



# Determinants of visit decisions at Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque: social media, visitor experience, and e-wom

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** to examine the influence of social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on visit decisions at the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque as a contemporary religious tourism destination.

**Method:** this study employed a quantitative approach using a survey involving 390 visitors to the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using multiple linear regression with SPSS to examine the effects of social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on visit decisions.

**Findings:** social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) significantly influence visit decisions at the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. Among these factors, visitor experience and e-WOM represent the most influential determinants, indicating that meaningful on-site experiences and credible online information play essential roles in shaping visitors' decisions.

**Implications:** extending the application of the theory of planned behavior in understanding religious tourism behavior and offering managerial insights for improving digital communication, enhancing visitor experiences, and managing online visitor engagement to support sustainable destination development.

**Originality:** lies in integrating social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) into a single framework to explain visit decisions in the context of a contemporary mosque as a religious tourism destination, which remains underexplored in previous tourism research.



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## Introduction

Religious tourism has experienced significant transformation over the past decade, evolving from activities primarily intended to fulfill spiritual obligations into

multidimensional travel experiences that integrate religious, cultural, educational, and recreational values (Choe, 2025). In Muslim-majority countries, mosques increasingly perform multiple roles beyond serving as places of worship (Sumaktoyo, 2025). They function as symbols of urban identity, centers for Islamic education, public gathering spaces, and tourism destinations distinguished by their architectural uniqueness and historical significance (Moghavvemi et al., 2021). This transformation has expanded the strategic role of mosque management, requiring destination managers not only to preserve the sanctity of religious spaces but also to provide meaningful visitor experiences that sustain tourist interest and competitiveness (Adinugraha & Shulthoni, 2024). Consequently, understanding the determinants that influence tourists' decisions to visit contemporary religious destinations has become an important issue in both tourism research and destination management.

One of Indonesia's most prominent examples of this transformation is the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque in Bandung, which was inaugurated in December 2022. Besides functioning as a place of worship, the mosque offers monumental architecture, educational galleries, landscaped public spaces, and technology-supported visitor services that position it as one of the country's emerging religious tourism icons. Since its inauguration, the mosque has attracted substantial public attention and high visitor numbers. However, official visitor statistics indicate that this popularity has not been consistently maintained. Visitor arrivals reached 810,315 in September 2024 and 768,454 in October 2024, but declined sharply to only 92,452 visitors in March 2025 (Al-Jabbar, 2026). Such fluctuations suggest that the destination's initial attractiveness does not necessarily guarantee sustainable visitation. Instead, tourists' decisions appear to be influenced by broader psychological, experiential, and communication-related factors that require further investigation.

The decline in visitor numbers is also accompanied by several managerial issues that potentially affect tourists' decision-making processes. Although the official social media accounts of the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque have attracted a considerable number of followers, preliminary findings indicate that visitors still perceive the communication as lacking responsiveness, engagement, and interactive information delivery. Furthermore, online visitor reviews continue to report several service-related concerns, including parking management, cleanliness, transparency of parking fees, and the handling of lost belongings. These conditions imply that destination attractiveness alone is insufficient to encourage visitation when tourists' evaluations of communication quality, on-site experiences, and shared online opinions remain less than satisfactory. Consequently, understanding how these factors jointly influence visit decisions becomes increasingly important for the sustainable management of religious tourism destinations.

The tourism literature has identified social media as one of the most influential communication platforms affecting tourists' destination selection and travel planning (Pop et al., 2022; Saini et al., 2023; Tran & Rudolf, 2022). Social media enables destination managers to disseminate information regarding attractions, accessibility, facilities, and regulations while simultaneously facilitating two-way communication with prospective visitors (Feronika et al., 2026). Through interactive content and continuous engagement, social media reduces information uncertainty, strengthens destination awareness, and shapes social influence that encourages travel behavior (Hysa et al., 2021). In addition, Jannah et al. (2023) demonstrated that Instagram significantly influences tourists' decisions to visit tourism destinations by increasing destination attractiveness and information credibility. Nevertheless, possessing a large number of followers does not necessarily indicate effective communication because tourists also

evaluate the relevance, responsiveness, and quality of information provided by destination managers.

Beyond digital communication, visitor experience represents another critical determinant of tourist behavior (Juliana et al., 2024). Visitor experience encompasses tourists' cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral responses generated through interactions with destination environments, facilities, service personnel, and local atmospheres (Walls et al., 2011). Kim et al. (2012) further explain that memorable tourism experiences emerge from meaningful interactions that create lasting memories and influence subsequent behavioral decisions. Within religious tourism, visitor experience extends beyond functional service quality to include spiritual atmosphere, emotional attachment, sacredness, and personal reflection during the visit (Şahin & Güzel, 2024). Positive experiences strengthen visitors' evaluations of destination quality and encourage favorable behavioral outcomes such as recommendations, revisit intentions, and destination loyalty (Nowacki & Niezgoda, 2023; H. Zhang et al., 2018). Conversely, negative experiences related to service quality or destination management may reduce tourists' willingness to revisit despite the destination's architectural or religious appeal.

In the digital era, tourists' experiences are increasingly communicated through electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), which has become one of the most trusted sources of travel information (Rodríguez et al., 2022). Electronic word of mouth consists of online reviews, comments, ratings, photographs, and recommendations voluntarily shared by visitors through digital platforms (Hasan & Neela, 2022). Compared with official promotional messages, e-WOM is generally perceived as more credible because it originates from actual visitor experiences (Khotimah & Sulistyowati, 2022). Previous studies have consistently reported that positive e-WOM enhances destination trust, improves destination image, and influences tourists' travel decisions (Abubakar et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2022). For religious tourism destinations, e-WOM also communicates aspects that are difficult to convey through formal marketing communication, including the spiritual atmosphere, worship environment, visitor behavior, and the balance between religious functions and tourism activities.

Although previous studies have established the importance of social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth in influencing tourist behavior, several important gaps remain. First, existing studies predominantly examine these variables independently rather than integrating them within a single behavioral framework. Second, most empirical investigations have been conducted in heritage tourism, natural attractions, recreational destinations, or hospitality settings (Piramanayagam et al., 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021), while contemporary mosques functioning simultaneously as places of worship, educational centers, public spaces, and tourism destinations have received limited scholarly attention. Third, limited evidence exists regarding how official digital communication, tourists' direct experiences, and user-generated online communication jointly shape visit decisions within religious tourism contexts. These theoretical, empirical, and contextual gaps indicate the need for a more comprehensive model capable of explaining tourists' behavioral decisions in contemporary mosque tourism.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in integrating social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth into a unified research model to explain tourists' visit decisions at the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. Unlike previous studies that emphasize only one or two determinants of tourist behavior, this study simultaneously examines official communication, experiential evaluation, and user-generated

communication within the context of a contemporary mosque that performs multiple functions as a religious institution, educational center, public space, and tourism attraction. Therefore, this study extends the application of tourism behavior research to a religious destination context that remains relatively underexplored.

This study aims to examine the influence of social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth on tourists' visit decisions at the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque, both individually and simultaneously. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for destination managers in designing effective digital communication strategies, improving visitor experiences, and encouraging positive online engagement to strengthen destination competitiveness and sustainable visitation. From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the tourism literature by extending the application of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) within religious tourism while providing empirical evidence regarding the integrated effects of digital communication, experiential evaluation, and online social influence on tourists' behavioral decisions.

The theoretical foundation of this research is the theory of planned behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991), which explains that individual behavior is preceded by behavioral intention, while behavioral intention is determined by attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In tourism contexts, tourists evaluate available information, social influence, and previous experiences before deciding whether to visit a destination. Accordingly, TPB provides an appropriate theoretical framework for explaining how social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth influence visit decisions. Social media functions as an information source that can shape subjective norms and reduce uncertainty about destination attributes. Visitor experience contributes to favorable attitudes through tourists' cognitive, emotional, and spiritual evaluations of the destination. Meanwhile, electronic word of mouth represents social influence generated through user-created information that shapes tourists' attitudes and behavioral intentions before making travel decisions.

Based on the theory of planned behavior, social media is expected to influence visit decisions because interactive digital communication enhances destination awareness, reduces information uncertainty, and strengthens subjective norms that encourage behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Hysa et al. (2021) argued that social media has become an effective marketing instrument for tourism destinations by facilitating information exchange and visitor engagement. Likewise, Jannah et al. (2023) reported that social media significantly affects tourists' visit decisions. Therefore, the first hypothesis proposed in this study is:

H1: Social media positively influences visit decisions.

According to the theory of planned behavior, favorable attitudes formed through positive evaluations increase behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Visitor experience reflects tourists' overall cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual evaluations resulting from interactions with destination environments and services (Kim et al., 2012; Walls et al., 2011). Memorable experiences strengthen destination attachment and encourage positive behavioral outcomes, including future visit decisions (Nowacki & Niezgoda, 2023; H. Zhang et al., 2018). In religious tourism, meaningful spiritual experiences further reinforce positive destination evaluations (Şahin & Güzel, 2024). Therefore, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: Visitor experience positively influences visit decisions.

The theory of planned behavior further suggests that subjective norms derived from social influence significantly affect behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Electronic

word of mouth represents one of the strongest forms of social influence because prospective tourists frequently rely on online reviews and recommendations when evaluating tourism destinations. Compared with official promotional communication, e-WOM is generally perceived as more authentic and trustworthy because it reflects actual visitor experiences (Khotimah & Sulistyowati, 2022). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that positive e-WOM enhances destination trust and influences tourists' travel decisions (Abubakar et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2022). Accordingly, the third hypothesis proposed is:

H3: Electronic word of mouth positively influences visit decisions.

## **Method**

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive and explanatory (verification) research design to examine the effects of social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on tourists' visit decisions at the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque in Bandung, Indonesia. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to empirically test the hypothesized relationships among variables and evaluate the extent to which the independent variables explain tourists' visit decisions. The unit of analysis consisted of individual visitors who had previously visited the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque and were therefore able to evaluate their experiences, the mosque's social media communication, online reviews, and their own visitation decisions.

The study population comprised all visitors to the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. Because the exact population size was dynamic and continuously changing, respondents were selected using purposive sampling. This non-probability sampling method was adopted to ensure that only individuals possessing relevant experience with the destination participated in the study. The sampling criteria required respondents to have visited the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque at least once and to be able to provide assessments regarding the research variables. Based on these criteria, a total of 390 valid questionnaires were collected and included in the final analysis. Primary data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended statements developed from established theoretical constructs in the tourism and marketing literature. Before the main survey was conducted, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity, consistency, and suitability of the measurement items for the research context.

The independent variables examined in this study were social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), while visit decision served as the dependent variable. Social media was operationalized using three dimensions, namely social presence, media richness, and media choice, measured through ten questionnaire items. Visitor experience was measured using five dimensions adapted from the memorable tourism experience literature, including immersion, surprise, participation, fun, and education, represented by fifteen measurement items. Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) was operationalized through three dimensions comprising intensity, content, and valence of opinion using nine measurement items. Meanwhile, visit decision was measured using five items representing the stages of consumer decision-making, including need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and purchase (visit) decision. A summary of the operationalization of the research variables is presented in Table 1.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the quality of the measurement instrument was

evaluated through validity and reliability testing. Construct validity was assessed using corrected item-total correlation, while internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. To ensure that the regression model satisfied the assumptions of the classical linear regression model, several diagnostic tests were conducted, including tests of normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, linearity, and autocorrelation. The research hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis with IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. The partial effects of each independent variable on visit decision were examined using the t-test, whereas the simultaneous effects of all independent variables were evaluated using the F-test. Furthermore, the explanatory power of the regression model was assessed using the adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>). All statistical tests were performed at a significance level of 5% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), allowing the proposed hypotheses to be accepted or rejected based on empirical evidence.

**Table 1 operational summary of research variables**

| Variable                         | Core dimensions                                                            | Items | Scale  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| Social media                     | Social presence; media richness; media choice                              | 10    | Likert |
| Visitor experience               | Immersion; surprise; participation; fun; education                         | 15    | Likert |
| Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) | Intensity; content; valence of opinion                                     | 9     | Likert |
| Visit decision                   | Need recognition; information search; evaluation of alternatives; decision | 5     | Likert |

## Results and discussion

### *Respondent characteristics*

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed to provide an overview of the sample composition and to ensure that the participants possessed relevant experience for evaluating the research variables. A total of 390 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis. The respondents were classified according to gender, age, occupation, and frequency of visits to the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 demographic characteristics of respondents**

| Characteristic  | Category         | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender          | Male             | 157           | 40.3           |
|                 | Female           | 233           | 59.7           |
| Age             | 17–25 years      | 145           | 37.2           |
|                 | 26–35 years      | 179           | 45.9           |
|                 | 36–45 years      | 63            | 16.2           |
|                 | >65 years        | 3             | 0.8            |
| Occupation      | Student          | 93            | 23.8           |
|                 | Civil servant    | 66            | 16.9           |
|                 | Private employee | 122           | 31.3           |
|                 | Entrepreneur     | 67            | 17.2           |
|                 | Housewife/others | 42            | 10.7           |
| Visit frequency | Once             | 74            | 19.1           |
|                 | Twice            | 159           | 41.0           |
|                 | More than twice  | 155           | 39.9           |

Source: primary data, processed (2026).

As shown in Table 2, female respondents accounted for the majority of the sample (59.7%), while male respondents represented 40.3%. This distribution indicates that the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque attracts visitors from both genders, with a relatively higher participation among women. In terms of age, respondents aged 26–35 years constituted the largest proportion (45.9%), followed by those aged 17–25 years (37.2%) and 36–45 years (16.2%). Only a small percentage of respondents were over 65 years of age (0.8%). The predominance of respondents within the productive age group suggests that the sample consists primarily of individuals who are active users of digital media and therefore capable of evaluating the influence of social media and electronic word of mouth on their visit decisions.

Regarding occupation, private-sector employees formed the largest occupational group (31.3%), followed by students (23.8%), entrepreneurs (17.2%), civil servants (16.9%), and housewives or respondents with other occupations (10.7%). The diversity of occupational backgrounds indicates that the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque attracts visitors from various socioeconomic segments, reflecting its role not only as a place of worship but also as a public religious tourism destination. With respect to visit frequency, most respondents had previously visited the mosque more than once. Respondents who had visited twice represented 41.0% of the sample, while 39.9% had visited more than twice. Only 19.1% were first-time visitors. The dominance of repeat visitors indicates that the majority of respondents possessed sufficient firsthand experience to evaluate the mosque's social media communication, visitor experience, electronic word of mouth, and their visit decisions. Therefore, the respondent profile supports the credibility of the findings because the assessments were largely provided by individuals who were already familiar with the destination.

### *Instrument quality*

Before testing the proposed hypotheses, the measurement instrument was evaluated to ensure that it met the requirements of validity and reliability. Item validity was assessed using the corrected item-total correlation, whereas reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability results for each research construct are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 reliability assessment of research variables**

| Variable                         | Items | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | Interpretation |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------------------|----------------|
| Social media                     | 10    | 0.621               | Reliable       |
| Visitor experience               | 15    | 0.771               | Reliable       |
| Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) | 9     | 0.885               | Reliable       |
| Visit decision                   | 5     | 0.811               | Reliable       |

Source: primary data, processed (2026).

The validity test indicated that all questionnaire items were valid because the corrected item-total correlation values exceeded the critical value ( $r = 0.099$ ). Furthermore, the reliability test demonstrated that all research variables achieved acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.621 to 0.885. Among the four constructs, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) exhibited the highest reliability ( $\alpha = 0.885$ ), followed by visit decision ( $\alpha = 0.811$ ) and visitor experience ( $\alpha = 0.771$ ). Although the social media construct produced the lowest reliability coefficient ( $\alpha = 0.621$ ), the value exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold for exploratory behavioral research, indicating that the measurement instrument was sufficiently reliable for subsequent statistical analyses.

### *Classical assumption tests*

After confirming the measurement instrument's quality, classical assumption tests were conducted to verify the suitability of the data for multiple linear regression analysis. The normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method produced a significance value of 0.200 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. Multicollinearity diagnostics showed that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.001 to 1.610, well below the recommended cut-off value of 10, suggesting that no multicollinearity existed among the independent variables. In addition, the Durbin–Watson statistic was 2.005, indicating that the regression residuals were free from significant autocorrelation. Collectively, these findings confirm that the data satisfied the assumptions required for multiple linear regression analysis.

### *Descriptive analysis*

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine respondents' perceptions of each research variable before hypothesis testing. Overall, the results indicate that all variables were evaluated positively and fell within the high category, suggesting favorable perceptions toward the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque in terms of its social media communication, visitor experience, electronic word of mouth, and visit decisions. Among the four constructs, visitor experience obtained the highest overall score (75.92%), indicating that respondents generally experienced positive cognitive, emotional, and spiritual interactions during their visit. The highest-rated indicator (79.44%) reflected respondents' appreciation of the mosque's architectural beauty and the activities available within the destination. Conversely, the lowest-rated indicator (71.49%) related to respondents' willingness to become part of the mosque community, suggesting that memorable experiences did not necessarily encourage long-term social involvement with the destination.

The electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) construct achieved an overall score of 75.79%, indicating that respondents generally perceived online information regarding the mosque as useful and credible. Information concerning the mosque's facilities and services received the highest evaluation (78.67%), whereas information regarding visitation costs received the lowest score (73.85%). This finding suggests that although online information is generally adequate, greater transparency regarding cost-related information could further improve visitors' perceptions. The visit decision variable recorded an overall score of 73.08%, demonstrating that respondents generally exhibited positive decisions to visit the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. The highest-rated indicator (74.31%) was associated with visiting the mosque for worship purposes, indicating that religious motivation remains the primary reason for visiting despite the mosque's role as a tourism destination and public space.

Among all research variables, social media received the lowest overall evaluation (71.42%), although it remained within the high category. The lowest-rated indicator (55.84%) concerned respondents' perceptions of management responsiveness and communication through the mosque's official social media platforms. This finding indicates that visitors expect more consistent, informative, interactive, and responsive communication regarding facilities, religious activities, operational regulations, and visitation costs. Strengthening digital communication may therefore enhance visitor engagement and support more favorable visit decisions.

### Multiple linear regression and hypothesis testing

Following the confirmation that the measurement instrument met the required validity and reliability standards and that the data satisfied the classical regression assumptions, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the effects of social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on visit decision. The significance of each relationship was evaluated using the t-test, while the overall regression model was assessed using the F-test. In addition, the explanatory power of the model was examined using the adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted  $R^2$ ). The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4 multiple linear regression and hypothesis testing results**

| Hypothesis                              | Coefficient | t-value   | p-value | Decision    |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|---------|-------------|
| H1: Social media → visit decision       | 0.057       | 7.356     | < 0.001 | Supported   |
| H2: Visitor experience → visit decision | 1.681       | 26.838    | < 0.001 | Supported   |
| H3: e-WOM → visit decision              | 0.445       | 78.095    | < 0.001 | Supported   |
| F-value                                 | –           | 2.354.203 | < 0.001 | Significant |
| Adjusted $R^2$                          | –           | –         | 0.948   | –           |

Source: primary data, processed (2026).

As presented in Table 4, all three independent variables exerted a positive and statistically significant influence on visit decisions. The results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ( $F = 2354.203$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating that social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) collectively explain variations in tourists' visit decisions at the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.948$ ) indicates that approximately 94.8% of the variance in visit decisions can be explained by the three independent variables included in the model. The remaining 5.2% of the variance is attributable to other factors not examined in this study. This finding suggests that the proposed research model possesses substantial explanatory power in explaining tourists' visit decisions within the context of religious tourism.

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that social media positively influences visit decisions. The regression analysis produced a positive regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.057$ ) with a t-value of 7.356 and a significance level below 0.001, indicating that social media has a positive and statistically significant effect on tourists' visit decisions. Therefore, H1 is supported. Although the magnitude of the regression coefficient is relatively smaller than those of the other independent variables, the findings demonstrate that effective social media communication contributes to encouraging tourists' decisions to visit the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. The second hypothesis (H2) examined the influence of visitor experience on visit decision. The results show a positive regression coefficient ( $\beta = 1.681$ ) with a t-value of 26.838 and a significance level below 0.001, confirming that visitor experience has a positive and significant effect on visit decisions. Consequently, H2 is supported. Among the independent variables, visitor experience exhibits the largest regression coefficient, suggesting that visitors' cognitive, emotional, and spiritual experiences during their visit play the most substantial role in shaping their decision to visit the destination.

The third hypothesis (H3) proposed that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) positively influences visit decisions. The analysis produced a positive regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.445$ ) with a remarkably high t-value of 78.095 and a significance level below 0.001, indicating a strong positive relationship between e-WOM and visit decisions. Therefore, H3 is supported. This result implies that online reviews,

recommendations, and user-generated content significantly influence prospective visitors when deciding whether to visit the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. Overall, the regression results demonstrate that social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) each contribute significantly to tourists' visit decisions, both individually and collectively. These findings provide empirical support for the proposed research model and indicate that digital communication, visitor experiences, and online interpersonal communication constitute important determinants of visit decisions in the context of contemporary religious tourism.

#### *The influence of social media on visit decision*

The findings of this study confirm that social media positively influences visitors' decisions to visit the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. This finding indicates that digital communication has become an important element in shaping visitors' perceptions before they decide to visit a religious tourism destination. Through social media platforms, visitors can obtain information about destination attractiveness, facilities, activities, accessibility, visitor regulations, and the destination's current conditions (Shen, 2025). Therefore, social media does not merely function as a promotional channel but also serves as an information-based decision-support tool that reduces uncertainty and increases visitors' confidence before traveling. This finding is consistent with previous tourism studies emphasizing the strategic role of social media in influencing tourist behavior. Hysa et al. (2021) explained that social media has transformed tourism marketing by enabling interactive communication, information exchange, and stronger relationships between destination managers and visitors. Similarly, Jannah et al. (2023) demonstrated that social media significantly influences visitation decisions because digital platforms allow tourists to evaluate destinations based on available information and visual representations. These findings confirm that effective social media management can enhance destination awareness and influence tourists' behavioral intentions.

The relationship between social media and visit decisions can also be explained through the theory of planned behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991). Within this framework, social media contributes primarily to the formation of subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Information obtained from digital platforms influences how individuals perceive social expectations regarding visiting a destination while also increasing their confidence that the visit can be conducted easily and successfully. When visitors receive clear, reliable, and engaging information, their uncertainty decreases, and their intention to visit becomes stronger. In the context of the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque, this finding reflects the importance of digital communication in supporting the mosque's transformation into a contemporary religious tourism destination. Although the mosque has gained significant public attention, visitor evaluations indicate that digital communication still requires improvement, particularly in responsiveness, information clarity, and audience interaction. This suggests that a large digital following does not automatically create strong visitor engagement if communication remains one-directional. Visitors increasingly expect destination managers to provide timely responses, practical information, and content that reflects actual conditions at the destination. Therefore, the managerial implication of this finding is that social media management should be developed from a promotional approach toward an integrated visitor communication strategy. Managers should provide updated information regarding worship schedules, educational programs, visitor regulations, facilities, accessibility, and potential costs. Furthermore, active engagement through comments,

direct messages, and visitor feedback should be strengthened to build trust and encourage future visitation.

#### *The influence of visitor experience on visit decision*

The findings demonstrate that visitor experience positively influences visit decisions, indicating that tourists evaluate the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque not only based on its physical attributes but also through the meanings and emotions generated during the visit. Religious tourism experiences involve multiple dimensions, including architectural appreciation, spiritual atmosphere, educational value, service quality, comfort, and opportunities for social interaction (Iftikhar et al., 2023). This finding suggests that a memorable and meaningful experience is an important mechanism that transforms a destination from merely a place to visit into one that creates personal value for visitors. This result supports previous studies emphasizing the importance of experience in determining tourist behavior. Kim et al. (2012) explained that memorable tourism experiences are formed through emotional involvement, meaningful interactions, and personal engagement with destinations. Similarly, Walls et al. (2011) highlighted that visitor experience emerges from interactions between individuals, physical environments, services, and social contexts. Previous studies by Piramanayagam et al. (2020) and Juliana et al. (2024) further confirmed that visitor experience contributes significantly to destination evaluation and behavioral intentions. In addition, Zhang et al. (2018) and Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021) demonstrated that positive tourism experiences encourage stronger destination attachment and future behavioral responses.

From the perspective of TPB, visitor experience influences visit decisions by shaping positive attitudes toward the destination (Ajzen, 1991). When visitors experience satisfaction, emotional connection, and meaningful interactions, they develop favorable evaluations that increase their willingness to visit, recommend, or revisit the destination. In religious tourism, this mechanism becomes even more significant because visitors do not only seek physical attractions but also search for spiritual meaning, tranquility, and personal reflection. The findings are consistent with the reality of the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque as a destination that combines religious, cultural, educational, and recreational functions. Visitors are attracted not only by the mosque's architectural characteristics but also by the atmosphere, educational facilities, open spaces, and opportunity to experience a unique religious environment. However, the findings also indicate that appreciation of the destination does not automatically create deeper involvement with the mosque community. Visitors may perceive the mosque as an attractive religious tourism destination without developing a strong sense of belonging or participation in community activities. Therefore, the implication for destination management is that improving visitor experience should not only focus on maintaining physical facilities but also on creating meaningful engagement opportunities. Managers can develop educational programs, guided religious tours, community-based activities, volunteer opportunities, and thematic events that encourage visitors to participate more actively. Such initiatives may strengthen emotional attachment, increase visitor loyalty, and support sustainable visitation by transforming visitors from temporary guests into long-term destination supporters.

#### *The influence of electronic word of mouth on visit decision*

The findings indicate that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) positively influences visitors' decisions to visit the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque. This result

demonstrates that online reviews, recommendations, comments, and visitor-generated content have become important sources of information in contemporary tourism decision-making. Potential visitors often seek information from previous visitors because they perceive user-generated content as more authentic and credible compared with information provided directly by destination managers (Santos & Vasconcelos, 2025). Therefore, e-WOM functions as a social validation mechanism that reduces uncertainty and strengthens confidence in the decision-making process. This finding is supported by previous research demonstrating the importance of e-WOM in shaping tourism behavior. Hu & Kim (2018) explained that positive and negative online opinions influence consumer behavior because individuals use other users' experiences as references when evaluating products or destinations. Kanje et al. (2020) further emphasized that e-WOM strengthens customer engagement and influences destination-related decisions through social interaction. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2017) highlighted that social media-based e-WOM plays an important role among modern travelers who increasingly depend on digital information sources. The findings are also consistent with Khotimah & Sulistyowati (2022), who confirmed that e-WOM significantly affects tourists' decisions to visit destinations.

The relationship between e-WOM and visit decisions can be explained through TPB, particularly the subjective norm component (Ajzen, 1991). Individuals often consider others' opinions, experiences, and recommendations when deciding whether to engage in a particular behavior. Positive online reviews can strengthen perceptions of destination credibility, while negative reviews may reduce visitation intention. Thus, e-WOM represents a form of social influence that operates before visitors directly experience the destination. In the case of the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque, e-WOM plays an important role because many visitors share experiences related to architectural beauty, worship atmosphere, facilities, parking conditions, cleanliness, and visitor management through digital platforms. These online conversations influence how potential visitors imagine the destination before arrival. However, e-WOM also creates challenges because negative experiences can spread quickly and influence public perceptions. Issues such as unclear information regarding costs, parking management, or service problems may affect destination image if they are not properly addressed. The managerial implication of this finding is that destination managers should actively manage digital reputation by encouraging visitors to share authentic experiences while also responding professionally to criticism and suggestions. Managers should not only focus on generating positive reviews but also use visitor feedback as a source of continuous improvement. Providing transparent information, addressing recurring complaints, and maintaining consistency between promotional messages and actual destination conditions are essential steps to strengthen positive e-WOM and support sustainable visitation.

#### *Integration of social media, visitor experience, and E-WOM in visitor decision formation*

The findings further indicate that social media, visitor experience, and e-WOM should be understood as interconnected elements within a continuous visitor decision journey rather than independent factors. Social media introduces the destination and shapes expectations before visitation, visitor experience determines whether these expectations are fulfilled during the visit, and e-WOM communicates the resulting evaluation to future visitors. This process illustrates that tourism decisions are formed through continuous interactions between digital information, personal experience, and social influence. This integrated relationship strengthens the applicability of the theory

of planned behavior in explaining religious tourism behavior. Social media contributes to subjective norms and perceived behavioral control by providing information and social signals; visitor experience shapes attitudes through personal evaluation; and e-WOM reinforces social influence through shared experiences. Therefore, effective religious tourism management requires alignment between online communication, destination performance, and visitor feedback mechanisms. For the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque, this implies that digital promotion, service improvement, and reputation management should be implemented as a unified strategy. Information communicated through social media must accurately represent actual destination conditions, visitor experiences should consistently meet expectations, and online feedback should be systematically analyzed for improvement. By establishing this integrated management cycle, the mosque can maintain its religious identity while strengthening its role as a sustainable tourism destination.

## **Conclusions**

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the determinants of visitors' decisions to visit the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque as a contemporary religious tourism destination. The findings demonstrate that social media, visitor experience, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) are important factors influencing visit decisions. Social media contributes by providing destination-related information, shaping visitor perceptions, and reducing uncertainty before visitation. Visitor experience plays an important role by creating meaningful cognitive, emotional, and spiritual evaluations through interactions with the destination environment. Meanwhile, e-WOM strengthens the decision-making process by providing social validation through shared experiences and recommendations from previous visitors. These findings confirm that visitation decisions in religious tourism are formed through the interaction of digital communication, direct experiences, and social influence, supporting the relevance of the theory of planned behavior in explaining contemporary tourist behavior.

This study contributes theoretically and practically to the development of religious tourism and destination management literature. Theoretically, this research extends the application of the theory of planned behavior by integrating digital communication factors, experiential dimensions, and online social influence into a single framework for explaining visit decisions at a contemporary mosque destination. This contribution is important because previous studies have predominantly examined these factors separately in conventional tourism settings, while religious destinations that combine worship, education, public space, and tourism functions remain relatively underexplored. From a managerial perspective, the findings guide for mosque tourism managers to develop integrated strategies involving accurate and interactive social media communication, continuous improvement of visitor experiences, and systematic management of online visitor feedback. Such strategies can help religious tourism destinations maintain their spiritual values while improving visitor satisfaction, engagement, and sustainable visitation.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that provide opportunities for future research. First, the research was conducted in a single religious tourism destination, namely the Al-Jabbar Grand Mosque, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other mosque-based tourism destinations with different cultural, geographical, or managerial characteristics. Second, the study employed a quantitative approach using self-reported questionnaire data, which may not fully capture the complexity of visitors' emotional, spiritual, and experiential

responses. Third, this research focused on three main determinants of visit decisions, while other factors such as destination image, trust, perceived value, service quality, accessibility, and spiritual motivation may also influence tourist behavior. Future studies are therefore encouraged to conduct comparative research across multiple religious tourism destinations, apply mixed-method approaches to obtain deeper insights into visitor experiences, and develop more comprehensive models by incorporating additional psychological, experiential, and destination-related variables.

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