

**Investigating the impact of social media images' value, consumer engagement, and involvement on eWOM of a tourism destination: A transmittal mediation approach**

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**Abstract**

Tourism organizations use social media to promote their destinations and attract new customers. However, there is a challenge in how tourism organizations can choose or create social media images to successfully attract consumers' attention, induce their engagement with the destination, and motivate their eWOM behavior. This study aims to identify and test the direct and indirect factors related to social media images of tourism destinations that could predict eWOM. *Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) as an umbrella framework, we integrated Ducoffe's model and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), to study the role of social media destination images' features (entertainment, informativeness, irritation, credibility, personalization, and incentives) on consumer's perceived value and eWOM through consumer engagement and involvement. Using a survey research method, we collected data from 307 individuals and tested the proposed structural model using the PLS-SEM-based transmittal mediation approach. The findings supported the proposed relationships providing valuable theoretical and practical implications.*

**Keywords:** Destination images value, Social media, Customer engagement, Consumer involvement, eWOM, Ducoffe's model, Elaboration likelihood model (ELM)

## **Introduction**

Social media usage has grown significantly through mobile technologies and high-speed internet advancement. According to Datareportal, 4.66 billion individuals currently use the internet, while 4.20 billion are active in social media (Simon, 2021). Social media plays a significant role in individuals' daily life and has become the main computer intervened communication platform (Lee & Hong, 2016; Wahab et al., 2022). Social media emerges with opportunities and challenges (Souiden et al., 2019) because it creates value for all the actors involved, such as businesses, brands, consumers, and advertisers (Khan, 2022; Tsotsou, 2021a).

Tourism organizations and companies have embraced social media to communicate their offerings to prospective tourists and to influence their travel decisions (Wu et al., 2008). Tourism organizations generate content on social media (e.g., text, images, advertising, and videos) to attract, inform, and enhance tourists' engagement and, subsequently, stimulate intentions to visit their destinations (Haobin Ye et al., 2021). This, in turn, raises the question of the practicality and effectiveness of such social media activities. Marketers are always challenged to discover how to make their social media content valuable to their customers and, therefore, more appealing and successful. Due to their interactive nature, social media content assists tourism organizations in achieving various marketing goals, including raising consumers' awareness, increasing knowledge, developing their perceptions, and persuading them to visit their destinations. As a result, social media content has attracted significant attention from researchers and practitioners.

Previous research has examined the influence of social media content and its characteristics on consumer responses (Aghakhani et al., 2018; Dessart et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2018). Specifically, researchers have studied social media content characteristics such as vividness, activation, text length, context, timing (De Vries et al., 2012; Demmers et al.,

2020), language, linguistic style, subjectivity, and emotion valence (Munaro et al., 2021), to predict consumers' responses. However, key questions such as how firm-generated content (e.g., social media images) influences consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses remain unanswered. The role of content characteristics is critical because a consumer reaction to a product or price-related post will elicit different reactions than an informational or entertaining post (Rishika et al. 2013). Most importantly, different social media features may induce different cognitive and emotional processes. As Gavilanes et al. (2018) support, there is a "black box" of cognitive and affective intermediate mindset consumer responses to social media content. Thus, research is needed to uncover how social media content triggers consumers' evaluations and mental processes, and lead to behavioral outcomes.

Currently, social media research has examined the indirect effects of content characteristics such as informativeness, entertainment, and irritation proposed by Ducoffe (1995) on consumers' attitudes (Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Aydın, 2016; Hamouda, 2018; Logan et al., 2012; Shareef et al., 2019) and purchase intentions (Alalwan, 2018; Chetioui et al., 2021b; Lee & Hong, 2016; Martins et al., 2019), via consumers' perceived value (Brackett & Carr, 2001; Lee et al., 2017; Lv et al., 2022; Martins et al., 2019; Meents et al., 2020; Xu, 2006) (Table 1). However, although Ducoffe's model has been applied in web and social media advertising, it has not been used in examining the value of social media content (e.g. destination images posted by tourism organizations). Moreover, the majority of the literature is limited to examining only the mediating role of social media content value on consumer behavior (Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Aydın, 2016; Logan et al., 2012; Shareef et al., 2019; Van-Tien Dao et al., 2014) without considering the internal processes (cognitive and emotional) consumers are going through before reacting behaviorally.

Usually, consumers opt to act after intense cognitive and emotional processing by purchasing, repurchasing, or advocating for a product or brand (Brettel et al., 2015). To understand the internal processes consumers are going through due to a stimulus (e.g., social media images' value), scholars applied the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty, 1986). The ELM is a social psychology model explaining the process behind the processing of persuasive communications (Petty, 1986). For example, using ELM, Chu and Kim (2011) examined consumers' information processes and perceptions to predict their behavior. They demonstrated that consumers' attitude is critical in sharing knowledge about products and services through word of mouth. According to Munaro et al. (2021) and Gavilanes et al. (2018), ELM can elucidate [consumer involvement \(CI\) and consumer engagement \(CE\)](#) influences on attitude-behavior in social media. CE refers to consumers' voluntary resource investment in interactions with the brand that goes beyond transactions (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2019). While CI, as a motivator, reflects a consumer's perception of the content's relevance based on intrinsic needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1994). [We chose these two intervening variables \(CE and CI\) based on their decisive role on social media communications \(Gavilanes et al., 2018; de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Tsiotsou, 2021; Voorveld et al., 2018\). Research shows that CE and CI with the firm-generated social media content can play a pivotal role in its effectiveness \(Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Mao & Zhang, 2017; Tsiotsou, 2013\). Thus, studying CE and CI could shed light on how consumers process social media content, cognitively and emotionally, before responding behaviorally.](#) However, research on the simultaneous mediating role of CE and CI in firm-generated social media content is limited (Geng et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2017), justifying further investigations.

As social media has grown in popularity, consumer online content has become a popular eWOM behavior. It becomes compelling when they are read and trusted by a large

number of individuals (Rather, 2021b). eWOM refers to any information/content consumers share through online channels about goods and services (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). eWOM in social media attracted significant research attention to providing an understanding of what triggers it and how (Dwivedi et al., 2020). However, extant research disregards (Kankhuni & Ngwira, 2021) the characteristics and value of social media content (e.g., social media destination images) and their role in inducing indirectly eWOM. Furthermore, the majority of the literature studied attitudes toward the ad and purchase intentions as consumers' possible responses to social media content value (Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Aydın, 2016; Chetioui et al., 2021b; Hamouda, 2018; Lee & Hong, 2016; Logan et al., 2012; Martins et al., 2019; Shareef et al., 2019) disregarding eWOM behavior. Moreover, no previous study has linked social media content value (i.e. images) with the mediating mechanism of CE and CI, although these two concepts are very important in consumer behavior and tourism research. In line with the above deficiencies, there is a need for an integrative conceptual model to identify the most critical aspects of social media destination images' value and explain how they trigger consumer reactions in the form of CE and CI, leading to eWOM behavior.

Therefore, this study aims to enrich our understanding of eWOM behavior in tourism by considering both social media content (destination images) value and consumer characteristics. The objectives of the study are threefold: (a) to identify which social media destination image features (entertainment, informativeness, irritation, credibility, personalization, and incentives) contribute to building content value; (b) to examine the role of social media destination images value on eWOM; (c) to explore if CE and CI act as mediators in the relationship between social media destination images' value and eWOM. [Based on the stimulus-organism-response \(S-O-R\) model \(Mehrabian & Russell, 1974\), this study develops a conceptual integrative framework that examines the unique effects of social](#)

media destination image features (stimuli), and the role of consumer engagement and involvement (organism) on inducing eWOM behavior (response). We adopted Ducoffe's (1995) web advertising model and Abbasi et al. (2021)'s pop-up advertising model and extended them to social media destination images. Moreover, we integrated it with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984) to understand the internal mental processes consumers are going through that trigger eWOM behavior.

This study contributes to the extant literature as follows. First, it extends social media research by exploring the characteristics of effective image content (social media destination images) in relation to eWOM behavior. With the current knowledge and inconclusive understanding of Ducoffe's model, our study further applies and extends his model to social media content. Secondly, it enriches Ducoffe's model by integrating it with the ELM and provides an understanding of the underlying processes of value formation, CI, CE, and eWOM using the S-O-R framework. Third, it enriches the social media literature by identifying and studying eWOM behavior as another important outcome of content value that has been disregarded in the extant literature. Fourth, it delineates the role of CE and CI in social media content effectiveness and provides an understanding of their modus operandi in this context. Fifth, the results of our study provide a practical guide to tourism destination managers in developing effective destination images to inspire visitors to visit the targeted destinations.

The present study unfolds as follows. First, we present the review of the literature on social media and eWOM, our study's theoretical foundation, and its hypotheses. Then, we delineate the method and present the research results. Following, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications while we conclude with the limitations and future research directions.

## **Review of Literature on Social Media Content and eWOM**

Nowadays, social media is an important promotional and relational tool because its global coverage provides significant benefits. Social media is less expensive than traditional media (Zimmerman & Sahlin, 2010), it allows interactive communications (Thomas et al., 2021), it reaches larger audiences in a shorter time (Howard et al., 2019), and it is considered more democratic (Drury, 2008).

The effectiveness of social media as a promotional tool has attracted significant research attention (Dwivedi et al., 2017; Jung, 2017; Shareef et al., 2019). According to studies, consumer attitudes toward social media content are an important determining factor for their effectiveness (Alalwan, 2018) because attitudes and behaviors are inextricably linked. Consumers having a favorable attitude toward social media content respond positively, but consumers with a negative attitude respond negatively (Boateng & Okoe, 2015). Peters et al. (2013) proposed three dimensions of social media content: (1) content quality (e.g., vividness), domain (e.g., education, entertainment), and narrative; (2) content valence (emotions and tone); and (3) content volume. Sabate et al. (2014) investigated how the type of a post (picture, video, link, and length) influences its efficacy. In addition, research supports that the features of social media content influence consumers' responses. Features such as vividness, information, entertainment, and level of interactivity of firm-generated content drive CE (e.g., likes and comments) and eWOM (e.g., shares) (De Vries et al., 2012; Demmers et al., 2020; Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

Due to its importance in predicting consumer perceptions and reactions, social media attracted considerable research attention. Consumers' reactions to social media content, such as liking, sharing, or commenting, provide valuable feedback to firms (Demmers et al., 2020) in identifying the most critical aspects and improving their services or developing new ones (Tsiotsou, 2022b). Moreover, social media firm-generated content empowers consumers in

their decision-making process while inducing their engagement (Tsiotsou, 2022b). When consumers engage with social media content, the material gets shared across their social media networks. As a result, CE behaviors facilitate the influence of firm-generated content on the attitudes and behaviors of a larger audience (Aghakhani et al., 2018). Therefore, there is always an interest in the role and importance of social media firm-generated content in triggering consumers' attention, shaping their perceptions, and predicting their reactions.

Research also examined consumers' reactions to social media content in tourism. Tourists engage in social media before, during, and after a trip. Before a trip, tourists gather information from social media about tourism destinations and services. During their trip, they post content (text, videos, photos) of the destination and their experiences, and they also post content and submit their reviews/evaluations after a trip (Tsiotsou, 2019) to assist other consumers in their decisions (Tsiotsou, 2022a). Thus, social media can be used as an information source, an experience-sharing platform, and an e-WOM channel (Tsiotsou, 2022a), which is highly interactive, confirming communication exchanges (Ducoffe, 1996). eWOM has grown in importance in tourism research involving three major areas: the nature and characteristics of eWOM, the antecedents of eWOM, and the impact of eWOM (Chen & Law, 2016). However, research primarily focuses on eWOM outcomes, frequently disregarding its antecedents (Zhou et al., 2020). Motives, emotions, types of social media platforms (Zhou et al., 2020), personality traits (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011), cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement (Kanje et al., 2020) have been identified as antecedents of eWOM in tourism. Moreover, age, education level, income level, level of travel experience, and certain travel motivations differentiate eWOM usage, such as sharing, not sharing, browsing, and not browsing (Rong et al., 2012). However, the role of social media destination image features, value, CI, and CE have not been studied as direct or indirect antecedents of eWOM.



## Conceptual Foundation

### *Ducoffe's Model*

Based on this review of the literature, it is clear that a conceptual model addressing the most crucial features of social media content value is required (Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Murillo et al., 2016; Shareef et al., 2019). A model of this type should also explain how consumers' perceived firm-generated content value might predict eWOM via CE and CI in social media. A closer examination of the primary body of literature reveals the crucial impact of marketing communication characteristics on customer reactions to social media content (Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Murillo et al., 2016; Shareef et al., 2019; Van-Tien Dao et al., 2014).

A central tenet of advertising research is advertising value as perceived by consumers. Advertising value is defined as a consumer's "*subjective evaluation of the relative utility or worth of an advertisement*" (Ducoffe, 1995) and reflects a critical measure of advertising enactment (Dix et al., 2012). We adopt this term in the social media firm-generated content (e.g., destination images). Thus, we define social media content value as a consumer's *subjective evaluation of the relative utility or worth of social media content* (Ducoffe, 1995). According to Ducoffe (1995), informativeness, entertainment, and irritation are crucial drivers of consumers' advertising-related assessments (Ducoffe, 1995, 1996; Edwards et al., 2002). Many researchers built upon Ducoffe's model and extended it to ensure a robust view of behavior. For example, Brackett and Carr (2001) extended the original Ducoffe model by adding the credibility factor. Xu (2006) studied mobile advertising and extended it to include personalization as another factor affecting mobile ads' value. Ducoffe's model is also applied to study mobile ads' value (Lee, Cheng, et al., 2017; Lv et al., 2022; Martins et al., 2019; Meents et al., 2020) and social media advertising such as Facebook (Hamouda, 2018; Jiang et

al., 2022a), Twitter (Murillo et al., 2016), YouTube (Yang et al., 2017), and pop-up ads in online video games (Abbasi et al., 2021b; Abbasi, Rehman, et al., 2022; Hussain et al., 2021) (Table 1). However, Ducoffe's model has not been applied to firm-generated content such as destination images on social media. As a result, the six characteristics of Ducoffe's expanded model were investigated in the context of social media firm-generated content, such as destination images: entertainment, informativeness, irritation, creativity, incentives, and personalization.

*"Please insert Table 1 here."*

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

The ELM is regarded as a dual-process information processing hypothesis that narrates its influence on consumer behavioral reactions. According to Petty (1986), persuasion is an activity in which the achievement of influence mostly depends on how the recipient interprets the message. According to ELM theory, two channels affect consumer decisions (central and peripheral routes). The receiver does high-level cognitive processing on the message content via the central route. A higher level of personal relevance (e.g., personalization) leads to high elaboration motivation and higher consumer issue involvement; thus, consumers become inclined to adopt the central route of information processing.

While the ELM stresses people's motivation and capacity to build on a given message, it also highlights the role of message parts or cues in influencing message processing, classifying them as central vs. peripheral cues (Filieri et al., 2018). Thus, Ducoffe's antecedents (communication features) of value can be considered as cues (central or peripheral) to understand better their role in consumers' reactions to social media destination images in the current study. Available research supports such an approach. For example, Chen et al. (2018) investigated the internal development of users' intentions to continue using

mobile health applications while taking into account both central (service and information quality) and peripheral route elements (an app's reputation and institution assurance). In social media used in tourism, the information quality of social media (central route) and source credibility (peripheral route) have been found to influence the task-information fit and consumers' information adoption (Cyr et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2013). According to SanJosé-Cabezudo et al. (2009, p. 603), both the central and peripheral routes “act jointly and significantly to impact attitudes and intentions in individuals' behavior”. Therefore, this research examines the central and peripheral routes consumers use to evaluate social media images and their indirect role on CI, CE, and eWOM. Employing the ELM to analyze social media content such as destination images seems reasonable because message cues are fundamental pillars of the ELM that largely impact message processing and attitude formation (Segev & Fernandes, 2022). As a result, the ELM can provide theoretical guidance for classifying the social media content features (e.g., central and peripheral cues) and identifying the factors influencing eWOM.

### **Framework, Conceptual Model, and Study Hypotheses**

Using the S-O-R framework, the current study integrates Ducoffe's model with the ELM to provide an understanding of the role of the social media content features on inducing consumers' mental processes and behavioral reactions. The S-O-R model, first proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) and later modified by Jacoby (2002), demonstrates that external influences activate basic internal mechanisms of the individual, resulting in specific behavioral outcomes. Because customers' reactions are determined by how they process the social image content, we deem this framework appropriate for representing the theoretical framework for this study.

The “Stimulus” component of S-O-R refers to factors that evoke an individual's environmental or situational elements (Lee et al., 2011; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In our context, social media images features are the stimuli that affect customers' internal mental mechanisms (Gavilanes et al., 2018). Based on Ducoffe's model (1995), consumers assess the value of social media content based on its characteristics such as entertainment, informativeness, irritation, credibility, personalization, and incentives (Abbasi et al., 2021). Therefore, this study considers social media image features as stimuli triggering consumers' evaluations, and information processes (Figure 1).

The second element, "Organism," describes all internal mechanisms and structures in response to an external stimulus, including psychological emotions, perceptions, and thoughts (Bagozzi, 1986). Customers' internal processes convert stimuli into useful information, which aids in decision-making and determines how their behaviors (Jacoby, 2002; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Thus, if the features of the social media images are attractive, consumers will evaluate them positively. Based on ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984), consumers' will consider the importance and interest of social media images and process them, cognitively and emotionally, accordingly. Specifically, based on the required elaboration level, we consider informativeness, personalization, and incentives as central cues (**high elaboration**) while entertainment, irritation, and credibility as peripheral cues (**low elaboration**) of social media destination image processing. When using the central route, customers are involved in the deliberate assessment and critical examination of the stimulus merits presented in the message (e.g., informativeness and incentives of social media destination images). The peripheral route is more dependent on prompts/cues (e.g., attractiveness, entertainment, and credibility of social media destination images) than on the material itself because customers are less motivated to examine the social media content (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Thus, e-WOM will most likely be influenced by the level of cognitive information processing

(consumer involvement and engagement). Thus, consumers' assessment of the social image value, involvement, and engagement are considered the internal mechanisms that underlie their behavioral reactions. Because social media is a high-engagement context (Tsiotsou, 2021b), CE was included in our proposed model as one of the direct consumer reactions to social media content value (Alalwan, 2018; Sundar et al., 2014), influencing eWOM (Aghakhani et al., 2018). Furthermore, consumers are influenced by the extent to which social media content is considered interesting and important. This, in turn, prompts this study to investigate the critical function of CI in predicting eWOM (Dholakia, 1998).

The "Response" component of S-O-R describes how an individual's behavior is a result of internal mechanisms (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In our case, the behavioral outcome of consumers' internal mental processes is eWOM. eWOM behavior is significant for marketing because consumers usually trust the information provided by other consumers and adjust accordingly their purchase decisions (Litvin et al., 2008; Van, 2021). Thus, we propose that eWOM should also be considered a relevant measure of firm-generated social media destination image effectiveness. Following, we present our proposed conceptual model and hypotheses (Figure 1).

*"Please insert Figure 1 here."*

### ***The Antecedents of Social Media Destination Image Value***

#### ***Entertainment***

Entertainment refers to the social media content (image)'s ability to arouse aesthetic enjoyment (Ducoffe, 1996; Hussain et al., 2021). In many instances, entertainment is one of the key motives for consumers to follow and consume social media (Florenthal, 2019). The entertainment element of social media enriches the online experiences and adds value to the exploration. In today's world, social media is considered a vital platform to create awareness

and promote a product/service to a larger community in a minimum time (Zhang et al., 2022). As part of the way to immerse tourists in a destination, promotion in the form of images posted on social media by an organization is becoming an emergent way of online communication (Liu et al., 2020). Destination-related images attract more attention and carry more meaningful information. They are aesthetically appealing, trendy, entertaining, a form of escapism from unpleasant events, and more emotionally responsive (He et al., 2022; Joyner et al., 2018). **In line with ELM, the entertainment features of social media images can be used as peripheral cues consumers use to evaluate a post.** Therefore, we hypothesized that:  
*H1: Perceived entertainment positively influences social media destination images' value.*

### ***Informativeness***

Informativeness refers to the social media content (image)'s ability to provide information about a product or service (Ducoffe, 1996). Barger et al. (2016) stated that consumers follow social media to acquire information about new offerings and connect to people sharing similar interests. In particular, tourists also interact on social media to discuss and obtain information about destinations and products (Mkono & Tribe, 2017). Through social media, tourism organizations post images to provide destination-related information, which helps consumers gain value and make travel-related decisions (He et al., 2022). In a similar vein, Chung and Chen (2018) have also highlighted the importance of using tourism-related images carrying destination-related information (e.g., beauty, scenery, and cleanliness of a destination) and non-tourism-related images carrying general information about the destination (e.g., culture, people, safety, and quality of life) to attract tourists to visit a destination. **According to ELM, informative social media images should require high levels of elaboration and therefore, consumers use this feature as a central cue.** Hence, we posit that:  
*H2: Perceived informativeness positively influences social media destination images' value.*

### ***Irritation***

Irritation refers to the social media content (image)'s ability to create annoyance, confusion, and distraction (Ducoffe, 1996). Though irritation is unintentional, the impact could be very grave. Irritation is considered a demotivating factor that reduces the effectiveness of promotional content on social media to prospective consumers (Florenthal, 2019). Firm-generated content (e.g., images posted by tourist organizations on social media) may irritate consumers (Alalwan, 2018) if it is repetitive, irrelevant, stale, and targeted through indirect means, e.g., tagging users or reaching out through emails. Thus, [in line with the ELM](#), this content may hinder consumers [from further elaborating this information because it is not relevant or important to them](#). Hence, we propose that:

*H3: Perceived irritation negatively influences social media destination images' value.*

### ***Credibility***

Credibility refers to the social media content (image)'s reliability and truthfulness (Hussain et al., 2021). Prior studies reveal that social media is a reliable source of information as it carries truthful information in the form of ratings, user-generated content (e.g., blogs, images, and video logs), and reviews (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019; Sari et al., 2020). Tourist organizations also utilize social media to create firm-generated content (e.g., destination images carrying more visual appeal). They post destination images to entice tourists to engage with their destinations and to consider them valuable and trustworthy while influencing their decision to visit the destination (Adamiş & Pınarbaşı, 2022; Bire & Nugraha, 2022). [In line with ELM](#), [social media content credibility can be used as a peripheral cue consumers use to evaluate a post](#). Hence, we hypothesize that:

*H4: Perceived credibility positively influences social media destination images' value.*

### ***Personalization***

Personalization refers to the inclusion of information in social media content (image) that identifies or characterizes consumers (Abbasi et al., 2021b). **In line with ELM**, when it comes to personalization and social media, destination images are related to tourists' interests and preferences and contain consumer-oriented information fulfilling their needs (Serrano-Malebrán & Arenas-Gaitán, 2021). Social media allows organizations to interact with consumers through personalized communications (Shanahan et al., 2019). **Based on ELM**, personalized destination images on social media attract more attention for consumers and provide more opportunities to engage in social media offerings (**requiring high elaboration and using of central route of persuasion**), which in turn help consumers gather destination-related information for immediate opportunities (Jung & Heo, 2021; Ng et al., 2022). Thus, we propose that:

*H5: Perceived personalization positively influences social media destination image value.*

### ***Incentives***

Incentive-based social media content (image) refers to offering certain monetary and non-monetary rewards/benefits to consumers (Abbasi et al., 2021b). Social media content is effective when incentives are embedded with their posts and are relevant to consumers (Arora & Agarwal, 2019). **Based on ELM**, we expect that consumers will cognitively process more this feature of the social media context and use the central route. Recently, Zhang et al. (2021) suggested employing incentives to encourage sharing and adoption of review sites to determine destination performance. It has also been witnessed that promotional-based incentives change the end-users attitude, intentions, and consumer decision patterns (Wei et al., 2021). We also see many tourist organizations on social media



that generate content (e.g., destination images) offering incentives (e.g., couple discounts, complimentary breakfast, and discounted rates) upon visiting those destinations. Hence, we hypothesize that:

*H6: Perceived incentives positively influence social media destination images' value.*

### ***The Mediating Effect of CE on Social Media Destination Images***

In today's world, individuals spend countless hours scrolling and interacting through social media apps each day. Research shows that CE is a psychological state including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (e.g., behaviors such as clicking; Kim et al., 2017; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Rather & Hollebeek, 2021). For social media platforms, engagement with social media-generated content involves attention, interest and enjoyment, and participation (Mirbagheri & Najmi, 2019). **Thus, both routes of persuasion, the central and the peripheral, can be used as the ELM suggests.** When individuals are engaged in social media, they send and receive information. Social media engagement is the main action in virtual social channels leading to interactions among individuals around the globe. Through social connections on social media, consumers might contribute different forms of discussions, such as eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2011). A prior study revealed that attitude towards eWOM leads to eWOM engagement in digital media content (Gvili & Levy, 2018). Furthermore, in tourism, research confirmed that cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement in social media leads to eWOM behavior (Kanje et al., 2020). Chu et al. (2019) stated that the engagement dimension 'dedication' has a significant relationship with eWOM intention in We-Chat App. In general marketing, research has illustrated that CE significantly influences word of mouth (Abbas et al., 2018). However, CE with images posted on social media in relationship to eWOM and the mediating role of engagement between social media

destination image value and eWOM are yet to unfold. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H7: CE positively mediates the relationship between social media destination images' value and eWOM.*

### ***The Mediating Effect of CI on Social Media Images***

Involvement is a well-known concept in the realm of marketing, and it has received a great deal of attention and application in behavioral research fields such as social psychology and advertising (Dedeoğlu, 2019; Mao & Zhang, 2017; Tsiotsou, 2013). According to [ELM](#) research, involvement has a positive effect on several important outcomes, including marketing communications effectiveness in terms of product attitudes and purchase intention (Wu et al., 2008), attitude toward either traditional or internet advertising (Ko & Park, 2002), information processing and search behavior (Andrews et al., 1990), brand recall and recognition (Tsiotsou, 2013), ad clicks, product evaluation and eWOM (Mao & Zhang, 2017). [Based on ELM](#), research shows that with high involvement, consumers are more likely to invest more time and effort in disseminating product information to others (Dholakia, 1998). The importance of CI in the promotional message also applies to social media (Mao & Zhang, 2017). The interaction among consumers through the display of social media content (e.g., images) indicates their interest in the content. Thus, [according to ELM](#), the more involved they are in the social media destination images, the more likely they will react positively ([use of central route of persuasion](#)). Previous research has shown the moderating effect of CI between the sender's expertise, eWOM quality, the quantity of eWOM, and purchase intentions (Lin et al., 2013). However, the mediating role of CI between social media destination image value and eWOM has yet to be tested. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H8: CI positively mediates the relationship between social media destination images' value and eWOM.*

## **Method**

### ***Study Context***

The tourism industry plays a crucial role in the growth of the national economy. Pakistan is one of the emerging tourist countries, having numerous tourist destinations. The prominent tourist spots of Pakistan are Chitral, Swat, Kashmir, Murree, Gilgit-Baltistan, Neelum valleys, mountainous ranges, and historical and archaeological sites (Ashfaq et al., 2021). Pakistan has countless potential opportunities for tourists, such as Shandur traditional polo tournament, greeneries, climbing, trekking, trout fishing in the glacial water of Gilgit-Baltistan, paragliding, rocky attractions, wild boar hunting and crabbing in the Arabian Sea, jeep and camel safari in the Cholistan desert (Ashfaq et al., 2021; Tribune, 2019). Due to technological progressions, social media has become the most popular platform to expose tourists to destinations (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Tourism companies actively use social media marketing tools to enhance visitors' engagement, stimulate their intention to visit destinations, and boost company-customer relationships (Haobin Ye et al., 2021). Consumer opinions have become extra robust due to the expansion of social media and are read by several individuals (Rather, 2021b). There are several tourism pages and groups on social media that shape the tourists' visits to Pakistani destinations. These pages contain different content in the form of V-logs, blogs, and images that engage tourists in the destination.

### ***Questionnaire design***

We have employed the questionnaire survey to test the relationships under study. The measurement scales are adapted from previous studies: entertainment, informativeness,

irritation, and social media destination images value (Ducoffe, 1995, 1996; Martins et al., 2019), personalization (Kim & Han, 2014; Xu et al., 2008), credibility (Cui et al., 2012; Kim & Han, 2014; Martins et al., 2019), incentives (Kim & Han, 2014; Ünal et al., 2011), CE (Fehrer et al., 2018; Ting et al., 2020), consumer involvement (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Mittal, 1995) and eWOM (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2020) as shown in Appendix A. In March 2021, a pilot test was performed to examine the study's survey on different fronts (e.g. checking basic spelling and grammar, depth and breadth of constructs and their associated items, and internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha; Lodico et al., 2010) and establish the scales' content validity. In the pilot study, 130 tourists visiting a tourist destination after experiencing online tourism images on social media participated. We found no issues with the adapted scales. The final questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part included the demographic variables, and the second part contained 39 items measuring 10 study constructs on a five-point Likert scale [1= strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree].

### ***Sampling and Data Collection***

Next, to perform the PLS-SEM analysis, we estimated the minimum required sample size through the G\*power tool by Faul et al. (2007). Given the input parameters (i.e. effect size  $f^2 = 0.15$ ,  $\alpha$  err prob = 0.05, power = 0.95, number of predictors = 6) based on the study's model, The software generated 146 minimum sample size to conduct PLS-SEM analysis. We tried to collect more to increase the accuracy and generalizability of PLS-SEM estimations (Hair et al., 2021). The purposive sampling technique was applied because it is an effective technique for collecting data from a restricted number of people and for theory testing (Etikan et al., 2016; Rather et al., 2021). More importantly, it helps in identifying the relevant participants who can be the reliable source for providing information (e.g. tourists

who follow tourism-related social media pages and groups and view images carrying the destination relation information).

We approached the participants online and offline due to Covid-19 restrictions and to "allowing for an expansion in the scope of the explanatory or descriptive possibility of the study" (Hines, 2015, p. 29). Using a mixed mode approach, we gained a comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, we understood social media's qualities while exploring its embedding in diverse circumstances offline (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002). Baym (2009) advocates for multimodal approaches to understanding new media, emphasizing that these new technologies are not experienced in isolation but rather that human activities connect them in a complicated and unexpected way. Thus, we collected data for our study both online and offline.

The offline and online data collection procedures followed the same scrutiny process. For instance, in the online environment, we approached individuals following reputed Pakistani tourism pages on social media that post destination images. We posted a call for participation in our study on Pakistani tourism pages and asked them to respond to our questionnaire. The questionnaire was in a Google form to expedite the process and secure anonymity. The first part of the questionnaire included some screening questions. For instance, *are you able to answer the questionnaires in the English language?; Do you 'like and follow' tourism-related social media pages and groups? Have you ever visited any destination in Pakistan such as the Northern area, Naran-Kagan, Malamjaba, etc.?; Do social media images posted on designated pages/groups inspire you to visit a destination?* Those who answered 'yes' (132 subjects out of 145) to the above questions were eligible to respond to the questionnaire of the study.

When Covid-19 restrictions were eased and relaxed, we followed the same data collection procedure offline and selected the right participants at popular destinations.

Notably, we went to a few popular destination places, where the percentage of tourists is comparatively high compared to conventional places. To collect the offline data, we approached only those tourists who responded positively to our screening questions (175 subjects out of 185). We collected data from 330 respondents, whereas 307 responses were retained for further analysis—table 2 exhibits participants' demographic profiles.

Since we collected the data online and offline, the final data were further categorized into early responses (i.e. online data) and late responses (i.e. offline data) to test for non-response bias. Utilizing the guideline by Armstrong and Overton (1977), we compared the early responses vs. late responses through an independent t-test. The results showed no significant differences between the early vs. late responses on the study's constructs. Therefore, the non-response bias was not a concern in our study.

*"Please insert Table 2 here."*

### ***Common method bias (CMB)***

Since the data collection was mainly conducted in the settings of cross-sectional design, this may increase the chance of having a common method bias (CMB) issue. Hence, it is vital to examine the CMB concern. We applied two approaches involving (Harman's single-factor; Podsakoff et al., 2003) and (Full collinearity assessment using variance inflation factor (VIF); Kock, 2015). The findings showed that the total variance extracted from the single factor is 29.85%, which is lower than the critical value of 50%. Besides, we examined the VIF values and witnessed that all VIF values were lower than the threshold value of 3.3. Both the findings revealed that CMB is not an issue for this study.

### **Data analysis and results**

The model was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis with Smart-PLS v.3.3.3 software. It is a constructive approach that uses quantitative data analysis when different constructs are examined together; for both reflective and formative constructs (Hair et al., 2020). PLS-SEM requires neither large samples nor normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2012; Ringle et al., 2020). It is also suitable for dealing with hypothesized relationships and complex models (Rather et al., 2021). Thus, we used the PLS-SEM methodology in our current study.

### ***Measurement model assessment***

Running the Smart-PLS software, the reliability and validity of the reflective constructs can be weighed. The assessment is based on outer-loadings with values greater than 0.5 as the cut-off value (Abbasi et al., 2019; Chin, 2010) and a 0.7 cut-off value for CR and Cronbach's alpha. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must exceed the standard value of 0.5, and Heterotrait and Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) should be smaller than the 0.9 threshold (Hair et al., 2020; Hair et al., 2019). We also examined the discriminant validity using cross-loadings and found that cross-loadings were properly loaded on their designated constructs, see Table 5. Our findings fulfilled the given threshold criteria. Thus, our measurement model is valid and reliable (Tables 3-5).

*“Please insert Tables 3-5 here.”*

### ***Structural model assessment***

The second part is to evaluate the structural model. The analyses were carried out to assess the link between the latent variables. For the structural model estimation, the coefficient of the determination,  $R^2$ , and Stone–Geisser’s  $Q^2$  blindfolding cross-validated redundancy were utilized for measuring the predictive power through our predictor variables. The standard criteria for both are that their values must be larger than zero (Hair et al., 2020; Hair et al.,

2019), which reflects that endogenous variables are good enough to have explanatory power and predictive relevancy. Our findings indicate that  $R^2$  values are 0.580 and 0.383, respectively, and the Stone–Geisser’s ( $Q^2$ ) values are 0.436 and 0.221, respectively (Figure 2).

*"Please insert Figure 2 here."*

Prior studies suggested the bootstrapping resampling technique (5000 samples) to examine the hypotheses correlation in smartPLS (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019). Hence, we run the bootstrapping with a 307 sample size. Tables 4-6 illustrate the modeled associations' projected path coefficients, standard deviation, p-value, and T statistics. The findings established that entertainment ( $\beta = 0.175, p < 0.01$ ), informativeness ( $\beta = 0.170, p < 0.01$ ) credibility ( $\beta = 0.186, p < 0.01$ ) and personalization ( $\beta = 0.408, p < 0.01$ ) have a significant direct relationship with social media destination images value. Whereas, irritation ( $\beta = - 0.002, p > 0.05$ ) and incentives ( $\beta = 0.071, p > 0.05$ ) have shown an insignificant relationship. Hence, hypotheses H1, H2, H4, and H5 are accepted, while H3 and H6 are rejected (see Table 6).

*"Please insert Table 6 here."*

### ***Testing the Mediating Effects of CE and CI***

In this study, we followed Rungtusanatham et al. (2014) guidelines for developing the mediating hypotheses. In their seminal article, the authors stated two main approaches (segmentation and transmittal approach) to develop the mediating hypothesis and provided guidelines for testing accordingly. Within the transmittal approach, it is required to have a single mediating or indirect effect stating that the mediator (M) mediates the relationship between IV and DV without other hypotheses (e.g., IV to M, M to DV). We developed two mediating hypotheses based on the transmittal technique (H7 and H8). For testing, we applied





Jiang et al. (2022a) Jiang et al. (2022b) Jiang et al. (2022b) Jiang et al. (2022b) research focused on location-based messaging and Covid-19 advertising on social media (Meents et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2022). We provide evidence of the value of social media destination images resulting from their features, such as information, entertainment, personalization, and credibility.

However, our findings pertaining to the personalization element of the social media destination image value are in contrast with those of Kim and Han (2014), Arora and Agarwal (2019), and Hussain et al. (2022). This discrepancy may be due to the type of communication (advertisements) and the context used in their study (e.g., smartphone advertising, social media advertising, and Instagram sponsored advertising). More importantly, such advertisements may not cater to consumers' needs that they might be looking for in the products and services. However, our study primarily focused on the firm-generated content (e.g. destination images) posted on social media designated pages to promote a tourism destination. Hence social media destination images provide notable personalized information to tourists looking for information at a particular destination. Despite being contrary to some research findings, our results on the perceived personalized content having a positive effect on overall social media destination image value are in line with the findings of Hussain et al. (2021) in the context of online videogame-based pop-up advertising.

Interestingly, our findings indicate that perceived irritation and incentives do not influence consumers' social media destination image value. As far as irritation is concerned, consumers may not feel irritated by the content posted on social media (e.g., firm-generated images) because they do not feel "threatened" by this communication. Thus, irritation may be used as a peripheral cue which, in this case, did not play a significant role in forming consumers' attitudes and evaluations of the social media destination images. There is no

aggressive effort to persuade them to purchase (as the social media approach is different from advertising, which is more pushy and aggressive). Regarding the insignificant role of incentives, the findings can be justified by the lack of monetary benefits of social media images. Thus, our findings do not support prior investigations on the positive influence of incentives and the negative effect of irritation on the perceived social media content value (Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2022). Again, the type of communication (advertisements) used in their study may explain the discrepancies in the results of the two studies (Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2022).

Our study utilized the transmittal mediation technique to examine the indirect effect of consumer involvement and engagement between social media destination image value and eWOM, thereby expanding previous studies Chu et al. (2019), 2019; Kanje et al. (2020),2020; Kim et al. (2017); Mao and Zhang (2017). Although the direct relationship between CE and eWOM has been established, Chu et al. (2019) advocated that more research is needed to identify the mechanism that reinforces the relationship (Abbas et al., 2018; Kanje et al., 2020). Research has also established the direct association between CI and attitude/eWOM in service contexts (Mao & Zhang, 2017; Tsiotsou, 2013). We address these research calls by corroborating that CE and CI are crucial mediators between social media destination image value and eWOM behavior in the tourism destination context. Thus, the findings revealed that CE and CI in destination images mediate the relationship between social media destination image and eWOM. This result suggests that CE and CI in destination images are pivotal in generating eWOM with tourism destinations.

### ***Theoretical implications***

We used S-O-R as an umbrella framework for integrating Ducofee's model and the ELM to show that the images used in social media content elicit both roots of persuasion, central and peripheral, using the respective cues. Thus, the ELM informs Ducoffe's model

and how the social media images are processed by consumers using central and peripheral cues to form their evaluations (social media destination images value), induce CI and CE, and impact eWOM. Using the dual-process model (the ELM) for online consumer behavior as the background and drawing upon Ducoffee's model, the results of the study help to improve our understanding of different attributes that contribute to the effectiveness of social media content (destination images). The results of our study contribute to the understanding and application of Ducoffe's model and the ELM theory in social media content research. They advance previous studies that mainly focused on limited aspects of the message (Lee, Lee, et al., 2017) (Le et al., 2020) and outcomes such as attitude toward the content and purchase intentions. Thus, we show that the two traditional advertising models, Ducoffe's and the ELM, are also applicable in social media and can advance our knowledge and understanding in this context.

This study contributes toward applying firm-generated content (e.g., destination images) on social media destination-related pages to create value, promote destinations, and generate eWOM. In particular, we advanced the application of Ducoffe's model (i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021a; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022b; Meents et al., 2020) (i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021a; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022b; Meents et al., 2020) (i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021a; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al.,

2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022b; Meents et al., 2020)(i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021a; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022b; Meents et al., 2020)(i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021a; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022b; Meents et al., 2020)(i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021a; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022b; Meents et al., 2020)(i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021a; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022b; Meents et al., 2020)(i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021a; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022b; Meents et al., 2020)(i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021b; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022a; Meents et al., 2020)(i.e. previously studied in the context of pop-up ads, Vlogs, social media, instagram sponsored ads, Covid-19 advertising, and location-based messaging; Abbasi et al., 2021b; Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Alalwan, 2018; Arora & Agarwal, 2019;

Hussain et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022a; Meents et al., 2020), especially in the context of firm-generated content, to assess the value of social media destination images. The findings of our study indicate that, to a large degree, the extended Ducoffe's model can be applied in advertising and social media content such as destination images. Moreover, our study's results imply that the antecedents of Ducoffe's extended model of perceived communication value depend on the type of communication (social media advertising vs. social media images). Thus, social media images may be more effective because they do not irritate consumers and thus do not lead to their resistance to the message of this communication.

Our research supports the emerging tourism/marketing literature stipulating that social media-based relationship is a crucial factor in cultivating and developing robust relationship with customers (Abbasi, Rather, et al., 2022; Barreto, 2014; Demmers et al., 2020; Haobin Ye et al., 2021). While the pivotal role of social media in creating value has been underlined in the marketing and tourism literature (Khan, 2022; Rather et al., 2021; Willems et al., 2019), its role in generating CE, CI, and eWOM behavior is tenuous so far (Lin et al., 2021; Rather, 2021b). Our findings enrich the social media marketing literature by identifying key antecedents and outcomes of CE and CI. Moreover, we advance the notion of CI and CE mediating the relationship between consumers' value of social media images and eWOM behavior. Previous research (Tsiotsou, 2021b, 2022a) has shown the importance of CE in social media. Our study also illustrates its pivotal role for firms, particularly tourism firms/organizations. Our finding established that the value of tourism destination images posted on social media positively impacts CE and CI. In turn, this increased cognitive and emotional elaboration of the social media destination images induces eWOM. Our study adds to the available literature by considering a previously unexplored outcome, eWOM, which is

very important for generating demand and attracting new customers (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2020).

The study's findings supplement the theoretical realm of social media and relationship marketing by exposing the role of social media destination images in developing consumers' strong engagement and involvement with a tourism destination. Thus, the results contribute to CE and CI research by connecting the constructs to social media destination and eWOM, thus extending earlier studies (Jiang et al., 2022a; Molinillo et al., 2021)

We also contribute to the extant literature on social media marketing by exploring the transmittal-based mediating roles of CE and CI to elucidate how social media destination image value affects consumers' eWOM behavior. This matter has been unnoticed by Chu et al. (2019), Kanje et al. (2020), Kim et al. (2017), and Mao and Zhang (2017). In other words, we make a methodological contribution by utilizing the transmittal mediation approach suggested by Rungtusanatham et al. (2014) to theorize and test the mediating effects of CI and CE.

### ***Practical Implications***

Our study offers several valuable contributions that support social media managers and tourism destinations for better utilizing social media content, such as images of their products, services, and destinations. First, the findings suggest that social media content should be informative, entertaining, credible, and personalized to influence consumers' perceived value of the content (e.g., social media destination image value). While attracting the individuals toward the destination, the images posted on social media must have helpful content that not only assure tourism destination-related material but also entertains the virtual viewers. The destination images should inspire credibility to attract consumers' interest toward the promoted destination. Personalized social media content can be made more

attractive to prospective tourists. Thus, images of a particular destination are valuable for prospective visitors, as they provide information while depicting its location and scenery. While viewing the destination images on social media the potential travelers acquired values in terms of knowledge and pleasure, they indeed express a positive emotional response.

Furthermore, social media destination pages should provide authentic information in the form of images to increase CE. It might be possible if the social media content is consumer-oriented (Lin et al., 2021; Willems et al., 2019). Thus, personalized image posts on social media can provide more value to consumers. Tourism groups and pages on social media should not undermine the credibility element of social media posts and enhance the entertainment elements in their tourism-related posts. Therefore, providing exclusive places and images and creating a feeling of enjoyment to the viewers can fascinate other users towards the particular tourism page and group on social media but also cause the traveler's physical move to the destination (Lin et al., 2021; Utterson, 2003). The practitioners and industry should be reminded that image-based tour promotion on social media is a viable tool to attract more tourists to the destination. Our finding established that the tourism destination images posted on social media are apt for entertaining the viewers and delivering credible information to virtual tourists.

If social media images are perceived as valuable due to their enjoyment, knowledge, authenticity, and personalization, they undoubtedly, positively influence CE and CI in the tourism destinations promoted. When consumers acquire value from social media images posted on destination pages, they would engage and become more involved with the destination while engaging in positive eWOM. Thus, destination and marketing managers should consider the perceived value of images they post on social media to engage current and prospective customers and generate positive eWOM behavior. CE and CI can evade consumer churn contrary to competitive tourism/marketing actions (Khan, 2022; Kumar &



Pansari, 2016) and develop firm performance in tourism service industries (Kumar et al., 2019; Rather, 2021a). Persuading customers to engage in eWOM behavior can be beneficial for tourism destinations. For example, customer's recommendations to others, benefits relating to pleasant/novel experiences, and exchange/share their comments/posts about tourism services/products with others could be precious assets in developing firm performance (Chu et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2021; Rather et al., 2022).

### **Limitation and Future Research**

Our research is bound to several limitations that provide opportunities for future research. Within the social media marketing content, we focused on image value-promoting destinations in Pakistan. Future studies could replicate our research in other destinations by posting images on social media. Moreover, new research would be direly needed to explore the use of other types of content such as video logs (Vlogs) and short videos on TikTok to promote tourism destinations, which subsequently affect tourists' inspiration (Abbasi, Schultz, et al., 2022; Dai et al., 2022). This study focused on CE and CI as mediators between social media destination image value and eWOM. However, scholars may consider other mediators such as consumers' inspiration and moderators such as the type of social media (e.g., Facebook vs. Instagram) and gender. More importantly, we did not include the experiential aspect, especially the joyful experiences driven from the destination places to generate eWOM through CI and CE, which we recommend be considered in future work. Our study was limited to a developing economy (i.e., Pakistani destination places). Thus, our findings can be further extended and compared to developed nations to see the effectiveness of social media images in promoting destinations. Additionally, our study mainly centered on the unidimensional perspective of eWOM. Thus, future investigations may take a multi-

dimensional perspective in studying eWOM comprising opinion seeking, giving, and passing (Kanje et al., 2020).

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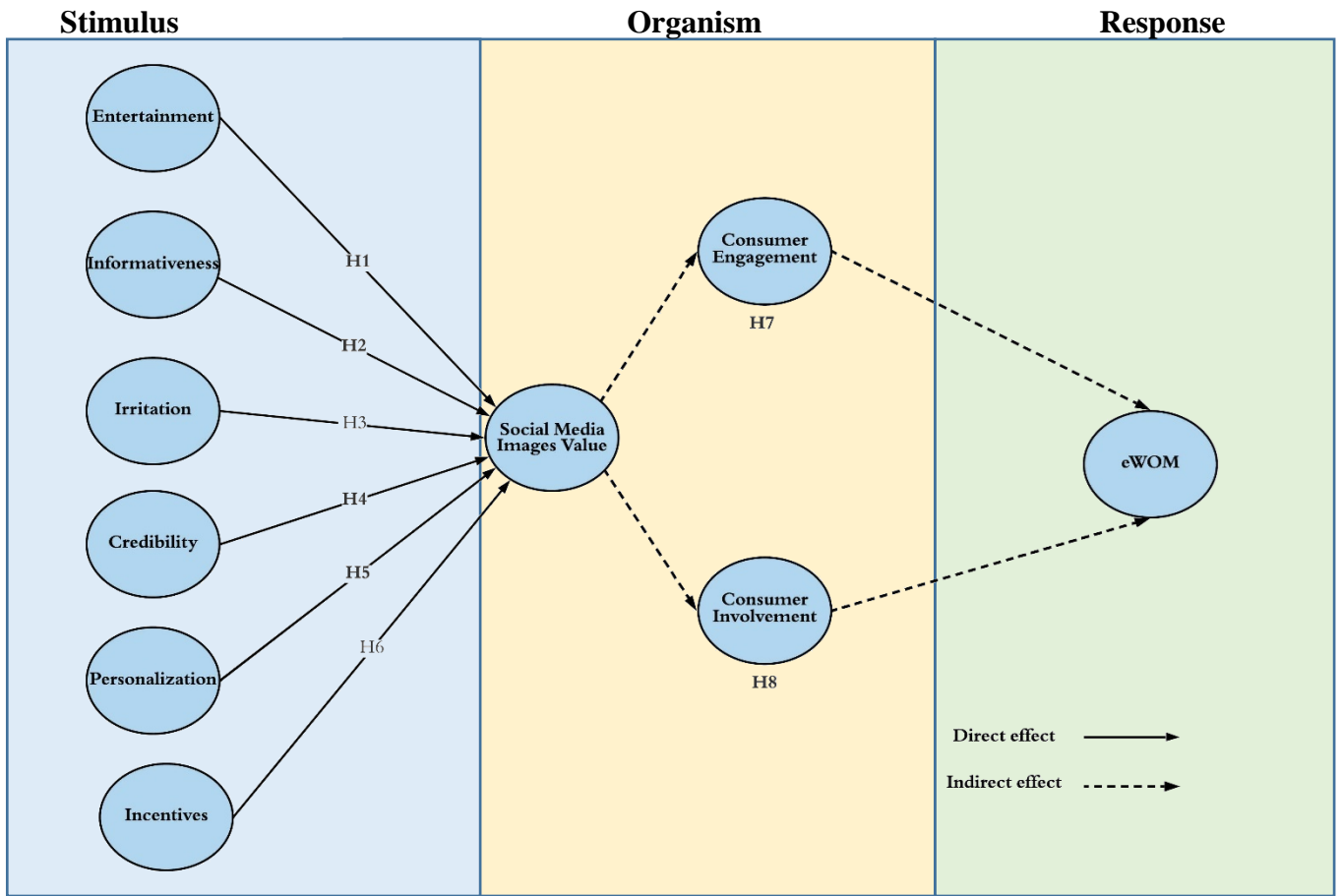
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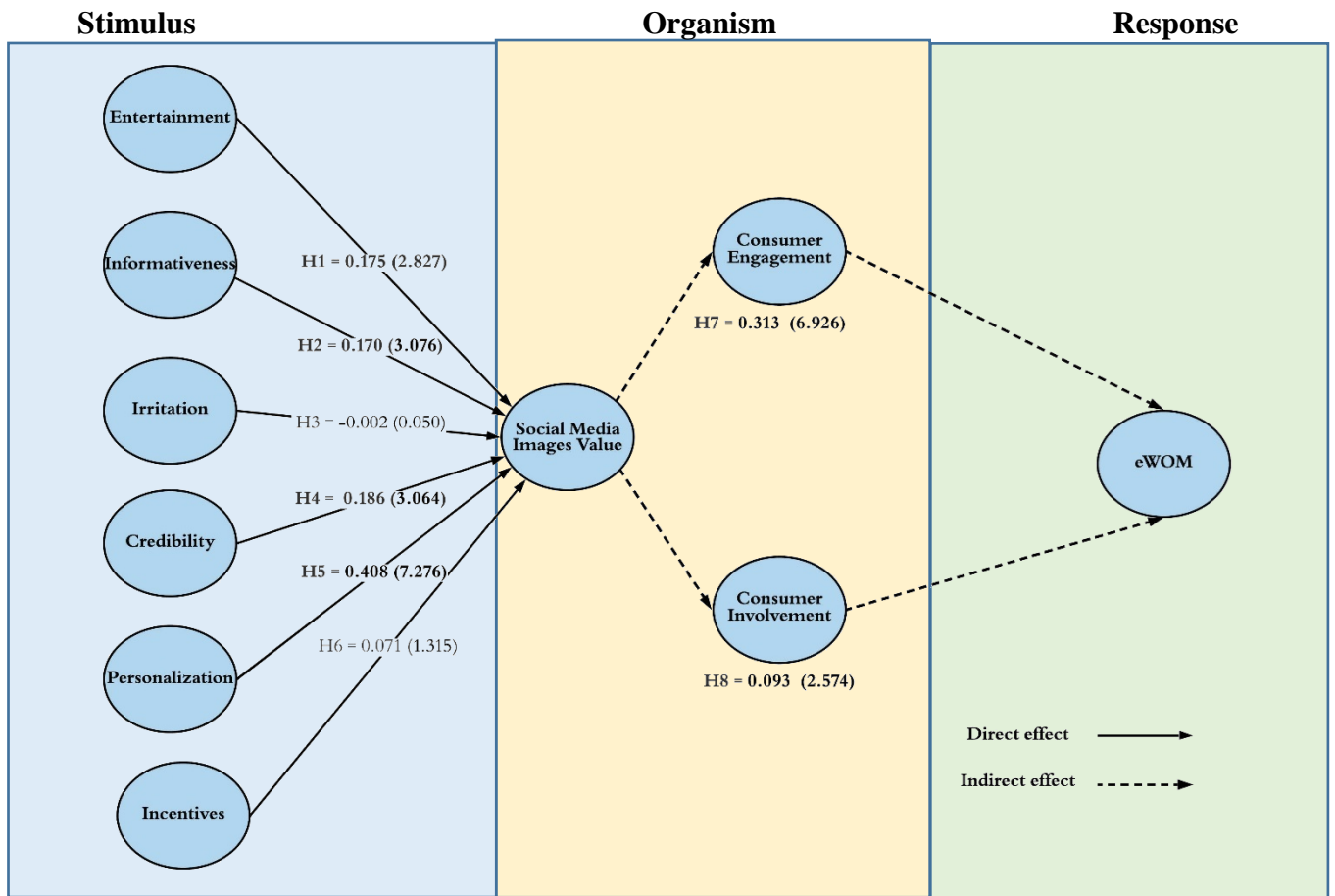
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**Figure 1:** A Conceptual Model of Social Media Images



**Figure 2:** A Structural Model of Social Media Images

**Table 1:** Main social media advertising value research

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Moderator (MO)/ Mediator (ME)</b>	<b>Social Media/Context</b>
Logan et al., 2012	Informativeness(+) Entertainment (+) (irritation-no impact)	Consumer attitudes	Advertising value (ME)	Facebook
Van-Tien Dao et al., 2014	Informativeness (+) Entertainment (+) Credibility (+)	Online purchase intentions	Advertising value (ME) Social media type (MO)	Facebook and YouTube
Lee and Hong, 2016	Informativeness (+) Creativity (+)	Purchase intentions	Customer empathy (ME)	Facebook
Murillo et al., 2016	Informativeness (+) Entertainment (+) Credibility (+)		Advertising value (ME)	Twitter
Aydin, 2016	Informativeness (+) Entertainment (+) Credibility (+) Irritation (ns)	Attitude toward the Ad	Advertising value (ME)	Comparison between social media ads and mobile ads
Hamouda, 2018	Informativeness (+) Entertainment (+) Credibility (+)	Attitude toward the Ad Consumer response	Advertising value (ME) Corporate reputation (MO)	Facebook/Tourism groups and pages
Alalwan, 2018	Informativeness (+) Interactivity (+) Perceived relevance(+)	Purchase intentions	Performance Expectancy (ME)	Social media in general
Shareef et al., 2019	Informativeness (+) Entertainment (+) Irritation (+)	Attitude toward the Ad	Advertising value (ME)	Facebook
Arora and Agarwal, 2019	Entertainment (+) Informativeness (+) Irritation (-) Credibility (+) Incentives (+) Personalization (ns)	Attitude toward the Ad	Advertising value (ME)	Facebook Instagram YouTube LinkedIn Twitter
Martins et al., 2019	Entertainment (+) Informativeness (+) Irritation (-) Credibility(+) Incentives (+)	Purchase intentions	Advertising value (ME) Flow experience (ME) Brand awareness (ME)	Mobile ads
Chetioui et al., 2021	Informativeness (+) Entertainment (ns) Credibility (+)	Purchase intentions	Advertising value (ME) eWOM (ME) Attitude toward the Ad (ME) Corporate reputation (MO)	Facebook
Our Study	Entertainment (+) Informativeness (+) Irritation (-) Credibility (+) Incentives (+) Personalization (+)	eWOM	Social Media Image Value (ME) Customer Engagement (ME)/ Customer Involvement ( ME)	Facebook pages of tourism organizations (destinations)

**Table 2: Overview of Respondents' Demographics**

Respondents' Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Total	307	100%
Gender		
Female	130	42
Male	177	58
Age		
18-25	150	48.86
26-32	82	26.7
33-39	45	14.66
40-46	20	6.52
47-53	10	3.26
Education		
High-school	15	5
Bachelor	153	49.8
Master	90	29.2
M-Phil and above	49	16
Social media use		
Facebook	50	16.3
Instagram	27	8.7
Twitter	10	3.3
All the above social media	220	71.7

**Table 3:** Item loadings, construct reliability and convergent validity

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
<b>Consumer Engagement</b>	CE1	0.63	0.86	0.90	0.65
	CE2	0.88			
	CE3	0.88			
	CE4	0.77			
	CE5	0.85			
<b>Consumer Involvement</b>	CI1	0.88	0.85	0.91	0.77
	CI2	0.86			
	CI3	0.89			
<b>Credibility</b>	CRED1	0.72	0.70	0.81	0.52
	CRED2	0.55			
	CRED3	0.75			
	CRED4	0.84			
<b>Entertainment</b>	ENT1	0.75	0.84	0.90	0.68
	ENT2	0.86			
	ENT3	0.82			
	ENT4	0.86			
<b>Incentives</b>	INC1	0.80	0.76	0.86	0.68
	INC2	0.82			
	INC3	0.85			
<b>Informativeness</b>	INF1	0.76	0.80	0.86	0.56
	INF2	0.71			
	INF3	0.83			
	INF4	0.70			
	INF5	0.72			
<b>Irritation</b>	IRR1	0.90	0.91	0.92	0.80
	IRR2	0.84			
	IRR3	0.95			
<b>Personalization</b>	PER1	0.72	0.79	0.86	0.61
	PER2	0.77			
	PER3	0.81			
	PER4	0.82			
<b>Perceived Value</b>	PV1	0.86	0.85	0.91	0.76
	PV2	0.89			
	PV3	0.88			
<b>eWOM</b>	eWOM1	0.74	0.84	0.89	0.61
	eWOM2	0.84			
	eWOM3	0.83			
	eWOM4	0.73			
	eWOM5	0.76			



**Table 4:** Discriminant Validity Results (HTMT Approach)

	<b>CE</b>	<b>CI</b>	<b>CRE</b>	<b>ENT</b>	<b>INC</b>	<b>INF</b>	<b>IRR</b>	<b>PV</b>	<b>PER</b>	<b>eWOM</b>
<b>CE</b>										
<b>CI</b>	0.639									
<b>CRE</b>	0.401	0.427								
<b>ENT</b>	0.439	0.427	0.682							
<b>INC</b>	0.660	0.412	0.357	0.465						
<b>INF</b>	0.629	0.487	0.843	0.678	0.444					
<b>IRR</b>	0.122	0.074	0.181	0.172	0.335	0.099				
<b>PV</b>	0.732	0.595	0.604	0.665	0.619	0.683	0.043			
<b>PER</b>	0.661	0.482	0.278	0.486	0.791	0.450	0.178	0.750		
<b>eWOM</b>	0.696	0.529	0.422	0.408	0.695	0.439	0.117	0.700	0.703	

eWOM = Electronic Word of Mouth, PER = Personalization, PV= Perceived Value, IRR = Irritation, INF = Informativeness, INC= Incentives, ENT= Entertainment, CRD = Credibility, CI = Consumer Involvement, CE = Consumer engagement.

**Table 5: Discriminant Validity (Cross-Loadings)**

	<b>Cred</b>	<b>Ent</b>	<b>Eng</b>	<b>Ewom</b>	<b>Inc</b>	<b>Inf</b>	<b>Invol</b>	<b>Irr</b>	<b>Per-val</b>	<b>Perso</b>
<b>CRED1</b>	0.72	0.44	0.14	0.19	0.21	0.43	0.25	0.08	0.32	0.19
<b>CRED2</b>	0.55	0.22	0.20	0.17	0.16	0.44	0.14	0.07	0.18	0.12
<b>CRED3</b>	0.75	0.40	0.25	0.35	0.23	0.44	0.25	-0.08	0.43	0.15
<b>CRED4</b>	0.84	0.48	0.30	0.24	0.16	0.53	0.32	0.17	0.43	0.17
<b>ENT1</b>	0.46	0.75	0.22	0.23	0.23	0.40	0.23	0.21	0.41	0.27
<b>ENT2</b>	0.41	0.86	0.25	0.21	0.28	0.48	0.25	0.07	0.48	0.32
<b>ENT3</b>	0.39	0.82	0.32	0.31	0.34	0.41	0.26	0.03	0.41	0.36
<b>ENT4</b>	0.54	0.86	0.45	0.37	0.39	0.56	0.45	0.10	0.56	0.41
<b>CETP1</b>	0.29	0.37	0.63	0.42	0.32	0.44	0.45	0.08	0.45	0.39
<b>CETP2</b>	0.28	0.35	0.88	0.47	0.44	0.49	0.45	0.03	0.54	0.44
<b>CETP3</b>	0.18	0.24	0.88	0.52	0.46	0.37	0.45	-0.08	0.47	0.42
<b>CETP4</b>	0.19	0.26	0.77	0.48	0.47	0.31	0.38	-0.15	0.46	0.48
<b>CETP5</b>	0.32	0.33	0.85	0.52	0.46	0.50	0.48	-0.06	0.58	0.50
<b>eWOM1</b>	0.21	0.26	0.45	0.74	0.54	0.23	0.30	-0.22	0.41	0.46
<b>eWOM2</b>	0.26	0.22	0.44	0.84	0.44	0.29	0.35	-0.10	0.47	0.41
<b>eWOM3</b>	0.30	0.25	0.46	0.84	0.45	0.32	0.36	-0.08	0.44	0.45
<b>eWOM4</b>	0.24	0.36	0.38	0.72	0.35	0.27	0.31	0.02	0.47	0.48
<b>eWOM5</b>	0.30	0.27	0.57	0.76	0.39	0.33	0.43	0.01	0.53	0.45
<b>INC1</b>	0.34	0.42	0.39	0.42	0.80	0.38	0.31	-0.19	0.42	0.46
<b>INC2</b>	0.13	0.23	0.40	0.43	0.82	0.20	0.23	-0.26	0.39	0.49
<b>INC3</b>	0.16	0.28	0.53	0.53	0.85	0.28	0.28	-0.23	0.42	0.56
<b>INF1</b>	0.51	0.49	0.41	0.39	0.26	0.76	0.37	0.03	0.46	0.38
<b>INF2</b>	0.38	0.34	0.36	0.15	0.27	0.71	0.21	-0.01	0.36	0.24
<b>INF3</b>	0.55	0.47	0.41	0.30	0.27	0.83	0.32	0.08	0.47	0.26
<b>INF4</b>	0.34	0.29	0.39	0.30	0.22	0.70	0.26	0.02	0.41	0.30
<b>INF5</b>	0.55	0.52	0.37	0.22	0.28	0.72	0.34	0.14	0.39	0.19
<b>CIV1</b>	0.32	0.32	0.46	0.42	0.32	0.37	0.88	-0.01	0.48	0.37
<b>CIV2</b>	0.34	0.32	0.49	0.40	0.25	0.39	0.86	0.10	0.45	0.32
<b>CIV3</b>	0.25	0.34	0.49	0.37	0.30	0.31	0.89	0.05	0.40	0.36
<b>IRR1</b>	0.03	0.07	-0.06	-0.09	-0.26	0.06	0.03	0.95	-0.03	-0.09
<b>IRR2</b>	0.11	0.16	-0.01	-0.05	-0.26	0.07	0.02	0.83	0.00	-0.11
<b>IRR3</b>	0.14	0.17	-0.02	-0.08	-0.25	0.07	0.09	0.89	-0.02	-0.18
<b>PV1</b>	0.40	0.50	0.51	0.49	0.51	0.53	0.36	-0.05	0.85	0.57
<b>PV2</b>	0.47	0.50	0.57	0.51	0.41	0.44	0.45	0.01	0.89	0.57
<b>PV3</b>	0.44	0.49	0.56	0.56	0.39	0.51	0.52	-0.04	0.88	0.51
<b>PER1</b>	0.24	0.29	0.57	0.61	0.65	0.41	0.36	-0.18	0.46	0.72
<b>PER2</b>	0.06	0.26	0.34	0.34	0.38	0.14	0.25	-0.15	0.39	0.77
<b>PER3</b>	0.11	0.30	0.33	0.41	0.50	0.23	0.30	-0.10	0.46	0.81
<b>PER4</b>	0.22	0.41	0.47	0.44	0.40	0.35	0.33	-0.04	0.61	0.82

**Note:** Cred-Credibility, Ent-Entertainment, Eng-Consumer Engagement, Ewom, Inc-Incentive, Inf-informativeness, Invol-Consumer Involvement, Irr-Irritation, Per-val-Perceived Value, Perso-Personalization

**Table 6:** Direct and indirect effects of social media images

Direct effects	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Q <sup>2</sup>	Results
<b>H1: Entertainment -&gt; Perceived Social Media Image Value</b>	0.175	0.171	0.062	2.827	<b>0.005</b>		<b>Supported</b>
<b>H2: Informativeness -&gt; Perceived Social Media Image Value</b>	0.170	0.170	0.055	3.076	<b>0.002</b>		<b>Supported</b>
<b>H3: Irritation -&gt; Perceived Social Media Image Value</b>	-0.002	0.000	0.046	0.050	0.960		Not-supported
<b>H4: Credibility -&gt; Perceived Social Media Image Value</b>	0.186	0.188	0.061	3.064	<b>0.002</b>		<b>Supported</b>
<b>H5: Personalization -&gt; Perceived Social Media Image Value</b>	0.408	0.411	0.056	7.276	<b>0.000</b>		<b>Supported</b>
<b>H6: Incentives -&gt; Perceived Social Media Image Value</b>	0.071	0.072	0.054	1.315	0.189	0.436	Not-supported

Indirect effect results	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Q <sup>2</sup>	Result
<b>H7: Perceived Social Media Image Value -&gt; Consumer Engagement -&gt; eWOM</b>	0.313	0.315	0.045	6.926	<b>0.000</b>		<b>Supported</b>
<b>H8: Perceived Social Media Image Value -&gt; Consumer Involvement -&gt; eWOM</b>	0.093	0.095	0.036	2.574	<b>0.010</b>	0.221	<b>Supported</b>

## **Appendix A: The study's questionnaire**

### **Entertainment**

- ENT1: I feel that destination images posted on social media are interesting.
- ENT2: I feel that destination images posted on social media are enjoyable.
- ENT3: I feel that destination images posted on social media are entertaining.
- ENT4: I feel that destination images posted on social media are pleasing.

### **Informativeness**

- INF1: Destination images posted on social media provide timely information.
- INF2: Destination images posted on social media supply relevant information.
- INF3: Destination images posted on social media are a good source of information.
- INF4: Destination images posted on social media are contemporary.
- INF5: Destination images posted on social media are relevant.

### **Credibility**

- CRED1: I feel that destination images posted on social media are convincing.
- CRED2: I feel that destination images posted on social media are believable.
- CRED3: I feel that destination images posted on social media are credible.
- CRED4: I feel that destination images posted on social media are a good reference for visiting it.

### **Irritation**

- IRR1: I feel that destination images posted on social media are irritating.
- IRR2: I feel that destination images posted on social media are annoying.
- IRR3: I feel that destination images posted on social media are intrusive.

### **Personalization**

- PER1: I feel that destination images posted on social media fit me.
- PER2: I feel that destination images posted on social media are personalized.
- PER3: I feel that destination images posted on social media are personalized for my usage.
- PER4: I feel that destination images posted on social media are delivered in a timely way.

### **Incentives**

- INC1: I am satisfied with the offer/rewards (group or couple discount) on destination images posted on social media
- INC2: I take action to get the rewards (group or couple discount) offered on destination images posted on social media
- INC3: I respond to the destination images posted on social media to obtain incentives (group or couple discounts).

### **Perceived value**

- PV1: I feel that destination images posted on social media are useful.
- PV2: I feel that destination images posted on social media are valuable.
- PV3: I feel that destination images posted on social media are important.

### **Customer engagement**

- CETP1: I like to know more about the tourism destinations posted on social media
- CETP2: I pay a lot of attention to anything on the tourism destination on social media
- CETP3: I keep up with things related to tourism destinations on social media
- CETP4: I spend a lot of discretionary (optional) time viewing tourism destinations on social media
- CETP5: I am passionate about tourism destinations posted on social media

### **Consumer Involvement with Destination Images**

- CIVA1: The destination images posted on social media are important to me.
- CIV2: I have a strong interest in destination images posted on social media
- CIV3: The destination images posted on social media matter to me.

**eWOM**

eWOM1: I am excited to post and share on social media about tourism destinations I am interested in.

eWOM2: I have written positive comments about tourism destinations on social media.

eWOM3: I have posted positive reviews about tourism destinations on social media.

eWOM4: I have uploaded tourism destination images on social media

eWOM5: I became a follower of social media tourism destination-related pages/groups to share content.