

Research Article

WOM Positive Towards Memorable Tourism Experiences and Risk Perception Mediated by Tourist Satisfaction

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of memorable tourism experiences and operational risk management in tourist train transportation on positive Word of Mouth (WOM), with tourist satisfaction serving as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach was employed, and data were processed using SEM-PLS 4. The research sample consisted of 247 respondents who had used tourist train services within the past year. The results reveal that both effective risk management practices and memorable tourism experiences perceived by tourists significantly impact tourist satisfaction. Additionally, tourist satisfaction plays a crucial mediating role in generating positive WOM. The study highlights that memorable tourism experiences, including aspects such as comfort, scenic views, and the quality of service, significantly enhance tourist satisfaction. Furthermore, operational risk management, which includes ensuring passenger safety, maintaining service reliability, and handling emergencies effectively, is essential for cultivating satisfaction and positive WOM. The findings suggest that businesses in the tourism industry, particularly those operating tourist trains, should prioritize both risk management and creating memorable experiences to foster customer loyalty and enhance WOM. This study contributes to understanding the dynamic relationship between risk management, customer satisfaction, and WOM in the tourism sector, providing valuable insights for improving service strategies in tourist train transportation.

Keywords: Memorable Tourism Experiences; Risk Perception; SEM-PLS 4; Tourist Satisfaction; WOM Positive.

1. Introduction

Tourism refers to various travel-related activities supported by infrastructures, facilities, amenities, and services that take into account the needs of tourists (Undang – Undang No. 18 tahun 2025). Tourism, as a sector of an economy, can be crucial and determinant for the magnitude of economic growth in a country (Samprakos, 2024). Tourism development is closely related to economic growth (Adamopoulos & Thalassinou, 2020; Scarlett, 2021). Tourists' experience comprises the quintessence of their travelling and hospitality experience at a destination (Kim et al., 2012).

Tourism is fundamentally a consumption activity involving expectations toward products and services (Roselius 1971; Moutinho 1987; Zhang et al. 2004). Its risk is often that the product or service cannot meet the expectation of tourists or that is the collection of factors which are beyond the control during tourism consumption process (Oliver 1980; Cui, et al, 2016). Tourist risk perception is not solely determined by the probability of negative events but is also shaped by media exposure and prevailing public opinion (McKercher & Chon, 2004).

Within the tourism industry, consumer behavioral intentions include the willingness to recommend services to others through word-of-mouth communication (WOM) (Chen, et al., 2019). WOM plays a central role in expanding a company's customer base (SanMartín, et al., 2015). WOM refers to customers' response on a product by informing other people (Yang, et al, 2018) and can be either positive or negative depending on the nature of the consumption experience (Akhtar, et al., 2019).

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2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Positive WOM

Word of Mouth (WOM) is an informal interpersonal communication form that is not commercially motivated and typically emerges from direct service consumption experiences (Berger, 2014; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Paley, et al., 2019; Mojeed, et al, 2023). Word-of-mouth (WOM) is a type of direct communication where individuals informally share their consumption experiences, which can involve recommendations, alerts, or discouragement (Arndt, 1967; Westbrook, 1987; Barros, et al, 2024).

In the digital context, online word-of-mouth (e-WOM) defined refers to the dissemination of information through internet-based platforms (Dellarocas, 2003). Research on e-WOM in the tourism sector has largely concentrated on evaluations of services, choice of destinations, and implementing marketing strategies (Zheng, et al., 2023). Online WOM offers valuable insights into various attributes of tourism locations, and many scholars view it as a significant factor in shaping perceptions (Yun, et al., 2008). Tourists today depend on both conventional sources and digital reviews/social media when selecting destinations (Zhang, et al, 2025). In the context of sustainable development, tourism needs to harmonize economic, social, and environmental factors. E-WOM serves as a valuable instrument for managers to understand tourist expectations regarding environmentally responsible tourism practices (Gursoy, et al., 2009). By examining E--WOM, insights on sustainable practices can be uncovered, steering the industry towards enhanced sustainability (Zhang, et al, 2025). E-WOM not only collects extensive amounts of tourist reviews and feedback but also captures authentic experiences and perceptions through detailed data analysis (Kumar & Kaur, 2019). Research has shown that negative reviews have a more significant impact on consumer choices compared to positive ones (Khan, et al., 2024; Zhang, et al, 2025).

Tourist Satisfaction

Satisfaction refers to the assessment of the surprises associated with acquiring and experiencing a product (Ghanbri, et al, 2019). Satisfaction represents an individual's psychological condition that arises when their emotions linked to expectations align with their previous feelings about the experience of consumption (Hermawan, et al., 2019; Tilaki, et al., 2017). Tourist satisfaction can be defined that it is the state of psychological preferences and enjoyment towards tourism offerings (Biswas, et al, 2020). Tourist satisfaction also plays a strategic role in enhancing destination attractiveness and competitive positioning (Nasir, et al., 2020). Satisfaction is the assessment made by customers regarding a product or service, based on whether it fulfills their needs and expectations (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). According to the expectation disconfirmation theory, satisfaction leads to development in tourism and hospitality studies (Oliver, 1980).

Memorable Tourism Experiences

Memorable tourism experiences are formed through tourists' emotional assessments of their journey and their capacity to recall specific moments from that experience (Kim, et al., 2012; Tiwari, et al, 2022). Most consumer decisions rely on past experiences, which establishes the foundation of MTE (Chandralal, et al., 2015). MTE focuses on how tourists recognize and evaluate their experiences, then connect those experiences and memories to a specific destination. (Chandralal et al., 2015). Tourist emotions and memories represent critical attributes that shape the overall quality of tourism experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Retaining existing customers costs far less than acquiring new ones, which makes MTE a key driver of tourist behavior (Sthapit, et al., 2019). Seven experiential dimensions of MTE are hedonism (pleasure giving feelings), novelty (seek newness or new experience), local culture (interacting with local people to know their culture), refreshment (freedom to relax), meaningfulness (deep or significant experiences), involvement (level of involvement with on site activities); and knowledge (information about the site) (Kim, et al, 2012).

Risk Perception

Risk perception is how individuals subjectively assess a threatening situation based on its nature and severity (Moreira, 2008; Sjöberg, et al., 2004). In tourism, risk perception involves evaluating situations to decide whether to travel, purchase travel products, or engage in travel experiences (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). Elevated risk perception has been shown to negatively affect destination image (Sonmes & Graefe, 1998). Risk perception negatively influences tourist attitude and travel intention (Sanchez-Canizarez, et al, 2020, Hasan, et al, 2021). Demographic factors and individual characteristics further shape tourists' risk

perceptions (Carr, 2001; Seddighi, et al., 2001). Media coverage significantly influences how risk perception affects travel intention. When media associates a destination with negative events or heightened risk, tourists tend to revise their travel plans, avoiding destinations they perceive as unsafe and choosing safer alternatives instead (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998).

Research Hypothesis

H1 = Effect of Memorable Tourism Experiences Towards Tourist Satisfaction

During a trip tourists experience positive and negative emotions that leave a mark on the memory (Bosque & Martín, 2008). The reconstruction of these emotional experiences subsequently shapes post-consumption satisfaction assessments (Maunier & Camelis, 2013; Prayag, et al., 2013). Tourists compare their actual experiences at the destination against their initial expectations to arrive at feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Lin & Kuo, 2016).

H2 = Effect of Memorable Tourism Experiences Towards Positive WOM

MTE demonstrates a significant relationship with tourist behavioral intentions, including the intention to share information a destination to public (Barnes, et al., 2016; Kim, 2017; Zhang, et al., 2018). Measuring behavioural intentions effectively predicts future tourist behaviour (Piramanayagam, et al, 2020), with revisit intention and recommendation intention being the most widely used measures (Chen, et al, 2020). Recommendation behavior represents a psychological response that motivates others to use services that the consumer has positively evaluated (Chen, et al, 2020). WOM refers to positive verbal recommendations that tourists share with family and friends following a visit to a destination (Prayag, et al, 2017). Online experience sharing involves creating and distributing audio-visual content that captures information, emotions, and perceptions from tourism journeys (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Locaric, et al, 2021).

H3 = Effect of Risk Perception Towards Tourist Satisfaction

Risk perception and satisfaction are both shaped by consumption experience (Johnson, et al., 2006; 2008), and risk perceptions has rarely been used as an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Szymanski & Henard, 2001). When customers perceive risks through their interactions with products and services, those perceptions can influence their satisfaction either positively or negatively through general antecedents (Johnson, et al., 2008). Risk perception closely connects to negative consumption emotions, and these emotions can directly affect whether customers feel satisfied or dissatisfied (Mano & Oliver, 1993; Chaudhuri, 1997). Customers who perceived low risk tend to provide more lenient overall satisfaction evaluations (Bennett, et al., 2005)

H4 = Effect of Risk Perception Towards Positive WOM

Tourist risk perception during travel connects directly to post-visit behavioral intentions including revisit, loyalty and recommend intention (An, et al., 2010; Artuger, 2015; Cetinsoz & Ege, 2013; Qi, et al., 2009; Quintal, et al, 2010; Sohn, et al., 2016; Hasan, et al, 2017). Negative public opinion has been found to affect revisit intention through the transmission mechanism of tourist safety perceptions (Li, et al, 2019).

H5 = Effect of Tourist Satisfaction Towards Positive WOM

Customer satisfaction consistently drives higher customer retention rates and positive word-of-mouth (WOM) (Cronin, et al, 2000; Taylor & Baker, 1994; Kozak, 2001; Chi & Xu, 2008; Shin, et al, 2024). Tourists who feel satisfied are willing to share their experiences with others and recommend the service provider through both offline and online reviews (Sotiriadis, 2017). Satisfied customers tend to spread positive WOM, which helps companies retain customers and build a favorable image (Mangold, et al, 1999). Higher levels of customer satisfaction increase the likelihood of positive WOM communication and repeat purchases (Davidow, 2003).

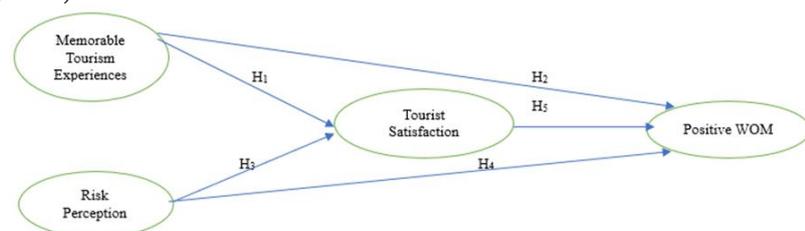


Figure 1. Research Model.

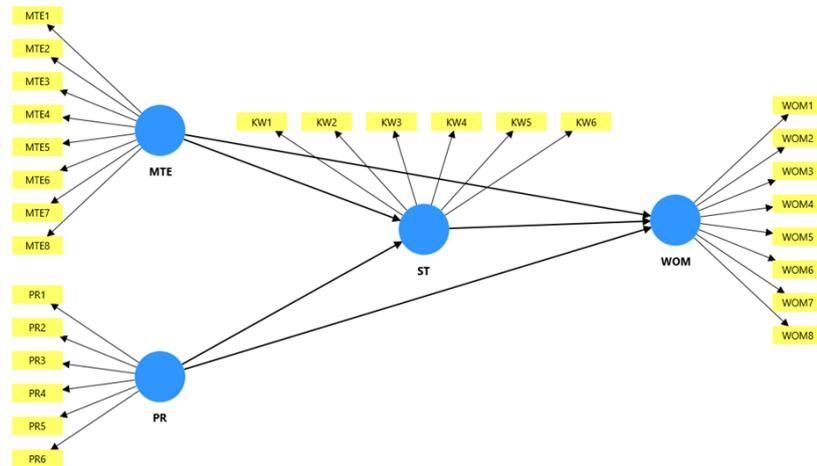


Figure 2. Research Model with Indicator.

3. Proposed Method

This study applied PLS-SEM analysis using SmartPLS 4 software. Indicators for each variable were adapted from previous empirical studies as follows:

Table 1. Variables Operationalization.

Variables	Codes	Indicators	Sources
Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE)	MTE1	I experienced emotional feelings (such as happiness, nostalgia, admiration, surprise, etc.) while using the tourist train.	Kim, et al, (2012), Seyfi, et al, (2019), Bayraktar & Selcuk (2022)
	MTE2	I had a good experience with the food service on the tourist train.	
	MTE3	I had an enjoyable experience during the journey on the tourist train.	
	MTE4	I had a different experience due to the innovations of the tourist train.	
	MTE5	I was impressed by the uniqueness of the tourist train.	
	MTE6	I was impressed by the design of the tourist train that reflects cultural elements.	
	MTE7	I was impressed by the appearance of the tourist train's logo.	
	MTE8	I was impressed by the social interactions that occurred during the tourist train journey.	
Risk Perception	RP1	I feel that the layout of the tourist train takes safety aspects into account.	Sugiarto (2023)
	RP2	I feel that the tourist train has proper safety facility arrangements.	
	RP3	I feel safe during the transaction process for the tourist train.	
	RP4	I feel that the tourist train pays attention to customer data security.	

	RP5	I feel that the administrative arrangements of the tourist train are clear.	
	RP6	I feel that the tourist train employees comply with existing regulations.	
Tourist Satisfaction	ST1	I feel that using the tourist train is the best choice.	Oliver (1997), Hendratono (2010)
	ST2	I need the tourist train service.	
	ST3	I feel comfortable using the tourist train.	
	ST4	I feel wise choosing to use the tourist train service.	
	ST5	I feel that the tourist train service is very enjoyable.	
	ST6	I feel that the tourist train service exceeds my expectations.	
Positive WOM	WOM1	I rely on online and/or offline reviews of the tourist train from others when choosing a trip.	Chen, et al (2021), Baber, et al (2024), Rahman, et al (2023)
	WOM2	I gather information from online and/or offline reviews of the tourist train uploaded by other customers before using it.	
	WOM3	I feel more confident after reading online and/or offline reviews of the tourist train.	
	WOM4	I will share my experience of using the tourist train online and/or offline.	
	WOM5	I will share my evaluation of the tourist train experience online and/or offline.	
	WOM6	I will speak positively online and/or offline about the tourist train.	
	WOM7	I will recommend the tourist train online and/or offline.	
	WOM8	I will convince others to use the tourist train online and/or offline.	

4. Results and Discussion

A total of 247 respondents was gathered and analyzed. Based on the respondent profile, all of respondent were tourists traveling by train tourism. The respondent profile shows a majority of male participants (52%), aged 31 to 50 years (55%), married (68%), employed in the private sector (54%), and holding a bachelor's degree (66%). Most respondents learned about tourist train services through social media (64%).

This study will use the measurement model, which involves testing for validity and reliability (Sugiarto, 2023). Convergent validity testing confirms that all variables meet the required threshold, with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50. The result of both analysis are as follows:

Table 2. Convergent Validity Test Results.

Variables	Codes	Loading Factor	AVE	Result
	MTE1	0.764	0,761	Valid

Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE)	MTE2	0.897		
	MTE3	0.904		
	MTE4	0.902		
	MTE5	0.893		
	MTE6	0.823		
	MTE7	0.797		
	MTE8	0.841		
	Risk Perception	RP1	0.894	0,812
RP2		0.912		
RP3		0.910		
RP4		0.908		
RP5		0.924		
RP6		0.867		
Tourist Satisfaction	ST1	0.908	0,847	Valid
	ST2	0.827		
	ST3	0.929		
	ST4	0.918		
	ST5	0.891		
	ST6	0.880		
Positive WOM	WOM1	0.830	0,709	Valid
	WOM2	0.760		
	WOM3	0.818		
	WOM4	0.855		
	WOM5	0.862		
	WOM6	0.859		
	WOM7	0.886		
	WOM8	0.869		

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Test Result (Cross Loadings).

Codes	MTE	Risk Perception	Tourist Satisfaction	Positive WOM
ST1	0.774	0.671	0.908	0.752
ST2	0.731	0.643	0.827	0.703
ST3	0.854	0.768	0.929	0.784
ST4	0.837	0.747	0.918	0.776
ST5	0.825	0.743	0.891	0.734
ST6	0.822	0.741	0.880	0.766
MTE1	0.764	0.642	0.695	0.669
MTE2	0.897	0.779	0.847	0.750
MTE3	0.904	0.787	0.853	0.755
MTE4	0.902	0.778	0.830	0.743
MTE5	0.893	0.719	0.798	0.742
MTE6	0.823	0.625	0.718	0.654
MTE7	0.797	0.616	0.672	0.641
MTE8	0.841	0.693	0.749	0.701

RP1	0.740	0.894	0.721	0.655
RP2	0.755	0.912	0.735	0.678
RP3	0.769	0.910	0.753	0.698
RP4	0.727	0.908	0.705	0.647
RP5	0.757	0.924	0.745	0.710
RP6	0.741	0.867	0.708	0.694
WOM1	0.622	0.558	0.611	0.830
WOM2	0.580	0.496	0.538	0.760
WOM3	0.682	0.596	0.674	0.818
WOM4	0.708	0.656	0.684	0.855
WOM5	0.685	0.632	0.701	0.862
WOM6	0.756	0.701	0.801	0.859
WOM7	0.774	0.726	0.821	0.886
WOM8	0.752	0.677	0.797	0.869

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the HTMT ratio, with all values falling below 0.894, confirming that no discriminant validity issues existed among the model constructs. Reliability testing revealed that Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables exceeded 0.90, indicating a very high level of internal consistency.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test Results (HTMT).

	MTE	Risk Perception	Tourist Satisfaction	Positive WOM
MTE				
Risk Perception	0,850			
Tourist Satisfaction	0,894	0,810		
Positive WOM	0,847	0,783	0,848	

Table 5. Reliability Test Results.

Variables	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Results
MTE	0,923	0,921	Reliable
Risk Perception	0,923	0,923	Reliable
Tourist Satisfaction	0,912	0,909	Reliable
Positive WOM	0,936	0,932	Reliable

The research model explains 69.9% of the variance in tourist satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.699$) and 70.0% of the variance in positive WOM ($R^2 = 0.700$), reflecting strong predictive power.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination Test Results.

Variables	R ²
Tourist Satisfaction	0,699
Positive WOM	0,700

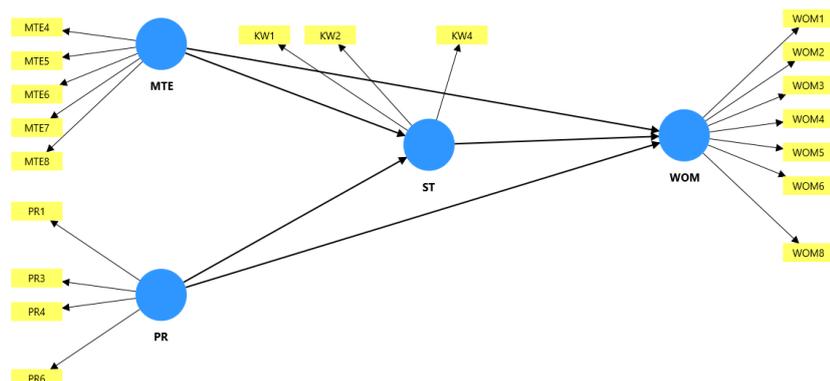


Figure 3. Path Coefficient Research Model.**Table 7.** Hypothesis Test Results.

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	P-value	Effect Size (f^2)	Results
H ₁	MTE → Satisfaction	0,620	0,000	0,486 Supported
H ₂	MTE → Positive WOM	0,330	0,000	0,093 Supported
H ₃	Risk Perception → Satisfaction	0,256	0,001	0,083 Supported
H ₄	Risk Perception → Positive WOM	0,196	0,000	0,045 Supported
H ₅	Satisfaction → Positive WOM	0,373	0,000	0,140 Supported

Path coefficients were analyzed by estimating t-values using 5,000 bootstrap samples in SmartPLS4. Path coefficient values range from -1 to +1, where values approaching +1 indicate a strong positive relationship and values approaching -1 indicate a negative relationship. All path coefficients must reach a significance level of at least 0.05. All five hypotheses proposed in this study were fully supported and statistically significant.

The hypothesis testing results confirm that all proposed relationships (H1–H5) are supported. Both risk perception (RP) and memorable tourism experiences (MTE) have significant effects on tourist satisfaction (ST) and word of mouth (WOM).

Specifically, MTE demonstrates the strongest influence on tourist satisfaction ($\beta = 0.620$, $f^2 = 0.486$, large effect), indicating that accepting memorable tourism is the most dominant driver of satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction itself significantly impacts positive WOM ($\beta = 0.373$, $f^2 = 0.140$, medium effect), underscoring its role as a central construct in enhancing positive recommendations. This findings of this research support the argument that MTE demonstrates a significant relationship with tourist behavioral intentions, including the intention to share information (Barnes et al., 2016; Kim, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018).

6. Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate that all proposed hypotheses are supported, confirming the significant relationships among risk perception, memorable tourism experiences, tourist satisfaction, and positive word of mouth. The findings of this study confirm that risk perception and memorable tourism experiences are key determinants of tourist satisfaction and positive WOM (Melon, et al., 2021).

Among these, memorable tourism experiences, emerges as the most influential factor, exerting the strongest effect on tourist satisfaction. This finding highlights that tourists place the greatest importance on the quality of risk management and experiences when evaluating their experiences especially in train tourism. Overall, the findings emphasize that memorable tourism experiences, and risk management quality not only shape tourist satisfaction but also indirectly foster positive WOM, which is critical for sustainable tourism growth.

From a managerial perspective, tourism service providers need to prioritize improving the quality of memorable tourism experiences, given their greatest impact on satisfaction. Risk management must also receive adequate attention, as interpersonal trust and safety contribute meaningfully to satisfaction and positive WOM. Staff training in customer service, risk management, and complaint handling can strengthen relational bonds with tourists. Managers should also actively monitor tourist satisfaction levels and encourage satisfied tourists to share their experiences as a reputation based marketing strategy that reinforces competitive advantage.

The limitation of this research model is the limitation sampling (respondents) was carried only within a certain period. The respondent's perception have dynamic, so in longitudinal research can be carried out to measure memorable tourism experiences and tourist satisfaction.

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