

ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH TOWARD THE CHOICE OF TOURISM PRODUCTS: A RECOVERY STRATEGY FROM COVID – 19 IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper is to test the impacts of electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) toward the choice of tourism products in Tanzania and proposes a recovery strategy from COVID – 19. Structured questionnaire was administered to 101 respondents selected through a simple random sampling technique, Data collected were focused on social media usage extent, e-WOM tool used when choosing the site, willingness to share their experience, posting on their experience and when they use e-WOM tools mostly as source of travel ideas, when they planning tour, during the tour and after tour. Quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics presented through tables and figures. The results show the big numbers of tourists are willing to share the positive experience. And also, 93% of tourists used their social media mostly after they have visited the site and the extent of usage are on Instagram followed by WhatsApp which raise roadmap on tourist destination on how could they market. The research has confirmed that e-WOM shares direct positive and significant influence on visitors' interest, though e-WOM also has indirect positive and significant influence on tourist interest through destination image and trust. A general conclusion is that; tourism destination should develop an integral way to reach customers as the technology influence the change on consumer's behaviors which can be carried out by improving the quality of services for tourists. Furthermore, better promotion can be carried out by optimizing the use of Websites and social media such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook as promotional media.

Keywords: COVID – 19, e- WOM, Tourism, Tourism Product

INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of the internet, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has become an important factor affecting consumers' product evaluation, especially in a multidisciplinary field such as tourism. While making decisions regarding travel and vacation planning, potential tourists search for information of tourism products and services in order to reduce uncertainty and perceived risks (Dina, Ribarić, & Farkaš, 2016).

The e-WOM phenomenon is considered as an evolution of traditional interpersonal communication to the new generation of cyberspace. The advancement of information technology allows consumers to seek sufficient information they need related to a certain product before making a purchase (Semuel & Lianto, 2014).

E-WOM has the ability to influence tourists' purchase decisions, including tourists' interest in visiting a certain tourist destination. E-WOM also disseminates the quality of certain tourist destinations in the form of positive destination images, which eventually trigger stronger trust. E-WOM improves the image of certain tourist destinations and it affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty. More frequent and more positive e-WOM shared by consumers on social media leads to a greater level of satisfaction and customer loyalty (Setiawan et al., 2014).

More and more tourists like writing opinions on their travel experiences on the internet, make blogs, which can be viewed and accessed from anywhere (Soeid, Kadir & Masepe, 2020). This is done because they are satisfied with the tourist product and service or either very dissatisfied. The

information incorporated in such online e-WOM may be used as a resource for other tourists as they plan their trips. Tourists provide their travel-related experiences on online social media platforms to share their journey experiences with others. For instance, they post their writing on blogs; upload photos and images through online social media communication sites like Instagram, Twitter and Facebook in order to share their journey through e-WOM (Gunawan, Najib & Setiawati, 2020)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In tourism-based studies, information regarding tourist journey and their experiences that are been posted on the internet is referred to as e-WOM, which also acts as a kind of information and communication to other travelers (Chen & Law, 2016). In reality, the Internet today has surpassed all other media as the primary source of tourist information for travelers. Tourists prefer to read travel stories from other travelers to better understand the situation at a tourist destination (Prayogo at al., 2016). Therefore, e-WOM may impact the travel decisions of those who are planning to travel. Tourists often use social networking sites to get information on flights, hotels, and, most importantly, place to visit and explore (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Although commercial sources of information, such as brochures and magazines, may be important for developing awareness, WOM communication sources strongly influence actual adoption of innovations and destination image formation (Beerli & Martin, 2004).

E-WOM has two dimensions, consisting of personal and commercial communication setting. Because the power of e-WOM communication has been studied for over 40 years, the importance of e-WOM for marketers is obvious, as researchers have shifted the focus of their studies from traditional WOM to e-WOM. Many studies have examined each dimension of traditional WOM and e-WOM's effects on non-service products; however, only few of these studies focused on tourism and hospitality products. Furthermore, there is no study that have examined integrated effects of traditional WOM and e-WOM toward the choice of tourism products and tourist destination image at Lake Duluti Forest Reserves. The objectives of this research were to assess effects of electronic Word of Mouth toward the choice of tourism products, to identify the E-Word of Mouth tools when choosing the site, to assess E-Word of Mouth tools mostly used as source of travel ideas when planning tour, during the tour and after tour, and to evaluate the willingness of tourists to share their understanding through E-Word of Mouth tools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

In the social environment, there is an exchange of tangible or intangible activities between at least two people including rewards or punishments. This theory, proposed by Homans (1958), explains the reasons behind social interaction. It is widely used to explain why individuals share information and opinions and involve in discussions to generate eWOM. It is used in the eWOM literature to find out the types of

contributors and the underlying motives for generating and leveraging social capital using online reviews (Munzel & Kunz, 2014). Cheung and Lee (2012) make use of it in investigating the factors that drive consumers to spread eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms.

SOCIAL CONTAGION THEORY

The social contagion theory provides foundation for the spread and diffusion of eWOM among consumers. Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels (2009) use it to explain the formation and growth of online communities using Facebook. They explain that eWOM referrals have substantially longer carryover effects than traditional marketing actions and produce substantially higher response elasticities. Libai, Muller, and Peres (2013) use contagion theory to discuss the role of acceleration and expansion in the context of seeding programs, which are used by marketers to spread information about a new product or idea.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

The effects of intergraded word-of-mouth (WOM), both traditional and electronic, on tourism products are yet to fully investigate. The current study aim to assess the effects of differences between traditional WOM and between positive and negative WOM on destination image, Noel Yee-Man Siu,2016.Result of the study indicate that traditional Word of Mouth had a greater influence on destination image compared to electronic personal WOM and commercial WOM .However negative WOM exerted less influence on destinations image compared to positive WOM while negative electronic WOM

had a greater influence on destination image compared to negative traditional e-WOM. According to Fitri Aprilia, Andrian Kasumawat, (2021) contribution made by tourism sector is strategic enough to provide job opportunities and increase the state's foreign exchange, which will follow by development in the information and technology sectors. The population of this study includes all domestic tourists who visit the Batu city Angkut museum over 17 years of age and who have obtained information via e-WOM from other tourist. Based on the measurements, a minimum of 60 respondents must select as the research sample. Non-probability sampling techniques used to select sample. Social media had used by companies to provide information, services and products related to tourism, and it was utilized by tourists to share information about their traveling experience. Therefore, improving the number of visits requires the management of certain tourism services companies to apply proper marketing strategy and provide various advantages and best services quality to attract more visitors and give satisfaction to visitors.

In order to meet challenges of modern society, marketing experts should recognize the benefits of the concept of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Purpose taking into account a number of benefits and advantages of using e-WOM and determining the role and importance of e-WOM in the travel decision-making process. Methodology the paper based on theoretical and empirical where by theoretical part describes the key concepts empirical research conducted on a convenience sample of 129 citizens. Research instrument was adapted from the previous research (Salilvand et Al 2011;

Bronner and de Houg 2011; Gruen et Al 2006; Lopez and Sicilia 2014; Xa 2014). Survey conducted in May 2015 using 22 item structured written questionnaire completed by the respondents descriptive and cluster analysis were used to obtain the goals. Findings and results showed the effects of e-WOM are only indicator of the value of products taking into account their independence and objectivity and the fact that they are not paid or purchased fabricated/falsified. In addition, this paper it contributes that e-WOM means an objective presentation of product and services at minimum cost; often with a biggest effect on the sales and competitiveness in comparison to other forms of advertising. According to (Mehrani Adl, 2016), the purpose of this paper is to investigate how electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), attitude, and city image affect tourists' intention to visit a tourism city. Drawing from the tourism management literature, the authors hypothesize and test the relationships among e-WOM, attitude, overall city image, and visit intentions. Structural equation modeling conducted to test the proposed relationships among the variable. The empirical results suggested that e-WOM has a positive and significant influence on tourists' attitude and overall city image. Further, e-WOM, attitude toward city, and overall city image were significant determinants of visit intentions. The paper contributes to understand the relationship between four constructs of e-WOM, attitude, and overall city image and visit intentions, tested in city tourism in the context of a tourism city.

Results imply that destination marketing organizations and tourism service providers should understand the

importance of the internal branding processes among residents, and should incorporate them into their destination branding strategy according to Hyungsuk Choo, Sun-Young Park, James F Petrick 2011. According to Christina Geng-Qing Chi and Hailin Qu, 2008 the objective of this study was to offer an integrated approach to understanding destination loyalty by examining the theoretical and empirical evidence on the causal relationships among destination image, tourist attribute and overall satisfaction, and destination loyalty. A research model proposed in which seven hypotheses were developed. The empirical data collected in a major tourism destination in the state of Arkansas—Eureka Springs. 345 questionnaires returned and the data analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results supported the proposed destination loyalty model: (1) destination image directly influenced attribute satisfaction; (2) destination image and attribute satisfaction were both direct antecedents of overall satisfaction; and (3) overall satisfaction and attribute satisfaction in turn had direct and positive impact on destination loyalty. The theoretical and managerial implications drawn based on the study findings, and recommendations for future researchers made.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

There were various types of research designs namely, case study, survey and experimental design. The researcher survey design was conducted in research whereby the researcher went to a case of Lake Duluti Forest Reserve and assess on the impact of electronic word-of-mouth

towards the choice of tourism product and this means researcher meet with respondent who was supposed to answer questions asked by the researcher.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SAMPLE SIZE

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Several sampling procedures was used such as random sampling and purposive sampling and the determination of sample size was involving some steps and firstly, was selection of study area where by Lake Duluti Forest Reserve is selected by using purposive sampling due to its high potentiality of hosting different domestic tourism events. The final step was involving the selection of 101 respondents using simple random sampling where by this technique applied because of the objective of the research where by each respondent has an equal chance to give views about the E-Word of mouth tool used when choosing the site and after they posting on which social media, where the sample units were drawn by using a sample structure from the tourists list.

The sample size in the study area will be determined using the formula by Boyd et al; $C = n/N * 100$; Where C represented a figure greater or equal to 5% of the ward household population, N is the total household in the study area and n is the number of sampled households (Boyd et al., 1981). The 5% will be sufficient sample size and sampled ward meet the criteria stated by Boyd et al that the 5% will be sufficient provide that the sample size will be not less than 30 units.

DATA COLLECTION

PRIMARY DATA

In this method the researcher used questionnaires. The questionnaire was given direct to the respondents for them to give answer since it is practical means to gather the required information in a short period of time. The data collection enable researcher to analyzed it from domestic tourists about the impact of Electronic Word of Mouth tool when choose the site.

SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data is the second-hand information exploited by other scholars and these was obtained from documents such as books papers, journals, magazines,

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

E-WORD OF MOUTH TOOLS WHEN CHOOSING THE SITE

E-WORD OF MOUTH TOOL

eWOM is considered in many different formats, such as product review sites, emails, discussion boards, user-generated content, social media, and online communities (Chu, 2021). With the rapid development of Internet technology, more and more consumers rely on the Internet for the products and services of

articles, electronic sources and unpublished literature. The documents were obtained through Social Media comments from tourism destinations also testimonials from Trip advisor. The aim of secondary data was to get views and information about impact of E-Word of mouth tools toward the choice of tourism product

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were obtained through Questionnaires, and analyzed by descriptive statistics. The data presented using figure, tables and percentages by presenting the tendency based on numbers of domestic tourists.

information searching and sharing; Electronic word-of-mouth information has gradually become an important factor of affecting consumer purchase intention (Hennig-Thurau., et al. 2004).

The Figure 2 below shows the findings which were obtained from domestic tourists at Lake Duluti, as the many numbers were on Instagram were 51 (50%), WhatsApp were 26 (25%), Facebook were 20 (20%), Twitter were 4 (5%).

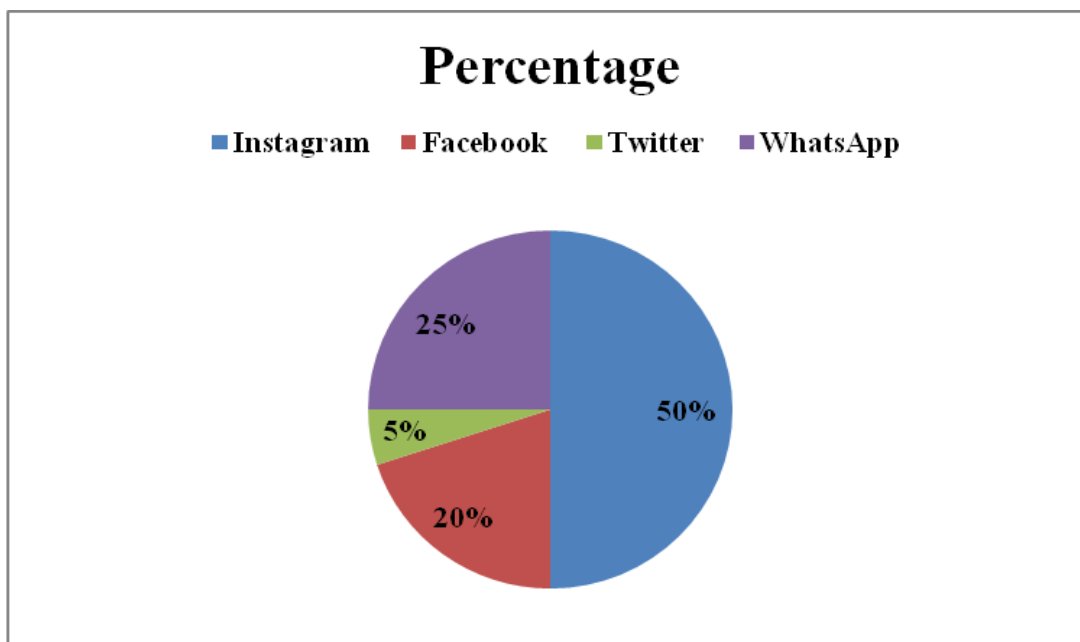


Figure 2: E-Word of Mouth Tool

E-WORD OF MOUTH TOOLS MOSTLY USED AS SOURCE OF TRAVEL IDEAS WHEN PLANNING TOUR, DURING THE TOUR AND AFTER TOUR

SOCIAL MEDIA MOSTLY USED

Another progressive initiative as far as the social media approach by tourism destinations was concerned was the joint social media platform named Slovenia. Conrad advertising investigated the influence of social media on holiday booking and suggested that social media is influential but cannot drive short-term sales, and the impact of social media on tourism management might be less important than it has been thought, (Charles Darwin et al 2013).

The Figure 3 below shows the findings which were obtained from domestic tourists at Lake Duluti, as the many number of respondent use the social media after the tour this indicates that after they have taken some picture and they agreed that they want to share to those social media they own and 63 (65%) use as source of Travel Idea, after the tour respondents were 93 (93%), When planning the tour were by 80 (80%), as during tour were 75 (74%). In other hand those strongly disagree on the social media were 27 (27%) use as source of travel idea, after the tour respondents were 6 (6%), when planning the tour were by 14 (13%), as during tour were 14 (13%).

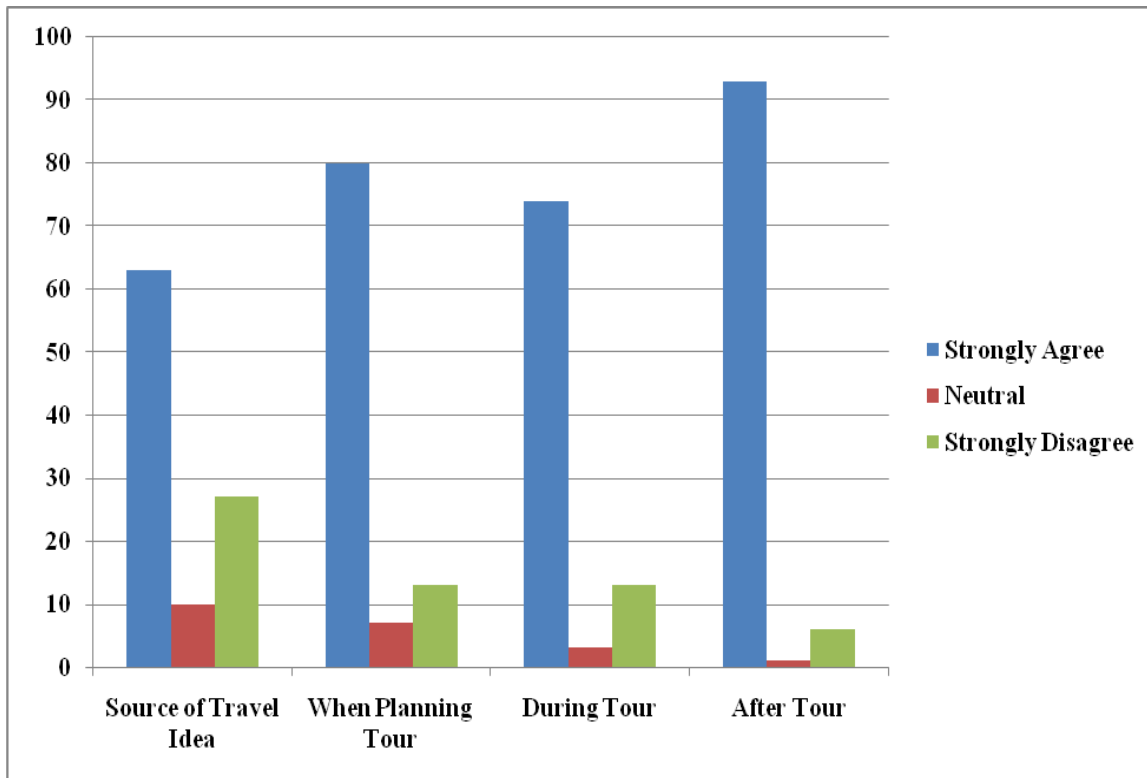


Figure 3: Social Media mostly used

SOCIAL MEDIA EXTENT

The Figure 4 below shows the findings which were obtained from domestic tourists at Lake Duluti, as on Facebook were 41 (40%) they do Agree, 10 (10%) they were neutral while 50 (50%) Disagree on extent of social media use, on other hand WhatsApp were 79 (78%) they do Agree, 12 (12%) they do Neutral and 10 (10%) Disagree about the extent of social media use, Instagram were 94 (93%) Agree, 8 (7%) they were Neutral, 0 (0%)

Disagree and lastly Twitter were 31 (30%) they do Agree, 13 (13%) they were Neutral, 57 (57%) Disagree. Based on the results of the statically analysis that the variable e-WOM has a positive significant impact on destination image among domestic tourist by looking on social media extent usage. According to Bennett 2013, there were 1.41 billion users in 2012, 1.61 billion users in 2013, 1.82 billion users in 2014, and 1.99 billion users in 2015 worldwide

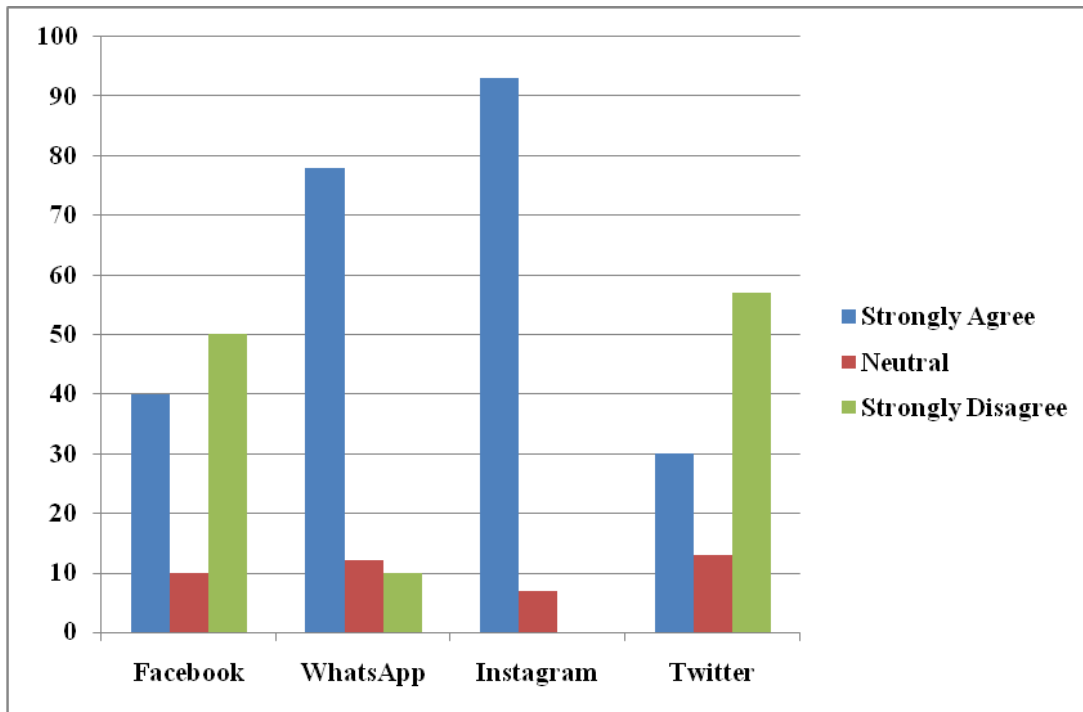


Figure 4: Social Media Extent

WILLINGNESS OF TOURISTS TO SHARE THEIR UNDERSTANDING THROUGH E-WORD OF MOUTH TOOLS

WILLINGNESS TO SHARE EXPERIENCE

Electronic Word of Mouth has empowered customers to express their feelings and opinions online and to share their experiences with other individuals through video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube), photo sharing sites and communities (e.g., Instagram, Facebook), or virtual opinion sharing platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor). Sharing experiences with other individuals online is not only part of the service experience for a multitude of consumers, but enhances the impact of successful service providers on current and potential customers (Munzel and Kunz, 2013).

The Figure 5 below shows the findings that were obtained from domestic tourists at Lake Duluti. As the many numbers of respondent are willing to share the positive experience were by 74 (73%) are strongly agree and 20 (60%) they do Disagree on willing to share the negative experience. Sharing a tourism experience based upon this framework it examines the impact of social media when travelers share their emotions and perception after the trips the results of study confirm that sharing positive experience post trip increases travelers positive affect while decreasing negative effect, (Felsenmeer et al 2015). This research, is similarly with the other study from said that electronic WOM give impact on destination trust and intention to visit this support the idea that positive and significant online WOM may raise the destination image (Reza Jalilvand et al.: 2012).

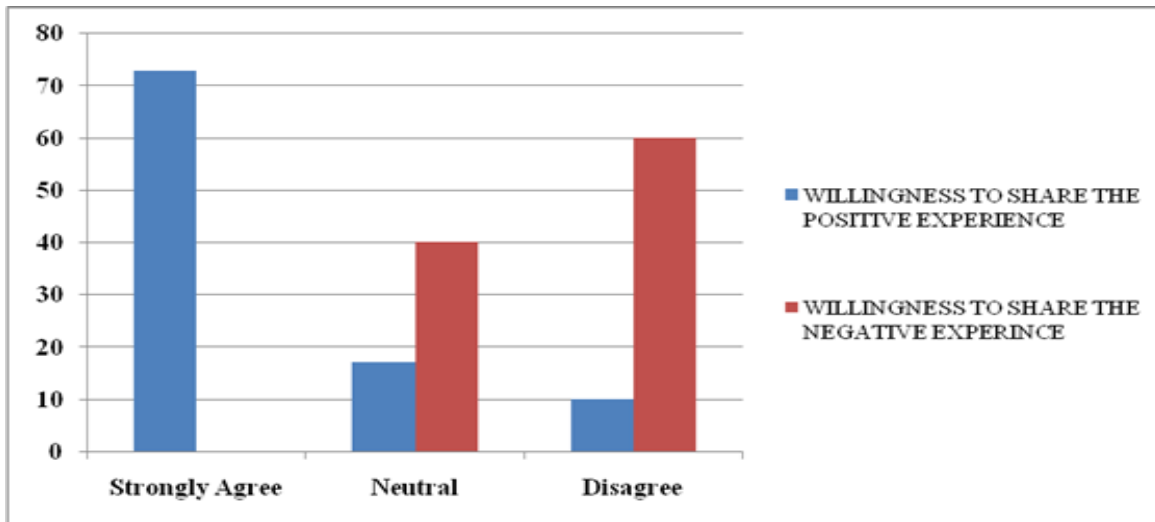


Figure 5: Willingness to share experience

SHARING EXPERIENCE BY POSTING ON

The Figure 6 below shows the findings which were obtained from domestic tourists at Lake Duluti, as the many numbers of respondent from Instagram were by 62 (65%), WhatsApp 15 (10%), Facebook were by 18 (20%), Twitter were

by 6 (5%). Social media has empowered customers to express their feelings and opinions online and share their experiences with other individuals sharing e.g., YouTube, photo sharing sites and communities e.g., Flickr, or virtual sharing platforms e.g., Trip Advisor or Yelp. It enhances the impact of successful services provider on current and potential customers (Kunz and Munzel, 2013).

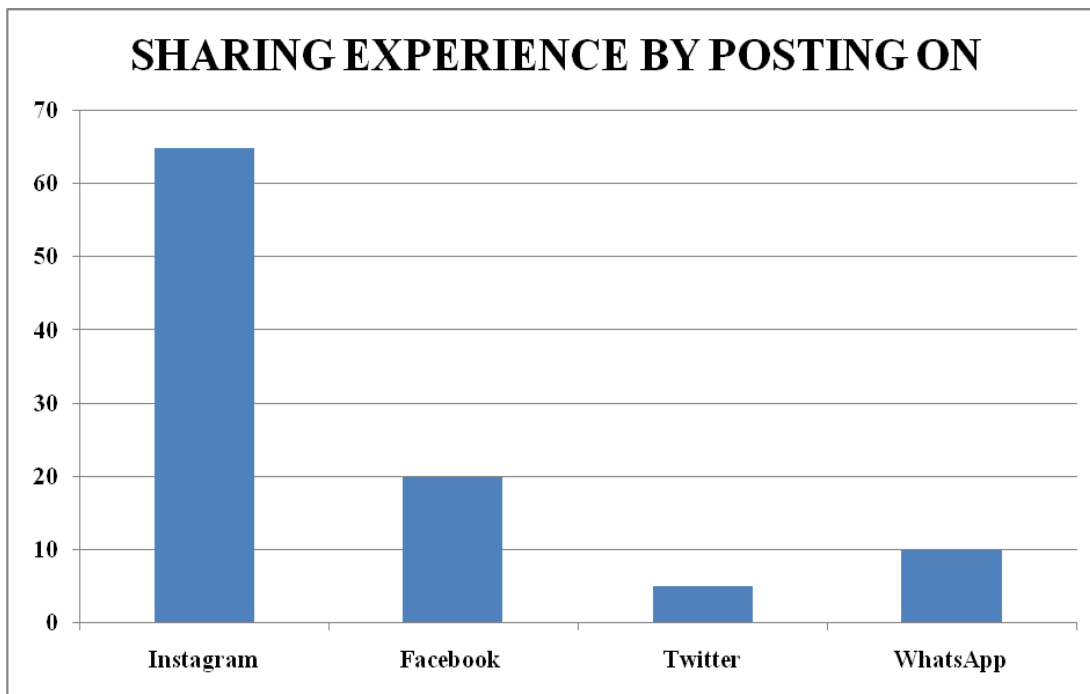


Figure 6: Sharing Experience by posting on

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This section provides the final sections, which is conclusion and recommendation of findings received from respondents on the study of impact of E-Word of Mouth towards the Choice of Tourism Product among Domestic tourist. This Chapter also, deals with suggestion for the further studies that will be conducted.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted at Lake Duluti Forest Reserve with thirty, (101) respondents who were domestic tourists who have visited Lake Duluti Forest Reserve and Club. This study was attempted to assess the impact electronic word of mouth toward the choice of tourism product among domestic, at Lake Duluti Forest Reserve. Thesis has been

conducted at Lake Duluti Forest Reserve and Lake Duluti Forest Club Place.

The research demonstrates the impact of electronic word-of-mouth towards the choice of tourism product among domestic tourist. The research has confirmed that e-WOM shares direct positive and significant influence on visitors' interest besides, e-WOM also has indirect positive and significant influence on tourist interest through destination image and trust. The research aims to provide a positive contribution to the destination management organization as it provides a valuable insight to take proper decision related to marketing strategy, management, and development of tourist destinations.

And research discovered that the perceived source credibility and quality of e-WOM

like user sharing comments, experiences and opinions on social media has the significant impact has it draws an intention of tourist to visit. Positive online word of mouth is reliable indicator of customer satisfaction and loyalty

RECOMENDATIONS

Based on major findings of this study, the following are recommendations will help the tourism destination management to develop away on how to promoting their attraction through using E-WOM as follows; the tourism company and those stakeholders of tourism they should invest their energy in develop distinct way of using electronic word of mouth to market

their product. In addition, how they could retain customers, electronic word of mouth it can be used as marketing tool to build good brand image as well it creates a positive relationship with customers, recommendations directed to the board of management of tourist destinations at Lake Duluti Forest Management to regard the findings of this research in improving the management and promotion of Lake Duluti Forest reserve, lastly, we recommend Lake Duluti Forest Service to improving the quality of services for tourists. Furthermore, better promotion can be carried out by optimizing the use of Websites and social media such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook as promotional media.

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