

The Influence Of City Branding And E-Wom On Interest In Visiting Religious Tourist Attractions In Surakarta The Role Of The Intervening Variable City Image

Safira Amelia Pramesti^a, Muhammad Sholahuddin^{b*}

^{a,b}faculty of economics and business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

* Corresponding author e-mail: muhammad.sholahuddin@ums.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Religious tourism has become a significant sector of the tourism industry in many countries around the world. Religious tourism sites attract tourists who seek spiritual experiences, religious values, and cultural knowledge. One of the places that has a lot of religious tourism is Surakarta. The purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of City Branding and E-Wom on interest in visiting religious tourist attractions in Surakarta, the role of the intervening variable City Image. This research method is quantitative. This study uses data in the form of primary data. This study uses a questionnaire method to collect data. The population in this study was obtained from the population of tourists in Central Java Province with a total of 1412. The sampling technique is purposive sampling. The number of samples in this study were 150 respondents. The data analysis technique in this study uses Partial Least Square (PLS) using the help of SMARTPLS software. The results of this study are City Branding and E-Wom have a positive and significant effect on City Image. City Branding, E-Wom and City Image have a positive and significant effect on Visiting Interest. City Branding has a positive and significant effect on Interest in Visiting which is mediated by City Image. E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Interest in Visiting which is mediated by City Image. The implication of this research is to help people to know more about the factors that influence tourist trust and interest in visiting.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that has natural and cultural beauty so that it can be utilized by the community as a tourist attraction that can attract tourist visits. Tourism is a mainstay to increase state and regional income, this is supported by the existence of existing tourist attractions. A tourist attraction is something that has uniqueness and high value as a basis for tourists to visit a tourist spot. Without a tourist attraction, tourism is difficult to develop because to increase tourist interest there needs to be something unique and interesting. One industry that can encourage economic growth is tourism. Promotion of the country's image abroad is another function of tourism in terms of socio-cultural development. Indonesian tourism in fact has tremendous natural tourism potential, due to its rich natural and cultural attractions, which include thousands of islands and hundreds of different races and ethnic groups. The largest foreign exchange earner is estimated to come from this industry

Religious tourism has become a significant sector in the tourism industry in many countries around the world. Religious tourist attractions attract tourists who seek spiritual experiences, religious values, and cultural knowledge (Mardalis & Wijaya, 2016). Surakarta (Solo), as one of the cities in Indonesia, has great potential to develop religious tourism with a variety of tourist attractions that combine historical, cultural, and spiritual values. However, to maximize this potential, strategic efforts need to be made in building a strong and attractive city image for Surakarta as a religious tourism destination (Hasyimi & Azizalrahman, 2021).

Previous studies have shown that city branding and e-wom (electronic word-of-mouth) play an important role in influencing tourist interest. City branding involves efforts to build a positive image and promote the uniqueness of the city as a tourist destination (Rakhmawati et al., 2019). Meanwhile, (Utami & Azis, 2021) in their research stated that consumers revealed that they were interested in a place based on suggestions from friends, and other reviews from mass media such as Instagram, and Twitter and Facebook. These two factors can influence the perception and interest of tourists to visit a destination.

Although previous studies have revealed the positive influence of city branding and e-wom on tourists' interest in visiting, there is a need to conduct further research in the context of religious tourism in Surakarta. Some aspects that need to be considered in identifying research gaps are the influence of city branding and e-wom specifically on interest in visiting religious tourist attractions, as well as the role of city image variables as intervening variables in the relationship. Previous research may not have specifically explored the influences and mechanisms involved in the context of religious tourism in Surakarta.

A previous study conducted by (Azman et al., 2019) has investigated the influence of city branding in influencing tourists' interest in visiting a destination. However, this study did not specifically focus on religious tourism or include the city image variable as an intervening variable. In addition, studies on the effect of e-wom on interest in visiting religious tourist attractions are also still limited. (Ayumi, S.A et al., 2022) investigated the influence of e-

wom in tourism management, but there is no research that specifically analyzes the influence of e-wom on interest in visiting religious tourist attractions.

Relevant quantitative data in this context could include survey data that measures tourists' interest in visiting religious tourism sites in Surakarta before and after the implementation of city branding and e-wom strategies. For example, a survey involving the number of respondents visiting religious tourism sites, their perception of the city image, and the influence of city branding and e-wom on their interest in visiting. This quantitative data will help in identifying the extent of the influence of city branding and e-wom and the role of city image as an intervening variable in influencing tourists' interest in visiting religious tourism sites in Surakarta.

This study aims to analyze the influence of city branding and e-wom on tourists' interest in visiting religious tourism sites in Surakarta, with city image as an intervening variable. City image refers to the perceptions and images formed in the minds of tourists about a particular city (Jojic, 2019). As an intervening variable, city image is expected to mediate the relationship between and e-wom and tourists' interest in visiting. However, there is no research that specifically analyzes the role of city image in the relationship between city branding, e-wom, and tourist interest in the context of religious tourism in Surakarta.

The Effect of City Branding on City Image. City branding is a process or effort to create a brand of a city to make it easier for the owner of the city to tell his city to the target market (investors, tourists, talents, events) of the city by using positioning sentences, slogans, icons, exhibitions and various other media (Maulani & Prasetyo, 2018). According to (Indriani & Kuswoyo, 2017) city branding is generally oriented towards image management or an image of a city. More specifically, the focus lies on the ways and processes of city image formation, as well as the communication aspects involved in image management.

In several previous studies, it was found that there is a relationship between City Branding and City Image such as research conducted (Bahtiar et al., 2021), (putri, 2020) which stated the same results, namely city branding has a positive and significant effect on City Image. Based on the description above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: City Branding has a positive and significant effect on City Image.

Effect of E WOM on City Image. Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is a positive or negative statement made by potential customers or former customers about a product or company that is intended for many people or institutions via online (Muslim et al., 2021). The rapid development of technology today has made social media one of the things that can influence a person in making a decision (Lestari et al., 2020). An increase in positive Electronic Word of Mouth (E WOM) significantly contributes to the improvement of city image, assuming that electronic communication between individuals in an urban context has a strong influence in shaping positive perceptions of the city's attributes.

In several previous studies, it was found that there was a relationship between E WOM and Interest in Visiting such as research conducted by (Muzdalifah et al., 2019) which stated the same results, namely E WOM has a positive and significant effect on City Image. Based on the description above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H2: E WOM has a positive and significant effect on City Image.

The Effect of City Branding on Interest in Visiting. City branding is considered a marketing strategy to promote an area by giving a special identity to a city, aiming to make the city better known (Ramadhan et al., 2015). This approach creates an attraction for tourists because it highlights its unique differences compared to other cities, encouraging interest in visiting the city which has different branding and taglines from the others (Rahman et al., 2023). The concept of city branding has similarities with destination branding, where both can be considered as a brand for a place. The existence of a city brand can generate certain perceptions or feelings that encourage the desire to visit (Rahman et al., 2023).

In several previous studies, it was found that there was a relationship between City Branding and Visiting Interest such as research conducted by (Tati Haryati & Jumadil Wahid, 2019), (Aulia & Yulianti, 2019) which stated the same results, namely City Branding has a positive and significant effect on Visiting Interest. Based on the description above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: City Branding has a positive and significant effect on Visiting Interest.

Effect of E WOM on Interest in Visiting. Increasing positive exposure to Electronic Word of Mouth (E WOM) significantly increases the level of interest in visiting a religious destination in Surakarta, along with the belief that testimonials and online reviews can form positive perceptions and increase tourists' desire to visit the destination (Chrisardani & Arief, 2022). The relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth (E WOM) and visiting interest will be stronger when the information conveyed involves positive experiences from people who have visited the destination (Indriana et al., 2022)

In several previous studies, it was found that there was a relationship between E WOM and visiting interest such as research conducted by (Purwanto & Rofiah, 2020), (Purwanto & Kadi 2021) which stated the same results, namely E WOM has a positive and significant effect on visiting interest. Based on the description above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H4: E WOM has a positive and significant effect on visiting interest.

The Effect of City Image on Interest in Visiting. City image explains the pent-up vision and beliefs that persist in consumer memories about a brand (Indriani & Kuswoyo, 2017). In the world of tourism, city image is assumed to be the same as brand image. According to (Tjiptono, Fandy, 2017) brand image or brand description is a description of consumer associations and beliefs about certain brands. A tourist destination can be viewed as a mixture of individual products and experiences that combine to form the total experience of the area

visited (Putra, 2021). A good perception of a city's image can increase tourists' interest and desire to explore the destination.

In several previous studies, it was found that there is a relationship between City Image and Interest in Visiting such as research conducted by (Putra, 2021) and (Utomo et al., 2022) which stated the same results, namely City Image has a positive and significant effect on Interest in Visiting. Based on the description above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H5: City Image has a positive and significant effect on Interest in Visiting.

The effect of City Branding on Interest in Visiting through City Image. City Branding will be "something" that is attractive to potential customers. City Branding is basically a promise of a city to give something to consumers (Muslim et al., 2021). According to (Kotler & Keller, 2016) the starting point for making purchasing decisions is the stimulus and response model of consumer buying behavior.

In several previous studies, it was found that there is a relationship between City Branding and Interest in Visiting through City Image such as research conducted by, (Haryati & Wahid, 2019) which stated the same results, namely City Branding has a positive effect on visiting interest through City Image. Based on the description above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H6: City Image has a positive and significant effect on visiting interest through City Image.

Effect of E WOM on Interest in Visiting through City Image. (Chrismardani & Arief, 2022) explain what is meant by Electronic Word-of-mouth (EWOM) are positive and negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company that are made available to many people and institutions via the internet. The growing interest encourages tourists to seek deeper information so as to reach the decision to visit tourist attractions (Agitasari et al., 2022).

In several previous studies, it was found that there is a relationship between E WOM and visiting interest through City Image such as research conducted by (Chrismardani & Arief, 2022) which stated the same results, namely E WOM has a positive effect on visiting interest through City Image. This shows that EWOM influences tourists' interest in visiting certain attractions.

The novelty of this research with previous research is that the research specifically focuses on religious tourism and includes the city image variable as an in-tervening variable.

Based on the description above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H7: E WOM has a positive and significant effect on visiting interest through City Image.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research method is quantitative. The quantitative method is testing theory through measuring research variables numerically and analyzing data with statistical procedures (Sugiyono, 2019). The purpose of using quantitative research is to determine the effect of city branding, E-WOM on visiting interest through city image as an intervening variable.

This study uses primary data. Primary data is data that comes from questionnaires or questionnaires distributed to respondents and the results of interviews conducted with respondents (Sugiyono, 2019). This type of research is included in the field survey category, by distributing questionnaires / questionnaires by purposive sampling to get answers from independent variables to the dependent variable through intervening variables by distributing questionnaires to religious tourists in Surakarta.

This study uses a questionnaire method to collect the required data. The data can be obtained by researchers by distributing questionnaires to respondents, namely religious tourists in Surakarta. In this study the measurement scale used is a Likert scale.

The population in this study is the intended object to be used as a place of data acquisition (Sugiyono, 2019). The population in this study was obtained from the population of tourists in Central Java Province with a total of 1412. The sample is part of the number and characteristics of the population that can represent (Raihan, 2017). To determine the number of samples from the population, sampling is carried out. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which is selecting a sample from a population based on the available information and determining the sample determined by the researcher based on certain objectives and considerations that are considered to meet the specified criteria (Raihan, 2017). The sample in this study was 10% of the population, namely 141.2, rounded up to 150. In this study, the considerations and sample criteria are as follows:

- a. Tourists who will visit religious tourism in Surakarta
- b. Tourists who have visited religious tourism in Surakarta.

Data analysis techniques in this study using Partial Least Square (PLS) with the help of SMARTPLS software. SMARTPLS is able to test SEM models with various forms of scales such as ratio, likert and others. PLS-SEM analysis consists of two Outer model and Inner model (Ghozali, 2019).

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results. In this study, hypothesis testing used Partial Least Square (PLS) data analysis techniques with the SmartPLS 3.2 program. The following is the PLS program model scheme tested:

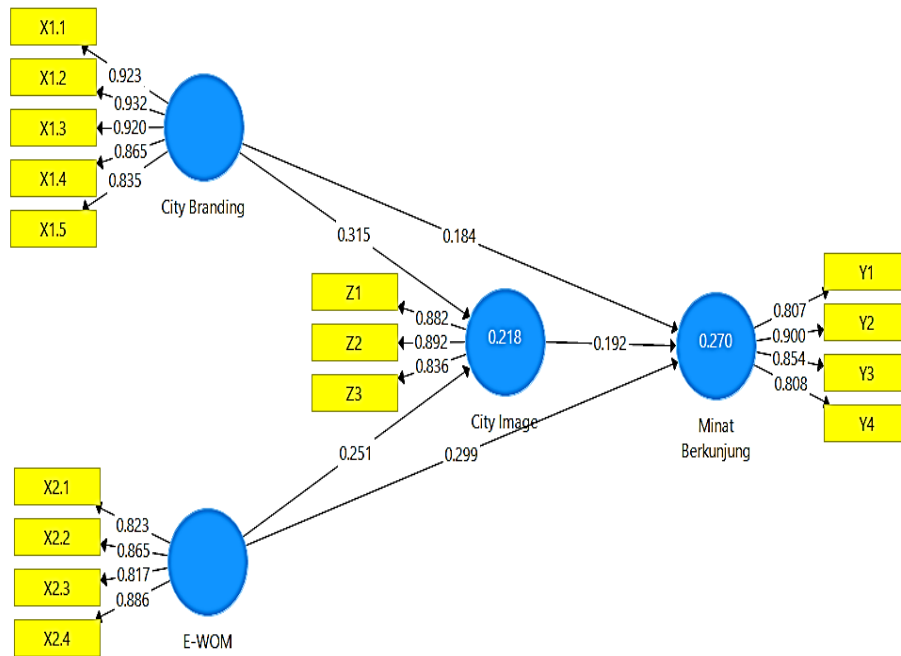


Figure 1. Outer Model

Source: Reseacher, 2023

Outer Model Evaluation. Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loading

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading
City Branding	X1.1	0,923
	X1.2	0,932
	X1.3	0,920
	X1.4	0,865
	X1.5	0,835
E-WOM	X2.1	0,823
	X2.2	0,865
	X2.3	0,817
	X2.4	0,886
City Image	Z1	0,882
	Z2	0,892
	Z3	0,836
Interest in Visiting	Y1	0,807
	Y2	0,900
	Y3	0,854
	Y4	0,808

Source: Primary data processed (2023)

Based on Table 1, that each indicator of the City Image, E-WOM, Image Image, and Visiting Interest variables has good convergent validity can be seen from the outer loading value of > 0.7 so that each indicator is declared valid and eligible for research.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted

Variable	Average Variance Extracted
City Branding (X1)	0,802
City Image (Z)	0,758
E-WOM (X2)	0,720
Interest in Visiting (Y)	0,711

Source: Processed Primary Data (2023)

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value that meets the criteria of > 0.5 must be seen to determine whether the variable is valid or not. Based on the table above, it can be seen that all AVE values of each variable are > 0.5 so that all variables have good discriminant validity.

Reliability Test

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
City Branding(X1)	0,938	0,953
City Image (Z)	0,841	0,904
E-WOM (X2)	0,870	0,911
Interest in Visiting (Y)	0,865	0,908

Source: Primary data processed (2023)

The reliability test is needed to evaluate the stability and consistency of the research instrument used to measure variables. The table shows the Cronbach's Alpha value or the reliability value of the reliability composer > 0.7 so that all variables are said to be reliable.

Multicollinearity Test. Multicollinearity test is used to determine whether there is a correlation between independent variables or not. The criteria in this test are the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) value < 0.5 , which means that the regression model is free from multicollinearity (Ghozali, 2019)

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test (VIF)

Variable	City Branding	City Image	E-WOM	Interest in Visiting
City Branding		1,143		1,270
Citra Image				1,279
E-WOM		1,143		1,224
Interest in Visiting				

Source: Primary data processed (2023)

From the results of table 4, the VIF value to see the multicollinearity test of the City Branding variable on City Image is 1.143, City Branding on Visiting Interest is 1.270, City Image on Visiting Interest is 1.279, E-WOM on City Image is 1.143, E-WOM on Visiting Interest is 1.224.

Inner Model Evaluation. R square analysis. The coefficient of determination (R²) is a way to assess how much the endogenous construct can be explained by the exogenous construct. The higher the predictive accuracy value of the model with criteria 0.75 high, 0.50 medium, and 0.25 low.

Table 5. R-square

Construct	R-square	R-square Adjusted
City Image	0,218	0,208
Interest in Visiting	0,270	0,255

Source: Primary data processed (2023)

The results of table 5, the R-square of the City Image variable is 0.218, which means that the City Branding and E-WOM variables together affect trust by 0.218 or 21.8% of the high category, the rest is explained by other independent variables outside the model. While the involvement value of Visiting Interest is 0.270 or 27.0%, which means that the independent variables, namely the City Branding and E-WOM variables, jointly affect Trust by 21.8% in the high category, the remaining 78.2% is explained by other independent variables outside the research discussed.

Goodness of fit test. Good of fit research can be known from the Q square value. Based on the calculation results, the value of Q-square is 0.4291 or 42.91%, this shows that the data that can be explained by the research model is 42.91%, while the remaining 57.09% is explained by other factors outside of this study. Thus, these results mean that this research model can be said to have a good fit.

Hypothesis Test. Direct effects

Table 6. Direct effects

	Tstatistic	P value	Decesion
City Branding(X1) -> Interest in Visiting (Y)	2,124	0,035	Support
E-WOM(X2) -> Interest in Visiting (Y)	2,036	0,044	Support

Source: Primary data processed (2023)

Based on table 6, it can be concluded that the results of hypothesis testing of the effect of City Branding on Visiting Interest have a positive influence, this can be seen from the original sample of 0.061 and has a significant effect with a P value of 0.000 > 0.05. E-WOM on Interest in Visiting has a positive and significant effect with an original value of 0.048 and P values of 0.000 > 0.05.

Indirect effects

Table 7. Indirect effects

	Tstatistic	P value	Support
City Branding -> City Image -> Interest in Visiting	2,124	0,035	Support
E-WOM -> City Image-> Interest in Visiting	2,036	0,044	Support

Source: Primary data processed (2023)

The results of hypothesis testing of the effect of City Branding on City Image with Interest in Visiting as an Intervening variable have a significant effect and the original sample is 0.061 and has a P-values of $0.35 < 5$. the effect of E-WOM on City Image with Interest in Visiting as an Intervening variable has a significant effect and the original sample is 0.040 and has a P-values of $0.044 < 5$.

Discussion. Effect of City Branding on City Image. This research shows that there is a positive and significant influence of City Branding on City Image of religious tourism in Surakarta, an effective city branding increases the positive image of Surakarta as a religious tourism destination. This means that people tend to view Surakarta as a place that has rich spiritual, cultural, and historical values. Strong branding helps attract more tourists, especially those who are interested in the religious and cultural aspects of the city (putri, 2020). However, particularly in the context of religious tourism, this may present new nuances that have not been widely researched before. This research is unique because it focuses on the influence of city branding on interest in visiting religious tourist attractions, which is a special niche in tourism studies.

In line with research findings (Prabainastu, 2020) and (Ajis et al., 2022) that City Branding has a positive and significant effect on City Image. However, particularly in the context of religious tourism, this may present new nuances that have not been widely researched before. This research is unique because it focuses on the influence of city branding on interest in visiting religious tourism sites, which is a special niche in tourism studies. Good city branding comes from presence, place, potential, spirit, people and preconditions. The existence of these indicators then form the image of Surakarta city in the minds of tourists so that what is contained in the elements of city branding as well as from the familiarity of tourists with Denpasar, the situation in Denpasar that makes tourists comfortable, the potential that exists in Surakarta, especially in terms of religious tourism potential, and local residents who are able to create a comfortable atmosphere for tourists. City image will be formed not only from one element but from all city branding influences the formation of city image.

Effect of E-WOM on City Image. This research shows that there is a positive and significant influence of E-WOM on City Image, which means that good online reviews and comments from visitors can strengthen the positive view of others towards Surakarta. E-WOM is often considered more credible compared to traditional advertising because it comes from other people's real experiences. This makes people more trusting and interested to visit Surakarta. E-WOM plays an important role in shaping public opinion about Surakarta as a religious tourism destination. Positive reviews from other travelers can be a deciding factor in someone's decision to visit. In this digital era, social media and review platforms have become important tools in disseminating information and experiences about tourist destinations. The results of this study are in line with previous research which shows a significant effect of E-WOM on destination image. A study in (Handayani et al., 2022) also found that E-WOM influences tourists' motivation and their perceptions of destinations. This study's focus on religious tourism provides new insights into how E-WOM affects this type of tourism, which

may differ from general tourism or nature tourism. For tourists to get more accurate and reliable information about religious tourism places in Surakarta through E-WOM. For Surakarta City, it can use E-WOM as an effective marketing strategy, utilizing positive reviews and testimonials to attract more tourists.

The Effect of City Branding on Interest in Visiting. This research shows that there is a positive and significant influence of City Branding on Interest in Visiting. Effective city branding increases people's interest in visiting religious tourism sites in Surakarta. This means that successful branding efforts make Surakarta more attractive to tourists as a religious tourism destination. Good branding helps shape a positive image of Surakarta as a city rich in religious and cultural values, which attracts tourists. This result shows how important narrative and identity are in promoting tourist destinations. A compelling story and a strong identity of Surakarta as a religious tourism center play a key role in attracting tourists. This result is in line with the literature that suggests that city branding can have a positive impact on visitation interest. For example, a study (Aulia & Yulianti, 2019) also found that city branding has an impact on brand experience and satisfaction. This study is unique because it focuses on the impact of city branding on religious tourism, which is a specific niche in paritourism and may have different dynamics from other types of tourism. Travelers will be better informed and inspired to visit Surakarta thanks to successful branding efforts. Surakarta City can use these results to develop more effective marketing strategies, targeting religious and cultural aspects that attract tourists.

Effect of E-WOM on Interest in Visiting. This study shows that there is a positive and significant influence of City Branding on Interest in Visiting. E-WOM, such as online reviews and recommendations on social media, plays an important role in increasing people's interest in visiting religious attractions in Surakarta. When someone reads a positive review, they are more likely to be interested in visiting the place. This result emphasizes the importance of online reputation for tourist destinations. Positive reviews and comments on the internet can directly increase a person's interest in visiting a place. This result is in line with the study (Purwanto & Kadi, 2021) which shows a significant effect of E-WOM on visiting decisions. This research is unique because it specializes in the influence of E-WOM on interest in visiting religious tourist attractions in Surakarta, which may have different dynamics compared to other types of tourism. For tourists, they will get better insights from E-WOM, making it easier for them to plan their visit. For Surakarta City to develop marketing strategies that utilize E-WOM, such as encouraging tourists to share their experiences online.

Effect of City Image on Interest in Visiting. This study shows that there is a positive and significant influence of City Image on Interest in Visiting. A positive city image increases people's interest in visiting religious tourism sites in Surakarta. A good city image, which includes perceptions about culture, safety, hospitality, and uniqueness, encourages people to visit. This result is in line with the literature that emphasizes the importance of city image in tourism. Research conducted by (Utomo et al., 2022) shows that city branding affects brand

experience and satisfaction which is closely related to city image. This research brings new insights into how city image particularly in Surakarta affects religious tourism interest, which may differ from other cities in Indonesia or the world. For Travelers, Travelers will be attracted to plan a visit based on positive perceptions of Surakarta, especially in terms of its cultural and religious richness. For Surakarta City, This finding can assist Surakarta in developing marketing and city development strategies that emphasize on enhancing and maintaining a positive image, especially in the religious tourism sector.'

The Influence of City Branding on Interest in Visiting through City Image. This research shows that City Branding has a positive and significant influence on the Interest in Visiting religious tourism in Surakarta through City Image. That is, the way Surakarta is promoted and perceived by the society as a whole influences tourists' interest to visit religious tourism places in Surakarta. The influence means that City Branding built through City Image plays an important role in attracting tourists to visit religious tourism destinations in Surakarta. This result is in line with the study (Handayani et al., 2022) pointing out that this study confirms the importance of City Branding in the context of religious tourism in Surakarta. It shows the relevance and sustainability of the city's marketing and promotion efforts to attract a specific tourist market segment, namely those who are interested in religious tourism. For religious tourists in Surakarta, the result of this study shows that they are influenced by city image and branding in choosing their tourist destination. Therefore, the effort to improve the city image and promotion of religious tourism in Surakarta becomes more important. For the government of Surakarta, this research provides a foundation to direct greater resources and marketing strategies towards strengthening the city's image and branding as an attractive religious tourism destination.

The Effect of E-WOM on Interest in Visiting through City Image. This study shows that E-WOM has a positive and significant influence on Interest in Visiting religious tourism in Surakarta through City Image. This means that reviews, testimonials and experiences shared electronically about religious tourism in Surakarta can influence people's interest in visiting these places. This influence means that in today's digital era, opinions and recommendations conveyed online by others have a major impact on people's perceptions and interest in religious tourism destinations. Positive reviews can encourage tourists' interest in visiting Surakarta as a religious tourism destination. These results are in line with the study (Rakhmawati et al., 2019). This study highlights the power of social media and online testimonials in influencing religious tourists' interest. It emphasizes the importance of presence and effective management on digital platforms to promote religious tourism destinations in Surakarta. For religious tourists in Surakarta, the results show that they can be influenced by online reviews and testimonials in choosing their religious tourism destination. The implication for the Surakarta City government is the importance of paying attention and responding to online reviews and comments to build a positive and attractive image for religious tourists.

4. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and discussion, it is found that City Branding has a positive and significant effect on City Image, City Branding plays an important role in shaping the positive image of a city. Effective branding efforts can create a strong and attractive perception of Surakarta, enhancing the city's reputation as a unique and attractive religious tourism destination. E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on City Image, through online reviews and talk, significantly influencing the image of Surakarta. Positive reviews and online conversations describing a satisfying experience in Surakarta can enhance the city's image in the eyes of potential visitors. City Branding has a positive and significant effect on Interest in Visiting, a strong city branding strategy increases interest in visiting. When Surakarta is introduced through attractive and creative branding, it attracts attention and increases the desire to visit, especially among tourists who are interested in religious and cultural aspects. E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Interest in Visiting, E-WOM has a direct impact on tourists' decision to visit Surakarta. Positive recommendations and reviews from previous visitors provide strong social validation, encouraging others to follow suit and visit religious attractions in Surakarta. City Image has a positive and significant effect on Interest in Visiting, A positive city image is directly related to increased interest in visiting. An attractive and inviting city image, especially related to the uniqueness of Surakarta religious tourism, makes the city a desirable destination for tourists. City Branding has a positive and significant effect on Visiting Interest mediated by City Image, City Branding built through City Image plays an important role in attracting tourists to visit religious tourism destinations in Surakarta. E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Interest in Visiting mediated by City Image, that in today's digital era, opinions and recommendations conveyed online by others have a major impact on perceptions and interest in visiting religious tourism in Surakarta.

As for the recommendations for further researchers, they should add other variables that can affect visiting interest such as adding destination image variables. Future researchers are expected to expand the scope of their research so that the data obtained is more varied. For further research, it is hoped that it can increase the number of respondents in the study so that the research is more perfect and accurate.

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