



INTEREST IN WEST JAVA MOSQUE TOURIST VISITS (Study 3A and the Role of E-WOM Moderation)

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the influence of attractions, amenities, and accessibility on tourists' interest in visiting mosque tourist destinations in the West Java region, as well as testing the role of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) moderation in this relationship. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The object of the research is focused on mosques in the West Java region that have the potential for religious tourism. Data was collected through questionnaires distributed to people who had visited the mosques. The data analysis techniques used were multiple linear regression and moderation regression. The results showed that the attraction variable had a positive and significant effect on the interest in visiting ($p = 0.021$), while the amenities ($p = 0.602$) and accessibility ($p = 0.142$) variables did not show a significant effect directly. However, E-WOM was shown to be able to moderate the effect of accessibility on visitor interest significantly ($p = 0.014$), while E-WOM's interaction with attractions and amenities was not significant. Simultaneously, attractions, accessibility, and amenities had a significant effect on tourist interest ($p < 0.001$) with a determination coefficient value (R^2) of 0.623. These findings indicate that although not all variables have an individual effect, the combination of all three simultaneously plays an important role in shaping tourist visitor interest. The role of digital reviews is only effective as a moderation variable for factors that can be explained informatively. On the other hand, the influence of E-WOM is not significant in moderating the relationship between attractions, amenities, and interest in visiting, because both factors are more subjective and can only be optimally assessed through tourists' direct experiences at the destination.

Keywords: Religious Tourism; Digital Reviews; Interest in Visiting.



INTRODUCTION

For Muslims, mosques are sacred places because they serve as centers of worship and spirituality, representing not only human relationships with God (Ghouchani & Taji, 2021), but also symbolizing the holiness, unity, and strength of the ummah (Embong, Muslim, Musa, Mohamed, & Jusoh, 2021). However, over time, mosques have also come to play an important role in the social, educational, and cultural dimensions (Yar, 2022). One of the new roles that has emerged in recent decades is the mosque as part of a religious tourist destination.

Religious tourism is a form of travel that was initially rooted in the tradition of pilgrimage (Došenec & Ševcenco, 2024). However, in its development, it not only focuses on the spiritual aspect but also reflects an appreciation for the values of architecture, art, and religious meaning contained in the sacred sites visited (Smith, 2022). In other words, religious tourism is a development of pilgrimage activities in the Islamic tradition.

The market share of religious tourists is substantial considering that Indonesia has a majority Muslim population, data from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia records the number of Grand Mosque 471, historical mosques 1087, large mosques 5198, mosques in public places 54,127, jami mosques 252,932, national mosques 1, state mosques 1, large mosques 35 (Bimas Kemenag, 2025). The development of religious tourism, based on visits to mosques, has significant potential for encouraging regional economic growth.

Religious tourism not only plays a role in preserving Islamic spiritual and cultural values, but also opens up strategic opportunities to increase Regional Original Revenue (PAD) through the contribution of the tourism sector. In addition, this initiative can strengthen investment cooperation between local governments and the private sector, as well as encourage the growth of local community creative economies through the development of products, services, and activities that support mosque tourism with high commercial value.

Not all existing mosques can make a significant economic contribution to the government or the local community. This is due to the limited professional governance of mosques (Hidayat, Danuri, & Purwanto, 2018). Many mosques are still traditionally positioned as places of worship only, without optimal utilization in the broader socio-economic context (Purnomo, Idris, & Kurniawan, 2020). This condition reflects the complex challenges in changing the paradigm of a tourism-aware society and developing the function of mosques as centers of religious activities that, at the same time, support local economic empowerment from the potential for religious tourism that is formed (Srivastava, Nigam, & Kumar Tripathi, 2024).

Previous studies have shown that the professional management of mosques as religious tourism destinations has the potential to make a significant contribution to the preservation of Islamic culture (Cifci, Akova, Rasoolimanesh, & Ogretmenoglu, 2023), the resulting result can attract and increase tourist spending through increasing the activities of the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector around the mosque area (Syamsurrijal et al., 2023). However, to date, there have been few studies that reveal the motivation behind people's visits to mosques, other than to fulfill worship obligations. Non-ritual aspects, such as social, cultural, educational, or tourist interests that drive visits and economic spending tendencies in the area around the mosque, have not been explored in depth. This void presents

both a challenge and an opportunity for further research in the context of developing mosques as multifunctional tourist destinations.

Based on the above background, this study examines the influence of mosque attractions, the services provided by mosque facilities, and the accessibility of mosque locations on tourists' interest in visiting. The research focuses on four prominent mosques in West Java: the Sang Cipta Rasa Mosque in Cirebon City, the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque in Bandung City, the Dian al-Mahri Mosque in Depok City, and the Al-Imam Mosque in Majalengka. These mosques were selected due to their significant role in religious activities and their potential to contribute to the growth of religious tourism in the region.

This study addresses two primary research questions: to what extent do attraction, amenities, and accessibility influence tourists' interest in visiting mosques, and whether E-WOM moderates the relationship between these factors and tourists' interest in mosque-based tourist destinations. The objective is to identify and analyze the key determinants shaping tourists' decisions to choose mosques as religious tourism destinations. Insights from this study are expected to provide mosque managers with a strategic foundation for developing tourism potential, thereby enhancing their competitiveness in the contemporary digital era of the religious tourism industry.

In the context of the current digital era, this study examines the role of E-WOM as a moderating variable that may either strengthen or weaken the influence of attraction, amenities, and accessibility on tourist interest. Information disseminated through social media, online reviews, and the experiences of previous visitors can significantly shape potential tourists' perceptions of a destination, including mosque-based tourism sites.

The growing public interest in visiting mosques as tourist destinations is expected to generate a multiplier effect. This impact not only offers spiritual enrichment and worship value for visitors but also drives local economic revitalization through increased trade, service provision, and creative economy activities in the areas surrounding mosques.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourists are individuals or groups who travel for recreational purposes and document their trips as part of the experience they obtain (Wijaya, Nurbayah, Zahro, & Ningsih, 2021). In the context of Muslim tourism, travel activities include observing and learning about local culture, as well as engaging in spiritual practices that align with Islamic values (Halilović, 2020). The mosque is one of the top tourist destinations that Muslim tourists can visit.

Mosque-based religious tourism destinations require a systematic and integrated approach to create a quality and competitive tourism experience. One of the conceptual approaches widely used in destination management studies is the 3A framework (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2011), which comprises three main elements: attraction, accessibility, and amenity. These three elements are considered essential foundations in forming a positive perception of a destination and in influencing the decision to visit.

Tourist attractions encompass elements such as natural beauty, local cultural richness, social interaction, and the presence of artificial facilities designed to attract

tourists and create meaningful tourist experiences (Biswas, Omar, & Rashid-Radha, 2020). In this context, mosques not only serve as places of worship but also as cultural heritage sites rich in historical value, architectural aesthetics, and centers of religious and educational activities (Al-Refai, 2020). For example, the architecture of the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore is a major attraction due to its aesthetic value and deep historical heritage (Hussain & Juan, 2023).

The definition of amenity refers to the facilities and supporting services available in a tourist destination that aim to enhance the comfort, convenience, and overall experience of tourists. The amenities of the mosque are located both inside and outside the mosque, within the mosque area. Facilities such as parking lots, sanitation (including clean toilets), comfortable ablution facilities, information centers, and access to halal products or souvenir shops are key determinants of the quality of tourism services (Al-Ansi, Han, Kim, & King, 2021). Additionally, mosques need to have designated rest areas for tourists (Abdul Malee & Mohd Balwi, 2021). The study's results indicate that the quality of facilities owned by a tourist destination has a significant impact on the comfort of tourists, which in turn can increase the frequency of visits and enhance the destination's attractiveness (Surya, Felani, Felani, & Andriani, 2023).

Meanwhile, accessibility refers to the ease with which tourists can reach the destination location (Biswas et al., 2020), which is a crucial factor that affects the level of visits (Aulet & Duda, 2020). Accessibility includes various interrelated dimensions, including the quality and availability of transportation infrastructure such as roads, airports, terminals, and ports, as well as the effectiveness of public transportation services (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020). Additionally, the availability of relevant and easily accessible supporting information plays a crucial role in facilitating the planning and implementation of efficient, safe, and comfortable tourist trips (Jeong & Shin, 2020).

The use of various digital platforms, including the destination's official website, social media, and YouTube channel, enables the wide, fast, and interactive dissemination of information. Digital media not only offers cost efficiency compared to conventional media but also provides easier and more inclusive access for people from various demographic backgrounds (Dewantara, Gardiner, & Jin, 2023). Additionally, the digital approach enables the creation of two-way communication, strengthening the relationship between destination managers and potential travelers through the presentation of engaging and real-time content (Martínez García De Leaniz, Herrero, & García De Los Salmones, 2025).

In the current context, the influence of E-WOM is becoming increasingly significant. Reviews, testimonials, and tourist experiences shared through social media and other digital platforms have a strategic role in shaping public perception of a tourist destination, including religious tourist destinations such as mosques. Research indicates that E-WOM has a substantial impact on shaping tourists' attitudes and intentions to visit. This is especially the case because social media has become a significant channel for searching and considering travel information (Anubha & Shome, 2021).

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to investigate the impact of attraction, amenity, and accessibility variables on tourist interest in visitors, as well as to examine E-WOM as a moderating variable. A quantitative approach was chosen to objectively and quantifiably identify cause-and-effect relationships between variables based on empirical data. To analyze the direct influence of independent variables on dependent variables, this study used multiple linear regression analysis. Furthermore, to test the role of E-WOM as a moderation variable, the Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) technique was used. The entire data analysis process is conducted using the JASP software version 0.18.3.0.

The sample consisted of 200 individuals who had made tourist visits to these mosques. The sampling technique used the purposive sampling method, with the respondents' criteria, namely: (1) having visited at least one mosque in West Java in the context of religious tourism, and (2) being at least 17 years old. The determination of the number of samples in this study follows the guidelines put forward (Hair, 2014). This recommends a minimum of 5 to 10 times the number of variables in the research instrument. This approach is commonly used in multivariate analysis to ensure the adequacy of data in testing statistical models in a valid and reliable manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mosque-based religious tourism in the West Java region is expected to provide added value for the region, both socially and economically, through increasing the number of tourist visits. The presence of tourists who visit these destinations, whether directly or indirectly, contributes to the development of the local economy and the preservation of local religious culture. The public's interest in visiting religious tourism destinations does not occur spontaneously; rather, it is influenced by various factors. These factors include the existence of attractive religious attractions, the availability of adequate amenities or supporting facilities, ease of accessibility to tourist sites, and effective promotion and information strategies, primarily through digital media and e-WOM.

Table 1. Determination coefficient (R^2)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE
H ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.034
H ₁	0.789	0.623	0.609	1.897

Resource: Output Jasp, 23 Agustus 2025

The results of multiple linear regression analysis showed that the value of the determination coefficient (R^2) was 0.623, which means that 62.3% of the variability of the Interest to Visit variable can be explained by the variables Attraction (X_1), Amenity (X_2), Access (X_3), and E-WOM (Z), as well as the interaction between variables. Meanwhile, the Adjusted R^2 value of 0.609 indicates that after adjusting for the number of variables in the model, about 60.9% of the variability of Visiting

Interest can still be explained by this model in the pretty good (moderate) category. A reasonably high Adjusted R^2 value indicates that this model has good predictive ability in explaining the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Factors outside of this model account for the remaining 37.7% of the variability in Visiting Interest.

Table 2. T Test

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T	Sig. (p-value)	Information
(Intercept)	0.698	3.021	0.231	0.818	Insignificant
X ₁ Attractions	0.697	0.298	2.335	0.021	Significant
X ₂ Amenities	0.142	0.273	0.522	0.602	Insignificant
X ₃ Accessibility	-0.239	0.162	-1.475	0.142	Insignificant
Z E-WOM	0.191	0.141	1.357	0.177	Insignificant

Resource: Output Jasp, 23 Agustus 2025

Based on the results of the t-test in the table above, it can be concluded that the Attraction variable (X₁) has a significant effect on Visitor Interest ($p = 0.021 < 0.05$). In contrast, the variables Amenity (X₂), Access (X₃), and E-WOM (Z) do not have a significant effect directly.

Table 3. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
H ₁	Regression	1140.665	7	162.952	45.288	< .001
	Residual	690.835	192	3.598		
	Total	1831.500	199			

Resource: Output Jasp, 23 Agustus 2025

Based on the results of the analysis in the table above, it is known that the value of $F = 45.288$ and $p < 0.001$. This result indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. This means that the combination of Attractions, Amenities, Accessibility, and E-WOM collectively influences tourists' decisions to visit mosques in West Java. Although the model is simultaneously significant, not all independent variables have a partial effect. Based on the previous t-test, only Attractions (X₁) had a significant effect on Interest in Visits, while Amenities, Accessibility, and E-WOM had no significant effect, partially. However, because the F test looked at the model as a whole, the combination of all variables still had a significant influence on Visiting Interest.

Table 4. MRA (Moderated Regression Analysis)

Interaction	Coefficient	Std. Error	T	Sig. (p-value)	Information
X ₁ Attractions * Z E-WOM	-0.017	0.013	-1.290	0.198	Insignificant
X ₂ Amenities * Z E-WOM	-0.005	0.011	-0.477	0.634	Insignificant
X ₃ Accessibility * Z E-WOM	0.017	0.007	2.473	0.014	Significant

Resource: Output Jasp, 23 Agustus 2025

The results of the analysis in the table above show that E-WOM only moderates the relationship between Accessibility (X₃) and Visitor Interest (Y) with a coefficient of 0.017 and a p-value of 0.014 ($p < 0.05$). This means that the higher the positive E-WOM regarding destination accessibility, the stronger the influence of accessibility on tourists' interest in visiting the destination. However, the results of the interaction between Attractions (X₁) and Amenities (X₂) with E-WOM were not significant ($p > 0.05$), which suggests that although there are reviews or recommendations online regarding tourist attractions and facilities in mosques, they are not strong enough to moderate the relationship between these variables and Interest in Visiting.

This finding suggests that positive online discourse, such as travel blogs, reviews, and social media posts, particularly regarding the ease of access to mosque-based tourist destinations, enhances tourists' motivation to visit. These results are consistent with previous studies, which show that accessibility is a critical driver in tourist decision-making, particularly when supported by digital recommendations that reduce uncertainty and perceived effort in reaching a site (Quan & Thang, 2023)

The significant moderation effect underscores the role of E-WOM as a social proof mechanism. When potential visitors encounter frequent and favorable discussions online about the ease of accessibility of a religious tourism destination, whether by public transportation, road infrastructure, or wayfinding, they are more likely to develop a favorable intention to visit. This aligns with the Information Adoption Model (IAM), which explains that perceived usefulness and credibility of online messages positively affect behavioral intention (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). In this context, accessibility-related content shared online serves as a cognitive facilitator, transforming general awareness into concrete interest.

On the other hand, the moderation effects of E-WOM on the relationships between Attractions (X₁) and Amenities (X₂) with Visitor Interest (Y) were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that while attractions (such as architectural uniqueness or the historical value of mosques) and amenities (such as cleanliness, parking, or prayer facilities) are important in their own right, online narratives about them may not sufficiently enhance or weaken their impact on visitation interest.

Several interpretations can be offered. First, religious tourism tends to involve intrinsic motivations, such as spiritual fulfillment and religious obligations, which are less influenced by consumer-generated content compared to leisure tourism (Battour, Hakimian, Ismail, & Boğan, 2018). As such, visitors may rely more on personal values and offline recommendations than online reviews when assessing the appeal of religious attractions and amenities. Second, the content quality and volume of E-WOM regarding mosque-based tourism may still be

relatively limited, fragmented, or less persuasive, reducing its moderating power in these domains (Zhang, Ye, Law, & Li, 2010)

This finding highlights the uneven effectiveness of E-WOM across different dimensions of the tourism experience. It appears that E-WOM is more potent when addressing functional and logistical concerns, such as accessibility, than when discussing experiential or service-related aspects, like attraction appeal or facility adequacy. This nuanced role of E-WOM warrants further research, especially in the context of halal and religious tourism, where the social trust and value alignment of the message source may play a more dominant role than the content itself (Rahman, 2014)

In practical terms, these results suggest that destination managers and mosque administrators should invest in improving and promoting accessibility, while also strategically encouraging online narratives that highlight the ease and convenience of reaching the location. Simultaneously, efforts to improve attractions and amenities must be complemented with storytelling strategies and digital engagement to elevate their visibility and influence in the digital sphere.

CONCLUSIONS

The trend of religious tourism in Indonesia, particularly those centered on mosque destinations, exhibits significant development and requires more targeted management to achieve high competitiveness and attract more tourists, both domestic and international. This paper argues at the beginning that the factor that affects the interest of tourists visiting mosque-based religious tourism areas is a 3A component of tourism and to increase tourist visits, digital promotion is needed using reviews by electronic word of mouth, it turns out that the findings of this study show that the most dominant factor in influencing the interest of tourists visiting mosques as religious tourism destinations is the aspect of the mosque's attractions itself. The attractions in question include the mosque's distinctive and magnificent architecture, its rich historical value and inherent religious symbolism, as well as the diversity of inclusive religious activities, such as recitation, *tabligh akbar*, and Islamic studies, all of which are open to the general public. This suggests that the intrinsic attraction of the mosque is the primary magnet for tourists, stronger than amenities and accessibility, which are considered the three key components that determine interest in visiting tourist attractions.

This research also confirms the strategic role of digital promotion in attracting tourist visits, primarily through the submission of reviews on physical access and route information to religious tourist sites. These findings show that the effectiveness of digital promotion does not solely depend on the narrative of attractions or amenities available in mosques, but rather on the ability of digital reviews to provide clarity, ease of navigation, and a sense of security for potential visitors in planning their trips. Practical information, such as road conditions, public transportation availability, parking locations, and estimated travel times, proved to be highly relevant and attractive content in the context of religious tourism. This emphasizes that in the digital era, the promotion of tourist destinations does not have to focus on the aspect of attraction or facilities alone, but also includes functional dimensions that support the comfort of tourist mobility.

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