HOW ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (E-WOM) AFFECTS THE DECISION TO STAY TO AMBUN SURI BUKITTINGGI HOTEL

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Abstract

This research was motivated by the positive and negative comments on the Ambun Suri Hotel website, which suggested that these comments might influence the decision to stay overnight. Therefore, the aims of this research are: 1) To describe the Electronic Word of Mouth at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi; 2) To describe the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi; and 3) To examine how Electronic Word of Mouth influences the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi. The approach used in this research is quantitative, with a causal associative method. This research was conducted at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi. The research population consists of guests who stayed overnight and used internet media services to choose a hotel from June 2023 to October 2023, with an average of 315 guests. The sample was selected using non-probability sampling techniques, resulting in a sample of 176 people. Data collection was carried out using a Likert Scale model questionnaire, which was tested for validity and reliability. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression. The research results indicate that: 1) There is a 34.9% influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi; 2) Electronic Word of Mouth is overall categorized as good, with a score of 79.2%; and 3) The decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi is also categorized as good, with a score of 78.4%.

Keywords: Electronic Word of Mouth, Decision to Stay

INTRODUCTION

Bukittinggi is one of the most popular tourist spots in West Sumatra. Nature tourism, shopping, culinary experiences, and historical sites are some of the attractions in this city. As a tourist destination that is conveniently located and easily accessible, Bukittinggi offers many advantages. According to T. Putra et al. (2019), the features and unique qualities of a tourist attraction are potentials that can be developed and promoted to attract visitors.

Ambun Suri Hotel is a two-star hotel in Bukittinggi City. The hotel is strategically located, making it easier for guests to explore various tourist attractions in the Bukittinggi area. It is only 200 meters

from Jam Gadang. Ambun Suri Hotel has 35 rooms and offers four types of accommodations: Standard Room, Standard AC Room, Superior Room, and Family Room. To increase room sales, Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel must develop strategies to attract consumers and improve guest services, ensuring that guests leave with a positive impression and do not post negative comments, which could affect the hotel's image and future booking decisions.

Preliminary research through data collection revealed that the decline in room occupancy rates at Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi was primarily due to a high number of room purchase cancellations. The data shows the number of room purchase cancellations from June to October 2023 at Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi. After staying at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi, many guests provided reviews or comments in the review section on the online travel agent (OTA) platform. These reviews are accompanied by star ratings. The OTA hotel rating table indicates that Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel received a mix of positive and negative comments, reflecting varying guest experiences, which can influence potential guests' decisions to make a reservation or cancel.

Given this issue, it is crucial to examine the influence of e-WOM on the decision to stay at a hotel. E-WOM refers to the exchange of consumer information and experiences through electronic media, which plays a crucial role in consumers' decision-making. According to Kim and Ko (2012), e-WOM functions as an essential source of information in shaping consumer perceptions and influencing purchasing decisions. E-WOM can increase consumers' trust through positive recommendations and alert them to potential problems through negative reviews (Cheung et al., 2008).

Given the positive and negative comments about Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi, the hotel's rating on OTA platforms, and the number of guests canceling their reservations via OTA, which has led to a decrease in the hotel's occupancy rate, it is essential to investigate how e-WOM influences the decision to stay overnight. Research by Huang and Benyoucef (2013) indicates that positive online reviews can increase the likelihood of a consumer making a reservation, while negative reviews can reduce interest and influence the decision to cancel a booking. Thus, testing the impact of e-WOM on overnight stay decisions is necessary.

The study's findings will assist hotels in developing more effective marketing strategies and managing their online reputation. Moreover, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in the hotel industry by providing new insights into the impact of e-WOM on overnight stay decisions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative methodology to examine the impact of e-WOM on the choice to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi. This approach was selected because it allows for testing the relationship between the two primary variables in the study: the decision to stay overnight, which is the dependent variable, and e-WOM, which is the independent variable.

The population of this study consists of guests who use Internet media services to choose a hotel. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling strategy, was employed to select samples based on specific criteria. These criteria include guests who made reservations via the Internet at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi. A total of 176 guests who met these criteria were included as samples in this study.

A questionnaire designed to quantify e-WOM characteristics and overnight decisions was used to collect data. The questionnaires were distributed to hotel guests who had made reservations via the online platform, using a Likert scale to assess the respondents' level of agreement with statements related to e-WOM and their decision to stay.

Data were analyzed using a variety of methodologies. The normality test was conducted to ensure that the data follow a normal distribution, which is critical for the validity of the regression analysis results. Homogeneity tests were performed to ensure that variances between data sets are equal, resulting in consistent data variability. The linearity test was used to establish a linear relationship between e-WOM and overnight decisions, demonstrating that the independent and dependent variables are linearly connected. Finally, researchers utilized a simple linear regression test to assess the impact of e-WOM on overnight decisions, determining the degree and direction of the relationship between the two variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Description of Respondent Characteristics

1.1. By Gender
Table 1 provides an overview of respondent characteristics based on gender.

Table 1. Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Man	86	48.9
Woman	90	51.1
Total	**176**	**100**

Out of the 176 respondents, the majority were women, with 90 respondents (51.1%). Meanwhile, 86 respondents were men, accounting for 48.9% of the total. This indicates that the gender distribution of respondents is fairly balanced, though there are slightly more female respondents than male.

1.2. By Age
The table below provides a summary of respondents' characteristics based on their age:

Table 2. Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
<20	4	2,3
20-30	25	14.2
31-40	78	44.3
41-50	58	33
>50	11	6.3
Total	**176**	**100**

The majority of respondents were in the age range of 31-40 years, totaling 78 people or 44.3% of the respondents. The second largest group was the 41-50 year age group, with 58 respondents (33%). The 20-30 year age group included 25 respondents or 14.2%, while the over 50 group had 11 respondents (6.3%). The age group under 20 years was the smallest, with only 4 respondents (2.3%). Overall, the age distribution shows that most respondents are of productive age, particularly between 31 and 50 years.

1.3. By Occupation
The characteristics of respondents based on their sort of work are described below:

Table 3. Respondents by Occupation

Work	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Employee	13	7.4
Private employees	42	23.9
Government employees	39	22.2
Self-employed	32	18.2
Retired	18	10.2
Housewife	12	6,8
Other	20	11.4
Total	**176**	**100**

When analyzing respondents by employment type, it is clear that the majority work as private employees, with 42 respondents or 23.9% of the total. Civil servants make up the next largest group, with 39 respondents (22.2%), followed by entrepreneurs with 32 respondents (18.2%). Other categories include 20 respondents (11.4%) in various jobs, 18 retirees (10.2%), 13 employees (7.4%), and 12 housewives (6.8%). This data shows that most respondents are from the formal employment sector, both in private and public sectors..

1.4. Based on Income
The income-related features of respondents are described below:

Table 4. Respondents by Income

Income	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
<IDR.1,000,000	12	6,8
IDR 1,000,000-3,000,000	51	29
IDR. 3,000,000-5,000,000	83	47.2
>IDR.5,000,000	30	17
Total	**176**	**100**

Guest characteristics are based on the highest income in the range IDR 3,000,000-5,000,000 totaling 83 respondents or 47.2%. Meanwhile, respondents with the lowest income who stayed at hotels were those with an income of less than IDR. 1,000,000as much as 12 or 6.8%

1.5. Based on Education
The following is a description of the characteristics of responders depending on education, specifically:

Table 5. Respondents by Education

Education	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Elementary School	10	5.7
Junior High School	24	13.6
Senior High School	78	44.3
College	64	36.4
Total	**176**	**100**

Of the 176 respondents, the majority had a vocational or high school education, with 78 respondents or 44.3%. A total of 64 respondents, or 36.4%, had a tertiary education. Twenty-four respondents (13.6%) had a junior high school education, and the fewest, 10 respondents (5.7%), had only elementary school education. Overall, this distribution shows that most respondents have either upper secondary or tertiary education, reflecting a relatively educated population.

1.6. Based on Multiple Stays
The following describes the characteristics of responders depending on the number of entries, namely:

Table 6. Respondents by Number of Stays

Stay	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
1 time	65	36.9
2 times	78	44.3
>2 times	33	18.8
Total	**176**	**100**

Among the 176 respondents, 78 (44.3%) reported staying overnight twice. Sixty-five respondents (36.9%) stayed overnight once, while 33 respondents (18.8%) stayed more than twice. The distribution shows that the majority of respondents tend to stay 1 to 2 times.

1.7. Based on the Reservation Type
The following describes the characteristics of responders by reservation type, namely:

Table 7. Respondents Based on Reservation Type

Reservation Type	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Walk in	55	31.3
By Phone	70	39.8
OTAs	51	29
Total	**176**	**100**

Regarding reservation methods, the majority of respondents, 70 people or 39.8%, chose to make reservations by phone. Fifty-five respondents (31.3%) made reservations in person (walk-in), while 51 respondents (29%) used Online Travel Agent (OTA) services. This data indicates that phone reservations are the most commonly used method among respondents, followed by walk-in and OTA reservations.

2. *Electronic Word of Mouth* **at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi**

The results of the analysis of respondents' level of achievement for each Electronic word-of-mouth indicator can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8. Respondents' Achievement Level for Each Electronic Word of Mouth Indicator

No.	Indicator	Score	Average	%Respondent Achievement Level	Category
1	*intensity*	2796	3.97	79.4	Good
2	*Valance of Opinion*	2091	3.96	79.2	Good
3	*Content*	2776	3.94	78.9	Good

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the respondents' achievement level for the electronic word-of-mouth variable reached 79.2%, which falls into the 'good' category. This indicates that the intensity, valence of opinion, and content indicators at Hotel Ambun Suri Bukittinggi are already good. Therefore, the hotel management should maintain this by paying attention to the hotel's website and social media so that guests can easily access information about Hotel Ambun Suri Bukittinggi

3. Decision to Stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi
The results of the TCR analysis of each indicator of the Decision to Stay are explained in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Respondents' level of achievement for each indicator of decision to stay

No.	Indicator	Ideal Score	Average Score	Respondent Achievement Level (%)	Category
1	Recognition of Needs	2098	3.97	79.5	Good
2	Information Search	2749	3.90	78.1	Good
3	Evaluation of Alternatives	2059	3.90	78.0	Good
4	Buying decision	2756	3.91	78.3	Good
5	Post-Purchase Behavior	2061	3.90	78.1	Good

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the respondents' achievement level for the decision to stay variable reached 78.4%, which falls into the 'good' category. This indicates that guests' decisions to stay at Hotel Ambun Suri Bukittinggi, as evaluated based on the five indicators, namely need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, decision to stay, and post-purchase behavior, have adequately met their needs. Therefore, this result reflects Hotel Ambun Suri Bukittinggi's success in maintaining service quality that satisfies guests' needs and expectations, thus creating a positive stay experience and encouraging potential guest loyalty in the future.

2. Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis tested in this research is an alternative hypothesis, which states that "there is an influence of electronic word of mouth on the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi." The calculation results show that the correlation coefficient between e-WOM and the decision to stay overnight is 0.349, as described in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Coefficient of Determination (R Square) of Variable

				Std. Error of the Estimate
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	
1	.594a	0.352	0.349	3,732
a. Predictors: (Constant), EWOM				

Model Summary is the table header.

Based on the data presented in the table, the R Square value obtained is 0.349. This indicates that the Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) variable contributes 34.9% to guests' decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi. The remaining 65.1% of the decision to stay overnight is influenced by other factors not included in this analysis.

The F-test was used to assess the significance of the influence of the independent variable (e-WOM) on the dependent variable (decision to stay) as a whole. This test aims to determine whether the influence of e-WOM on overnight decisions is significant. The results of the F-test are presented in the following table, providing insight into whether the regression model can explain the variability of overnight decisions overall.

Table 11. F Test

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1318,998	1	1318,998	94,722	,000b
	Residual	2422,950	174	13,925		
	Total	3741,949	175			
a. Dependent Variable: Decision						
b. Predictors: (Constant), EWOM						

ANOVAa is the table header.

According to the data listed in the table, an F value of 94.722 was obtained with a significance level (sig.) of 0.000, which is smaller than the threshold of 0.05. These findings indicate that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. In other words, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a significant influence on the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi.

The next step involved deriving the regression equation, and a summary of the analysis results can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12. Regression Coefficient Test for Variable X against Y

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	36,129	3,144		11,491	0,000
	EWOM	0.700	0.072	0.594	9,733	0,000
a. Dependent Variable: Decision						

Coefficientsa

Based on the equation, a regression coefficient of 0.700 was obtained with a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This implies that every increase in Electronic Word of Mouth corresponds to a 0.700 unit increase in the Guest Stay Decision.

Based on the overall significant test results, the hypothesis stating "there is an influence of electronic word of mouth on the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi" can be accepted.

3. Discussion
3.1. *Electronic Word of* Mouth (X)

According to the findings of a study on the impact of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi, there were 176 respondents regarding the e-WOM variable. Each indicator of e-WOM was found to be in the good category, with a percentage of 79.2%. Reigner (in Achmad, 2018) defines e-WOM as "the activity of exchanging views based on experience or use of goods/services through electronic interactive media, particularly the internet."

Based on this explanation, it can be inferred that guests both conveyed and received information about the hotel effectively. The Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel has succeeded in leaving a positive impression on guests and understanding their needs, resulting in effective communication between guests and the hotel. This, in turn, has influenced guests' decisions to stay at the hotel while in Bukittinggi City.

Information received through e-WOM plays a crucial role in shaping potential guests' perceptions of the hotel. With 79.2% of respondents rating it in the good category, it can be concluded that guests have received positive information about the hotel. This indicates that the Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel has successfully managed e-WOM, thereby creating a positive image and attracting the attention of potential guests.

Effective communication between guests and the hotel involves not only the delivery of accurate information but also a deep understanding of the guests' needs and expectations. The Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel has demonstrated its ability to leave a positive impression and respond promptly to guest feedback. This contributes to a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship between guests and the hotel, which, in turn, influences guests' decisions to stay at the hotel when visiting Bukittinggi City.

Based on these results, the e-WOM strategy at the Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel should focus on reinforcing elements that have proven effective. This includes ensuring the quality of reviews received, responding quickly and constructively to feedback, and encouraging more positive reviews from guests. Proactive e-WOM management can increase the trust of potential guests and strengthen their decision to choose this hotel.

Given the increasing role of e-WOM in consumer decision-making, the Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel should continue to refine its communication strategies to maintain and enhance guest satisfaction. Implementing best practices in e-WOM management, such as providing honest and accurate information and fostering positive interactions with guests, will offer significant competitive advantages in the hospitality industry.

3.2. Decision to Stay (Y)

Based on the results of the research regarding the influence of e-WOM on the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi, it was found that out of the 176 respondents involved, their decision to stay was classified in the good category, with a percentage reaching 78.4%. This indicates that the majority of respondents were satisfied with their decision to stay at the hotel.

Consumer behavior involves how individuals, communities, and organizations select, purchase, and use goods, services, ideas, or experiences that satisfy their needs and preferences. Stay decisions are an integral part of this activity. In this context, consumer behavior encompasses not only the transaction decisions but also how various factors, including information obtained through e-WOM, influence their final choices. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2016:177), the study of consumer behavior focuses on a deep understanding of the factors that influence consumer decisions in purchasing and consumption. These findings underscore the importance of Electronic Word of Mouth in influencing stay decisions and highlight the need for a deeper understanding of how information from electronic sources can impact consumer behavior in the hospitality context.

The findings emphasize the significant role of Electronic Word of Mouth in shaping the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi. Information obtained through e-WOM, such as positive reviews and recommendations from previous guests, plays a crucial role in shaping potential guests' perceptions and influencing their decision to choose this hotel. This suggests that the hotel has been successful not only in conveying positive information but also in providing an experience that aligns with guest expectations.

From the above explanation, it can be inferred that guests have provided favorable evaluations of the hotel's services, location, and facilities, which enabled them to enjoy a comfortable and satisfactory hotel experience. As a result, the Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel has become a preferred choice for guests. Although the hotel has successfully navigated the decision-making process that leads guests to stay, there remains room for improvement to ensure guests choose to stay more frequently, including more than twice.

Considering these results, the Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel should continue to focus on enhancing aspects that contribute to positive guest decisions, such as improving the quality of services and facilities and maintaining strong communication with guests. These efforts will likely strengthen guests' stay decisions and potentially increase guest retention and loyalty rates in the future.

3.3. The Influence of E-WOM on the Decision to Stay

Based on the results of hypothesis testing to analyze the influence of e-WOM on the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi, simple linear regression analysis using SPSS version 24.00 showed significant results. A significance value (sig.) of 0.000, which is below the threshold of 0.05, indicates that the e-WOM variable (X) has a significant influence on the overnight decision variable (Y). In other words, e-WOM significantly influences guests' decisions to stay at the hotel. The regression equation obtained shows a coefficient of 0.700 with a sig. value of $0.000 < 0.05$, which indicates that every one-unit increase in Electronic Word of Mouth will increase the overnight decision by 0.700 units. These findings emphasize the importance of e-WOM in influencing stay decisions, providing valuable insights for hotels in their marketing strategies.

Furthermore, the R Square value of 0.349 indicates that 34.9% of the variability in decisions to stay overnight can be explained by the Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) variable. Meanwhile, the remaining 65.1% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. Based on these results, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that Electronic Word of Mouth influences 34.9% of the decision to stay overnight. This relationship is due to the role of e-WOM indicators, one of the internal factors influencing guest decisions. The stronger the Electronic Word of Mouth received by guests, the more likely they are to decide to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi. These findings emphasize the important role of e-WOM in the hotel industry, especially in influencing consumer decisions.

An external strategy, such as Electronic Word of Mouth, is an effective approach to enhancing this influence. Leong, Hew, Ooi, and Lin (in Budiman, 2021) stated that e-WOM is a crucial data source and can be a reference in determining whether guests choose to stay at a hotel. This aspect of consumer expectation has the potential to change consumer attitudes and preferences when buying or choosing products and services online.

However, it is important to note that although e-WOM shows a significant influence, the contribution of e-WOM to overnight decisions only reaches 34.9%. This result indicates that other factors, such as service quality, hotel location, price, and promotions, also play an important role in influencing consumer decisions. Future research could explore other factors contributing to stay decisions to better understand consumer behavior in the hospitality industry. This research also suggests that hotels should focus on managing e-WOM and other aspects that can increase guest satisfaction and stay decisions.

In conclusion, a combination of integrated marketing strategies and effective e-WOM management can be the key to attracting more guests and enhancing their loyalty to the hotel.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

Based on the analysis results from the research described, the conclusions drawn are as follows.
1) Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) from guests staying at the Ambun Suri Hotel is categorized as good, with a percentage of 79.2%.
2) The decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi is also categorized as good, with a percentage of 78.4%.
3) Electronic Word of Mouth influenced the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel Bukittinggi in a positive and significant manner. This is evident from the results of a simple linear regression test with a sig value of $0.000 < 0.05$ and an R square value of 0.349, indicating that Electronic Word of Mouth has an influence of 34.9% on the decision to stay at the Ambun Suri Hotel, Bukittinggi. The remaining 65.1% is influenced by other variables not included in this research.

2. Suggestion
2.1. To the Hotel

The hotel should ensure that it provides accurate and detailed information to online travel agents. Additionally, the hotel should address any issues raised and respond to negative reviews via email. This approach will help guests feel valued and may increase the likelihood of them choosing Ambun Suri Bukittinggi Hotel for their future stays when visiting Bukittinggi City.

2.2. Department of Tourism

The results of this study can serve as instructional material, discussion points, or a reference on the topic of E-WOM and customer satisfaction for the tourism department.

2.3. Other Researchers

Future researchers can expand upon this study by examining E-WOM in relation to other variables. This research's findings can provide a reference for future scholars. Additionally, conducting meta-analyses to explore how E-WOM influences hotel stay decisions could offer more comprehensive insights into the hospitality sector.

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