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Perceived Sustainability and its Effects on Trust and WOM Intention: a Study in Nature and Cultural Tourism

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This research aims to investigate the effects of perceived sustainability on tourist trust and word-of-mouth (WoM) intention. A survey was carried out on 450 international tourists visiting Bali during the May-August 2018 period. The measuring scale used was the Likert's scale, and the analysis instrument used was WarpPLS. The research results indicate that perceived sustainability had a significant effect on tourist trust, that perceived sustainability had a significant effect on WoM intention, and that tourist trust had a significant effect on WoM intention. The results contribute to the closing of the gaps in previous research studies, especially those on the effects of perceived sustainability on tourist trust and WoM intention at culture and nature-based destinations. Based on the results, it is recommended that tourist destination management maintain sustainability by conserving nature, preserving local cultures, and appreciating tourists' value of money so that the tourists have a trust in the tourist destinations' future and have a strong intention to recommend to others.

Key words: *Perceived sustainability, trust, WoM intention.*

Introduction

Investigation into sustainability in tourism development becomes critical as tourism has emerged as a strategic, yet controversial issue. The UNWTO—UN World Tourism Organization (2011) estimated that in 2030 the number of international tourists will multiply to 1.8 billion. Development in the tourism sector may increase revenue, but it may also compromise the environment. Meanwhile, the ever-increasing number of tourists will inflate income, but poor planning will risk environmental damage. The phenomenon of degraded



environmental quality (natural, social, and cultural environments) caused by tourism activities garnered special attention from the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) back in 2005. The UNEP recommends sustainability for environmental preservation and improvement of tourist satisfaction and interest in tourist destinations. Tourism development strategies ideally take sustainability approaches which focus on the optimization of local asset use on the one hand, and align stakeholders' current and future needs, while ensuring high tourist satisfaction and experience on the other hand (UNEP, 2005).

It is of much importance that tourist perceived sustainability be studied, as it dictates the future of tourist destinations. Tourists are key stakeholders when it comes to decision-making processes, as their perspective governs which tourist destinations are of interest (Weaver and Lawton, 2004). Tourists demonstrate their support for sustainability efforts through their interest and behaviour when visiting tourist sites. Tourist perceived sustainability will build trust and determine their intention to revisit and to recommend to others. The UNWTO (2011) specified sustainability development based on three primary aspects: environment, socio-culture, and economy (Farsari, 2012; Jamrozy; 2007; Ramgulam, Raghunandan-Mohammed, and Raghunandan, 2013).

Perceived sustainability has drawn considerable attention from researchers. Iniesta-Bonillo et al. (2016) examined the effect of perceived sustainability on tourist satisfaction, while Kim (2017) compared each indicator of perceived sustainability in isolation (economy, environment, and culture) against revisitation intention and word-of-mouth intention. Chen et al. (2015) researched the effect of environmental sustainability on tourist trust, but studies on other aspects of sustainability (environmental and economic) have yet to receive adequate attention. Thus, this research emerges to promote a new path to figuring out the effect of perceived sustainability (economy, environment, and culture) on tourist trust and WoM intention. This research focused on international tourists to Bali Island, Indonesia's chief nature and culture-based tourist destination, dubbed as one of the TOP 100 Sustainable Destinations worldwide (www.greendestinations.org). The island has also been ranked first by TripAdvisor among the 25 best world destinations in 2017 (tempo.com, March 7, 2018). The aims of this research were (1) to examine the effect of perceived sustainability on tourist trust, (2) to examine the effect of perceived sustainability on WoM intention, and (3) to examine the effect of tourist trust on WoM intention.

Literature Review and Conceptual Model

Tourism sustainability

Sustainability in tourist industry development is defined as "the development which meets current needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs"



(Brundtland, 1987). Sustainable tourism fully takes into account economic, social, and environmental impacts on the future needs of the tourists, industries, environment, and local communities (UNEP, 2005). Sustainability has an emphasis on the ecological, social, and economic elements of tourism, for the balanced and prudent utilization of natural resources (Hall and Macionis, 1998). Sustainable tourism satiates both tourists and the requirements of local communities, while protecting and increasing future opportunities (Iniesta-Bonillo et al., 2016). Ultimately, sustainable tourism is a concept of tourism management which counts the benefits and long-term impacts of a tourist destination for stakeholders. The benefits and impacts received include the environmental, sociocultural, and economic domains. Tourism stakeholders are comprised of the governments, local communities, business actors, and tourists. Tourists have an interest in the quality of destinations in the coming days (UNEP, 2005). Sustainable tourism development should not only satisfy the visiting tourists and immediate demands, but also protect and increase future opportunities (Rodríguez Díaz and Espino Rodríguez, 2016). Stakeholders should join forces in mitigating the impacts of rapid growth, through sustainability (Chung and Whang, 2011; Hwang, 2012; Iniesta-Bonillo et al., 2016).

Sustainability conceptualization and measurement are still ongoing. A number of authors have developed sustainability indicators for particular geographical territories (e.g., Cernat and Gourdon, 2012; Ko, 2005). Some others developed multi-dimensional approaches, which may cover three dimensions, namely the economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Martínez and Rodríguez delBosque, 2014); four dimensions, namely the economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and institutional dimensions (Cottrell, Vaske, and Roemer, 2013); or even seven dimensions, including the environmental, cultural, political, economic, social, managerial, and governmental dimensions (Bramwell et al., 1996). International organizations (e.g., the United Nations, 2012; the UNWTO, 2011) determine sustainability development in three main aspects: environment, socio-culture, and economy (Farsari, 2012; Jamrozy, 2007; Ramgulam, Raghunandan-Mohammed, and *Raghunandan*, 2013). Eventually, the sustainable tourism dimensions boil down to environmental sustainability, cultural sustainability, and economic sustainability (Iniesta-Bonillo et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2017).

Trust

Berry and Parasuraman (1991) revealed that the relationship between the consumer and the producer/service provider requires trust to become a long-term relationship. Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997) state that trust is a hope or desire that the service provider be reliable in performing what is promised. In the context of tourism, tourist trust is consumers' trust that the destination management would not behave negatively and cause them harm. Meanwhile, Gefen (2000) defined that trust as consumers' evaluation that the provider is trustworthy.



Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) state that trust is consumers' hope that the service provider is reliable and can be relied on to keep its promises. Barnes (2003) revealed that trust involves one's willingness to behave in a certain way because of the belief that the partner would provide them with what they want, and one's general hope that a person is trustworthy in their words, promises, or statements. Koeszegi (2004) defined trust as the knowledge that the seller would not take risky actions considered as threats to the buyer. Finally, we concluded that consumer trust refers to the consumer's evaluation that the service provider is reliable and meets their hopes. This definition depicts that trust as a foundation for the partnership between two different parties, as mentioned by Morgan and Hunt (1994).

Green (2006) states that a consumer who has a trust will conduct things beneficial for the producer/service provider, for example, listening more, sharing more useful information with the company, being easier to contact, being more tolerant of the company's standards, designating a good, special status to the producer, being more forgiving, being willing to share important information with other parties, and being more open to advice. Trust is deemed a key to maintaining the relationship between the consumer and the service provider (Chiu et al., 2012; Han and Hyun, 2013). Santos and Basso (2012) state that trust plays an indispensable role in determining tourist intention to spread positive words of mouth and to repurchase. Trust based on visit experience serves as a significant determinant of revisit intention (Lankton, Wilson, and Mao, 2010). Some researchers classified trust into a couple of indicators. Lewis and Weigert (1985) measure trust based on the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects, and Chang (2012) based it on two indicators, namely affective and cognitive indicators. Meanwhile, Morgan and Hunt (1994) gauge trust according to a number of aspects, namely self-confidence, reliability, and integrity. Trust indicators in the context of tourism according to Pujiastuti et al. (2017) include reliability, ability to serve, best service offer, satisfaction for tourists, and pleasurable destinations for tourists.

WoM Intention

Word-of-mouth is indispensable in tourism as it maintains the sustainability of destinations (Litvin et al., 2008). Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1995) state that WoM is an informal transmission of ideas, commentaries, opinions, and information between two people, none of whom belongs to the marketing staff. Richins and Root-Shffer (1988) defined WoM as a form of interpersonal communication between consumers on their personal experiences with a company or product, by improving or spoiling the reputation of the communication object. As stated by Sernovitz (2006), WoM is a form of marketing where consumers join a discussion and participate within it but never manipulate, fake, or degrade honesty. WoM is highly effective because trust comes from those not benefiting from their recommendations.



Tourists have WoM intention after visiting a destination as it allows them an opportunity to discuss what becomes their object of interest, tell about a destination, express their opinions, or talk about their experiences (Wells and Prensky, 1996). To the receivers of the message, WoM enables them to collect important information for decision-making. News on others' individual experiences reduces confusion during evaluation of an overwhelming amount of information. Meanwhile, to the destinations, WoM improves their image if the message relayed is positive. However, if the message is negative, it will deal them a loss instead.

Harrison-Walker (2001) measure WoM by constructing two dimensions: WoM activity and WoM praise. Riduan et al. (2015) later developed WoM dimensions from Harrison-Walker (2001), Keong (2006), Lang (2011), and Dumas (2010). WoM activity refers to the frequency at which an individual is engaged in WoM and the number of people engaged in WoM, while WoM praise refers to the consumers' commentary on their experience for the purpose of recommending to others.

Perceived Sustainability and Tourist Trust

Trust is deemed key to maintaining the relationship between the consumer and the service provider (Chiu et al., 2012; Hand and Hyun, 2013). Berry and Parasuraman (1991) reveal that the relationship between the consumer and the producer/service provider takes trust to last in the long run. Strong trust reflects a high quality of relationship. Relationship quality concerns not only temporary relationships but also long-term ones. Iniesta-Bonillo (2016) assert that sustainable tourism development not only satisfies visiting tourists and immediate demands, but also protect and increase long-term opportunities. This means that sustainability will improve trust by protecting the relationship between the tourists and the tourist destinations. Chen et al.'s research results (2015) show that environmental friendliness significantly affected green trust. Research specifically examining the effects of perceived cultural sustainability and perceived economic sustainability on trust is still highly rare, opening an opportunity for further investigation.

The logical/rational relationship between perceived sustainability and trust can be explained thus. If tourists have a positive impression about the sustainability efforts of a tourist destination, they will trust that the destination quality will be constant and the destination will always satisfy them. This is based on the fact that many tourist destinations have their quality degraded by management factors, resulting in environmental damage and conflicts with local communities. Through sustainability, tourists will be spared from worries about the destination's decreased quality and thus will be spared from harm. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived sustainability has an effect on trust.



Perceived Sustainability and WoM Intention

Conceptualization of behaviour intention, including the revisit intention and the word-of-mouth intention, has been widely reviewed (as in Pujiastuti et al., 2017; Bajs, 2015; Canny, 2013). However, empirical evidence showing the influence of perceived sustainability on word-of-mouth intention has been scarce. Empirically, it is shown that each perceived sustainability indicator (economy, environment, and culture) has an effect on word-of-mouth intention (Kim et al., 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived sustainability has an effect on WoM intention.

Trust and WoM Intention

Santos and Basso (2012) state that trust plays a critical role in determining customers' positive word-of-mouth intention and repurchase intention. Walter and Ritter (2003) convey that trust enables customers to recommend to others. According to Green, the more that customers trust a product or service, the more they will be willing to listen, share useful company information, be contacted, be tolerant of the company's standards, rate the company positively, be forgiving, share important information with others, and accept advice/suggestions. Important information is given through positive communication in which others are recommended to follow one's experience. Morgan and Hunt (1994) express that trust leading to successful relationships can improve communication, cooperation, and purchase intention and spur purchase increase if it can reduce the perceived purchase complexity and risk. Empirical evidence by Su and Fan (2011) shows that trust has a significant effect on WoM intention. Pujiastuti et al.'s study (2017) also indicates that trust significantly affected behavioural intention, which was measured by a variety of dimensions including WoM intention. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 3: Tourist trust has an effect on WoM intention.

Research Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

The survey method was employed in this research to collect data on international visitors to Bali Island. The questionnaires were formulated in four languages (English, Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic). They were translated by linguists and verified by natives to strengthen the consistency and accuracy. The research respondents were international tourists aged at least 18 years who had been visiting Bali for a minimum of three days and had visited nature and culture-based tourist destinations. The questionnaires were distributed to the international tourists on their home trip or at the airport. As many as 450 questionnaires were distributed from May through August 2018. All of the returned 450 responses were complete, thus worthy of further analysis. There were over 100,000 tourists visiting Bali. Referring to



Sekaran (2003) and Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the minimum sample size would be 384. Thus, the incoming responses have satisfied the minimum sample size requirement.

Variable Operationalization and Analysis

The authors measured all constructs making use of the literature. Perceived sustainability utilized the three dimensions adapted from Andereck and Vogt (2000), Tsaor, Lin, and Lin (2006), Byrd, Bosley, and Dronberger (2009), Iniesta-Bonillo et al. (2016), and Kim et al. (2017). Tourist trust drew upon the five items adapted from Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Pujiastuti et al. (2017). Lastly, WoM intention used the five items adapted from Harrison-Walker (2001) and Riduan et al. (2015). To measure all of the items, the authors employed a five-point Likert's scale from "strongly disagree" (1) through "strongly agree" (5) and conducted instrument validity and reliability testing on 30 respondents. The instrument testing results showed a correlation coefficient of > 0.3 and a Cronbach's alpha of > 0.6 , suggesting that the instruments yielded valid and reliable data and could be used for measuring the variables on a larger number of respondents. The research data analysis was conducted with SPSS 20.0 and WarpPLS 6.0.

Results and Discussion

Sample Characteristics

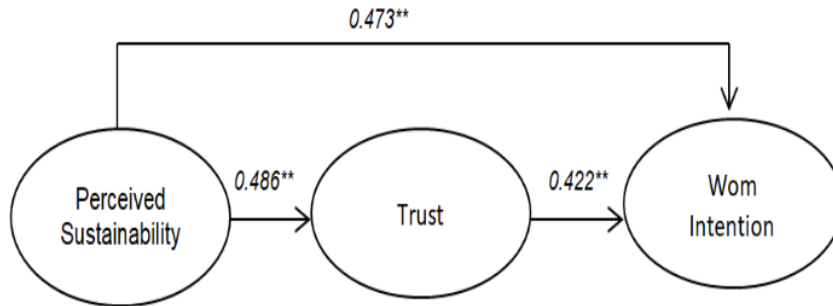
Based on the sample, women represented 47.7% and men 52.3% of the respondents. Nationality is dominated by China 26.9% and Australia 25.1%, while other nationalities are 48% cumulatively. The details of the age group are as follows: 30.3% at age < 31 years, 42.3% at age 31-40 years, 20.3% at age 41-50 years, and 7.2% at age > 50 years. Travel composition is as follows: with friends (62.8%), family (28.7%), colleagues (5.4%), and alone (3.1%). The majority of respondents (57.7.3%) first visited Bali, the second visit was 34.6%, the third visit was 5.4%, and the fourth visit was 2.3%. Visitation duration is as follows: 3-4 days 52.1%, 5-6 days 28.5%, and more than 6 days 19.4%.

Measurement Model

Cross check validity and reliability used convergent validity, discriminant validity, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha. The results of convergent validity measurements indicate that all standardized factor loadings exceeded 0.50. AVE. All variables exceed each square estimate. Therefore it fulfils convergent validity and discriminant validity. Composite Construct Reliability > 0.7 and Cronbach's alpha > 0.6 , reliability is fulfilled (Table 1). Intercorrelation between constructs exhibits a significant relationship, therefore, it is predicted to have a significant influence (Table 2).

Structural Model

Figure 1. Final Structural Model



Path coefficient, ** $p < 0.01$

Test of Hypotheses

H1 predicted that perceived sustainability has an effect on trust. The results reveal that tourist trust was affected in a significant, positive way by perceived sustainability (path coefficient = 0.486, $p < 0.01$). Thus, H1 was supported.

H2 predicted that perceived sustainability has an effect on WoM intention. The results reveal that tourist trust was affected in a significant, positive way by perceived sustainability (path coefficient = 0.473, $p < 0.01$). Thus, H2 was supported.

H3 predicted that trust has an effect on WoM intention. The results reveal that tourist trust was affected in a significant, positive way by perceived economic sustainability (path coefficient = 0.422, $p < 0.01$). Thus, H3 was supported.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Perceived Sustainability and Trust

The research results indicate that perceived sustainability had a significant, positive effect on trust. This supports Chen et al.'s study (2015), which states that environmental friendliness had a significant effect on trust. The environmentally friendly state of a destination made tourists believe that the tourist destination always had its quality maintained. Tourists' positive perception on environmental sustainability boosted their trust in the efforts made by the tourist destination management in conserving nature. Similarly, protection for the authenticity of the local culture made the tourists believe that the destination's attraction was preserved. The infrastructure development and value of money perceived by the tourists also improved their trust. The tourists felt that their money was worth spending because it



benefited not only the tourists themselves but also the local communities. These findings are essential to close the research gap rarely investigated by prior researchers.

Perceived Sustainability and WoM Intention

The research results also indicate that perceived sustainability had a significant effect on WoM intention. Foreign tourists' perceived sustainability led to WoM intention. This supports the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), which states that perception forms behaviour intention. It is also consistent with the opinions of Eusebio and Vieira (2013), Ozdemir et al. (2012), Sun et al. (2013), and Kim and Brown (2012) that tourists' sustainability-effort-related past experiences would lead to behaviour intention. Based on the results of this research, to improve the tourists' WoM intention, destinations' sustainability efforts should be increased. The mean score of the variable WoM intention was still sub-optimal, thus, in the competition context, constituting a drawback that must be addressed. This can be performed by improving the values of the indicators of perceived sustainability.

Trust and WoM Intention

Trust is of much criticality in directing tourists' behaviour. When the tourists trust a destination, they will feel the urge to share their experiences with others. This research's results reveal that trust had a significant effect on WoM intention. This supports the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), which explains that attitude forms behaviour intention. The attitude in this research was the tourists' post-visit trust, while the behaviour intention took the form of WoM intention. When foreign tourists were convinced that Bali would meet their expectations in the future and when they felt no harm, they would have the intention to disseminate their information on Bali to others. These results are also consistent with Santos and Basso's statement (2012) that trust plays a material role in determining customers' positive word-of-mouth intention and repurchase intention. Besides, these results supports Walter and Ritter's findings (2003) that trust enabled customers to recommend to others and Green's (2006) and Su & Fan's (2011) opinion that the more the customers trust a product or service, the more willing they are to share important information with others. These are also in agreement with Morgan and Hunt's statement (1994) that trust which leads to successful relationships can improve communication, cooperation, and purchase intention and increase purchases.

Implications

The results of this research have an academic implication by presenting how perceived sustainability influences trust. Earlier researchers focused mainly on the effect of perceived



environmental sustainability on trust (as in Chen et al., 2015), but not many have examined the effect of perceived sustainability (environmental, cultural, economic) on trust. This shows that tourist trust and WoM intention are formed not only by environmental sustainability but also by cultural and economic sustainability. Additionally, trust also affects WoM intention, thus reinforcing the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2975) in the tourism context.

The practical implications of this research's findings can be applied in the environment-based tourist destination management. The future of destinations is dictated by how the destinations' management behaves in managing nature and culture-based attractions. Tourist destination authorities must keep in mind that the tourism industry and market are driven by visiting tourists through WoM (Cooper and Hall, 2016). Tourists would trust the destinations and recommend them to others if they construct a positive perception on the environmental, cultural, and economic aspects. Tourists expect well-preserved natural and cultural environments and appreciate value-for-money.

Limitations and Future Research

This research comes with a number of limitations; thus, it is hoped that future researchers would make improvements to it. The first limitation is that, although this research has extended prior studies (Iniasta-Bonillo et al., 2016 and Kim et al., 2017), the scope of this research was still restricted to tourists' intention and has yet to showcase the actual behaviour. It is hoped that further research would focus its investigation on tourists' behaviour. Second, it was described that the majority of the respondents (72.6%) were below 40 years of age, thus falling into the Generation Z and millennial categories. For the most part, they would employ communication based on social media and the Internet, including one for recommending a tourist destination. This research was still restricted to conventional word-of-mouth, thus future research is recommended to investigate electronic-word-of-mouth or word-of-mouth based on social media. Lastly, this research is cross-sectional, but longitudinal research is deemed to be better in accuracy.



Table 1: Results of confirmatory factor analysis for measurement model¹

Construct and Items	Standardized Loading	p-Value
Perceived Sustainability ($\alpha=0.888$)		
I think Bali has low pollution level	0.730	0.008
I think Bali can control unpleasant smell	0.773	0.003
I think Bali has a low complexity level	0.822	0.000
I think Bali always keep the historical heritage (monument and museum) well	0.772	0.002
I think in Bali, cultural heritage (celebrations and traditions) are well preserved	0.901	0.000
I think Bali looks to maintain the authenticity of the local culture well	0.765	0,003
I think Bali makes an investment to attract tourists.	0.877	0,001
I think Bali has a good basic infrastructure	0.756	0.003
I consider that tourist services in Bali are affordable	0.698	0.009
Trust ($\alpha=0.887$)		
Bali destinations can be relied upon to meet recreational needs	0.892	0.000
Tourists destination managers in Bali have high integrity to satisfy tourists	0.856	0.000
I am confident in the ability of Bali Tourism Management in serving tourists	0.804	0.000
I believe Bali offers a quality destination service	0.922	0.000
I believe tourist destinations in Bali ensure tourists satisfaction	0.912	0.000
WoM intention (0.893)		
I will share my experience in Bali with others	0.904	0.000
I will discuss Bali more often than other tourist attractions	0.898	0.000
I will say good things about Bali to others	0.909	0.000
I am proud to tell about Bali to others	0.940	0.000
I would recommend for others to visit Bali	0.921	0.000

¹ APC=0.459, $p<0.001$; ARS=0.583, $p<0.001$; AARS=0.490, $p<0.001$; AVIF=3.977; AFVIF=3.192; GoF=0.623; SPR=0.724; SSR=1.000; NLBCDR=0.912.



Table 2: Construct intercorrelations, mean, standard deviation (SD), CCR, and AVE

Constructs	Mean	SD	PS	TRS	WoM-I
PS	4.21	0.62	1		
TRS	4.26	0.56	0.834**	1	
WoM-I	4.15	0.66	0.660**	0.776**	1
CCR¹			0.877	0.883	0.867
AVE²			0.823	0.787	0.802



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