

The Influence of Social Media on the Decision to Visit Gulamo Tourist Attractions in Kampar Regency

M. Firdaus Alfarizi^{1*}, Violintikha Harmawan²

^{1,2}Hospitality Management, Universitas Negeri Padang

Copyright©2025 by authors, all rights reserved. Authors agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence 4.0 International License.

Article Info

Article history:

Received July 31, 2025

Revised August 2, 2025

Accepted August 3, 2025

Keywords:

Social media, Visit decision,
Gulamo Tourist Attraction,
Kampar Regency

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media on tourists' decisions to visit the Gulamo Tourist Attraction in Kampar Regency, Indonesia. Using a quantitative, causal-associative approach, data were collected from 100 respondents through structured questionnaires. Descriptive analysis revealed high perceptions of social media's role in shaping travel behavior, particularly across five dimensions: ease of use, interactivity, entertainment, communication effectiveness, and content credibility. Inferential analysis through simple linear regression confirmed a statistically significant relationship ($\beta = 0.682$, $p < 0.001$), with social media explaining 65.2% of the variance in visit decisions ($R^2 = 0.652$). The findings underscore the strategic role of user-generated content and digital engagement in influencing destination choice, especially in under-promoted ecotourism sites. The study contributes to tourism marketing literature by highlighting how social media acts as an effective tool in behavioral persuasion and travel decision-making processes.

Corresponding Author:

M. Firdaus Alfarizi

Hospitality Management, Universitas Negeri Padang

Email: firdausafariz02@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a pivotal role in regional economic development, not only by creating employment and generating income, but also by enhancing the image and attractiveness of destinations. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and digital communication, traditional marketing efforts in tourism are increasingly being complemented—and even displaced—by digital channels, particularly social media. These platforms facilitate real-time dissemination of destination-related information and provide user-generated content that significantly influences tourists' perceptions and behavior [1], [2].

Social media has revolutionized the way tourists search, evaluate, and decide on destinations. Through visual storytelling, interactive features, and algorithm-driven personalization, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become essential tools in shaping destination image and influencing travel decisions [3]. The electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) shared through user posts, reviews, and influencers enables potential visitors to assess the appeal, accessibility, and uniqueness of a location before making their final decision [4]. Moreover, scholars have highlighted five essential characteristics that determine the influence of social media in the tourism context: interactivity, content credibility, ease of use, enjoyment, and participatory engagement [5].

In this context, previous studies have emphasized the significant role of social media marketing in affecting tourist behavior. For instance, Yadav and Tripathi [6] found that social media engagement positively impacts destination trust and visit intentions. Similarly, Jalilvand and Samiei [7] demonstrated that user-generated content can shape destination image, which in turn directly influences visit intention

and travel decision-making. These findings align with the theory of planned behavior, which posits that behavioral intentions are influenced by attitudes formed through accessible and credible information [8].

Kampar Regency in Riau Province, Indonesia, possesses unique ecotourism potential, one of which is Gulamo, often referred to as the “Green Canyon of Riau.” Characterized by its emerald waters, limestone cliffs, and pristine natural settings, Gulamo has recently attracted attention from social media users, influencers, and travel content creators. Nonetheless, despite its potential, the destination suffers from inconsistent promotional management and underutilization of official digital platforms, which raises questions about how influential user-generated content really is in shaping visitation decisions.

This concern is further illustrated by the fluctuation in tourist visitation over the past three years. As shown in Figure 1, visitation to Gulamo Tourist Attraction between 2023 and 2025 experienced significant variation. The highest spike occurred in April 2024, likely driven by viral content or holiday periods, while March 2024 recorded the lowest turnout. Throughout the rest of the months, the average visitation remained relatively stable, ranging from approximately 2,500 to 3,500 tourists per month. Such patterns highlight the potential vulnerability of destination popularity to inconsistent promotion, underscoring the importance of a well-managed and continuous digital engagement strategy.

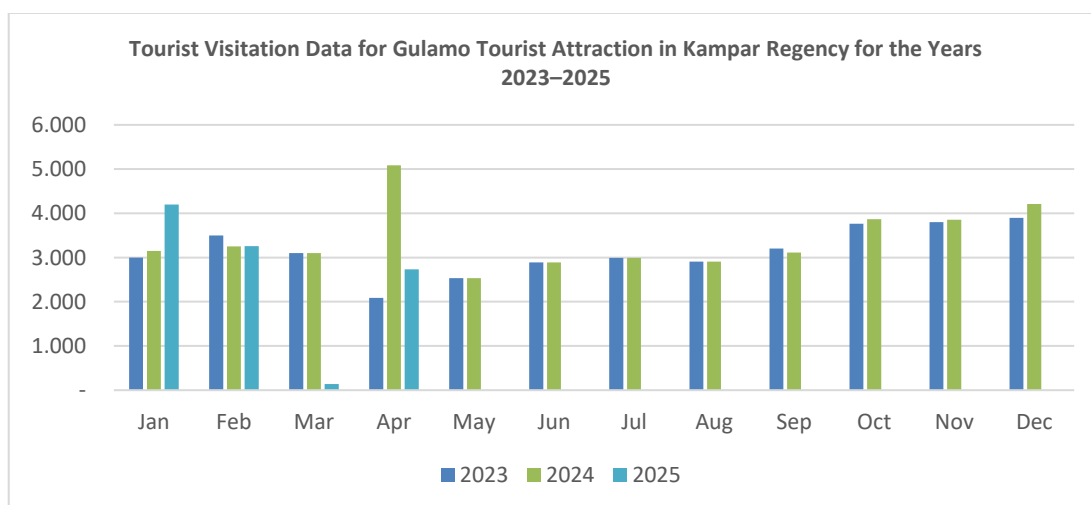


Figure 1. Graph of Tourist Visits to Gulamo Tourist Attraction in Kampar Regency in 2023–2025

Empirical evidence from Southeast Asia supports the assertion that destination image, formed via social media, influences not only tourist motivation but also intention and behavior [9]. However, studies specific to second-tier destinations such as Gulamo remain scarce. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how social media impacts the decision-making process of tourists visiting Gulamo in Kampar Regency. By identifying key determinants of social media effectiveness and their relation to visit behavior, this research contributes to destination marketing strategies, particularly in leveraging social media as a sustainable promotional tool.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal associative research design to investigate the effect of social media on tourists' decision to visit the Gulamo Tourist Attraction in Kampar Regency, Indonesia. Data collection was conducted in July 2025 using a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The population consisted of 36,698 individuals who had visited Gulamo in the previous 12 months. Using Slovin's formula with a 10% margin of error, a purposive sampling technique was applied to select 100 respondents, aligning with practices in behavioral tourism studies focusing on digital influence [10], [11]. The questionnaire items were adapted from previously validated constructs measuring the effectiveness of social media marketing and travel decision-making [12]. Prior to full data collection, a pilot test was conducted to ensure content clarity and instrument reliability. Internal consistency was verified using Cronbach's Alpha (threshold $\alpha \geq 0.70$), and construct validity was tested using Pearson's correlation with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 23. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and variable tendencies, while inferential

analysis was conducted through simple linear regression to determine the magnitude and significance of the relationship between social media and visit decisions. In addition, assumption tests for normality, homogeneity, and linearity were performed to confirm the appropriateness of the regression model [13]. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess how much of the variation in visit decisions could be explained by exposure to social media, a common method in tourism and consumer behavior research [14], [15].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

The descriptive analysis of both the social media and visit decision variables, based on 100 valid responses, revealed a generally high and consistent perception among tourists regarding the influence of digital platforms on travel behavior and their subsequent attitudes toward the Gulamo tourist attraction. For the social media variable, the average score (mean) was 59.82, with a median of 59.00 and a mode of 56, indicating a near-symmetrical distribution. A standard deviation of 7.240 and a variance of 52.412 suggest moderate variability across responses, with observed values ranging from 41 to 70 and a total score of 5,982. These results suggest that respondents viewed social media as an effective tool for obtaining tourism-related information. High average ratings across five indicators—ease of use (4.3), interactivity and participation (4.2), entertainment and enjoyment (4.3), ease of communication (4.4), and content credibility (4.4)—reinforce the strategic importance of social media as a persuasive, informative, and credible communication medium for destination promotion. Similarly, the visit decision variable yielded a mean of 51.47, a median of 51.00, and a mode of 48, indicating a distribution centered around the mid-to-upper range. With a standard deviation of 6.114 and variance of 37.383, the responses showed slightly lower variability than the social media variable. The range of scores extended from 35 to 60, totaling 5,147 points. This consistency in response is further supported by high average ratings across key behavioral indicators: decision stability (4.3), destination preference (4.1), recommendation to others (4.5), and intention to revisit (4.3). These results highlight strong post-visit intentions, destination satisfaction, and advocacy behavior among tourists, all of which are essential for building long-term destination loyalty and sustaining tourism growth.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Variable

Statistics	Value
N (Valid)	100
Mean	59.82
Median	59.00
Mode	56
Std. Deviation	7.240
Variance	52.412
Range	29
Minimum	41
Maximum	70
Sum	5982

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Visit Decision Variable

Statistics	Value
N (Valid)	100
Mean	51.47
Median	51.00
Mode	48
Std. Deviation	6.114
Variance	37.383
Range	25

Statistics	Value
Minimum	35
Maximum	60
Sum	5147

3.1.2. Assumption Testing

To ensure the validity of the regression analysis, two key statistical assumption tests were conducted: normality and homogeneity of variance. The normality of the data was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which is widely used in tourism and social science research to evaluate the distribution of residuals [16]. As shown in Table 3, the Monte Carlo significance value was 0.143, which is above the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the data are normally distributed, fulfilling the assumption required for linear regression. Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's Test to determine whether the variances of the dependent variable are equal across groups of the independent variable. As presented in Table 4, the significance value was 0.191 (> 0.05), indicating that the assumption of equal variances is satisfied. Meeting both assumptions supports the validity of using parametric statistical procedures in this study and ensures that the linear regression analysis yields unbiased and consistent parameter estimates [17]. The results are summarized in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Results of Normality Test of Social Media Variables on Visitation Decisions

Statistic	Value
N	100
Mean	51.470000
Std. Deviation	4.93841542
Most Extreme Differences	
Absolute	0.113
Positive	0.089
Negative	-0.113
Test Statistic	0.113
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)	0.143
99% Confidence Interval	[0.134, 0.152]

Table 4. Homogeneity Test Results

Statistic	Value
Levene Statistic	1.721
df1	1
df2	198
Sig.	0.191

3.1.3. Hypothesis Testing and Regression Results

To examine the relationship between social media and tourists' decision to visit Gulamo in Kampar Regency, a simple linear regression analysis was performed. The results revealed a statistically significant model, indicating that social media has a strong predictive effect on visit decision-making. Specifically, the ANOVA test yielded an F-value of 183.919 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, demonstrating that the model explains a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable. The regression coefficient for the social media variable was $B = 0.682$, with a standardized beta value of 0.808, and a t-statistic of 13.562 ($p < 0.001$). These values indicate that for every one-unit increase in the perceived effectiveness of social media, there is a corresponding 0.682-unit increase in the likelihood of visiting Gulamo. This strong positive association highlights the importance of social media as a communication and influence channel in the tourism decision-making process.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that demonstrate how social media significantly affects tourists' intentions and actual behaviors. For instance, Zeng and Gerritsen [20] found that social media platforms play a crucial role in forming destination image and generating intention to visit. Similarly, Mariani et al. [21] emphasized that digital engagement and online interactions influence trust and intention to travel, especially through user-generated content and visual storytelling. Furthermore, Tussyadiah and Pesonen [22] highlighted the psychological mechanism of information credibility and social presence in affecting tourists' behavioral intentions. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.652, indicating that approximately 65.2% of the variance in tourists' visit decisions can be explained by their perception and use of social media. The remaining 34.8% is influenced by other variables not included in the model. These results reinforce the persuasive and informative nature of digital platforms as critical components in modern tourism marketing strategies.

Table 6. ANOVA – Regression Significance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2414.407	1	2414.407	183.919	0.000
Residual	1286.503	98	13.128		
Total	3700.910	99			

Table 7. Coefficients of the Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	10.664	3.031	–	3.519	0.001
Social Media	0.682	0.050	0.808	13.562	0.000

Table 8. Model Summary – Coefficient of Determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.808	0.652	0.649	3.623

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study affirm that social media plays a pivotal role in influencing tourists' decisions to visit Gulamo Tourist Attraction in Kampar Regency. The positive and significant regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.682$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates a strong association between tourists' perception of social media and their likelihood to choose Gulamo as a destination. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.652$) further indicates that 65.2% of the variance in visit decisions can be explained by social media-related factors. This aligns with the work of Zeng and Gerritsen [20], who emphasized the integral function of social media in forming destination images and shaping behavioral intentions in tourism contexts.

Five social media dimensions—ease of use, interactivity, entertainment, communication effectiveness, and content credibility—were rated highly by respondents, suggesting that the influence of social media is multifaceted. These dimensions resonate with the framework proposed by Tussyadiah and Pesonen [22], who found that user experience, perceived credibility, and digital interactivity contribute to travel decision-making. In particular, platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, through visual storytelling and user-generated content, allow tourists to simulate the travel experience in advance, which shapes both emotional and rational components of their decisions [21], [24].

This study also reinforces the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [8], which posits that behavioral intentions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the case of Gulamo, social media acts as a channel that informs and influences attitudes toward the destination, while peer-shared content establishes normative beliefs. The high frequency of recommendations and revisit intentions among respondents further reflects the social validation and informational trust generated through e-WOM (electronic word-of-mouth) [6], [14].

Consistent with prior research, user-generated content is a critical determinant in modern travel behavior. Studies by Kim and Park [10] and Mariani et al. [12] show that online reviews and social endorsements affect both pre-travel planning and real-time decision-making. In the context of under-promoted ecotourism sites like Gulamo, such organic promotion becomes even more crucial. Despite limited official promotion by local authorities, the data suggest that tourists rely heavily on peer content,

influencer posts, and digital narratives to form destination preferences, a finding echoed by Lyu et al. [24] who emphasized authenticity and engagement as key drivers of tourism marketing success.

However, while social media explains a substantial portion of visit decisions, the remaining 34.8% of unexplained variance indicates the presence of other influential variables. These may include logistical considerations (e.g., transportation and accommodation), destination infrastructure, personal travel motivation, or socioeconomic factors [11], [15]. Future research should consider integrating these variables into a more comprehensive behavioral model to enhance explanatory power.

In sum, this study highlights that social media is not merely a supplementary tool but a central driver in shaping tourist behavior, particularly in emerging destinations where digital content often substitutes for formal marketing infrastructure. Destination managers should leverage this insight by promoting user participation, enhancing content quality, and collaborating with digital influencers to build sustained awareness and visitor engagement.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study provide strong empirical evidence that social media significantly influences tourists' decisions to visit Gulamo in Kampar Regency. The simple linear regression analysis revealed that social media accounts for approximately 65.2% of the variance in the visit decision, indicating that digital platforms—particularly those facilitating user-generated content—serve as powerful channels for destination promotion. This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the role of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), interactivity, and content credibility in shaping tourist perceptions and behaviors [20], [21].

Social media's impact can be attributed to several dimensions that enhance engagement and influence: ease of access, real-time visual storytelling, peer influence through comments and shares, and the perceived authenticity of content. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook allow prospective tourists to virtually experience destinations before visiting, thereby forming affective and cognitive impressions that influence behavior. Zeng and Gerritsen [20] argued that the interactive nature of social media supports destination image formation, while Tussyadiah and Pesonen [22] emphasized the role of digital trust and perceived credibility in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, the strong regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.808$) indicates that tourists who perceive social media as informative and trustworthy are significantly more likely to decide on visiting the destination. This reinforces the Theory of Planned Behavior, where behavioral intention is shaped by attitudes and perceived behavioral control—both of which are influenced by the information environment [8]. Given Gulamo's limited official promotion, the findings suggest that user-generated content and peer recommendations are compensating for formal marketing gaps, thus highlighting the potential for leveraging influencer strategies, destination storytelling, and viral content creation to boost awareness.

However, it is important to note that 34.8% of the variance remains unexplained, suggesting the presence of other influential factors such as destination accessibility, infrastructure, personal travel motivation, and economic considerations. Future studies may incorporate these variables to build a more comprehensive model. Nonetheless, this study confirms that strategic social media utilization is not just supplementary, but central to shaping destination appeal and driving tourist visits, especially for emerging ecotourism locations like Gulamo.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is derived from an undergraduate thesis submitted to the Hospitality Management Study Program. The author would like to express sincere appreciation to Ms. Violintikha Harmawan, for her dedicated supervision, valuable guidance, and continuous encouragement throughout the completion of this research. The author also extends gratitude to the Department of Tourism and Culture of Kampar Regency for granting access to Gulamo and supporting the data collection process. Special thanks go to all respondents who participated in the survey and contributed their time and insights. Lastly, the author acknowledges the academic staff, family, and friends whose support has been instrumental during the research journey.

REFERENCES

- [1] M. T. Tatar and M. Mihajlović, "The Impact of Social Media on Tourism Destination Choice," *Management: Journal of Sustainable Business and Management Solutions in Emerging Economies*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 13–22, 2023, doi: 10.7595/management.fon.2023.0037.

- [2] S. R. Herman and T. Putra, "Design for the Development of Tourist Attraction Facilities Timbulun Waterfall in Pesisir Selatan," *Journal of Management and Marketing (JoMM)*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 25–31, Dec. 2024. DOI: 10.63076/jomm.v1i2.13.
- [3] X. Wang, Y. Li, and Y. Wang, "Social media marketing and consumer purchase intention: Evidence from a college town," *Tourism Management Perspectives*, vol. 39, p. 100838, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100838.
- [4] Zendlyve Furqon, & Dwi Pratiwi Wulandari. (2025). The Influence of Facilities on Visitors' Emotional Value at Mifan Water Park Tourist Attraction in Padang Panjang City. *Journal of Multidimensional Management*, 2(1), 120–125. <https://doi.org/10.63076/jomm.v2i1.29>.
- [5] Suci Rafiza Herman and T. Putra, "Design for The Development of Tourist Attraction Facilities Timbulun Waterfall in Pesisir Selatan", *JoMM*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 25–31, Dec. 2024.
- [6] S. Yadav and V. Tripathi, "Impact of social media marketing on brand trust and brand loyalty: Empirical evidence from Indian consumer market," *International Journal of Information Management Data Insights*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.jjimei.2021.100027.
- [7] Juli Andra and Youmil Abrian, "The Influence of Promotion Through Instagram Social Media on the Decision to Stay at Villa Air Manis Hill Residence", *JoMM*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 46–51, Feb. 2025.
- [8] I. Ajzen, "The theory of planned behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 179–211, 1991, doi: 10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T.
- [9] D. Pham and M. Tran, "The role of destination image in mediating the relationship between social media marketing and tourist intention: Evidence from Vietnam," *Sustainability*, vol. 14, no. 11, p. 6829, 2022, doi: 10.3390/su14116829.
- [10] J. Kim and S. Park, "The effect of social media marketing on tourism consumer behavior: A meta-analysis," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 134–153, 2023, doi: 10.1108/JHTT-08-2022-0222.
- [11] A. Albayrak, S. Caber, and A. R. González-Rodríguez, "The role of individual factors and destination image in predicting tourists' behavioral intentions: A comparative analysis," *Tourism Management Perspectives*, vol. 37, p. 100790, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100790.
- [12] A. Mariani, M. Borghi, and M. Cappa, "Online review helpfulness and sentiment: Empirical evidence from the tourism industry," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 2135–2155, 2021, doi: 10.1108/IJCHM-10-2020-1147.
- [13] A. Gursoy and M. Chi, "Effects of social media marketing on decision-making process in tourism: A model development and testing," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 91, p. 103276, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.annals.2021.103276.
- [14] M. R. Jalilvand and N. Samiei, "The impact of electronic word-of-mouth on a tourism destination choice: Testing the theory of planned behavior (TPB)," *Internet Research*, vol. 22, no. 5, pp. 591–612, 2012, doi: 10.1108/10662241211271563.
- [15] D. Styliadis, "The role of place image dimensions in residents' support for tourism development," *Tourism Management*, vol. 63, pp. 261–272, 2017, doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2017.06.006.
- [16] C. Ghasemi and S. Zahediasl, "Normality tests for statistical analysis: A guide for non-statisticians," *International Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 486–489, 2012, doi: 10.5812/ijem.3505.
- [17] A. M. Tabachnick and L. S. Fidell, *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 6th ed., Boston: Pearson Education, 2013.
- [18] S. Munar and A. Jacobsen, "Motivations for sharing tourism experiences through social media," *Tourism Management*, vol. 43, pp. 46–54, 2014, doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2014.01.012.
- [19] C. Mariani, A. Borghi, and A. Cappa, "Online reviews: How content and reviewer characteristics affect consumers' intention to purchase," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, vol. 32, no. 12, pp. 3865–3886, 2020, doi: 10.1108/IJCHM-03-2020-0271.
- [20] B. Zeng and R. Gerritsen, "What do we know about social media in tourism? A review," *Tourism Management Perspectives*, vol. 10, pp. 27–36, 2014, doi: 10.1016/j.tmp.2014.01.001.
- [21] M. Mariani, A. Borghi, and S. Cappa, "Online review helpfulness and sentiment: Does extreme content matter?," *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 102, 2022, Art. no. 103158, doi: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103158.
- [22] I. Tussyadiah and J. Pesonen, "Drivers and barriers in tourists' use of digital applications," *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism*, Springer, 2016, pp. 229–239, doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-28231-2_17.

- [23] J. Hudson and R. Thal, “The impact of social media on the consumer decision process: Implications for tourism marketing,” *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, vol. 30, no. 1–2, pp. 156–160, 2013, doi: 10.1080/10548408.2013.751276.
- [24] Y. Lyu, D. Liu, and W. Wang, “Authenticity and engagement in social media tourism marketing: Empirical evidence from China,” *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, vol. 15, 2020, Art. no. 100404, doi: 10.1016/j.jdmm.2019.100404.