

Mediating Role of Tourist Trust in the Relationship between Digital Marketing, Destination Image, and Tourists' Visit Decisions

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines the influence of digital marketing and destination image on tourists' visit decisions, with tourist trust positioned as a mediating variable in tourism destinations.

Method: This study adopted a quantitative research design using a survey method. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 204 tourists who had visited tourism destinations in Cirebon Regency, Indonesia. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS).

Result: The findings reveal that digital marketing and destination image have positive and significant effects on tourists' visit decisions. Digital marketing and destination image also significantly influence tourist trust. Furthermore, tourist trust partially mediates the relationships between digital marketing, destination image, and tourists' visit decisions.

Practical Implications for Economic Growth and Development: The findings suggest that strengthening digital marketing strategies and improving destination image can enhance tourist trust and encourage visit decisions, thereby contributing to tourism sector growth. These efforts may support regional economic development by increasing tourist arrivals, local revenue, and tourism-related economic activities.

Originality/Value: This study integrates digital marketing and destination image into a mediation framework by incorporating tourist trust as an explanatory mechanism for tourists' visit decisions. In addition, this study enriches the literature on digital tourism marketing, particularly in emerging regional tourism destinations.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Destination Image, Tourist Trust, Visiting Decision, SEM-PLS*

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategic sector that plays an important role in promoting regional economic growth and improving community welfare (Hilmiana & Kirana, 2021). Tourism activities not only contribute to regional income but also create employment opportunities and strengthen local cultural identity. In recent years, the development of information technology has significantly transformed the promotion and marketing of tourism destinations (Natari & Raharja, 2022). Information about tourist destinations can now be accessed easily by tourists through various digital platforms. This condition requires destination managers to utilize digital technology as an effective and adaptive promotional instrument.

The tourism sector in Indonesia has shown a positive recovery trend after experiencing a decline due to the global pandemic (Rivani et al., 2021). Increased public mobility and improved economic conditions have encouraged the revival of tourism activities in various regions. In the context of tourism destination development, appropriate marketing strategies play a crucial role in attracting tourist interest (Fiisabilillah et al., 2023). Without effective marketing strategies, the tourism potential of a region cannot be optimally utilized. Therefore, tourism promotion must be managed in a planned, consistent, and sustainable manner.

Tourism development is also influenced by the ability of destination managers to build a positive image in tourists' perceptions (Sujatmiko et al., 2022). A positive destination image can enhance tourists' perceptions of quality, uniqueness, and attractiveness. These perceptions ultimately influence tourists' decisions to visit a destination. Thus, destination image is an important factor in strengthening destination competitiveness and shaping tourist behavior.

In the digital era, digital marketing has become an important instrument for promoting tourism destinations to a wider audience (Prasetyo et al., 2022). The use of social media, websites, and other digital platforms enables information to be disseminated quickly and interactively. In addition, digital marketing allows destination managers to engage directly with potential tourists through attractive and relevant content (Salsabila et al., 2023). Information delivered through digital media can shape tourists' perceptions, expectations, and evaluations of a destination. Therefore, effective digital marketing strategies are essential for increasing destination attractiveness.

Previous studies have highlighted the role of digital marketing and destination image in influencing tourist behavior. Digital marketing has been found to significantly influence tourists' visit decisions by increasing destination visibility and improving access to information (Natari & Raharja, 2022). Meanwhile, destination image plays an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions and expectations of a destination (Suryani et al., 2023). A positive destination image can enhance tourists' confidence and intention to visit. These findings indicate that both variables are important determinants of tourism marketing and tourist decision-making.

Other studies have also emphasized the importance of trust in tourism decision-making. Tourist trust is formed through reliable information, previous experiences, and destination reputation (Librianty et al., 2025). Trust can reduce perceived risk and increase tourists' confidence in choosing a destination. Furthermore, trust has been shown to influence both visit and revisit decisions (Trius et al., 2023). Thus, trust plays a strategic role in strengthening the relationship between marketing factors and tourist behavior.

Although previous studies have examined digital marketing, destination image, and tourist trust, most have analyzed these variables separately. Limited research has integrated these variables into a comprehensive model to explain tourists' visit decisions simultaneously (Prasetyo et al., 2022). This limitation results in an incomplete understanding of how digital marketing and destination image interact in shaping tourist trust and influencing visit decisions. In addition, empirical studies focusing on regional tourism destinations, such as Cirebon Regency, remain relatively scarce. Therefore, further research is needed to examine these relationships within an integrated framework.

Based on the identified research gap, this study aims to examine the influence of digital marketing and destination image on tourists' visit decisions through tourist trust as a mediating variable. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying tourists' decision-making processes. Furthermore, it contributes empirically to the development of tourism marketing literature, particularly in the context of regional tourism destinations. The findings are also expected to provide practical insights for local governments and tourism managers in designing effective digital marketing strategies.

Hypotheses Development

Digital Marketing and Tourists' Visiting Decisions

Digital marketing influences tourists' visit decisions through the mechanisms of information accessibility and engagement, which shape tourists' cognitive and affective evaluations of a destination (Liu et al., 2023). When tourists are exposed to structured, interactive, and visually appealing digital content, they can process information more efficiently and develop positive perceptions of the destination. This relationship can be explained through Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, in which digital marketing functions as an external stimulus that affects tourists' internal evaluations and leads to behavioral responses (Zhang et al., 2022). The organism stage reflects tourists' perceptions, emotions, and attitudes formed through digital exposure, which subsequently influence their decision-making process. Therefore, effective digital marketing is expected to strengthen tourists' intention and decision to visit a tourism destination.

H1: Digital marketing is positively and significantly associated with tourists' visit decisions.

Destination Image and Tourists' Visiting Decisions

Destination image influences tourists' visit decisions through the mechanism of perception formation, in which cognitive and affective evaluations shape tourists' preferences toward a destination (Kim & Lee, 2022). When tourists develop positive perceptions of a destination's attractiveness, safety, and uniqueness, they are more likely to evaluate it as a desirable travel option. This relationship is supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which explains that attitudes formed from beliefs and perceptions significantly influence behavioral intentions and actual decisions (Wang et al., 2023). In this context, destination image contributes to the formation of favorable attitudes that lead to visit decisions. Therefore, a stronger and more positive destination image is expected to increase tourists' likelihood of visiting a destination.

H2: Destination image is positively and significantly associated with tourists' visit decisions.

Digital Marketing and Tourist Trust

Digital marketing influences tourist trust through the mechanisms of information quality, transparency, and interaction, which shape tourists' perceptions of destination credibility (Liu et al., 2023). When tourists are exposed to accurate, consistent, and reliable digital information, they are more likely to perceive the destination as trustworthy and experience reduced uncertainty. This relationship is supported by Information Adoption Theory, which explains that information quality and credibility significantly determine users' trust in and acceptance of online content (Zhang et al., 2022). In this context, digital platforms function as channels that facilitate trust formation through effective communication and information delivery. Therefore, credible and well-managed digital marketing is expected to strengthen tourist trust toward a destination.

H3: Digital marketing is positively and significantly associated with tourist trust.

Destination Image and Tourist Trust

Destination image influences tourist trust through the mechanism of perception formation, in which cognitive and affective evaluations shape tourists' confidence in a destination's reliability and quality (Liu et al., 2023). When tourists develop positive perceptions of safety, attractiveness, and service quality, they are more likely to believe that the destination can provide satisfying experiences. This relationship is supported by Signaling Theory, which explains that a strong and positive image acts as a signal that reduces uncertainty and builds trust among potential consumers (Stylos et al., 2021). In this context, destination image serves as an important signal that communicates credibility and reduces perceived risk. Therefore, a more favorable destination image is expected to strengthen tourist trust toward a destination.

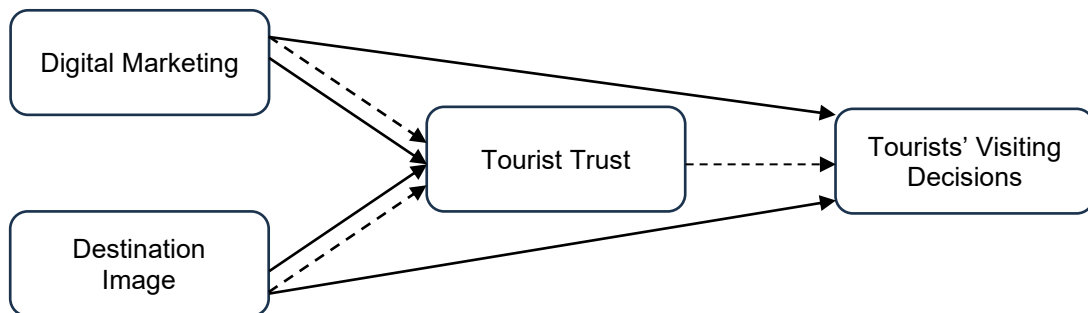
H4: Destination image is positively and significantly associated with tourist trust.

Tourist Trust as the Mediator: Digital Marketing and Tourists' Visiting Decisions

Tourist trust mediates the relationship between digital marketing and tourists' visit decisions through the mechanisms of reducing perceived risk and strengthening confidence in the information received (Novrianda et al., 2023). When tourists are exposed to credible and consistent digital marketing content, they tend to develop trust, which subsequently influences their willingness to make travel decisions. This relationship is supported by Commitment–Trust Theory, which explains that trust serves as a key variable in transforming marketing efforts into behavioral outcomes (Imam et al., 2024). In this context, digital marketing first builds tourist trust, and this trust then drives tourists' decision-making processes. Therefore, stronger trust is expected to enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing in influencing tourists' visit decisions.

H5: Tourist trust mediates the effect of digital marketing on tourists' visit decisions.

Figure 1. Research Framework



Source: Developed by the authors (2026)

Tourist Trust as the Mediator: Destination Image and Tourists' Visiting Decisions

Tourist trust mediates the relationship between destination image and tourists' visit decisions through the mechanism of belief formation, in which positive perceptions of a destination are transformed into confidence that influences behavioral intentions (Suryani et al., 2023). When tourists perceive a destination as attractive, safe, and reliable, these perceptions contribute to the development of trust, which subsequently drives their decision to visit. This relationship is supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which explains that beliefs and attitudes can influence behavior through psychological factors such as trust (Trius et al., 2023). In this context, destination image shapes tourist trust, and trust subsequently

determines tourists' visit decisions. Therefore, stronger tourist trust is expected to enhance the influence of destination image on tourists' visit decisions.

H6: Tourist trust mediates the effect of destination image on tourists' visit decisions.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design with an associative approach to examine the relationships among the research variables. The research was conducted at several tourism destinations in Cirebon Regency, Indonesia. A quantitative approach enables researchers to test causal relationships among variables using statistical modeling techniques (Sekaran & Bougie, 2021).

The population of this study consisted of tourists who had visited tourism destinations in Cirebon Regency. Tourism statistics indicate that domestic tourist visits to the region exceeded one million in 2024, which served as the basis for determining the study population. In tourism research, sampling procedures commonly involve selecting respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Etikan & Bala, 2022). The sample size was calculated using Slovin's formula with a 7% margin of error, resulting in 204 respondents. Purposive sampling was applied using several criteria: respondents had to be at least 18 years old, had visited at least one tourism destination in Cirebon Regency, and had searched for tourism information through digital platforms.

Table 1. Operational Variables

Variable	Code	Measurement Statement	Source
Digital Marketing	DM1	I can easily find information about tourism destinations in Cirebon through digital media, such as social media and websites.	Dwivedi et al. (2021)
	DM2	Digital promotions of tourism destinations in Cirebon provide clear and useful information for planning a visit.	
	DM3	Attractive digital content, such as photos, videos, and reviews, increases my interest in visiting tourism destinations in Cirebon.	
	DM4	Online tourism information platforms help me make decisions about visiting tourism destinations in Cirebon.	
Destination Image	DI1	Tourism destinations in Cirebon offer attractive natural and cultural attractions.	Stylos et al. (2021)
	DI2	I perceive tourism destinations in Cirebon as interesting places to visit.	
	DI3	Tourism destinations in Cirebon have a positive reputation among tourists.	
	DI4	The overall image of tourism destinations in Cirebon is appealing to tourists.	
Tourist Trust	TT1	I believe that tourism destinations in Cirebon provide reliable tourism services.	Wang et al. (2023)
	TT2	I trust the information about tourism destinations in Cirebon obtained from digital sources.	
	TT3	I am confident that tourism destinations in Cirebon can provide satisfying travel experiences.	
	TT4	I believe that tourism destinations in Cirebon are trustworthy places to visit.	

Variable	Code	Measurement Statement	Source
Visiting Decisions	VD1	I intend to visit tourism destinations in Cirebon in the future.	Yadav & Sharma (2023)
	VD2	Tourism destinations in Cirebon are among my preferred travel choices.	
	VD3	I am confident in my decision to visit tourism destinations in Cirebon.	
	VD4	I would recommend tourism destinations in Cirebon to others.	

Source: Compiled by the authors (2026)

The data used in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents who met the predetermined sampling criteria. Survey-based questionnaires are widely used in tourism research to measure perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions (Hair et al., 2022). The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to measure respondents' perceptions of the research variables. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from official tourism statistics, government reports, and relevant academic literature to support the research analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the assistance of SmartPLS version 4. The analytical procedure included descriptive statistical analysis, measurement model evaluation, and structural model evaluation. SEM-PLS is considered appropriate for predictive research models and for examining complex relationships among latent variables (Sarstedt et al., 2022). The measurement model was evaluated through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability tests, while the structural model was assessed using R-square, predictive relevance, and path coefficients. Hypothesis testing and mediation analysis were conducted using the bootstrapping procedure to determine the significance of direct and indirect effects among the variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Characteristics

This study involved 204 tourists who had visited various tourism destinations in Cirebon Regency. Based on respondent characteristics, female tourists represented the majority of the sample, accounting for 59.3%, while male tourists accounted for 40.7%. In terms of age, most respondents were between 18 and 25 years old, representing 43.1% of the total sample. This finding indicates that younger tourists tend to have a higher readiness and ability to utilize digital technology as a source of tourism information.

Regarding visit frequency and intensity, most respondents, or 57.4%, had visited tourism destinations in Cirebon Regency two to three times. This indicates a relatively high level of interest in the region's tourism destinations. In addition, all respondents had experience accessing tourism information through digital media and had visited the destinations directly. Therefore, the data obtained were considered appropriate and relevant for the research objectives. A complete description of the respondents' characteristics is presented in the descriptive table.

Table 2. Respondents' Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	83	40.7
	Female	121	59.3
Age	< 18 years	10	4.9

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	18–25 years	88	43.1
	26–35 years	78	38.2
	36–45 years	23	11.3
	> 45 years	5	2.5
Last Education	Junior High School/Equivalent	9	4.4
	Senior High School/Vocational High School/Equivalent	85	41.7
	Diploma	33	16.2
	Bachelor's Degree	75	36.8
	Postgraduate Degree	2	1.0
Occupation	Housewife	16	7.8
	Civil Servant	29	14.2
	Private Employee	60	29.4
	Student	73	35.8
	Entrepreneur	26	12.7
Domicile	Cirebon Regency	65	31.9
	Cirebon City	101	49.5
	Outside Cirebon	38	18.6
Frequency of Visits to Tourism Destinations in Cirebon Regency	Once	34	16.7
	2–3 times	117	57.4
	> 3 times	53	26.0
Sources of Tourism Information about Cirebon Regency	Digital Advertising	24	11.8
	Social Media	104	51.0
	Friend/Family Recommendation	36	17.6
	Official Tourism Website	40	19.6
Purpose of Visit	Business	29	14.2
	Education	38	18.6
	Visiting Family/Relatives	20	9.8
	Recreation/Vacation	117	57.4
Accessed Digital Tourism Information about Cirebon Regency	No	1	0.5
	Yes	203	99.5
Visited Tourism Destinations in Cirebon Regency	Yes	204	100.0

Source: Processed data (2026)

Convergent Validity

Table 3 presents the outer loading values used to evaluate convergent validity in this study. The table indicates the extent to which each indicator represents its corresponding latent construct. Higher outer loading values reflect stronger relationships between the indicators and their respective constructs. Indicators with loading values of 0.70 or above are considered to satisfy the recommended criterion for convergent validity.

Table 3. Outer Loading

Indicator	Digital Marketing	Destination Image	Tourist Trust	Visiting Decision
DM1	0.795			
DM2	0.775			
DM3	0.750			
DM4	0.738			
DM5	0.818			
DM6	0.780			
DM7	0.779			
DM8	0.783			
DM9	0.804			
DM10	0.723			
DM11	0.802			
DM12	0.785			
DI1		0.867		
DI2		0.819		
DI3		0.812		
DI4		0.850		
DI5		0.850		
TT1			0.884	
TT2			0.871	
TT3			0.874	
VD1				0.860
VD2				0.851
VD3				0.900
VD4				0.863
VD5				0.861

Source: Processed data (2026)

The outer loading test results show that all indicators of the Destination Image, Digital Marketing, Tourist Trust, and Tourists' Visit Decision constructs have outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.723 to 0.900. The outer loading values for Destination Image indicators (DI1–DI5) range from 0.812 to 0.867, while those for Digital Marketing indicators (DM1–DM12) range from 0.723 to 0.818. Furthermore, the Tourist Trust indicators (TT1–TT3) show loading values ranging from 0.871 to 0.884, and the Tourists' Visit Decision indicators (VD1–VD5) range from 0.851 to 0.900. These results indicate that all indicators strongly and consistently represent their respective constructs. Therefore, the measurement quality of the indicators in the model is considered satisfactory, and all indicators are retained for further analysis.

Table 4 presents the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values used to assess convergent validity in this study. The table shows the extent to which each construct explains the variance of its indicators. Higher AVE values indicate that the construct has a stronger ability to represent its indicators. Constructs with AVE values of 0.50 or higher are considered to satisfy the recommended criterion for convergent validity.

Table 4. Average Variance Extracted

Construct	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Destination Image	0.605
Digital Marketing	0.705
Tourist Trust	0.768
Tourists' Visit Decisions	0.752

Source: Processed data (2026)

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceed the minimum recommended threshold of 0.50. Destination Image obtained an AVE value of 0.605, Digital Marketing obtained 0.705, Tourist Trust obtained 0.768, and Tourists' Visit Decisions obtained 0.752. These results indicate that the convergent validity of all constructs has been adequately established. In other words, each construct is able to explain a greater proportion of variance in its indicators than the variance attributable to measurement error.

Discriminant Validity

Table 5 presents the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values used to assess discriminant validity in this study. The table indicates the degree of similarity among different constructs in the research model. Lower HTMT values suggest that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another. HTMT values below the recommended threshold of 0.90 indicate that the constructs satisfy the criterion for discriminant validity.

Table 5. HTMT

Construct	Destination Image	Digital Marketing	Tourist Trust	Tourists' Visit Decisions
Destination Image	—			
Digital Marketing	0.491	—		
Tourist Trust	0.693	0.795	—	
Tourists' Visit Decisions	0.550	0.577	0.639	—

Source: Processed data (2026)

The HTMT results show that all values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90. The HTMT values range from 0.491 to 0.795, indicating that the constructs in the model are empirically distinct from one another. Therefore, the discriminant validity criterion has been met, and each construct can be considered conceptually and statistically different from the other constructs.

Reliability Test

Table 6 presents the results of the reliability test for each construct in this study. The table reports Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, which were used to assess the internal consistency of the measurement model. Higher values indicate that the indicators consistently measure their respective constructs. Constructs with reliability values above 0.70 are considered to meet the recommended reliability criterion.

Table 6. Reliability Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)
Destination Image	0.941	0.942
Digital Marketing	0.895	0.895
Tourist Trust	0.849	0.849
Tourists' Visit Decisions	0.917	0.918

Source: Processed data (2026)

The reliability test results show that all constructs have Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above the recommended threshold of 0.70. Destination Image obtained values of 0.941 and 0.942, Digital Marketing obtained values of 0.895 and 0.895, Tourist Trust obtained values of 0.849 and 0.849, and Tourists' Visit Decisions obtained values of 0.917 and 0.918. These findings indicate a high level of internal consistency and measurement

stability. Therefore, all constructs in this study are considered reliable and suitable for further analysis.

R-square

Table 7 presents the R-square values used to evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model. The table indicates the extent to which the independent variables explain the variance in the endogenous variables. Higher R-square values reflect stronger explanatory and predictive ability of the model. In SEM-PLS, R-square values are commonly interpreted as weak, moderate, or strong depending on the research context and established evaluation criteria.

Table 7. R-square

Variable	R-square	Adjusted R-square
Tourist Trust	0.605	0.601
Tourists' Visit Decisions	0.395	0.386

Source: Processed data (2026)

The R-square value for Tourist Trust is 0.605, indicating that Destination Image and Digital Marketing explain 60.5% of the variance in Tourist Trust, while the remaining 39.5% is explained by other variables outside the model. Furthermore, the R-square value for Tourists' Visit Decisions is 0.395, indicating that Destination Image, Digital Marketing, and Tourist Trust explain 39.5% of the variance in Tourists' Visit Decisions, while the remaining 60.5% is explained by other factors not included in this study. These results suggest that the structural model has moderate explanatory power.

Model Fit

Table 8 presents the model fit results used to assess the overall suitability of the research model. The table reports several model fit indices, including the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), d_ULS, d_G, chi-square, and Normed Fit Index (NFI). Among these indices, SRMR is commonly used to evaluate the difference between the observed correlation matrix and the model-implied correlation matrix. A lower SRMR value indicates a better model fit, and an SRMR value below 0.08 suggests that the model has an acceptable level of fit.

Table 8. Model Fit

Model Fit Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.064	0.064
d_ULS	1.311	1.311
d_G	1.155	1.155
Chi-square	1.200.142	1.200.142
NFI	0.730	0.730

Source: Processed data (2026)

The model fit evaluation shows that the SRMR value for both the saturated model and the estimated model is 0.064. This value is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating that the residual difference between the empirical data and the model-implied correlation matrix is relatively low. Therefore, the research model can be considered to have an acceptable level of fit and is appropriate for further structural model analysis.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 9 presents the path coefficient results used to test the proposed hypotheses in this study. The table shows the magnitude and direction of the relationships among variables, along with the t-statistics and p-values. A relationship is considered statistically significant when the t-statistic exceeds the critical value and the p-value is below 0.05. Thus, the path coefficient results indicate whether each proposed hypothesis is supported.

Table 9. Direct Effects

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-statistics (O/STDEV)	P-values
Destination Image → Tourist Trust	0.395	0.396	0.050	7.887	0.000
Destination Image → Tourists' Visit Decisions	0.262	0.264	0.067	3.900	0.000
Digital Marketing → Tourist Trust	0.515	0.516	0.050	10.389	0.000
Digital Marketing → Tourists' Visit Decisions	0.244	0.244	0.080	3.039	0.002

Source: Processed data (2026)

The results show that Destination Image has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Trust, as indicated by a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.395$, a t-statistic of 7.887, and a p-value of 0.000. Destination Image also has a positive and significant effect on Tourists' Visit Decisions, with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.262$, a t-statistic of 3.900, and a p-value of 0.000. These findings indicate that a stronger destination image increases both tourist trust and tourists' decisions to visit. Furthermore, Digital Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Tourist Trust, as shown by a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.515$, a t-statistic of 10.389, and a p-value of 0.000. Digital Marketing also has a positive and significant effect on Tourists' Visit Decisions, with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.244$, a t-statistic of 3.039, and a p-value of 0.002. These results suggest that effective digital marketing strengthens tourist trust and encourages tourists to make visit decisions.

Table 10 presents the specific indirect effect results used to examine the mediating role of Tourist Trust in this study. The table shows the indirect relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable through the mediating variable, along with the t-statistics and p-values. Indirect effects are considered statistically significant when the p-values are below 0.05. These results determine whether Tourist Trust significantly mediates the relationships between Destination Image, Digital Marketing, and Tourists' Visit Decisions.

Table 10. Indirect Effects

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-statistics (O/STDEV)	P-values
Destination Image → Tourist Trust → Tourists' Visit Decisions	0.092	0.092	0.039	2.361	0.018
Digital Marketing → Tourist Trust → Tourists' Visit Decisions	0.120	0.119	0.048	2.493	0.013

Source: Processed data (2026)

The results of the indirect effect test show that Destination Image has a positive and significant indirect effect on Tourists' Visit Decisions through Tourist Trust, as indicated by an indirect path coefficient of $\beta = 0.092$, a t-statistic of 2.361, and a p-value of 0.018. Since the p-value is below 0.05, Tourist Trust is proven to mediate the relationship between Destination Image and Tourists' Visit Decisions. The results also indicate that Digital Marketing has a positive and significant indirect effect on Tourists' Visit Decisions through Tourist Trust, as shown by an indirect path coefficient of $\beta = 0.120$, a t-statistic of 2.493, and a p-value of 0.013. Since the p-value is below 0.05, Tourist Trust is proven to mediate the relationship between Digital Marketing and Tourists' Visit Decisions.

Discussion

The results indicate that digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on tourists' visit decisions in Cirebon Regency. This finding suggests that more effective digital marketing strategies increase the likelihood of tourists choosing to visit the destination. In the context of Cirebon Regency, the availability of tourism information through social media, websites, and other online platforms enables potential visitors to explore cultural sites, historical attractions, and culinary destinations more easily. Visually appealing and informative digital content helps tourists form initial impressions and reduces uncertainty before visiting. Therefore, digital marketing serves as an important driver of tourists' decision-making behavior in this region. This finding is supported by previous studies showing that digital marketing significantly influences consumer decision-making by increasing access to information and facilitating interactive engagement (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In addition, the quality of digital content and the clarity of information have been found to play an important role in shaping tourists' intentions when selecting travel destinations (Yadav & Sharma, 2023). These studies emphasize that digital platforms function not only as sources of information but also as instruments that shape tourists' perceptions, preferences, and behavioral intentions. Thus, the findings of this study are consistent with prior research highlighting the role of digital marketing in influencing tourists' visit decisions.

The results also show that destination image has a positive and significant effect on tourists' visit decisions in Cirebon Regency. This indicates that a more favorable perception of the destination increases tourists' likelihood of visiting. In the context of Cirebon Regency, cultural heritage, historical landmarks, religious tourism sites, and distinctive local cuisine contribute to the formation of a positive destination image. These elements create perceptions of attractiveness, uniqueness, and authenticity, which encourage tourists to consider Cirebon Regency as a travel destination. Accordingly, destination image becomes a key factor in shaping tourists' visit decisions. This finding is in line with previous studies stating that destination image significantly affects tourists' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward visiting a destination (Timotius & Nainggolan, 2022). A positive destination image has also been shown to increase tourists' confidence and interest in choosing a destination (Makawoka et al., 2022). Moreover, tourists tend to select destinations that are perceived as attractive, safe, and capable of providing satisfying travel experiences (Yosandri et al., 2023). These findings confirm that destination image plays a crucial role in influencing tourists' visit decisions.

The results further indicate that digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on tourist trust in Cirebon Regency. This means that more effective digital marketing can strengthen tourists' confidence in the destination. In this context, consistent, accurate, and informative digital content about cultural attractions, accessibility, facilities, and tourism services helps reduce uncertainty among potential visitors. When tourists find clear and reliable information through digital platforms, they are more likely to perceive the destination as credible and trustworthy. Thus, digital marketing plays an important role in building tourist trust before the actual visit takes place. This finding is supported by previous studies showing that the quality of digital communication significantly influences trust formation in tourism contexts (Chen & Lin, 2024). Transparent and credible digital information has also been found to enhance tourists' confidence in destinations (Gursoy et al., 2022). In addition, online interaction and

information reliability are important factors in developing consumer trust in digital environments. These findings confirm that digital marketing is an essential factor in strengthening tourist trust.

The results show that destination image has a positive and significant effect on tourist trust in Cirebon Regency. This indicates that a more positive perception of the destination increases tourists' confidence in the quality, reliability, and credibility of the tourism experience. In the context of Cirebon Regency, well-known cultural heritage sites, historical attractions, religious tourism destinations, and a distinctive local identity contribute to building a strong and trustworthy destination image. When tourists perceive a destination as attractive, safe, and well managed, they are more likely to trust the information and expectations associated with it. Therefore, destination image is an important determinant of tourist trust. This finding is supported by previous studies stating that destination image plays a significant role in building trust by reducing perceived risk and strengthening tourists' confidence (Mareta et al., 2022). A positive destination image has also been shown to influence tourists' beliefs regarding service quality and the overall travel experience (Maulidiyah, 2024). Similarly, favorable perceptions of a destination contribute directly to the formation of trust in tourism contexts. These findings confirm that destination image is a crucial factor in shaping tourist trust.

The findings demonstrate that tourist trust significantly mediates the relationship between digital marketing and tourists' visit decisions in Cirebon Regency. This indicates that digital marketing influences visit decisions both directly and indirectly through the formation of trust. Trust strengthens the effect of digital marketing by increasing tourists' confidence in the credibility of digital information and the reliability of the destination. In other words, credible digital marketing not only provides information but also builds confidence that encourages tourists to make visit decisions. Previous studies support this result by emphasizing the mediating role of trust in linking marketing communication and consumer behavior. Hastari et al. (2022) explain that trust functions as an important mechanism that strengthens the effect of marketing communication on behavioral intentions. Similarly, Imam et al. (2024) highlight that tourist trust plays a crucial role in reinforcing the impact of digital marketing on decision-making processes. These findings confirm that trust acts as a key bridge connecting digital marketing efforts with tourists' visit decisions.

The results also show that tourist trust significantly mediates the relationship between destination image and tourists' visit decisions in Cirebon Regency. This finding indicates that destination image influences visit decisions both directly and indirectly through tourist trust. A positive destination image contributes to building tourists' confidence in the quality, safety, and reliability of the destination. Trust then strengthens the effect of destination image by transforming favorable perceptions into stronger visit decisions. Previous studies reinforce this result by highlighting the mediating role of trust in the relationship between destination image and tourist behavior. Liu et al. (2023) explain that a favorable destination image can enhance tourists' trust, which subsequently affects their behavioral intentions. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2022) emphasize that trust acts as a critical mechanism linking destination perception and decision-making. These studies confirm that tourist trust plays an essential role in translating a positive destination image into tourists' actual visit decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of digital marketing and destination image on tourists' visit decisions, with tourist trust positioned as a mediating variable in tourism destinations in Cirebon Regency. Specifically, this study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing, destination image, and tourist trust interact in shaping tourists' decision-making processes. The findings reveal that digital marketing and destination image have positive and significant effects on tourists' visit decisions. In addition, both digital marketing and destination image significantly influence tourist trust, which subsequently affects tourists' visit decisions. Furthermore, tourist trust is proven to partially mediate the relationships between digital marketing, destination image, and tourists' visit decisions. These

results indicate that the effectiveness of digital marketing and the strength of destination image are enhanced when tourists develop trust in the destination.

The findings provide important practical implications for tourism managers and local governments in Cirebon Regency. Stakeholders are encouraged to optimize integrated digital marketing strategies by delivering engaging, informative, credible, and consistent content across digital platforms. In addition, maintaining a positive destination image through improvements in service quality, facilities, cleanliness, safety, and destination management is essential for strengthening tourist trust. Consistency between promotional content and actual tourist experiences is also crucial for enhancing destination credibility and increasing tourist visits. Future research is recommended to expand the research model by incorporating additional variables, such as tourist satisfaction, electronic word of mouth, service quality, and tourist loyalty. Further studies may also examine broader geographical areas or conduct comparative analyses across different tourism destinations. In addition, the use of mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative methods is suggested to gain deeper insights into tourists' behavior and decision-making processes. These efforts are expected to enrich the development of tourism marketing research in the digital era.

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