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МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО И НАУКАТА

Списание за наука

„Ново знание”

ISSN 2367-4598 (Online)

Академично издателство „Талант“

Висше училище по агробизнес и развитие на

регионите - Пловдив

New Knowledge

Journal of Science

ISSN 2367-4598 (Online)

Academic Publishing House “Talent”

University of Agribusiness and Rural Development -

Bulgaria

<http://science.uard.bg>

ONLINE VS OFFLINE: DOES CITY IMAGE MODERATING COMPARISON BETWEEN INFLUENCE PERCEIVED BLOG INFORMATION AND REFERENCE GROUP TOWARD TOURIST VISIT INTENTION?

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Abstract: This research aims to investigating the phenomenon of perceived blog information, reference group, image of a city, and tourists' intention to visit particular places. Perceived blog information is the online source, while the offline one is reference group. This is the first study comparing on online and offline information influence tourists' intention to visit particular places. Samples are obtained through an electronic questionnaire involving 177 respondents and analyzed by using PLS-SEM. The results reveal that perceived blog information and reference group significantly influence image of the city and the intention to visit tourism destination. Image of the city moderate the relationship between independent and dependent variables partially. The influence of perceived blog information is greater than the reference group. It is indicates that online information is more influential. The stakeholders of tourism sector can utilize blog in increasing the number of visitors.

Keywords: Blog; Reference Group; Visit Intention; City Image

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an important sector in earning foreign exchange for the country. In addition, tourism sector can improve the economy of a particular area. It is important for the stakeholders of tourism destinations to understand what aspects which can attract tourist to visit their places. Tourism is one of the human needs to unwind, so that this sector will continue to grow (Byrd, 2007). Nowadays tourism constantly develops by offering various exclusive packages of travel. Tourists have their own considerations in choosing a city which will be visited. Those considerations are taken from any information gotten through various

ways. There are some sources of information which are regarded as credible information by tourists. The first is through the closest family, friends or colleagues. It is commonly called as the reference group. The decision made by someone might be based on personal considerations, but there might be some influences from the people around in the process of making decision (Credé, Bashshur, & Niehorster, 2010), including in determining the destination of a vacation. Individuals depend on each other and try to generalize the concept of desire in the reference group (Hayakawa & Venieris, 2015). In addition to search for information directly through the reference group, information can also be obtained through internet, especially by visiting blogs. What is read by tourists in those blogs will influence their intention to visit tourism destinations (Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014).

Nowadays, numerous research on tourism promotion are often reviewed in some magazines, pamphlets, brochures and guidebook, but there are not many research focussing on the blog (Arfin, Salim, Aireen, Ibrahim, & Hassan, 2012). A research conducted by Wu & Lee (2012) shows that the trust and involvement in a blog can affect the intention to purchase, in the context of this paper, the desire to visit particular tourism destination. Currently, along with the development of information technology and public awareness in utilizing the internet, blog becomes one of the important sources to get information about tourism. Blogs might provide information about tourism destination through pictures, videos, and audios for tourists (Sharda & Ponnada, 2008). Blogs can describe how the circumstance of tourism destination, so that tourists can prepare what they need. Tourists usually prefer to trust thereviews from blogs rather than professionals or suggestion from travel agents. This is because blogs are able to provide objective, reliable, and credible information. Therefore, blog becomes an important and relevant media for tourists to get information (Akehurst, 2009). Many bloggers write positive stories in exploring tourism destination. It is influenced by seven aspects such as: local culture, personal experiences, shared experience, new things which are available in tourism destinations, serendipity, a reliable guide and the emotions associated with the memorable experience (Chandralal, Rindfleish, & Valenzuela, 2015).

Cultural differences between regions or countries might be an attractive aspects for tourists. Based on the phenomenon, many studies are conducted to discuss and examine how image of a city attracts tourists' intention to visit it. In a study conducted by Huang, Chen, & Lin (2013) image of a city affects tourists' intention to visit it. Image of a city which is also a tourist destination are formed by several factors, some of them are stimulus and the personal characteristics of the tourist (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Blogs and reference group are external sources of information for tourists. The previous studies have explained that novelty, understandability, and interest of blog content through blogs usage enjoyment affect the intention to visitthe blog (Chen et al., 2014). Someone who has finished reading the blog will have a perception of the city which will be visited. It is called as the image of a city. Unfortunately, it is not examined in the study which has been conducted. There are numerous studies examining the relation between the reference group and the intention to buy particular products, but there is only a few of studies which relate it with the intention to visit particular places.

A research conducted by Hsu (2006) indicates that the reference group influence tourists to visit Hong Kong, but how the perception—image of a city—is represented still could not be explained. This research is conducted in Yogyakarta, a Javanese cultural center which offering a historical tour. It is different from Hong Kong, which offers the panorama of a modern city. This study attempts to investigate how blog and reference group influence the image of a city and tourists' intention to visit tourism destinations because this topic have not been examined previously. In addition, there has never been a study comparing the influence of online and offline information in framing the image of a city towards the intention to visit the city. Reference group represents offline source of information, whereas blogs represents

online source of information. This paper will examine which is more influential, the offline or the online source of information.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Blog

Blog is a writing product which is published through the internet and consists of various contents including tourism content (Nardi, Bonnie A, Schiano, Diane J., Gumbrecht, Michelle, and Swartz, 2004). Nowadays, there are many bloggers who share their experiences of visiting tourism destinations. Those bloggers write a review as detailed as possible based on their own experiences. Blogs have many functions, one of which is for personal use (Yueh, Lin, & Lu, 2014) such as looking for information on tourism destinations. The information is important for tourists who want to visit tourism destination. The most commonly sources used are blogs which is written personally or based on bloggers' experience (No & Kim, 2015). Through blogs, tourists can assess the feasibility and appropriateness of the city which will be visited. There are numerous bloggers who write the positive sides and the negative sides of tourism destination in their reviews. Those reviews are based on their experiences during their visit in particular tourism destinations (Zehrer, Crofts, & Magnini, 2011). Positive or negative sides described in the blog can be interpreted differently by tourists, but if the blog offers the preventive measures as well, it can be valuable information for tourists who will visit those tourism destinations.

A research conducted by Mack, Blose, & Bing Pan (2008) shows that most tourists prefer to trust the information written in the blog, but others assume that they can not generalize what is written in the blog. A good blog will be easily understood by the readers. Besides, a good blog always uses a very communicative language. In urban society which is always connected to internet, blogs can be an important source of information for people before they plan or decide to visit particular tourism destinations (Yuan, Xu, Qian, & Li, 2015). A blog story written by a blogger contains information and experience. It reflects their views on the tourism destination described (Wenger, 2008). As an accessible information to the public, blog can determine the image of a tourism (Çakmak & Isaac, 2012). A research conducted by Tseng, Wu, Morrison, Zhang, & Chen (2015) supports the idea that their reviews of the conditions, transportation, food and hotel can provide positive image of tourism destinations. Based on the description, the hypotheses which can be developed are:

H1: Perceived blog information will significantly influence the image of a city

H2: Perceived blog information will significantly influence tourists' intention to visit a city

Image of a City

City is associated as a brand. A city should have some attractive aspects to attract tourists such as: an interesting appearance, a good security system, and friendly people (Winfield-Pfefferkorn, 2005). Desire to visit a tourism destination is influenced by several things, one of which is how tourist assess image of a city, surely it is based on perception. Perception owned by tourists towards a city can be called as image of a city. Yogyakarta is a historic city in Indonesia because it was once the capital of the Republic of Indonesia in times of war to defend the independence. On the other hand, Yogyakarta is a center in maintaining Javanese culture indicated by the Yogyakarta Palace as a symbol (Herliana, 2015; Supriyadi, Sudarwanto, & Werdiningsih, 2012). The historic buildings in the city and various cultural events are some attractive aspects which can represent a better image of Yogyakarta to the tourists who will visit it.

The existence of interesting activities in a tourism destination might also shape a good image of a city to attract tourists to visit it (Chalip, Green, & Hill, 2003). It shows that the

image of a city can influence tourists' intention to visit the city. In addition, a research conducted by Yang, Yuan, & Hu (2009) indicates that the image of tourism destinations can affect the intention to visit it. This indicates the importance of showing a positive image to all travelers, so that it can give a very good impression. The existence of festival can also be embedded as identity on the image of a city (Liu & Chen, 2007). The image of a city should represent the unique characteristics which are not owned by other cities. It will have a positive effect on tourists' intention to revisit the city. It means that the city is considered as an appropriate tourism destination that the tourists want to visit it again (Ekinici, Sirakaya-Turk, & Baloglu, 2007). Image of a city have to give a deep impression such as memorable experience, suitability and convenient in the city. There are two consequences that arise related to e-wom (Pourabedin & Migin, 2015). The first is that tourist who has ever visited a city and found out that the city is interesting will share his/her experience and recommend his/her colleagues or family to visit it. It is associated with the reference group. Secondly, tourists who want to revisit a city will write stories on blogs and develop positive comments in social media. The hypotheses which can be arranged are:

H3: Image of a city will significantly influence the intention to visit it

H4: Image of a city will significantly moderate the influence of perceived blog information towards the intention to visit the city

H5: Image of a city will significantly moderate the influence of reference group towards the intention to visit the city

Reference Group

A group of people who can be considered as a source of information in social groups can be categorized as a reference group (Hoenig, 2015). Family, neighbors, friends or office colleagues can be categorized as a reference group. In some studies, reference group influences purchasing decisions (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Jia, Wang, & Liu, 2007; Jiaqin Yang, He, & Lee, 2007). Based on these descriptions, it means that the process of making decisions is not only based on their own considerations but also the considerations of the reference group. Reference group becomes an important source of information because the informants are trusted people such as family. Reference group is one of the factors in normative assessment, but it has a significant effect on impulsive buying through normative assessment (Li & Liang, 2010). The existence of reference group who influences the purchasing decisions can provide benefits for companies (Amaldoss & Jain, 2010). There is a relationship between the reference group and the desire to travel to particular place (Hsu, 2006). Someone who has visited a city will tell to his/her family or friend whether it is exciting or not. Someone who feels satisfied during his/her visit to a city will tell positive image to his/her closest colleagues. It has become a reference in this study. Reference group can not be separated from their word of mouth (WOM) coming from the surrounding people. Satisfaction will encourage positive WOM (de Matos & Rossi, 2008; Van Vaerenbergh, Lariviere, & Vermeir, 2012). In the context of this study, a group of people around the tourists will certainly influence how tourists are familiar with tourist destinations which are ever visited by the reference group. Based on the explanation, hypotheses which can be developed are:

H6: Reference group will significantly influence image of a city

H7: Reference group will significantly influence tourists' intention to visit a city

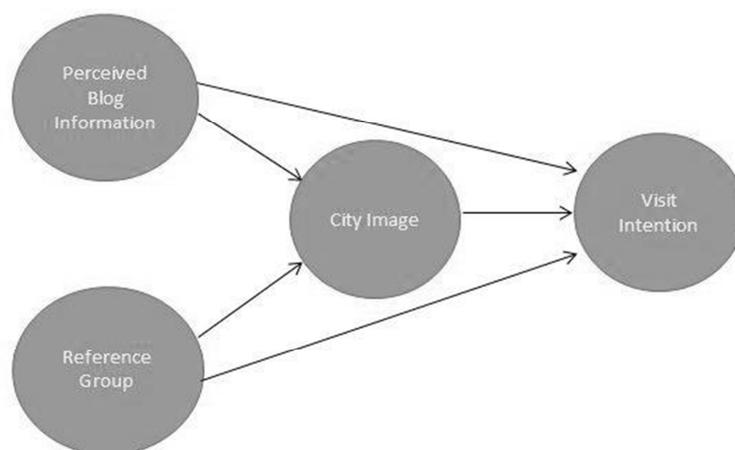


Fig. 1. Hypothesized Model

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample and Analysis

The study population is very broad, so sample is used to represent the population. Samples are collected through purposive random sampling method. The criterion is that the respondent has never visited Yogyakarta before. Respondents in this study are in the productive age range and have the intention to visit Yogyakarta. As a historic town, the cultural center of Java, and a famous tourism destination besides Bali, Yogyakarta is interesting to be explored and investigated. Samples are obtained through an electronic questionnaire involving 177 respondents. The respondents do not only answer the questions related to the research but also fill the data related to identity such as gender, age, and monthly income which will be processed in the descriptive statistics. This research employs PLS-SEM in analyzing the data. There are numerous studies of information systems, management, and marketing using PLS-SEM (Lowry & Gaskin, 2014).

Measurement

This study involves 177 respondents. Data of the study are analyzed using PLS-SEM. This study employs Likert scale in which the respondents are asked to give consent answer assessed in the range of 1-5. This study is composed of two independent variables, perceived blog information and reference group, whereas the moderating variable is the image of a city and the dependent variable is the intention to visit tourism destinations. Perceived blog information involves some indicators such as novelty, design and understandability (Chen et al., 2014; Colucci & Cho, 2014). Indicators of the image of a city can be obtained through some adoption. Those indicators are a historic building, the usefulness, and hospitality (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2016; Whang, Yong, & Ko, 2016). Reference group also employs some indicators such as informational, utilitarian, and expressive value (Hammerl, Dorner, Foscht, & Brandstätter, 2016; Lin & Chen, 2009). Indicators related to the intention to visit tourism destinations include the intention and the hope for a visit (Kim & Jun, 2016; Matzler, Strobl, Stokburger-Sauer, Bobovnick, & Bauer, 2016; Tan & Wu, 2015).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistic

Table 1. Respondent Descriptive Statistic

Sex	Male	86
	Female	91
Age	17-30	114
	30-40	40
	>40	23
Montly Income	<2.000.000	14
	2.000.000-5.000.000	78
	>5.000.000	85
Will visit to Yogyakarta in...	<3 Months	54
	3-6 Months	106
	6-12 Months	13
	> 1 year	4

Based on the data obtained, majority of respondents are aged under 30 years. It indicates that at this age, there are many information which can be obtained both through internet—blogs—and reference group. People who are under 30 years old have high curiosity that they appear the most as respondents. People in the age of 30-40 are considered as mature, such as parents who might want to spend their vacation with family and had never previously visited Yogyakarta. The lowest number of respondents goes to people who are above 40 years old because most of them have previously visited Yogyakarta. Based on the monthly income, the low number of respondents goes to the respondents who have monthly income less than IDR 2,000,000; whereas the highest number of the respondents belongs to the respondents whose income is more than IDR 2,000,000. On the other side, according to the time, most of respondents plan to visit Yogyakarta soon—in 3-6 months—, while there are only a small number of respondents who plans to visit Yogyakarta for a year.

Outer and Inner

Validity Test

The data collected are later tested by using SmartPLS. The first test performed is the validity and reliability test. To test the validity, this study refers to the value of the loading factor, if it is > 0.70 , the indicator is considered as valid data. In addition, to determine the validity of the study, the value of cross loading is used as well. If the value of cross loading on a construct variable is higher than the other variables, it indicates that the data are valid. So does the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. If it is > 0.50 , it indicates the validity of research data.

Based on Table 2, the cross loading of each construct variables is higher if it is compared to others. It shows that the data used in this study is valid. The entire value of loading factor is > 0.70 and AVE value of the variables is > 0.50 . It supports the idea that the data used in this study are valid. Testing the reliability of a study is important and necessary to do so that the data examined are reliable. The reliability test on this study is done by looking at the value of composite reliability (CR) and Cronbachs alpha. If the value of CR and Cronbachs alpha are > 0.70 then this indicates a reliable research data.

Table 2. Result of Loading Factor and Validity Test

Variable	Indicator	Blog	City Image	Reference	Visit	Loading Factor	AVE
City Image	M1.1	0,3019	0,8182	0,5494	0,4308	0,8182	0,6300
	M1.2	0,2850	0,7273	0,6307	0,3458	0,7273	
	M1.3	0,2569	0,8317	0,6823	0,3746	0,8317	
Blog	X1.1	0,7171	0,2757	0,265	0,3101	0,7171	0,6196
	X1.2	0,7797	0,1775	0,2126	0,2481	0,7797	
	X1.3	0,8583	0,3395	0,2538	0,4709	0,8583	
Reference group	X2.1	0,3352	0,5974	0,8312	0,4539	0,8312	0,686
	X2.2	0,2349	0,703	0,8156	0,3905	0,8156	
	X2.3	0,2053	0,6463	0,8378	0,3659	0,8378	
Visit Intention	Y1.1	0,4708	0,4852	0,5173	0,9508	0,9508	0,8765
	Y1.2	0,3865	0,4126	0,3806	0,9214	0,9214	

Table 3. Result of Reliability Test

Variable	CR	Cronbach Alpha
City Image	0,8358	0,7049
Blog	0,8294	0,7023
Reference group	0,8676	0,7713
Visit Intention	0,9342	0,8609

According to the Table 3, it is shown that the value of CR and Cronbach alpha of all variables are > 0.70 . It proves that the data in this study are reliable.

Hypotheses Testing

Data which have passed validity and reliability test and show the suitable results based on scientific principles will be tested again. This time, it will be hypothesis testing. The results of hypothesis testing in this study can be seen in Figure 2. Path coefficient of influence independent variables on the dependent variable showed in Table 4.

Table 4. Path Coefficient Independent to Dependent Variables

	Blog	City Image	Reference	Visit
Blog	0	0,1207	0	0,3232
City Image	0	0	0	0,1705
Reference	0	0,7478	0	0,2523
Visit	0	0	0	0

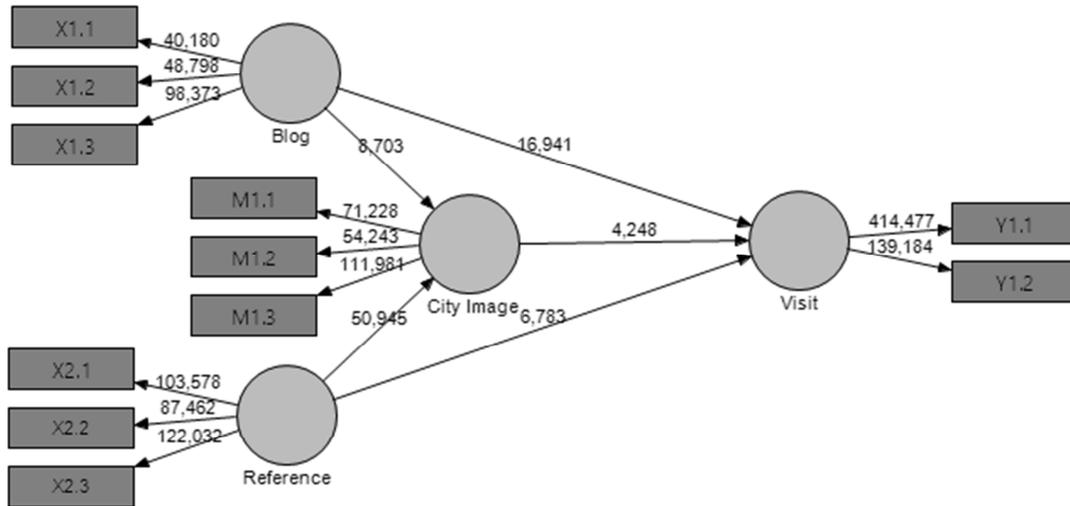


Fig. 2. Result of Hypotheses Testing

Figure 2 shows the results of hypothesis testing in this study. There are seven hypotheses tested. The first is that blog information will significantly influence the image of a city. The test results of this study support the hypothesis, the blog has a significant influence on the image of a city (β 0.12, $t = 8.703$). β positive value indicates a positive influence among blogs and image of a city. In addition if value of t is > 1.96 , it indicates a significant influence. Based on this result, someone who reads the blog with the corresponding indicator then it will affect the image of a city from reader. A research conducted by Leung, Law, & Lee (2011) supports this study. A website can be used as a benchmark in developing the image of a city. There are several factors which influence the image of tourism destination. They are primary and secondary sources. Besides, to form an image of tourism destination, tourists should go through the phase of pre and post visit (Beerli & Martin, 2004). In this study the image of a city constructed by the reader is secondary because it comes from external sources. It is categorized into the pre visit phase because the reader has never visited Yogyakarta.

The second hypothesis tests the influence of blogs towards the intention to visit the city. The research results confirm the hypothesis, that the blog might influence tourists' intention to visit a city (β 0.32, $t = 16.941$). Blog provides information which is previously unknown to the reader. A photo, video or narration expressed in the blog can invite the curiosity of the reader to visit the blog. The results are consistent with previous research. The results show that the content of the blog might influence one's desire to visit a tourism destination (Chen et al., 2014). The third hypothesis is the influence of the image of a city towards the intention to visit a city. The results show that the image of a city positively and significantly influence the intention to visit a city. The hypothesis is supported by the results of the study (β 0.1705, $t = 4.248$). Tourists' perception will determine intention at some time in the future to visit tourism destinations. A safe, comfortable, and attractive city will be more potential to attract tourists. This study is in line with (Phillips & Jang, 2007) who stated that the cognitive and affective image of tourism destination affect the desire to visit.

The fourth hypothesis tests whether the image of a city will significantly moderate the influence of blog information towards the intention to visit tourism destinations or not. The results of this study indicate that blog and the intention to visit tourism destination are significantly correlated. The blog has a significant influence on the image of a city. Image of a city significantly influences the intention to visit tourism destinations. The conclusions which

can be obtained is that the image of a city only moderate partially the influence of blog towards the intention to visit tourism destinations. Hence, the fourth hypothesis is rejected. The fifth hypothesis examines the influence of reference group towards the intention to visit tourism objects moderated by the image of a city. Based on the relationships contained in Figure 2, we can obtain the evidence that the reference group has a significant and positive effect on the image of the city. So does the image of the city which also has a significant and positive effect on the intention to visit tourism destinations. It shows partially moderation. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is rejected because the image of the city does not moderate fully but only moderate the relationships partially. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the reference group is the people trusted to create the perception of a tourism destination, but in reality, it only affects partially. The desire to visit a city is determined by other factors, not only the perception. At the time the relationship between independent and moderating variables are significant and the relation between moderating and dependent variables are significant as well, the moderating variable will moderate completely, but if the relationship between independent and dependent variables are also significant, the moderating variables moderate the relationships partially (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

The following discussion is the description of the sixth hypothesis about the relationship between the reference group and the image of a city. The results show a positive and significant correlation (β 0.74, $t = 50.945$). It shows that the recommendations given by reference group affects the image of a tourist destination. A high t value suggests that the reference group is highly trusted by the tourists. It is very logical because they are the ones who are considered as the closest person to them. The seventh hypothesis is about the relationship between reference group and the intention to visit tourism destination. This study shows that the relationship between both variables is positive and significant (β 0.2523, $t = 6.783$). It shows that the reference group might provide recommendations and description about the state of tourism destinations. Yet, by looking at the t value, the reference group is more dominant in shaping the perception of a destination when it is compared to the intention to visit it. It can be drawn an insight that the reference group is not able to describe visually and is only not limited to spoken words, so it will not motivate people to visit tourism destinations. The test results of R^2 on the image of a city shows the value of 0.63. It means that the perceived blog information and reference group affect by 63% in this model. In addition, the test result of R^2 on the dependent variable—the intention to visit tourism destination—shows the value of 0.354 which means that the image of a city influence by 35, 4% towards the intention to visit tourism destinations in this model.

This study supports the idea that visitors will give the assessment and write the review based on their experience. A small thing that is less fun might affects that assessment. The assessment is then written and published through the internet. It allows all people around the world to read it. The image of a city which becomes a tourism destination is determined by the impressions and experiences of tourists who have visited there. Implications arising from this study are that the stakeholders in tourism sector should provide a valuable thing for tourists. The strength of an impression will affect opinions written in one's personal blog. There are several stakeholders in Yogyakarta, namely governments, communities, and businesses that conduct their business in various sectors related to tourism. Governments can improve the facilities which are provided for tourists and maintain the existence of the culture. Businessman related to tourism can enhance the professionalism in running the business. Yogyakarta citizen can maintain a comfortable, settled, and a safe city life. It is consistent with the cultural characteristics of Java which are full of elegance, courtesy and calm.

CONCLUSION

This research has been carried out by conducting a series of statistical tests on seven hypotheses. There is a significant relationship between perceived blog information and reference group towards the image of a city. There is also a significant relationship among those two independent variables towards the intention to visit tourism destinations. Positive and significant effect is also shown by image of a city towards the intention to visit tourism destinations. However, this study answers that image of a city does not have a significant role in moderating the influence of perceived blog information and reference group towards the intention to visit tourism destinations.

Limitation of the Study

This study discusses the influence of perceived blog information and reference group towards the image of a city and its impact on the intention to visit tourism destinations. Although it has given new insight for the tourism sector in particular and for marketing management in general, there are some limitations that cannot be reached by this study. This paper examines the perceived information obtained from blogs, but there are electronic word of mouth (e-wom) on social media that are not included in this study. Future research could examine this variable and its influence toward the image of a city and intention to visit it separately or together with the perceived blog information and reference group. This study also focuses on the external aspects of the potential tourists—information from blogs and reference group—, whereas the internal aspects of the tourist such as personality, self-congruity, and motivation have not been examined yet. In future studies, it can be explored to add the new insight for the tourism sector.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Author would like to express gratitude to Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan) Ministry of Finance the Republic of Indonesia who has supported this research

Questionnaire Appendix

X1. Perceived Blog Information

- X1.1. I find new information in the blog
- X1.2. I easily understand the information in the blog
- X1.3. Interesting design of the blogs attract readers to read

X2. Reference Group

- X2.1. I get recommendations from my family / friends / neighbors / colleagues
- X2.2. Recommendation which I get from family / friends / neighbors / colleagues can be a valuable information
- X2.3. I feel equal when I can spend my vacation in the city which has been visited by my family / friends / neighbors / colleagues

M.1 Image of the City

- M1.1. There are many historic buildings in Yogyakarta
- M1.2. I can feel the benefit of visiting Yogyakarta
- M1.3. Yogyakarta citizens are friendly

Y. Intention to Visit Tourism Destination

- Y1.1. I hope that I will be able to visit Yogyakarta
- Y1.2. I will visit Yogyakarta soon

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