC) is considered more trustworthy than official sources (Abidin, 2021; Gretzel, 2022), which in turn increases cognitive and affective engagement with the destination (Wijaya, 2024). Interactive narratives and visually appealing posts can trigger emotional responses such as *FOMO* (Fear of Missing Out), which in turn elevates the desire to travel (Mariani et al., 2022). Moreover, influencers and multiplatform exposure (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) amplify this effect by shaping symbolic representations of place (Gartner & Gartner, 1989). Social media, especially in the post-pandemic context, not only boosts interest in rural and nature-based tourism but also helps reframe destination attractiveness around safety, beauty, and experience (Hardt & Glückstad, 2024). Thus, we propose:
H1: Social media content has a positive effect on visiting decisions.
H2: Social media content has a positive effect on destination image

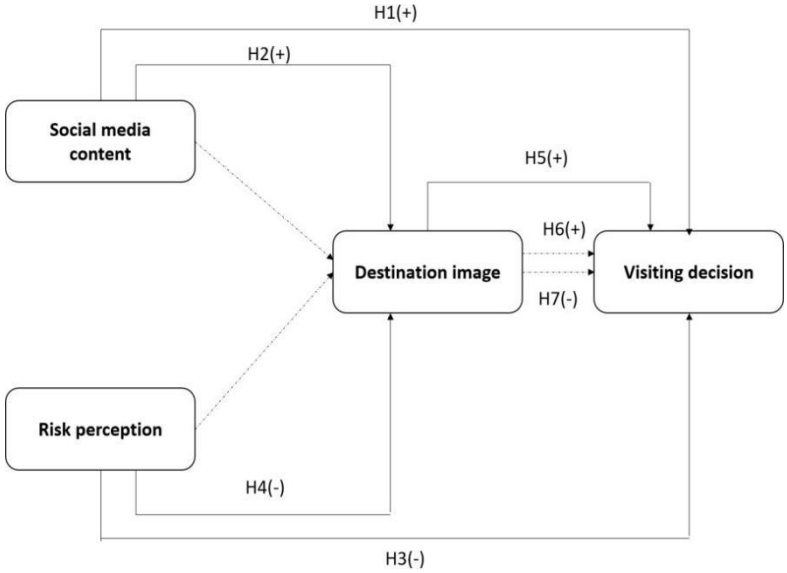
Risk perceived and Destination Image or Visiting Decisions Decisions
Risk perceived including concerns over health, safety, political stability, or natural disasters has consistently been found to impact tourists' behavior and destination image negatively (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011). During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, studies have shown that a higher perceived risk reduces travel intentions and deteriorates the cognitive-affective image of a place (Rather, 2021; Sheng et al., 2023). However, the relationship is nuanced. Some segments (e.g., adventure tourists) may interpret risk as part of the attraction (Farkasdi et al., 2021), while leisure or family tourists tend to avoid high-risk destinations (Simarmata, 2021). Recent literature also notes that *well-managed risks*—such as visible sanitation protocols, health certifications, or transparent communication—can enhance a destination's image by fostering trust and perceived competence (Pennington-Gray, Lori; Schroeder, Ashley; Kaplanidou, 2011; Prayag, 2020). Based on this, the hypotheses are:
H3: Risk perceived has a negative effect on visiting decisions.
H4: Risk perceived has a negative effect on destination image

Destination Image and Visiting Decisions
Destination image acts as a cognitive and affective evaluation formed through a mix of external cues and personal interpretations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Cognitive aspects include perceptions of safety, facilities, cleanliness, and prices(Gartner & Gartner, 1989), while affective dimensions relate to emotional impressions, such as excitement or tranquility (Hosany et al., 2020). Positive destination imagesespecially those rooted in authenticity, natural beauty, cultural

uniqueness, and safetyenhance the perceived value of visiting and strengthen behavioral intention (Audrey & Iskandar, 2024; Jiang et al., 2017). Additionally, online reviews and social proof on platforms reinforce positive image formation (Litvin et al., 2018). Therefore:
H5: The destination image has a positive effect on visitation decisions.

The Mediating Role of Destination Image
Numerous studies confirm that destination image mediates the effects of both social media content and risk perceivedon visiting intentions (Rinandiyana et al., 2022; Sheng et al., 2023). Based on the Image Formation Theory (Gartner, 1993), engaging digital content shapes perceptions, which in turn influence behavior. Social media content enhances destination image through (1) its high credibility(Abidin, 2021), (2) emotional engagement (Hosany et al., 2020), and (3) widespread exposure across platforms (Mariani et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers, 1975) supports the idea that a strong destination image can buffer the negative impact of risk perceivedthrough mechanisms such as building trust, enhancing perceived safety, and leveraging testimonials from past visitors (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011; Prayag, 2020). Hence:
H6: Social media content positively influences visiting decisions mediated by destination image.
H7: Risk perceivednegatively influences visiting decisions mediated by destination image.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Source: own elaboration author's

Methods
Population, Sampling Technique, and Sample Size
The population in this study consisted of 1.143 tourists who visited a particular tourist destination during the observation period (1 month). The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error (Yamane, 1967):

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} \quad (1)$$

$$n = \frac{1.458}{1+1.458(0,05)^2} \quad (2)$$

$$n = \frac{1.458}{4,645} \quad (3)$$

$$n = 313,885 \quad (4)$$

To account for potential nonresponse and outliers, the final sample size was increased to 315 respondents. This increase was deemed necessary to ensure a representative sample and to enhance the study's statistical power. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed, where participants were selected based on the followinginclusion criteria: having visited the tourist destination at least twice, ensuring familiarity and reflective judgment, and being aged 17 years and above, in line with ethical considerations regarding survey participation. This approach allowed the study to focus on information-rich cases that directly aligned with the research objectives. While purposive sampling limits generalizability, it increases relevance and depth in exploratory settings where the goal is to understand specific perceptions and behaviors rather than to generalize findings (Gibson, 2017).

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through offline and online channels. For online distribution, the survey was shared via Google Forms and distributed via WhatsApp to eligible respondents. The questionnaire used a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (7)", to capture nuanced responses.

Measurement of Variables

Key indicators that play a crucial role in measuring the decision to visit include the destination, type of trip, travel costs, travel agents, and service sources (Boarnet & Crane, 2001). These indicators are not just data points, but essential tools that provide a comprehensive understanding of travel-related decisions. The measurement of social media content is a comprehensive process that involves indicators such as relevant content, accurate content, valuable and helpful content, easily understandable content, and content distribution that is easily accessible to (Koob, 2021). This thorough approach ensures that all aspects of the content are considered. Risk perceivedis measured using the dimensions of Functional Risk, Physical Risk, Financial Risk, Social Risk, and Psychological Risk (Singh, 2015). Similarly, the destination image is measured using a wide range of environmental indicators, natural tourism events and entertainment, infrastructure, accessibility, price relaxation, and value (Chi & Qu, 2008)

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4 software. The analysis process involved two main stages: 1) Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model); Convergent Validity: Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50, Discriminant Validity: Based on the Fornell-Larcker criteria and HTMT ratio < 0.90, Construct Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70. 2) Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model); R^2 Value: Coefficient of determination for endogenous constructs, Path Coefficient: Includes t- statistics and p-values to test the significance of the hypothesis, Mediation Test: Using bootstrapping to examine indirect effects, and Effect Size (f^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2): To assess the strength and predictive accuracy of the model (Hair et al., 2022).

Results and Discussion

The majority of respondents in this study, aged between 31 and 35, comprised 32.4% (n = 102) of the sample. This was followed by individuals aged 26–30 years (30.8%, n = 97), 36–40 years (14.3%, n = 45), 21–25 years (9.8%, n = 31), over 40 years (7.9%, n = 25), and under 20 years (4.8%, n = 15). This distribution indicates that the sample primarily consisted of individuals in early to mid-adulthood, a demographic typically characterized by active travel behavior and strong engagement with social media. Regarding gender, females dominated the sample, accounting for 63.2% (n = 199), while males comprised 36.8% (n = 116). This gender distribution may reflect the higher level of interest or involvement of female tourists in tourism-related online content and decision-making processes.

From an occupational perspective, the largest group was self-employed entrepreneurs (45.4%, n = 143), followed by civil servants, teachers, and lecturers (17.8%, n = 56), private-sector employees (14.6%, n = 46), housewives (12.1%, n = 38), and students (10.2%, n = 32). This range of occupations reflects a varied respondent base, with a significant portion engaged in flexible or independent work. This suggests a potential for more frequent travel, which is an optimistic finding for the tourism industry.

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

This study assessed indicator validity through outer loading values, a measure used in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to determine the extent to which each indicator represents its corresponding latent variable. According to (Hair Jr. et al., 2019), an outer loading value ≥ 0.70 indicates that the indicator is valid and makes a substantial contribution to its construct.

Table 1. Outer loading values

Constructs	Items	Outer Loading	decision
Social media content	KMS1	0.859	valid
	KMS2	0.778	valid
	KMS3	0.743	valid
	KMS4	0.841	valid
	KMS5	0.785	valid
	KMS6	0.825	Valid
Risk perceived	PR1	0.875	Valid
	PR2	0.837	Valid
	PR3	0.835	valid
	PR4	0.853	valid
Destination image	CD1	0.767	valid
	CD2	0.790	valid
	CD3	0.735	valid
	CD4	0.832	valid
	CD5	0.838	valid
	CD6	0.813	valid
	CD7	0.721	valid
	CD8	0.730	valid
	CD9	0.830	valid

	CD10	0.849	valid
Visiting decision	KP1	0.774	valid
	KP2	0.838	valid
	KP3	0.793	valid
	KP4	0.723	valid

Table 1 shows that all indicators across the four constructs have outer loading values above the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70, confirming that they are valid measures. The constructsSocial Media Content, Risk Perception, Destination Image, and Visiting Decisionare thus reliably measured by their respective indicators, supporting the robustness of the measurement model for further structural analysis.

Table 2. Reliability and convergen validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Risk perceived	0.790	0.791	0.864	0.614
Social media content	0.823	0.825	0.871	0.530
Visiting decision	0.795	0.796	0.867	0.619
destination image	0.910	0.911	0.925	0.554

Based on Table 2, the following provides a detailed explanation of the reliability and convergent validity results. Reliability is assesCronbach'sCronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability (CR or rho_C). Acceptable thresh Cronbach's Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70 → Good internal consistency; rho_A ≥ 0.70 → A more accurate estimate of reliability; ≥ 0.70 is acceptable; and Composite Reliability (rho_C) ≥ 0.70 → Indicates good construct reliability.

As depicted in Table 2, all constructs surpass the 0.70 threshold for Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability. This robust performance indicates strong internal consistency and construct reliability across all variables, providing a solid foundation for the research. The establishment of convergent validity further underscores the reliability of our model. This is assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a threshold of AVE ≥ 0.50. All AVE values in our model exceed this threshold, confirming that each construct captures sufficient variance from its indicators. This robust establishment of convergent validity further supports the reliability of our measurement model.

Table 3. HTMT Matrix

	Risk perceived	Social media content	Visiting decision	destination image
Risk perceived				
Social media content	0.789			
Visiting decision	0.759	0.699		
destination image	0.734	0.795	0.698	

Based on Table 3, According to the HTMT criteria, discriminant validity is established for all pairs of constructs in the L model. Empirically, the constructs based on the HTMT method are

stronger, and this supports the adequacy of the measurement model and strengthens confidence in the construct validity.

Table 4. Coefficient of determination

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Visiting decision	0.709	0.706
destination image	0.857	0.856

Based on Table 5, R^2 (Coefficient of Determination) reflects the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variables. Visiting Decision (R^2 = 0.709): This indicates a strong level of explanatory power, meaning the model effectively explains about 71% of the variability in tourists' visiting decisions. Destination Image (R^2 = 0.857): This is an excellent value, indicating that the independent variables effectively account for 85.7% of the variation in the destination image. Adjusted R^2, which corrects for model complexity and sample size, is a key indicator of the model's stability and generalizability. The values here (0.706 and 0.856) are very close to their corresponding R^2 values, reinforcing the notion that the model is not overfitted and that its explanatory power is stable and generalizable.

Table 5. Direct effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Risk perceived -> Visiting decision	0.402	0.396	0.069	5.856	0.000
Risk perceived -> destination image	0.506	0.502	0.052	9.736	0.000
Social media content -> Visiting decision	0.470	0.473	0.064	7.371	0.000
Social media content -> destination image	0.472	0.476	0.049	9.563	0.000
destination image -> Visiting decision	0.437	0.427	0.105	4.161	0.000

All path coefficients are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), as indicated by t-values greater than 1.96 and p-values of 0.000, suggesting strong confidence in the relationships. Social Media Content and Risk perceivedboth have direct and indirect influences on Visiting Decisions through Destination Image. The strongest relationship in the model is Risk perceived→ Destination Image (β = 0.506), indicating that perceptions of safety are crucial in shaping tourists' impressions. The Destination Image → Visiting Decision path (β = 0.437) confirms its role as a mediator, amplifying the impact of both risk and media content.

Table 6. Indirect effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Risk perceived-> destination image -> Visiting decision	0.221	0.215	0.060	3.701	0.000
Social media content -> destination image -> Visiting decision	0.206	0.203	0.053	3.914	0.000

Both indirect paths are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), with t-values greater than 1.96, confirming the presence of mediation. The minor standard deviations indicate the stability of the estimates. Effect Sizes: The indirect effect of Risk perceived($\beta = 0.221$) is slightly stronger than that of Social Media Content ($\beta = 0.206$), suggesting that tourists' perception of risk significantly influences their image of the destination, which in turn affects their decision to visit. Furthermore, engaging and informative social media content, with its indirect effect, plays a significant role in enhancing the destination's image, thereby encouraging tourists to travel.

Since direct paths from both Risk perceivedand Social Media Content to Visiting Decision were also significant (see your earlier data), these findings suggest partial mediation. This means both direct and indirect pathways are at work simultaneously, highlighting the complexity of tourist decision-making. Destination Image functions as a mediator, channeling the influence of both risk perceivedand social media content into the final decision to visit a destination. This supports a theoretically robust model where psychological (risk), informational (social media), and perceptual (image) factors collectively shape behavioral intentions.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm the central role of both social media content and risk perceivedin shaping tourists' visiting decisions, with destination image serving as a significant mediating variable. These findings align with the StimulusOrganismResponse (S-O-R) model and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posit that external stimuli (media and perceived risk) influence internal evaluations (destination image), which in turn drive behavioral responses (visit intention).

First, the direct positive effect of social media content on visiting decision ($\beta = 0.470$, $p< 0.001$) supports H1 and is consistent with previous literature emphasizing the persuasive power of user-generated content (UGC) and influencer-driven narratives (Gretzel, 2022; Mariani et al., 2022). Visual appeal, emotional storytelling, and peer recommendations create a sense of aspiration and trust, increasing the likelihood of travel decisions (Sumarmi et al., 2025). Similarly, the positive impact of social media content on destination image ($\beta = 0.472$, $p< 0.001$; supporting H2) confirms that digital content has a strong influence on how tourists cognitively and affectively evaluate a destination (Wijaya, 2024)

Interestingly, risk perceived was also found to have a significant positive effect on the decision to visit ($\beta = 0.402$, $p< 0.001$), which contradicts conventional assumptions but supports more nuanced findings in the literature. While prior studies often emphasize that high perceived risk

reduces travel intention (Sánchez-cañizares et al., 2021), some works (Farkasdi et al., 2021) suggest that in specific tourist segmentssuch as adventure seekersmoderate risk can be perceived as an exciting challenge rather than a deterrent. This could explain the counterintuitive positive relationship observed in the context of this study's ecotourism.

The strongest direct path in the model was from risk perceivedto destination image ($\beta = 0.506$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4 and aligning with (Pennington-Gray, Lori; Schroeder, Ashley; Kaplanidou, 2011; Prayag, 2020), who found that visible risk management (e.g., health protocols, safety communication) can enhance perceptions of a destination's competence and reliability. This means that while tourists may be aware of risks, transparent communication, and trust-building practices can turn risk awareness into a factor that reinforces destination credibility.

The path from destination image to visiting decision was also significant ($\beta = 0.437$, $p < 0.001$), confirming H5 and echoing studies such as (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Hosany et al., 2020), which emphasize the cognitive-affective basis of destination evaluations in travel behavior. A favorable imageemphasizing nature, cleanliness, emotional comfort, and safetymotivates potential tourists to act. Moreover, the results revealed partial mediation by destination image in both: Social media content → destination image → visiting decision (indirect effect $\beta = 0.206$, $p < 0.001$); and Risk perceived→ destination image → visiting decision (indirect effect $\beta = 0.221$, $p < 0.001$).

These findings support H6 and H7, reinforcing the literature (Rinandiyana et al., 2022; Sheng et al., 2023)) that identifies destination image as a powerful interpretive filter. In this role, destination image helps reconcile cognitive dissonancea psychological term that refers to the discomfort experienced when holding conflicting beliefs or attitudes. In the context of this study, destination image helps turn potential anxieties (stemming from risk) or aspirations (derived from social media) into actionable travel decisions.

Overall, these findings validate the integrative model proposed in this study and demonstrate the dual role of media and risk as both opportunities and challenges in ecotourism marketing. By strategically managing media narratives and risk communication, destination managers can shape more resilient and attractive destination images, ultimately encouraging sustainable tourism behavior. For instance, by leveraging the positive influence of social media content on destination image, marketers can curate compelling narratives that highlight the unique aspects of their destination (Sabaa et al., 2025). Similarly, by understanding the nuanced relationship between risk perceived and destination image, managers can implement transparent risk communication strategies that enhance destination credibility.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of social media content and risk perceived on tourists' visiting decisions, with destination image as a mediating variable, using SEM-PLS on data from 315 respondents. The findings confirm that both social media content and risk perceivedhave significant direct effects on visiting decisions and indirect effects mediated by destination image. Destination image plays a pivotal role in translating tourists' cognitive and emotional responses to digital content and perceived risks into behavioral intentions.

Significantly, while social media content enhances destination appeal and trust, risk perceptionwhen effectively managedcan positively contribute to the formation of a credible and secure destination image. These results provide empirical support for the

StimulusOrganismResponse (S-O-R) framework and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), validating the interconnected roles of external cues, internal evaluations, and behavioral outcomes in tourism decision-making.

Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the tourism literature in several ways: First, it extends the S-O-R model by integrating both media influence and risk perceivedinto a single structural model with the destination image as the organism; Second, it demonstrates that risk perceivedis not always detrimental; instead, when well-managed, it enhances trust and reinforces a positive destination image, and third, it highlights the mediating role of destination image, which bridges stimulus cues and behavioral intentions, particularly in the post-pandemic travel context and ecotourism scenarios. These contributions enhance the conceptual understanding of how tourists process information and make decisions in complex environments characterized by both opportunities and uncertainty.

Managerial Implications

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest several actionable insights: destination marketers should prioritize high-quality, authentic, and emotionally engaging content on social media platforms to stimulate interest and build positive perceptions; Risk communication strategies must be transparent and proactive in nature. Certifications, health protocols, and real-time updates can reduce anxiety and convert perceived risk into a trust-building asset; Destination image management should focus on both cognitive aspects (facilities, safety, cleanliness) and affective impressions (peacefulness, excitement), ensuring consistency between online content and on-site experiences; and for emerging ecotourism destinations, leveraging social media and managing perceived risks are essential tools for increasing destination competitiveness.

Limitations

This study has several limitations: the use of purposive sampling may limit the generalizability of findings beyond the sample context; The study focused on a single ecotourism destination in Indonesia, which may not accurately reflect the dynamics of urban or international tourism contexts; self-reported data are subject to social desirability bias and may not fully reflect actual behavior.

Future Research Directions

Building on the findings and limitations, future research can: expand the model by including other mediators or moderators such as trust, destination attachment, or tourist personality types; Conduct comparative studies across different types of destinations (urban vs. rural, domestic vs. international); and apply longitudinal designs to assess how media influence and risk perceivedevolve; and explore cross-cultural differences to understand how social media and risk perceivedinteract across diverse tourist markets.

Contributions: ASW: Conceptualization; Data curation; Resources, Supervision; writingoriginal draft; Writingreviewer & editing, review manuscript; DAP: Project administration; Resources; Software; SS: Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation, Validation; Visualization; T: Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources

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