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# The Impact of Mass Media, Word-Of-Mouth on Travel Intention and Mediating Role of Destination Image and Tourist Attitude

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**Abstract**
This study aims to investigate the influence of information sources including mass media and word-of-mouth (WOM) on destination image, tourist's attitude and consequently on travel intention. Three hundred and twenty-three self-administered questionnaires were distributed by enumerators through convenience sampling and completed by tourists at historical attractions of City of Peshawar, Pakistan. Structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The main findings are: mass media and WOM have positive influence on destination image and attitude towards destination; destination image and tourists' attitude have positive influence on travel intention; and WOM has the most significant influence on destination image and attitude than mass media. Findings emphasize the use of WOM marketing strategies and understanding its mechanism in making travel decision.
**Keywords:** Destination Image, Mass Media, Word of Mouth Recommendation, Travel Intention, Heritage Tourism

**Introduction**
Tourism managers believed that image is a crucial part of a customers' destination selection process. A positive destination image supports tourists' decision-making process; arouses "awareness" and "evoked" sets and acts as a distinguishing feature among competing destinations (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012a; Phau et al., 2010). Prior to embarking on a trip, tourists tend to develop an image and a set of expectations about the intended destination. Often, these are guided by a previous travel experience, WOM, press reports, and common beliefs. Tasci et al (2007) observe that the image of a destination can also be influenced by promotional information from that destination. Therefore, destination marketing organizations and industry practitioners largely focus on how to enhance the favourable or memorable image of a destination in their promotional activities (Kim et al., 2014). Because tourists often choose the destination with the most favourable image, influencing their

perception through information sources is crucial (Ashfaq et al., 2022). One way to do this is by WOM, which (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012b; Jalilvand et al., 2012) have shown to be effective.

In tourism setting, WOM communication is a process that allows tourists to share information and opinions about a specific destination (Ashfaq et al., 2021) Traditionally, mass media have been considered an important communication tool related to consumption-related behaviours. Positive reinforcement from mass media can reinforce preferences in deciding which behaviours, values, attitudes, and skills are appropriate for them (Bush et al., 1999). For example, Moschis and Churchill (1978) found that watching television can be a means of gathering information about lifestyles and behaviours. However, evidence persists that WOM is an important means of finding and keeping customers, especially for some professional services such tourism industry, where mass media advertising is either uncommon or ineffective (Hernandez & Vicdan, 2014). For example, Litvin et al (2005) note that tourists' restaurant selections were predominantly influenced by the WOM recommendations of opinion leaders, with surprisingly few decisions based on the influences of more formal media.

Even though the role of information sources in decision-making and destination selection process has been well established (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012b; Mayzlin, 2006), the impact and importance of information sources on destination image have been somewhat overlooked in tourism studies (Doosti et al., 2016; Jalilvand et al., 2012). This study examines how WOM and mass media interrelate with destination image, attitude, and travel intention. One contribution of this study is that it integrates five concepts in a single model and investigates the structural relationships among them. So far, these constructs have not been studied in a single conceptual model as this study does. This study was conducted in Pakistan as a developing country. A rich heritage is revealed by the inclusion of 13 cultural sites in UNESCO's World Heritage list and nine examples in a World Intangible Heritage compendium (Jalilvand et al., 2012). Pakistan suffers from an unfavourable destination image. Therefore, historical tourism has become a major focus of tourism development in Peshawar.

**Literature Review**
Marketing communication can be classified broadly into personal communication and mass communication. WOM communication allows consumers to share information and opinions that direct buyers towards and away from specific products, brands, and services (Hawkins & David, 2015). Duhan et al (1997) show that while the originators of WOM can be close friends, family, or relatives (i.e., strong ties), that they can be acquaintances or strangers (weak ties) as well. Unsurprisingly, favourable WOM increases the probability of purchase, while negative WOM has the opposite effect. The exchange of product information through WOM empowers consumers and lessens producer/consumer information asymmetries, ultimately resulting in an acceleration or deceleration of product acceptance. Further, mass media include all methods of transmitting messages such as newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet (Pasek et al., 2006).

According to Aggarwal et al (1998), mass media are "informational" in nature. Mass media have some advantages represented by their ability to reach a large audience rapidly, create knowledge and spread information. The significant influence of mass media on behavioural intentions has been validated in various studies (Busby et al., 2013; Feiz et al., 2013; Zolait & Sulaiman, 2009). For example, Zolait and Sulaiman (2009) investigated the influence of mass media on the intention to use internet banking among Yemenis. They reveal that mass media

significantly influence the intention to use internet banking. In another study, Bhattacherjee (2000) utilized a similar construct called the external influence, which is best exemplified by the influence of the mass media. Bush et al (1999) found a strong positive association between amount of television viewing and attitude towards advertising. Their research also suggested that women watch more television than men and use television more for guidance and information than men.

Rice (2001) maintains that there are many new electronic media that facilitate WOM, specificallythe Internet and its bulletin boards, complaint sites, and discussion groups. WOM travels much quicker on the Internet and Mohr (2011) suggests the use of viral marketing to encourage the spread of WOM. Farrell (2000) stresses the importance of the integration of promotional activities. He maintains that media advertising and WOM act together in a non-linear way to influence a product's popularity. In the context of marketing communication, it has been shown that WOM is more influential than communication from other sources (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Doosti et al., 2016; Trusov et al., 2009), because it is perceived as providing comparatively reliable information and is easily accessible thorough social networks (Liu, 2006). Consequently, such communication is considered as highly persuasive through substantial perceived credibility and trustworthiness (Mayzlin, 2006). Further, information sources used, as stimulus variables, contribute significantly to travellers' images of tourism destinations (Baloglu, 2000).

In his study of 216 tourists in Cyprus, Abubakar (2016) found that medical tourists' eWOM is positively related to travel intention and destination trust. Llodra-Riera et al (2015), in a survey of 541 tourists and residents of Mallorca, indicated that different websites, reflecting both supplier- and user-generated content, exert important influences and combine to form an information source construct. Additionally, they showed that users who publish tourist information online value web platforms that offer user-generated content when they seek information about a tourist destination for themselves. Abubakar et al (2016) employed a sample of 308 customers in Cyprus and suggested the following results: (1) e-Referral does influence brand image, (2) eWOM influences brand image, and (3) eWOM and brand image influence purchase intention. Shen et al (2015) analysed the differences among destination images shaped via social network sites through official destination marketing and management organizations and individual consumers. Xie (2014) studied the impact of promotional videos, online reviews, and travel notes on destination image changes, and found that the three forms of information significantly changed destination image. Busby et al (2013) examined film tourism and destination image concepts. They found that television plays an important role in the creation of a heritage destination image. Without direct personal experience the images of a place are formed by information provided by the media and other secondary or external sources. Hence, the type, quality, and quantity of information available to the individual would determine the type of image he would be likely to develop. Mansson (2011) asserted that tourists create media products/images which circulate online through various channels like social media. These products are then available for consumption by other tourists, which in turn influences new media products. Morgan et al (2003) New Zealand-based research noted that negative WOM can have an overwhelming impact upon a destination's image, as dissatisfied visitors spread unflattering comments related to their experiences. More recently, Jalilvand et al (2012) in their study of 264 international tourists revealed that eWOM positively influences the destination image, tourist attitude, and travel intention. From the above, it is clear that WOM is an important promotional tactic. The discussion of these findings leads to the following hypotheses:

H1. WOM positively impacts a tourism destination image.
H2. Mass media positively impacts a tourism destination image.
H3. WOM positively impacts attitude towards a tourism destination.
H4. Mass media positively impacts attitude towards a tourism destination.
H5. WOM positively impacts intention to travel a certain destination.
H6. Mass media positively impacts intention to travel a certain destination.

Kim and Richardson (2003) defined destination image as a totality of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards a place over time.  Destination image is generally interpreted as a compilation of beliefs and impressions based on information processing from various sources over time that result in a mental representation of the attributes and benefits sought of a destination (Zhang et al., 2014). Destination image plays an important role in tourists' decision-making and subsequent travel behaviour (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Zhang et al (2014) in a meta-analysis found that destination image is highly associated with behavioural loyalty (visit and revisit intention) and composite loyalty (behavioural intention). They also showed that tourists who demonstrate behavioural loyalty towards particular destinations tend to have a positive attitude towards those destinations.

Chew and Jahari (2014) showed that destination image mediates the relationships between two risks, namely, perceived socio-psychological and financial risks, and revisit intention. Moreover, a poor match between the image of a visitor's destination and the tourist's self-image is more likely to induce perceived socio-psychological risk and unfavourable attitudes towards revisiting the destination. In their empirical study, Jalilvand et al (2012) revealed that: (1) destination image has a positive effect on tourists' attitude and intention to travel to an Islamic destination, and (2) tourist attitude has a significant relationship with intention to travel. Tourist attitude describes the psychological tendencies expressed by the positive or negative evaluations of tourists when engaged in certain behaviours. In fact, tourist attitude is an effective predictor of tourist decision for travelling to a certain destination Jalilvand and Samiei (2012c). The more favourable the attitude towards the behaviour, the stronger will be an individual's intention to perform the behaviour (Doosti et al., 2016).

Um and Crompton (1990) found that attitude is influential in determining whether a potential destination is selected as part of the evoked set and in selecting a final destination. Tan (in press) examined two visitor groups (first-timers and repeaters) who visited Toucheng/Taiwan. He found that for the two groups, destination image positively influences revisit intention. Tan and Wu (2016) analysed 493 residents in Taiwan and found that destination image is a significant predictor of behavioural intentions, such as destination choice and visit intention. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H7. Destination image positively impacts attitude towards a certain destination.
H8. Destination image positively impacts intention to travel a certain destination.
H9. Tourist attitude positively impacts intention to travel a certain destination.

Based on the above 9 hypotheses, this study develops a new theoretical model (Figure 1).
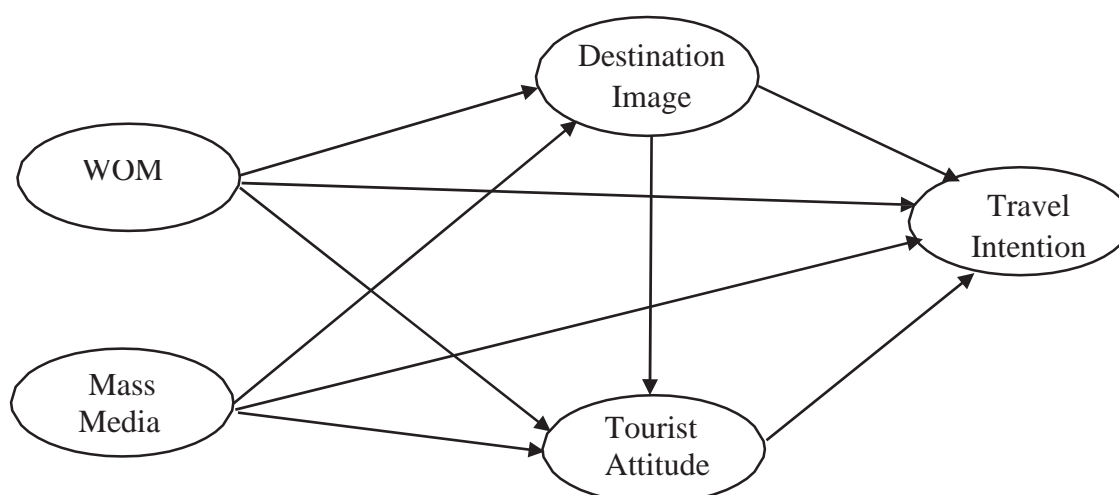


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

**Methodology**
Data collection was carried out by enumerators between  March and April, 2021 in historical tourism attractions in old city of Peshawar. The old city of Peshawar had active historical tourism businesses. A self-administered questionnaire-based survey was carried out to ensure a higher response rate in a short period of time. Convenience sampling has been regarded as the best way of getting information quickly and efficiently (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Based on convenience sampling, a sample of 365 was drawn from foreign and local tourists above 18 years old who had visited at least one historical tourism attraction in old city of Peshawar. However, only 323 questionnaires were valid, giving a response rate of 88%. The 19 five-point Likert-type scale items used to assess WOM, mass media, destination image, tourist attitude, and travel intention were adapted from Jalilvand and Samiei (2012b); Dey and Sarma (2010); Ferns and Walls (2012); Jalilvand et al (2012); Prayag et al (2013) respectively, and modified to suit this study's context.

This study used the statistical package software SPSS version 22.0 and LISREL version 8.54 as a tool to analyse and compare the collected data. First, descriptive statistics were used to analyse and understand the basic information of the samples. Then exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha were used to test the instrument reliability and validity. Furthermore, correlation analysis was used to understand the correlations between variables. Finally, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the hypotheses. To make the questions proposed in the questionnaire representative, a pre-test was conducted before the formal survey to review if there were any semantically unclear words or sentences. A total of 30 questionnaires for the pre-test were distributed. Rules of thumb suggest that the lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is .70 (Hair et al., 1998). The results obtained from the pre-test showed that the Cronbach's α value in each model construct was greater than .70 ranging between .741 and .896 (Table 2).

**Results**
The sample profile ($n$ = 323) is  displayed in Table 1. It is important to say that travellers of different socioeconomic status may have different patterns in their travel participation.

About 53.87% of the respondents are men and the remaining 46.13% women. Gender may influence participation in taking trips. Female participants are usually excluded from a socialization process in traditional leisure or travel activities, leading to an inequality in access to leisure time and activities. The consequence of such inequality is that women are less actively engaged in travel trips than men in terms of both likelihood and frequency. Furthermore, there is a clear predominance of individuals in higher education level, (51.8%), first timer (65.63%), foreign (international) tourists (61.30%), with more than 3000 dollars monthly income (43.96%). Education represents social class of travellers. The higher the education level, the higher the social class. Education enhances many types of recreation activities such as foreign travel and tours.

Table 1
*Profile of the survey respondents.*

|  | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Nationality** |  |  |
| Pakistani | 125 | 38.70 |
| Foreign | 198 | 61.30 |
| **Gender** |  |  |
| Male | 174 | 53.87 |
| Female | 149 | 46.13 |
| **Educational level** |  |  |
| Primary or secondary school | 36 | 11.15 |
| High school | 72 | 22.29 |
| Higher education | 215 | 66.56 |
| **Household monthly income (in Dollars)** |  |  |
| Up to 1000 | 67 | 20.74 |
| 1000–3000 | 114 | 35.30 |
| More than 3000 | 142 | 43.96 |
| **Age** |  |  |
| 18–24 | 23 | 7.12 |
| 25–34 | 64 | 19.81 |
| 35–44 | 88 | 27.24 |
| 45–54 | 106 | 32.82 |
| 55–64 | 6 | 11.15 |
| 65-or over | 6 | 1.86 |
| **Visitor status** |  |  |
| First-timer | 212 | 65.63 |
| Repeater | 111 | 34.37 |

Travellers with a greater extent of past travel experience also may indicate a higher likelihood to travel a certain destination in the next years. In addition, education may provide training and preparation for some types of recreational activities. In terms of nationality, cultural affinity of travellers with the destination may affect their travel decision. For example, domestic travellers may take a trip to the destination because of their familiarity with culture and traditions of the target destination. However, the frequency of international travellers in this study was more than domestic ones. Additionally, income can be considered as one of the most important determinants of tourism demand. The higher income level of travellers leads to more demand for taking a trip. Finally, the majority of respondents were

aged between the ranges of 25–34 (19.81%), 35–44 (27.24%), and 45–54 (32.82%). Travellers, relying on the different stage of life, have their own needs, tastes, or attitudes. In the context of recreational activities, aged travellers usually tend to visit historical and heritage destinations among others.

**Exploratory Factor Analysis**
The result of Bartlett's test of sphericity for dependant variables ($\chi2 = 562.630$, $p = .00$) and independent variable ($\chi2 = 594.456$, $p = .00$) was significant, indicating that nonzero correlation existed (Table 2). The overall values of KMO for dependant and independent variables were .904 and .911, respectively, which was well above the recommended threshold of sampling adequacy at the minimum of .50 (Hair et al., 1998). These two tests suggested that the data were suitable for an EFA. A principal component analysis with orthogonal (VARIMAX) rotations was assessed to reduce the dimensions of WOM, media, destination image, attitude, and travel intentions and to identify the determinant factors. Based on the eigenvalue greater than one, screeplot criteria, and the percentage of variance criterion, two independent factors and three dependant factors were chosen. These five factors were later used to construct summated scales for structural equation modelling (SEM) for hypotheses testing.

Table 2
*EFA results for dependent and Independent Variables*

| Q | Items | Independent | | Dependent | | |
| | | WOM | MM | DI | TA | TI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | When I consider travelling, I ask other people for opinions and advice. | .332 | .772 | | | |
| 2 | I feel more comfortable travelling when I have gotten opinions from people, I know | .263 | .853 | | | |
| 3 | I need to talk to others before I travel | .433 | .761 | | | |
| 4 | When choosing travel, talking to other people is important to me | .538 | .608 | | | |
| 5 | Newspapers/magazines/articles | .714 | .477 | | | |
| 6 | TV/radio | .855 | .228 | | | |
| 7 | Books | .829 | .332 | | | |
| 8 | Internet | .747 | .433 | | | |
| 9 | The destination offers historic charms | | | .669 | .248 | -.060 |
| 10 | The destination has good museums and art galleries | | | .788 | .266 | .195 |
| 11 | The destination offers a number of cultural and festival events | | | .753 | .260 | .118 |
| 12 | The destination has outstanding scenery | | | .929 | .055 | .058 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | In and around the destination, there are great places of outdoor activities | | | .543 | .211 | .505 | |
| 14 | I think the destination is: very bad/very good | | | .318 | .601 | .239 | |
| 15 | Very worthless/very valuable | | | .345 | .665 | .005 | |
| 16 | Very unpleasant/very pleasant | | | .320 | .794 | .164 | |
| 17 | I predict I will visit the destination in the future | | | .362 | -.009 | .781 | |
| 18 | I would visit the destination rather than any other destinations | | | .113 | .105 | .834 | |
| 19 | If everything goes as I think, I will plan to visit the destination in the future | | | .167 | .022 | .852 | |
| Eigen value | | 5.275 | 3.220 | 5.253 | 3.713 | 2.427 | |
| Variance (%) | | 65.939 | 8.918 | 47.754 | 11.547 | 8.042 | |
| Cumulative Variance (%) | | 65.939 | 74.858 | 47.754 | 59.301 | 67.34 | |
| A | | .866 | .896 | .741 | .799 | .861 | |

**Note: WOM** = Word-of-Mouth, **MM** = Mass Media, **DI** = Destination image, **TA** = Tourist Attitude, **TA** = Travel Intention

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**
AVE values above .50 are considered to be adequate (Hair et al., 1998). The AVE value of the factors is greater than .05, ranging from .712 (destination image) to .821 (travel intention). A CFA was conducted to further validate the psychometric properties of the scale items (Table 3). The chi-square statistic was significant ($p \leq .001$), and the normed chi-square ($\chi 2/df = 213.98/142 = 1.501$), SRMR (.051), and RMSEA (.068) were considered acceptable. The goodness-of-fit indices show GFI (.902), CFI (.921), NFI (.937), and TLI (.919). The indicator loading greater than .707 is assumed to be acceptable. In the confirmed measurement model, all factor loadings of the indicators related to each factor were statistically significant and sufficiently large, demonstrating that the indicators and their underlying constructs were acceptable (standardized loadings ranged from .71 to .87, all $p \leq .001$). Together, these results suggest reasonable overall convergent validity.

Discriminant validity is established when the estimated correlations between the factors are below .85 (Kline, 2005). Additionally, discriminant validity is evident when the squared correlations between one construct and any others are lower than the AVE for each construct. Table 4 presents the inter factor correlation analysis among research variable. They were all below .85, ranging from .346 (between destination image and mass media) to .758 (between attitude and travel intention) and the correlation was significant by $p \leq .01$. All squared correlations were less than the AVE value for each factor, representing good discriminant validity.

## Structural Equation Modelling

Using the same sample as the CFA, the structural model was estimated to fit the data with the maximum likelihood method. Fit indices of the structural equation modelling obtained for the proposed theoretical model demonstrated that the model fitted the data reasonably well ($\chi$2 = 213.98, *p* = .00009; CFI = .98, NFI = .94, IFI = .98, GFI = .93, RMSEA = .068). Figure 2 and Table 5 shows our empirical findings.

When *t*-values are in the range of −1.96 to 1.96, the hypothesis will reject (Hair et al., 1998). According the results of SEM, WOM ($\beta$ = .46, *t* = 4.34) and mass media ($\beta$ = .41, *t* = 4.22) significantly contribute to destination image. H1 and H2 are therefore supported. WOM ($\beta$ = .52, *t* = 4.46) and mass media ($\beta$ = .38, *t* = 3.13) appear to have significant effect on tourists' attitude towards destination, supporting hypotheses H3 and H4. Furthermore, WOM ($\beta$ = .64, *t* = 4.89) and mass media ($\beta$ = .42, *t* = 4.28) are the significant predictors of travel intention to the destination. As such, H5 and H6 are supported. Interestingly, the influence of WOM on destination image, tourists' attitude and travel intention was more than mass media.

With regard to the role of destination image, it had a statistically significant and positive effect on tourists' attitude towards destination ($\beta$ = .81, *t* = 4.24) and travel intention ($\beta$ = .35, *t* = 4.13), supporting H7 and H8. The hypothesized path between attitude towards destination and travel intention is all positive and statistically significant ($\beta$ = .88, *t* = 6.80), thus supporting hypothesis H9.
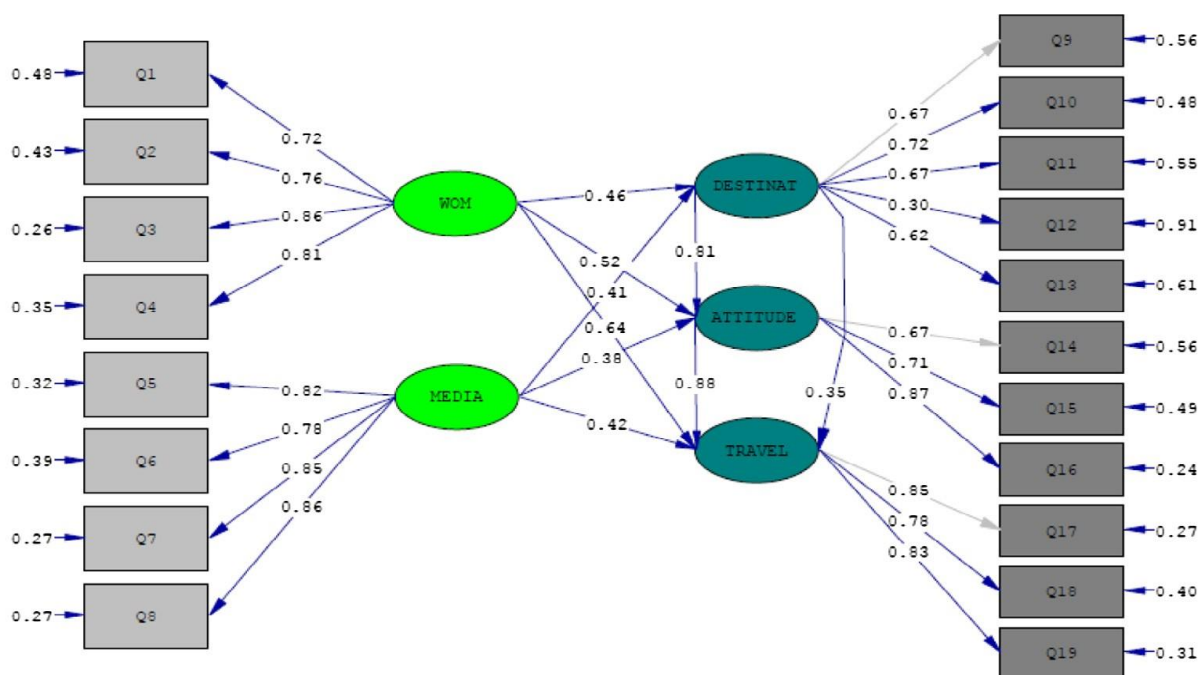
Table 3
*Critical ratios, Indicator loading and AVE values*

| Factors/items | Critical Ratios | Indicator Loadings | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **WOM** | | | .784 |
| Q1 | 8.45 | .72 | |
| Q2 | 9.07 | .76 | |
| Q3 | 10.95 | .86 | |
| Q4 | 9.97 | .81 | |
| **Mass Media** | | | .801 |
| Q5 | 10.33 | .82 | |
| Q6 | 9.49 | .78 | |
| Q7 | 10.89 | .85 | |
| Q8 | 10.96 | .86 | |
| **Destination Image** | | | .712 |
| Q9 | 7.36 | .87 | |
| Q10 | 8.19 | .72 | |
| Q11 | 7.46 | .77 | |
| Q12 | 6.78 | .71 | |
| Q13 | 6.97 | .72 | |
| **Attitude towards Destination** | | | .733 |
| Q14 | 8.55 | .77 | |
| Q15 | 8.24 | .71 | |
| Q16 | 11.00 | .87 | |
| **Travel Intention** | | | .821 |
| Q17 | 10.75 | .85 | |
| Q18 | 9.34 | .78 | |
| Q19 | 10.32 | .83 | |

Table 4
*Means, Standard deviations, and correlations*

| Component | Mean | SD | Inter-factor Correlations | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| WOM | 3.685 | .803 | | | | | |
| MM | 3.543 | 1.012 | .658* | | | | |
| DI | 4.100 | .826 | .573* | .346* | | | |
| TA | 3.632 | .815 | .659* | .555* | .571* | | |
| TI | 3.633 | .824 | .680* | .623* | .543* | .758* | |

*p<.01        Note: WOM = Word-of-Mouth, MM = Mass Media, DI = Destination image, TA = Tourist Attitude, TA = Travel Intention



Chi-Square=213.98, df=142, P-value=0.00009, RMSEA=0.068
Figure 2            Significance Coefficients

Table 5
*SEM results*

| Path description | β | t-value | Result |
|---|---|---|---|
| WOM → DI | .46 | 4.34 | Supported |
| MM → DI | .41 | 4.22 | Supported |
| WOM → TA | .52 | 4.46 | Supported |
| MM →TA | .38 | 3.13 | Supported |
| WOM → TI | .64 | 4.89 | Supported |
| MM → TI | .42 | 4.28 | Supported |
| DI → TA | .81 | 4.24 | Supported |
| DI → TI | .36 | 4.14 | Supported |
| TA → TI | .87 | 6.81 | Supported |

**Note: WOM** = Word-of-Mouth, **MM** = Mass Media, **DI** = Destination image, **TA** = Tourist Attitude, **TA** = Travel Intention

## Conclusion and Implications

The main objective of this study was to assess how WOM and mass media contribute to destination image formation. It may be one of only a few attempts to empirically assess simultaneously the impacts of WOM and mass media on image formation in a tourism destination context. The results indicated that WOM has a considerable impact on destination image, tourists' attitude towards destination, and travel intention. The findings were consistent with previous studies about the role of interpersonal communications in image formation (Doosti et al., 2016; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012a; Jalilvand et al., 2012; Morgan et al., 2003), attitude (Doosti et al., 2016; Jalilvand et al., 2012), and behavioural intentions (Doosti et al., 2016; Duhan et al., 1997; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012b, 2012c).

Similarly, mass media had a positive influence on destination image, tourists' attitude towards detonation, and travel intention. The findings were partially consistent with the previous studies (Feiz et al., 2013; Zolait & Sulaiman, 2009). For example, Feiz et al (2013) believed that media advertising provides customers with important information about product or service. Thus, feelings are elicited by advertisings and positive moods evoked by advertisings facilitate attitude change and consequently, purchase intention. My study also revealed that destination image is an important determinant of tourists' attitude and travel intention. This result would be consistent with Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Zhang et al. (2014) observations that a favourable image can form a positive attitude towards destination and motivate customers to visit or revisit a certain destination in the near future. Finally, I found that attitude towards a particular destination is a main determinant of travel intention. This finding was consistent with earlier studies in the context of hospitality industry (Doosti et al., 2016; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012c).

This study contributes to the tourism literature by revealing the influence of WOM and mass media on destination image and destination attitude in the context of historical tourism. The results revealed that the effects of WOM on destination image, destination attitude, and travel intention are much stronger than the effects of mass media. The phenomenon can be viewed as a pattern of change in travel behaviour. The reasons behind this phenomenon are complex and varied. WOM is a dynamic social process with key characteristics which distinguish it from other forms of marketing communication, namely, non-marketing source, face to face exchange, free exchange of information, and two-way flow. Due to these characteristics, WOM can generate higher order beliefs and thus stronger attitudes and more positive image because it comes from an unbiased and more credible source than traditional mass media. It is thus used frequently by travellers as a risk reduction strategy. This study has valuable managerial implications for tourism practitioners. Marketing managers should give more serious attention to a formal approach to encouraging and generating positive WOM messages about destinations. They should look for new and innovative ways to encourage customers to talk about the destination's attributes. In addition, WOM should be included as a formal component of a destination's promotional or marketing communications strategy and plan. For example, media advertising can be used to encourage more WOM about the destination. It should be noted that the reasons for tourism destinations being successful may also be the reasons for their superior WOM.

Destination managers should be aware of this and instigate monitoring activities to assess their WOM, just the same as they assess other marketing tactics. This would enable them to improve and strengthen their WOM activities. While the benefits of attracting audiences for media vehicles that are primarily advertiser supported are clear, there are also advantages for destinations. Destinations that have distinct attributes over the competition may find that

creating online feedback platforms, like tripadvisor.com, will assure more tourists learn about the attributes of the destination and over time, such learning should translate to improved tourism market share. In recent years, online reviews attracted a greater level of opinion leaders than the other media may indicate that marketers can advance their goals by creating more such platforms since they attract one of the most important tourists' groups-opinion leaders-to the destination Web sites.

For a media, the value of opinion leaders being drawn to a Web site is more obvious as the content is added, the destination is enhanced and may become more valuable and attractive. The value of opinion leaders visiting an online destination site also presents opportunities. Reviews by opinion leaders may accelerate WOM about destination and as a result, form the destination image. Of course, tourism destinations must work to provide a platform that allows opinion leaders to register their points of view about attributes of interest to the target audience. WOM can be used effectively to combat negative mass advertisements about a particular destination. Negative messages decrease the chance that a customer travels to a destination. However, mixed signals interact with each other. It seems that a WOM positive message can overcome anything negative said in mass advertisements. Therefore, when planning a campaign strategy, an effective approach is to deliver a campaign through targeted mass advertising and then reinforces that image through a more credible source of interpersonal influences.

The success of a marketing communication depends largely on how the audience views the source. Using both WOM and mass advertising strategies, it is easier to reinforce the advertising message by providing the same attributes through both outlets. Although personal influence may be more persuasive than mass communications, mass communications are the best method for stimulating WOM. These two forms of advertising act in close conjunction with each other and must be intricately used together to achieve maximum spread and results.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are some limitations in this study. This and other previous studies have focused mainly on issues of method and process, such as how WOM works, methods to initiate and media to spread WOM, and the process of influencing WOM. Very little, if anything, has been done to investigate the quality of the application of WOM and whether the quality of the activities influences the success or otherwise of the destination's marketing activities. Therefore, research into the quality of WOM as an intervening variable is required. This research has not considered the effects of WOM and mass media on risk mitigation. Risk perceptions exhibit an inverse relationship travel intentions. When perceptions of risk are high, intentions to travel are lower. Therefore, it is suggested that future research explores the role of WOM vs. mass media on risk perceptions. Given the recent political risk perceptions brought about by mass media effects on Peshawar, the question of "Does WOM overcome any negative/stereotypes of Peshawar in the mass media?" can also be answered by future works.

Additionally, cyberspace has provided new avenues to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication. One aspect of cyberspace is the phenomenon of online WOM. Hence, in today's contemporary society, the effect of social media and other digital sources of online WOM or news sites and the role of dissemination speed on information receivers can be addressed. The area is likely to provide an interesting stream of exploration. Further, this study empirically demonstrated that how mass media and WOM differ in terms

of their effect on the familiarity with a destination, trip purpose, and the length of stay. Thus, future studies are encouraged to compare these variables across decisions types.

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