The Role of User-Generated Content and Firm-Generated Content on Destination Image and Intention to Visit Derawan Island: A Stimulus–Organism–Response Approach

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Abstract

This study examines the role of user-generated content (UGC) and firm-generated content (FGC) in shaping destination image and their influence on the intention to visit Derawan Islands using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework. The research addresses the limited understanding of cognitive and affective mechanisms in digital-based destination image formation. A quantitative survey was conducted with 165 potential tourists exposed to UGC and FGC related to Derawan. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that affective image significantly influences intention to visit, while cognitive image is not significant. FGC affects intention both directly and indirectly, whereas UGC influences intention indirectly through affective image. Findings highlight the dominant role of emotional attachment compared to rational evaluation in driving tourist behavior. The study suggests that destination managers should emphasize emotional narratives by balancing UGC authenticity with FGC credibility in digital communication strategies. Future research should explore generational differences or tourist segmentation for broader insights. These results are important as they demonstrate that tourism promotion appealing to emotions is more effective in enhancing visit intentions.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the key sectors that significantly contributes to economic development, both globally and nationally. In Indonesia, the sector not only serves as a major source of foreign exchange but also plays a role in creating employment opportunities, promoting regional development, and strengthening cultural diplomacy (BPS, 2022). Through various strategic programs, such as *Wonderful Indonesia* and *Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI)*, the Indonesian government continues to enhance the competitiveness of its tourism destinations. Among these, the Derawan

Islands in Berau Regency, East Kalimantan, stand out as a premier destination with world-class marine attractions.

The Derawan Islands are renowned for their rich marine biodiversity, ranging from well-preserved coral reefs, green sea turtles, and manta rays to the rare phenomenon of non-stinging jellyfish in Kakaban Lake (Department of Culture and Tourism, 2023). With pristine white-sand beaches, internationally recognized diving spots, and floating resorts in Maratua Island, Derawan has earned the title "Maldives of Indonesia" (Mikulic et al., 2023). This potential positions Derawan as one of Indonesia's leading destinations with global competitiveness. However, in the face of intensifying international tourism competition, natural advantages alone are insufficient to ensure sustainability and continuous growth in tourist arrivals.

The shift in tourist behavior in the digital era underscores that decisions to visit a destination are increasingly determined by information obtained through social media and digital platforms rather than conventional promotions (Xu et al., 2021). Modern tourists actively seek information, compare experiences, and assess the credibility of destinations before making travel decisions. Consequently, digital content has emerged as a decisive factor in shaping tourist perceptions.

Two dominant types of digital content influencing tourist behavior are User-Generated Content (UGC) and Firm-Generated Content (FGC). UGC, such as reviews, photos, and videos uploaded by tourists on social media or online review platforms, is often perceived as more authentic and credible because it derives from real experiences (Yamagishi, 2023; Wijaya, 2024). Conversely, FGC—produced by official institutions, travel agencies, or Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)—tends to be more structured, consistent, and strategic in conveying destination information (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2022). These two content types are not mutually exclusive but complementary: UGC fosters emotional closeness, while FGC strengthens legitimacy through factual details (Stojanovic et al., 2022).

Tourism literature emphasizes that digital content influences tourist behavior through the formation of destination image, which has long been recognized as a primary determinant of tourists' intention to visit (Beerli & Martín, 2004). Over time, destination image has evolved into a multidimensional concept encompassing cognitive image and affective image. Cognitive image reflects tourists' rational evaluations of destination attributes such as attractions, facilities, and accessibility (Lekovic et al., 2020). Affective image, on the other hand, relates to tourists' emotional responses, such as feelings of awe, joy, or relaxation when imagining the destination (Crompton, 1979 in Chaulagain et al., 2019). Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive perception of a destination, which directly influences intention to visit (Harrill et al., 2023; Jorge et al., 2023).

UGC and FGC play distinct roles in shaping these dimensions. UGC, with its personal narratives, authentic photos, and real-life videos, strongly contributes to the formation of affective image (Xu et al., 2021; Yamagishi, 2023). For example, a tourist's post about diving with sea turtles or watching a sunset on Derawan Island fosters emotional attachment that enhances the destination's appeal. Conversely, FGC plays a

stronger role in reinforcing cognitive image by presenting structured official information, such as transportation access to Derawan, tour packages, and accommodation facilities (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2022; Jhawar, 2024). Thus, the combination of UGC and FGC builds a holistic perception of the destination—both rational and emotional—ultimately increasing tourists' intention to visit (Das et al., 2024).

While prior studies have highlighted the role of UGC and FGC in shaping destination image, most have examined it as an aggregate construct without differentiating between its cognitive and affective dimensions (Stojanovic et al., 2022; Wijaya, 2024). Yet, these dimensions operate through different mechanisms: cognitive image assures tourists of a destination's reliability, whereas affective image drives desire and enthusiasm to travel. Addressing this research gap is crucial, especially in the context of Indonesian marine destinations such as the Derawan Islands, which increasingly rely on digital strategies to strengthen global competitiveness.

The theoretical lens most relevant for explaining these mechanisms is the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Kim et al., 2018). Within this framework, UGC and FGC function as external stimuli influencing the organism—represented by tourists' cognitive and affective images—which subsequently generate the response in the form of intention to visit. This approach enables a more comprehensive analysis of both the direct and indirect pathways through which digital content affects tourist behavior.

The Derawan Islands were selected as the research context for three main reasons. First, Derawan possesses internationally competitive marine advantages, with unique attractions rarely found elsewhere (Department of Culture and Tourism, 2023). Second, the destination enjoys extensive digital exposure through both UGC and FGC. Third, despite its growing popularity, Derawan's destination image still faces challenges of consistency and differentiation compared to other Southeast Asian marine destinations. Hence, this study is important to understand how UGC and FGC influence intention to visit—both directly and indirectly—through cognitive and affective images in the case of Derawan.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to digital tourism literature by explicitly exploring the mediating roles of cognitive and affective image, which have been relatively underexamined. From a practical perspective, the findings are expected to provide insights for destination managers and policymakers in designing more effective digital communication strategies—balancing the emotional power of UGC with the cognitive legitimacy of FGC—to strengthen Derawan Island's destination image and enhance its appeal in the global tourism market.

LITERATURE STUDY

Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory was first introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in the field of environmental psychology to explain how external stimuli (stimulus) can influence an individual's internal state (organism) and ultimately shape behavioral responses (response). This model emphasizes that the

interaction between external and internal factors is the underlying mechanism of human behavior. In the context of modern marketing, this theory is often used to explain how consumers process marketing stimuli that lead to certain behaviors, such as purchase decisions or visiting intentions (Kim et al., 2020).

In tourism research, the S-O-R theory provides a relevant conceptual framework for understanding the role of digital content in shaping tourist behavior. The stimulus in this context refers to information or content delivered through social media and official digital channels, such as user-generated content (UGC) and firm-generated content (FGC). Both types of content influence the organism of tourists, which in this study is represented by cognitive perceptions (cognitive image) and emotional responses (affective image). Subsequently, these internal aspects generate a response in the form of intention to visit. With such a framework, the S-O-R theory not only explains the direct relationship between digital content and visiting intention but also the psychological mechanisms that mediate this relationship (Xu et al., 2021).

The Influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Firm-Generated Content (FGC) on Cognitive Image

Cognitive image refers to tourists' rational evaluation of a destination, encompassing perceptions of tourist attractions, infrastructure, accommodation facilities, and accessibility (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Lekovic et al., 2020). This dimension is factual and informational in nature, making it highly influenced by the type of information received by tourists.

User-generated content (UGC) plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive image. Content such as reviews, photos, or videos created by tourists provides factual depictions of the actual conditions of a destination. Xu et al. (2021) demonstrated that visual storytelling in UGC helps prospective tourists gain a deeper understanding of facilities and attractions. Furthermore, Das et al. (2024) emphasized that UGC enriches tourists' rational knowledge through practical details, such as prices, travel routes, or service quality, thereby enhancing the cognitive aspect of destination evaluation. Thus, UGC serves as a relevant source of information for constructing cognitive image.

Meanwhile, firm-generated content (FGC) tends to be more structured and systematic in delivering information. Official promotional content produced by governments, travel agencies, or Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) usually highlights rational aspects, such as transportation, tour packages, and supporting facilities (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2022). Stojanovic et al. (2022) found that FGC significantly influences the formation of cognitive image because it provides information that is credible, consistent, and validated.

Therefore, both UGC and FGC influence cognitive image, albeit through different pathways: UGC through real experiences shared by tourists, and FGC through professionally designed formal information. These two forms of content complement each other, thereby reinforcing the cognitive image of a destination in the minds of potential tourists.

The Influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Firm-Generated Content (FGC) on Affective Image

Affective image refers to tourists' emotional responses toward a destination, such as feelings of awe, joy, relaxation, or excitement (Crompton, 1979 in Chaulagain et al., 2019). This dimension is often shaped by emotional and visual narratives that are able to evoke travelers' feelings.

UGC plays a major role in shaping affective image because of its authenticity and closeness to tourists' personal experiences. Xu et al. (2021) emphasized that visual narratives in UGC generate strong emotional resonance, thereby increasing the emotional appeal of a destination. Yamagishi et al. (2024) further showed that younger tourists, particularly Generation Z, tend to trust UGC more than official content because of its honesty and authenticity. For example, UGC in the form of a sunset photo in Derawan Island or a testimonial about snorkeling with turtles can trigger both curiosity and an emotional desire to experience the same activity.

Nevertheless, FGC can also shape affective image. Official promotions using high-quality photographs, cinematic videos, or emotionally driven narratives can evoke feelings of awe and enthusiasm (Stojanovic et al., 2022). While FGC is more rationally structured, it can still elicit emotional responses if designed with a creative communication approach. Therefore, FGC complements the role of UGC in forming affective image.

In conclusion, the combination of UGC and FGC creates a stronger and more comprehensive affective image. Tourists are not only emotionally connected through the real-life experiences of other travelers but also receive emotional reinforcement from well-crafted official promotions. The synergy of both types of content increases the likelihood of a destination being perceived positively on an emotional level, which ultimately enhances intention to visit.

The Influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Firm-Generated Content (FGC) on Intention to Visit

Intention to visit is defined as tourists' willingness to visit a destination in the future, reflecting behavioral tendencies based on previously formed perceptions and emotions (Beerli & Martín, 2004). As a dependent variable, intention to visit is frequently employed in tourism research to predict tourists' actual decision-making.

UGC has been shown to significantly influence intention to visit. Tourist-generated content is generally perceived as more credible than official advertisements because it reflects authentic experiences (Eman & Refaie, 2023). Their study found that Instagram posts directly enhance positive perceptions of a destination and encourage tourists' willingness to visit. This aligns with the notion that consumers tend to trust peer recommendations more than formal marketing communications.

FGC also exerts an influence on intention to visit. Stojanovic et al. (2022) emphasized that the intensity of FGC strengthens destination brand equity, which consequently increases tourists' visiting intention. By providing consistent and credible information, FGC reduces uncertainty among prospective tourists and reinforces their trust in the destination.

However, although the direct influence of UGC and FGC on intention to visit is significant, several studies have shown that the indirect effect through destination image is even stronger (Wijaya et al., 2024). This suggests that cognitive and affective perceptions shaped by digital content act as critical mediators that strengthen the relationship between stimuli (UGC and FGC) and response (intention to visit).

The Mediating Role of Cognitive Image and Affective Image

Previous studies have demonstrated that cognitive image and affective image play crucial roles as mediators in the relationship between UGC, FGC, and intention to visit. Liu et al. (2024) revealed that tourists' perception of information quality enhances their trust through the formation of cognitive image, which in turn leads to stronger visiting intentions. In other words, cognitive image bridges the influence of UGC and FGC by providing rational assurance that the chosen destination offers attractions consistent with tourists' expectations.

In addition, affective image also functions as a significant mediator. Harrill et al. (2023) asserted that positive emotions generated by destination content exert a stronger influence than cognitive evaluations alone in stimulating intention to visit. Similarly, Jorge et al. (2023) found that emotional attachment formed through destination visualization significantly increases tourists' willingness to travel. Thus, affective image serves as a primary pathway through which digital content triggers emotional responses that ultimately motivate tourists to visit.

These two dimensions of image work in a complementary manner. Cognitive image ensures that tourists feel rationally confident, while affective image evokes emotional desire. The combination of both strengthens the impact of UGC and FGC on intention to visit, operating through both logical and emotional channels. Therefore, this study positions cognitive and affective image as key mediating variables in the conceptual model.

Hypotheses and Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review presented, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** User-generated content (UGC) has a positive effect on the cognitive image of Derawan Island.
- **H2:** Firm-generated content (FGC) has a positive effect on the cognitive image of Derawan Island.
- **H3:** User-generated content (UGC) has a positive effect on the affective image of Derawan Island.
- **H4:** Firm-generated content (FGC) has a positive effect on the affective image of Derawan Island.
- **H5:** User-generated content (UGC) has a positive effect on intention to visit Derawan Island.
- **H6:** Firm-generated content (FGC) has a positive effect on intention to visit Derawan Island.

- **H7:** Cognitive image mediates the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on intention to visit.
- **H8:** Cognitive image mediates the influence of firm-generated content (FGC) on intention to visit.
- **H9:** Affective image mediates the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on intention to visit.
- **H10:** Affective image mediates the influence of firm-generated content (FGC) on intention to visit.

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory. Within this framework, UGC and FGC serve as the **stimuli**, cognitive image and affective image represent the **organism**, and intention to visit functions as the **response**. The relationships among these constructs can be illustrated as follows:

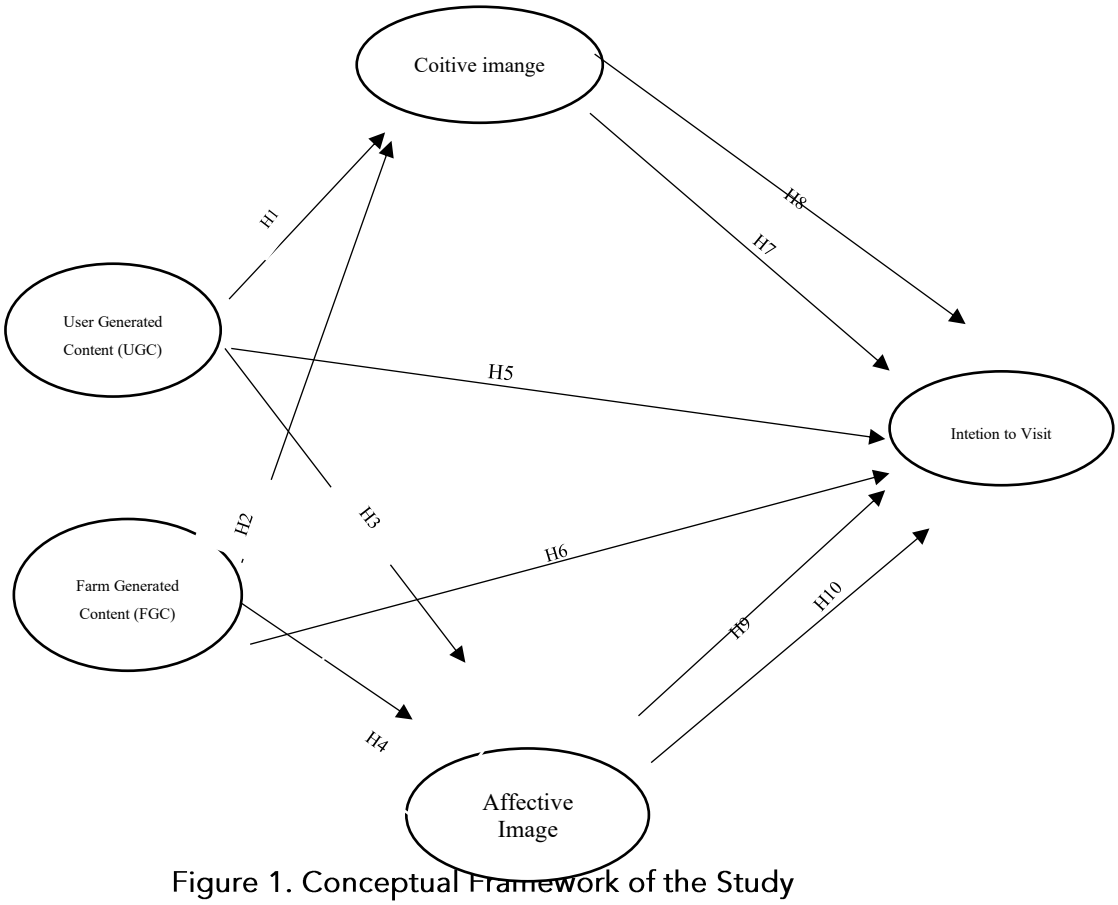

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Researcher, 2025

This model illustrates that both UGC and FGC influence intention to visit directly as well as indirectly through the mediating roles of cognitive image and affective image.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a causal research design to examine the relationships among the variables formulated in the hypotheses. Data were collected through a survey method using a structured questionnaire developed based on the research constructs: user-generated content (UGC), firm-generated content (FGC), cognitive image, affective image, and intention to visit. Each construct was measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), comprising a total of 33 items adapted from previous studies and adjusted to the context of Derawan Island (Xu et al., 2021; Stojanovic et al., 2022; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Harrill et al., 2023). This instrument was designed to capture both the cognitive and affective aspects of destination image as well as tourists' intention to visit.

The population of this study consists of both domestic and international tourists who are potential visitors to Derawan Island and have been exposed to digital content related to the destination. The sample size was determined based on the rule of thumb recommended by Hair et al. (2019) for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which suggests a minimum of five respondents per measurement item. Given the 33 items, a minimum sample of 165 respondents was required. Accordingly, this study targeted 165 respondents selected through purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria: (1) potential tourists with an intention to visit Derawan Island, and (2) prior exposure to digital content, either UGC or FGC, about the destination. Data were collected online by distributing the questionnaire via Google Forms shared through social media, travel communities, and tourism forums.

The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS software. This method was chosen because it is suitable for models involving latent variables and mediation pathways, and it does not require the data to strictly follow a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 165 respondents who met the inclusion criteria, namely potential tourists with an interest in visiting Derawan Island and who had been exposed to user-generated content (UGC) as well as firm-generated content (FGC) related to the destination. A descriptive analysis of respondents' characteristics was conducted to provide an overview of the sample profile based on gender, age, income level, and occupation. Such demographic information is essential as a foundation for understanding respondents' backgrounds, which may influence their perceptions of user-generated content (UGC), firm-generated content (FGC), as well as the formation of cognitive image, affective image, and intention to visit Derawan Island.

Table 1. Description of Respondents' Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	71	43.03
Female	94	56.97
Age		

20 years	3	1.82
21 - 30 years	91	55.15
31 - 40 years	60	36.36
41 – 50 years	10	6.06
> 50 years	1	0.61
Income		
2,5 - 5 million	16	9.70
5 - 7,5 million	39	23.64
7,5 - 10 million	35	21.21
> 10 million	75	45.45
Occupation		
Housewife	6	3.64
Civil Servant	11	6.67
Private Employee	96	58.18
Student	8	4.85
Enterpreneur	39	23.64
Other	5	3.03

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The respondents consisted of male (43.03%) and female (56.97%) participants, with the majority falling within the productive age groups of 21–30 years (55.15%) and 31–40 years (36.36%). Most respondents had an upper-middle income level, with 45.45% earning more than IDR 10 million per month, and were primarily employed as private sector employees (58.18%) and entrepreneurs (23.64%). This distribution of characteristics indicates that Derawan Island holds strong appeal for young tourists with sufficient financial capacity, predominantly from the productive workforce. This finding is highly relevant to the research focus, as this group is well known for its active use of digital media as a source of destination information, thereby being more intensively exposed to both UGC and FGC, which play a role in shaping cognitive image, affective image, and ultimately intention to visit.

After identifying respondents' characteristics, the analysis proceeds with a description of their responses to the research variables, namely user-generated content (UGC), firm-generated content (FGC), cognitive image, affective image, and intention to visit. Mean scores and standard deviations are used to describe the general tendencies in respondents' answers for each variable.

Table 2. Description of Respondents' Answers

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
User Generated Content	4.60	0.12
Firm Generated Content	4.67	0.02
Cognitive Image	4.64	0.08
Affective Image	4.73	0.03

Intention to Visit	4.69	0.09

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The descriptive results indicate that all research variables obtained high mean values on the five-point Likert scale, reflecting respondents' positive perceptions of UGC, FGC, destination image, and intention to visit. Among them, the affective image variable scored the highest with a mean of 4.73, suggesting that tourists' emotional responses, such as feelings of awe and enthusiasm toward Derawan Island, are particularly strong. This was followed by intention to visit, with a mean of 4.69, which reflects respondents' high interest in visiting the destination. Meanwhile, firm-generated content also received a high score (4.67) with a very small standard deviation (0.02), indicating consistent perceptions among respondents regarding the credibility and quality of official content. Overall, these findings confirm that both UGC and FGC effectively contribute to shaping a positive destination image, cognitively and affectively, which in turn drives tourists' strong intention to visit Derawan Island.

Building upon the descriptive analysis, the next stage is to evaluate the measurement quality of the instrument through tests of convergent validity and construct reliability within the framework of PLS-SEM. Convergent validity is assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while reliability is examined through Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). A construct is considered valid and reliable if it meets the following criteria: Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.7, Composite Reliability ≥ 0.7, and AVE ≥ 0.5 (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Results of Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability Tests

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Affective Image	0.890	0.916	0.646
Cognitive Image	0.825	0.877	0.589
Firm Generated Content	0.935	0.945	0.657
Intention to Visit	0.901	0.931	0.771
User Generated Content	0.910	0.927	0.591

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The test results show that all variables have Cronbach's alpha values above 0.8, indicating very good internal consistency of the instrument. The Composite Reliability values for all constructs are also above 0.87, with several exceeding 0.93, further reinforcing the reliability of the instrument. In terms of convergent validity, the AVE values for each variable range between 0.589 and 0.771, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.5. Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs in this study meet the criteria for convergent validity and reliability, making them suitable for further evaluation in the inner model stage.

Having established convergent validity and reliability, the next step is to evaluate discriminant validity using the cross-loading method. An indicator is considered to fulfill

discriminant validity if its loading value on its designated construct is higher than its loading values on other constructs (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 4. Results of Discriminant Validity Test (Cross Loading)

Item	Affective Image	Cognitive Image	Firm Generated Content	Intention to Visit	User Generated Content
AI.1	0.769	0.614	0.615	0.588	0.529
AI.2	0.847	0.694	0.655	0.666	0.508
AI.3	0.794	0.621	0.617	0.599	0.557
AI.4	0.755	0.609	0.551	0.622	0.463
AI.5	0.806	0.635	0.570	0.524	0.595
AI.6	0.845	0.720	0.718	0.698	0.588
CI.1	0.691	0.765	0.669	0.514	0.637
CI.2	0.649	0.766	0.629	0.632	0.587
CI.3	0.662	0.801	0.648	0.586	0.673
CI.4	0.494	0.714	0.611	0.531	0.562
CI.5	0.601	0.788	0.628	0.522	0.625
FGC.1	0.580	0.602	0.773	0.600	0.573
FGC.2	0.580	0.633	0.790	0.596	0.570
FGC.3	0.643	0.759	0.869	0.621	0.660
FGC.4	0.691	0.686	0.820	0.564	0.618
FGC.5	0.636	0.709	0.818	0.616	0.577
FGC.6	0.612	0.663	0.801	0.554	0.575
FGC.7	0.689	0.709	0.825	0.636	0.568
FGC.8	0.678	0.655	0.834	0.604	0.600
FGC.9	0.539	0.629	0.761	0.536	0.504
IV.1	0.736	0.690	0.670	0.905	0.519
IV.2	0.632	0.624	0.622	0.857	0.462
IV.3	0.666	0.588	0.618	0.869	0.482
IV.4	0.670	0.648	0.657	0.881	0.465
UGC.1	0.554	0.704	0.585	0.456	0.875
UGC.2	0.620	0.679	0.593	0.473	0.868
UGC.3	0.540	0.641	0.584	0.463	0.825
UGC.4	0.375	0.539	0.472	0.308	0.654
UGC.5	0.541	0.655	0.629	0.422	0.798
UGC.6	0.483	0.571	0.567	0.392	0.756
UGC.7	0.584	0.674	0.615	0.483	0.762
UGC.8	0.471	0.614	0.550	0.407	0.776
UGC.9	0.431	0.440	0.332	0.370	0.547

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The interpretation of the cross-loading results in Table 4 shows that each indicator has its highest loading value on the construct it is intended to measure compared to other constructs. For example, indicator AI.2 loads highest on the Affective Image construct (0.847) compared to other constructs; similarly, indicator CI.3 loads higher on Cognitive Image (0.801), and indicator IV.1 has a very high loading on Intention to Visit (0.905). This pattern is consistent across almost all indicators, allowing the conclusion that all constructs in this study satisfy the criteria for discriminant validity. These results demonstrate that each construct is clearly distinguishable from the others, confirming that the measurement model is valid and appropriate for proceeding to the inner model evaluation stage.

The measurement model (outer model), which has met the criteria for validity and reliability, provides a strong foundation for the subsequent structural model (inner model) evaluation. This evaluation aims to assess the extent to which exogenous constructs explain the variance of endogenous constructs and to test the predictive power of the model. The analysis is conducted using R-square (R^2) and Q-square (Q^2) values, which reflect the explanatory capacity and predictive relevance of the model with respect to the variables affective image, cognitive image, and intention to visit.

Table 5. R^2 and Q^2 Values of Endogenous Constructs

Variable	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Q^2 Predict
Affective Image	0.603	0.601	0.579
Cognitive Image	0.647	0.645	0.636
Intention to Visit	0.654	0.645	0.507

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The R^2 values in Table 5 indicate that affective image can be explained by 60.3% through the exogenous constructs (UGC and FGC), cognitive image by 64.7%, and intention to visit by 65.4%. According to Hair et al. (2019), R^2 values above 0.60 can be categorized as moderate to substantial, suggesting that the research model demonstrates good explanatory power. In addition, the Q^2 values for all endogenous variables are above 0.50—0.579 for affective image, 0.636 for cognitive image, and 0.507 for intention to visit. These results confirm that the model possesses strong predictive relevance, indicating that the endogenous constructs can be well predicted by the exogenous variables within the model.

Table 6. Results of Direct Effect Testing

Relationship Between Variable	Path Coefficient (O)	STDEV	P-Value
Affective Image → Intention to Visit	0.451	0.111	0.000
Cognitive Image → Intention to Visit	0.260	0.139	0.061
Firm Generated Content → Affective Image	0.606	0.106	0.000
Firm Generated Content → Cognitive Image	0.523	0.068	0.000
Firm Generated Content → Intention to Visit	0.286	0.098	0.004
User Generated Content → Affective Image	0.237	0.086	0.006

User Generated Content → Cognitive Image	0.428	0.063	0.000
User Generated Content → Intention to Visit	-0.168	0.089	0.059

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The results of the testing show that affective image has a positive and significant effect on intention to visit (β = 0.451; p < 0.001), whereas cognitive image does not exert a significant effect (β = 0.260; p = 0.061). This finding indicates that tourists' intention to visit Derawan Island is influenced more strongly by emotional aspects than by rational considerations.

Furthermore, firm-generated content (FGC) was found to have a significant effect on affective image (β = 0.606; p < 0.001), cognitive image (β = 0.523; p < 0.001), and also a direct effect on intention to visit (β = 0.286; p = 0.004). These results demonstrate that official content produced by government bodies or destination marketing organizations is effective in shaping destination image while also directly encouraging tourists' visiting intention.

On the other hand, user-generated content (UGC) significantly influences both affective image (β = 0.237; p = 0.006) and cognitive image (β = 0.428; p < 0.001), but does not have a significant direct effect on intention to visit (β = –0.168; p = 0.059). This finding suggests that UGC primarily functions as a stimulus shaping destination image—both cognitive and affective—which in turn indirectly drives intention to visit. In other words, the influence of UGC on visiting intention is mediated by destination image, while FGC exerts influence both directly and indirectly through destination image.

These findings reinforce the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, whereby the stimulus in the form of digital content influences the organism (cognitive and affective image), which subsequently generates the response (intention to visit).

The next stage of evaluation is to test the indirect effects among variables through the mediating roles of cognitive image and affective image. This analysis is crucial to confirm whether UGC and FGC affect intention to visit in a mediated manner through destination image. The results of the indirect effect testing are presented in Table 7.

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Table 7. Results of Indirect Effect Testing

Relationship between Variable	Path Coefficient	STDEV	P-Value
Firm Generated Content → Cognitive Image → Intention to Visit	0.136	0.075	0.072
Firm Generated Content → Affective Image → Intention to Visit	0.273	0.077	0.000
User Generated Content → Cognitive Image → Intention to Visit	0.111	0.062	0.073
User Generated Content → Affective Image → Intention to Visit	0.107	0.049	0.029

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The results in Table 7 show that the mediation pathway through affective image is significant for both FGC (β = 0.273; p < 0.001) and UGC (β = 0.107; p < 0.05). This indicates that both official content and user-generated content can stimulate tourists' intention to visit by evoking emotional responses. In contrast, the mediation pathway through cognitive image is not significant for either FGC (β = 0.136; p = 0.072) or UGC (β = 0.111; p = 0.073), suggesting that rational considerations related to facilities, accessibility, and attractions do not serve as the primary mechanism through which digital content influences visiting intention.

These findings highlight the dominant role of the affective dimension in bridging the relationship between digital content (stimulus) and intention to visit (response), consistent with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework. Thus, digital communication strategies that emphasize emotional aspects—whether through authentic user experiences or emotionally appealing official content, are more effective in enhancing tourists' intention to visit than strategies focusing solely on rational information.

The hypothesis testing results further confirm that affective image has a positive and significant effect on intention to visit, while cognitive image does not. This suggests that tourists' decisions to visit Derawan Island are driven more by emotional attachment than by rational considerations. Tourists tend to be motivated by feelings of awe, enthusiasm, and joy evoked through digital content. These findings align with Harrill et al. (2023) and Jorge et al. (2023), who showed that affective dimensions play a dominant role in influencing tourist behavior. This implies that destination marketing strategies should emphasize the emotional experiences Derawan Island offers, such as panoramic visualizations, storytelling narratives, and the unique impression of interacting with its marine ecosystem.

The results also reveal that FGC exerts a significant influence both directly on intention to visit and indirectly through affective image. By contrast, UGC does not have a direct effect on intention to visit, but shows significant indirect effects through the mediation of affective image. These results indicate that FGC has a dual strength: it enhances intention to visit directly through the credibility of official information, while also reinforcing emotional responses that drive visiting intention. UGC, meanwhile, functions primarily as an emotional stimulus that strengthens affective image, but is not sufficient to directly influence visiting decisions. This aligns with Stojanovic et al. (2022), who found that UGC is more effective in creating emotional closeness, whereas FGC emphasizes cognitive legitimacy and trust.

The non-significant mediation pathways through cognitive image for both FGC and UGC further suggest that, although tourists acquire rational information about facilities, accessibility, and infrastructure from digital content, such considerations are not the main drivers of intention to visit. This finding is consistent with Xu et al. (2021) and Das et al. (2024), who argued that cognitive image functions more as background knowledge, while actual travel decisions are more strongly triggered by emotions and imagination. In the context of Derawan Island, emotional factors such as the uniqueness of Kakaban Lake, diving with sea turtles, or the beauty of its underwater panoramas serve as the main attractions shaping tourists' desire to visit.

These findings provide important implications. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the relevance of the S-O-R framework in explaining tourist behavior. Digital content (UGC and FGC) serves as the stimulus influencing the organism (cognitive and affective image), which then generates the response (intention to visit). However, the findings show that the affective dimension of the organism is more dominant than the cognitive dimension. This theoretical contribution enriches the digital tourism literature by confirming the central role of emotional aspects in mediating the relationship between digital stimuli and tourist behavior.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that destination communication strategies should emphasize emotional aspects in promoting Derawan Island. Local governments, tourism businesses, and destination marketing organizations (DMOs) can optimize FGC through emotionally engaging visual campaigns, such as documentary videos showcasing the underwater beauty or traveler testimonials presented in storytelling formats. At the same time, destination managers should encourage tourists to generate high-quality UGC, such as photo and video uploads of unique experiences, to organically expand promotional reach. By balancing the credibility of FGC with the authenticity of UGC, Derawan Island can build a strong destination image, resonate with tourists emotionally, and ultimately enhance their intention to visit.

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CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that the emotional dimension plays a more dominant role than the cognitive dimension in influencing tourists' intention to visit Derawan Island. Affective image was found to have a significant impact on intention to visit, while cognitive image did not demonstrate a meaningful effect. Moreover, firm-generated content (FGC) influences visiting intention both directly and indirectly, whereas user-generated content (UGC) exerts only an indirect effect through the mediation of affective image. This suggests that emotional attachment evoked through digital content exposure is the key factor driving tourists' visiting decisions.

This study contributes to theory by reinforcing the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework in the context of digital tourism marketing. From a practical standpoint, the results recommend destination promotion strategies that balance the credibility of FGC with the authenticity of UGC, with a particular emphasis on emotional narratives that evoke awe and enthusiasm among tourists. These implications are crucial for destination managers and policymakers in designing effective digital communication strategies to strengthen the image of Derawan Island and enhance its attractiveness in the global tourism market.

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