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Content Value and Destination Brand Equity: Implications for North Sulawesi's Agrifood and Agro-Tourism**Ricardo Gianluigi Tindi^{1*},
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Abstract. Social media enables tourism micro, small, and medium enterprises to function not only as service providers but also as local content producers that shape destination perceptions. This study examined whether content marketing value strengthens destination brand equity directly and indirectly through social media engagement and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), while considering its applied relevance for local agrifood and agro-tourism promotion in North Sulawesi. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted from June to August 2026 among audiences exposed to tourism enterprise social media content. Of 350 survey invitations, 285 responses were received and 230 valid cases remained after eligibility and data-quality screening. Partial least squares structural equation modeling was performed using SmartPLS 4.0.9. Content marketing value positively affected destination brand equity ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$), social media engagement ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), and e-WOM ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). Engagement positively affected destination brand equity ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$) and e-WOM ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), while e-WOM positively affected destination brand equity ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). Both mediation paths and the sequential engagement-to-e-WOM pathway were significant. The findings show that valuable local tourism content builds destination equity more effectively when it stimulates interaction and peer recommendation, with practical implications for integrating local food, agrifood products, and agro-tourism experiences into destination communication.

Keywords: content marketing value; destination brand equity; electronic word of mouth; local agrifood; social media engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms have transformed destination communication from a predominantly organization-controlled activity into a distributed process involving visitors, communities, local enterprises, and other place-based actors. Social media enables these actors to create and circulate representations of places in real time, thereby influencing destination awareness, image, perceived quality, and loyalty. Reviews of destination-branding research show that social media increasingly connects user-generated content, cognitive and affective responses,

and behavioral outcomes (Tran & Rudolf, 2022). Empirical evidence also demonstrates that destination-generated and tourist-generated communication contributes to destination brand equity, while integrated and interactive digital communication remains strategically important for building and maintaining that equity (Stojanovic et al., 2022; Qi et al., 2024). In rural tourism contexts, social media affordances can shape cognitive and affective destination images by enabling interaction, social presence, and digitally mediated engagement with place representations (Liu et al., 2024).



This transformation is particularly relevant to local-resource economies because micro, small, and medium enterprises can simultaneously function as commercial actors and communicators of the places in which they operate. Digital marketing is increasingly embedded in agricultural and agrifood value chains. Han et al. (2022) show that product suitability influences farmers' adoption of social media marketing, indicating that the characteristics of local products matter when digital channels are used to reach markets. In Indonesia, agricultural retailers are also combining physical stores with social media, marketplaces, and other digital channels as part of broader omnichannel transformation (Kawet et al., 2026a). These developments suggest that local enterprises can use digital communication not only to promote individual products and services but also to connect those offerings with wider place-based value propositions.

The relationship between local resources and tourism creates an additional pathway for this digital transformation. Agro-tourism, agro-educational tourism, horticultural attractions, culinary experiences, and local-product tourism can convert agricultural resources into visitor experiences while creating economic opportunities for local enterprises. Recent applied research demonstrates that agro-educational tourism can generate measurable social and economic value for stakeholders (Razak et al., 2025). In North Sulawesi, online information has been used to evaluate agritourism and horticultural destinations in Tomohon, showing that digital information is becoming relevant to destination selection in resource-based tourism (Tindi et al., 2026). Local food commodities also represent an important component of regional agribusiness potential, and analysis of production and marketing dynamics in Tomohon highlights opportunities to strengthen the market

visibility of locally produced foods (Kawet et al., 2026b).

Tourists do not evaluate destinations solely through scenery or formal attractions. Local food, agricultural landscapes, culinary products, traditions, and locally produced goods can contribute to perceptions of destination distinctiveness and experiential value. Evidence from Indonesian consumers indicates that health, emotional, interaction, and social-media-related values of local cuisine can contribute to food destination image and behavioral responses (Alexandra & Choirisa, 2024). A recent review similarly shows that social media is increasingly intertwined with memorable tourism experiences involving local food, particularly through visually oriented platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Sartika et al., 2025). Tourists' evaluations of food quality, novelty, and healthiness can also encourage positive travel-experience sharing through social media (Soonsan et al., 2025). These findings support the view that local culinary and agrifood resources can become part of a broader digital destination narrative.

Within this environment, the effectiveness of tourism enterprise communication depends not only on posting frequency but also on the value audiences perceive in the content. Content marketing value refers to the extent to which digital content is perceived as informative, attractive, credible, relevant, enjoyable, and sufficiently useful to justify attention or interaction. Tourism content can provide practical information, represent local resources, generate mental imagery, stimulate affective responses, and encourage redistribution. Abbasi et al. (2023) found that the perceived value of destination-related social media images can stimulate consumer engagement and e-WOM through a transmittal process. Characteristics of destination-related Instagram posts also influence engagement (Blanco-Moreno et al., 2024),



while distinctive, enjoyable, and authentic short tourism videos can strengthen destination-related e-WOM (Yin *et al.*, 2024). At the firm level, content marketing values have also been linked to consumer brand equity among Indonesian service micro and small enterprises (Kolibu *et al.*, 2025).

Social media engagement and e-WOM represent complementary mechanisms through which content value may be converted into destination-level value. Engagement captures cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses such as attention, liking, commenting, saving, and sharing. Tourism-generated social media communication can contribute to brand equity, satisfaction, and loyalty through interconnected digital mechanisms (Abbasi *et al.*, 2024). e-WOM extends this process because recommendations, reviews, tagging, reposting, and experience sharing redistribute destination-related evaluations across personal networks. Destination communication has been shown to shape tourist e-WOM intentions (Hervás-Cortina *et al.*, 2024), while contemporary destination-image research identifies peer communication as an increasingly important source of image formation (Wang *et al.*, 2023). Research on rural travel likewise shows that social media use and e-WOM can strengthen travel intention toward rural destinations (Azhar *et al.*, 2023), and recent evidence confirms a mediating role for e-WOM in linking social-media-induced destination image with travel intention (Shekhar *et al.*, 2026).

Despite this growing literature, three gaps remain. First, destination social media research has concentrated primarily on destination marketing organizations, tourists, influencers, or users in general, while tourism micro, small, and medium enterprises remain comparatively underexamined as producers of destination-related content. Second, content marketing value has been

associated with firm-level brand outcomes, but its extension to destination brand equity requires further empirical testing. Third, engagement and e-WOM are often examined separately even though they may operate sequentially as audiences first interact with content and then redistribute recommendations. This gap is particularly relevant in Indonesian MSME research, where much of the firm-side digital-marketing literature has emphasized adoption and platform use rather than the mechanisms through which digital content generates higher-order branding outcomes (Tindi & Silaban, 2025).

North Sulawesi provides an appropriate context for examining these mechanisms because tourism promotion is strongly connected with local enterprises and place-based resources. The empirical setting includes audiences exposed to tourism enterprise content associated with Batu Angus and other areas in Manado, Bitung, Tomohon, and North Minahasa/Likupang. The digital environment is strongly visual, and local enterprise posts can represent not only attractions but also culinary products, locally produced foods, and other place-specific offerings. This creates an opportunity to examine destination-brand formation while also identifying practical implications for local agrifood and agro-tourism promotion without redefining the empirical population as an agricultural sample.

Accordingly, this study examines the relationships among content marketing value, social media engagement, e-WOM, and destination brand equity among audiences exposed to tourism micro, small, and medium enterprise social media content in North Sulawesi. It tests the direct effects of content marketing value on destination brand equity, social media engagement, and e-WOM; the effects of engagement on e-WOM and destination brand equity; and the effect of e-WOM on destination brand equity. It further



evaluates engagement and e-WOM as mediators and tests a sequential mechanism in which valuable content stimulates engagement, engagement encourages peer communication, and e-WOM ultimately contributes to destination brand equity. The study extends content-marketing research from firm-level outcomes to destination-level branding and provides applied implications for linking tourism communication with local agrifood products and agro-tourism experiences.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Design and Context

This study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey to examine relationships among four reflective latent constructs: content marketing value (CMV), social media engagement (SME), electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and destination brand equity (DBE). The field survey was conducted from 1 June to 31 August 2026. The research context was digital promotion by tourism micro, small, and medium enterprises in North Sulawesi, particularly content associated with Batu Angus in Bitung and related tourism areas. Respondents represented Manado, Bitung/Batu Angus, Tomohon, and North Minahasa/Likupang. The unit of analysis was the individual audience member exposed to tourism enterprise social media

content. The agricultural relevance of the study was treated as an applied implication of local-resource communication, particularly where tourism content incorporated culinary products, local foods, or other place-based resources.

Population, Eligibility, and Sampling

The target population consisted of tourists and prospective tourists aged at least 17 years who had encountered social media content produced by tourism micro, small, and medium enterprises in North Sulawesi during the previous six months and who recognized Batu Angus or a comparable destination in North Sulawesi. Purposive sampling was used, supported by online network-based dissemination through tourism communities and social media groups. A total of 350 survey invitations were distributed through Google Forms. The survey yielded 285 initial responses (81.4% of invitations). Eligibility screening removed 30 responses: 15 respondents were younger than 17 years and 15 had not been exposed to relevant tourism enterprise content during the preceding six months. Data-quality screening removed a further 25 responses, comprising 10 duplicate IP/email responses and 15 straight-lining responses. The final analytical sample therefore consisted of 230 valid respondents.

Table 1. Survey response and analytical sample flow

Stage	n	Description
Survey invitations distributed	350	Online distribution through tourism communities and social media groups using Google Forms.
Initial responses received	285	Raw responses before eligibility screening and data-quality checks.
Eligibility exclusions	30	15 respondents younger than 17 years; 15 without relevant content exposure in the previous six months.
Data-quality exclusions	25	10 duplicate IP/email responses; 15 straight-lining responses.
Final valid sample	230	Cases retained for PLS-SEM analysis.



Research Instrument and Measurement

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms and a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The final instrument contained 18 reflective indicators: five for content marketing value, four for social media engagement, four for e-WOM, and five for destination brand equity. The CMV scale was adapted from Kolibu *et al.* (2025), the SME scale

from Blanco-Moreno *et al.* (2024), the e-WOM scale from Hervás-Cortina *et al.* (2024), and the DBE scale from Stojanovic *et al.* (2022). Item wording was contextualized to tourism enterprise content and destinations in North Sulawesi. A pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted from 15 to 20 May 2026. Two SME items were linguistically revised to improve clarity and naturalness, while no item was deleted.

Table 2. Measurement framework

Construct	Role	Items	Codes	Operational focus	Source
Content Marketing Value	Exogenous	5	CMV1-CMV5	Perceived informativeness, attractiveness, credibility, and interactivity of tourism enterprise content.	Kolibu <i>et al.</i> (2025)
Social Media Engagement	Mediator	4	SME1-SME4	Cognitive, affective, and behavioral interaction with destination-related content.	Blanco-Moreno <i>et al.</i> (2024)
Electronic Word of Mouth	Mediator	4	EWOM1-EWOM4	Online recommendation, tagging, sharing, reviewing, and peer communication.	Hervás-Cortina <i>et al.</i> (2024)
Destination Brand Equity	Endogenous	5	DBE1-DBE5	Destination awareness, image, perceived quality, and loyalty-related evaluation.	Stojanovic <i>et al.</i> (2022)

Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

The structural model positioned CMV as the exogenous construct, SME and e-WOM as mediating constructs, and DBE as the endogenous construct. Six direct relationships were tested: CMV -> DBE (H1), CMV -> SME (H2), SME -> DBE (H3), CMV -> e-WOM (H4), e-

WOM -> DBE (H5), and SME -> e-WOM (H6). Two specific indirect effects were tested: CMV -> SME -> DBE (H7) and CMV -> e-WOM -> DBE (H8). Because SME was also modeled as an antecedent of e-WOM, the sequential indirect pathway CMV -> SME -> e-WOM -> DBE was evaluated as an exploratory extension.



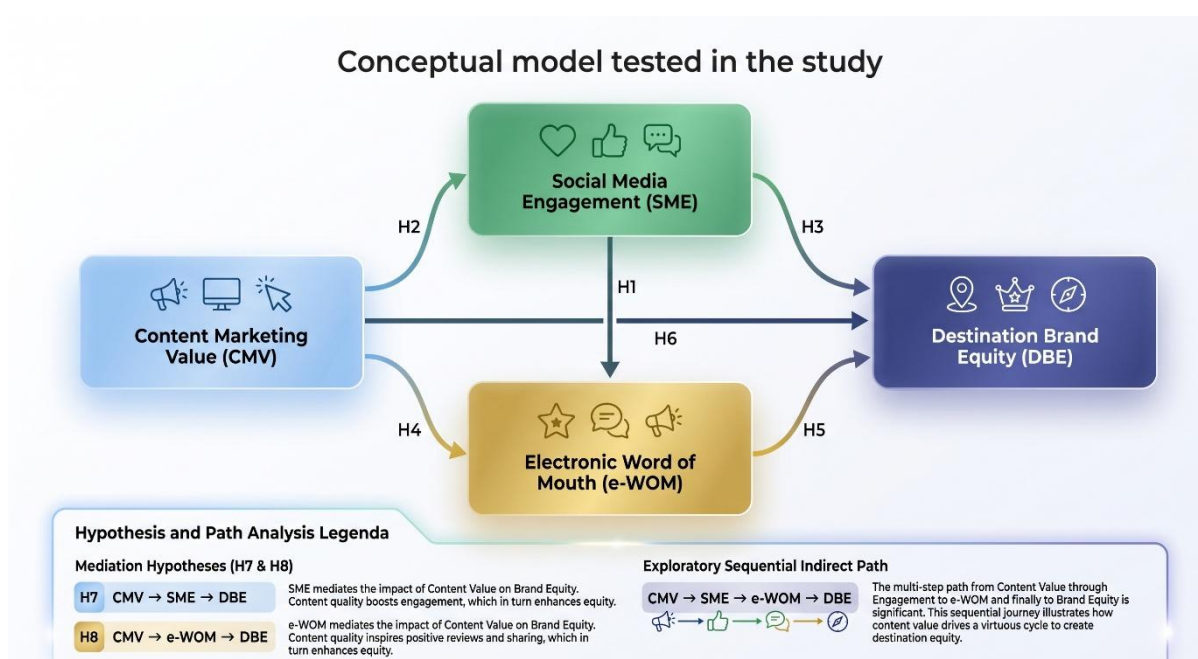


Figure 1. Conceptual model tested in the study.

Data Collection and Quality Control

Data collection was conducted online through tourism communities and social media networks relevant to North Sulawesi tourism. Screening and cleaning were completed before model estimation. The procedure assessed age and content-exposure eligibility, duplicate submissions, and straight-lining. Responses that failed the predefined eligibility or quality criteria were excluded. The analytical dataset was prepared without personal identifiers.

Data Analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was performed in SmartPLS 4.0.9. PLS-SEM was selected because the study emphasized prediction, simultaneous estimation of multiple latent-variable relationships, and mediation analysis

(Hair et al., 2022; Hair & Alamer, 2022). The analysis proceeded through respondent and construct descriptives, reflective measurement-model assessment, and structural-model assessment. For the measurement model, outer loadings above 0.708, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability above 0.70, average variance extracted (AVE) above 0.50, and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios below 0.85 were used as quality criteria. The structural model was assessed using inner variance inflation factor (VIF), adjusted R^2 , effect size f^2 , predictive relevance using Q^2 /PLSpredict, direct effects, and specific indirect effects. Hypothesis testing used 5,000 bootstrap subsamples, two-tailed tests, $\alpha = 0.05$, and bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals. Full-collinearity VIF was also examined as a diagnostic for common-method bias.

Table 3. PLS-SEM evaluation criteria

Stage	Indicator / procedure	Criterion / purpose
Data screening	Eligibility, duplicates, straight-lining	Retain eligible and quality-screened cases.
Measurement model	Outer loading	Target > 0.708.
Measurement model	Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability	Target > 0.70.
Measurement model	AVE	Target > 0.50.
Measurement model	HTMT	Target < 0.85.
Structural model	Inner VIF	Assess collinearity.
Structural model	Adjusted R ² and f ²	Assess explanatory power and effect size.
Prediction	Q ² / PLSpredict	Values > 0 indicate predictive relevance.
Hypothesis testing	5,000 bootstrap subsamples, two-tailed $\alpha = 0.05$	Evaluate direct, indirect, and sequential effects.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary. Digital informed consent was presented at the beginning of the questionnaire, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their information. Responses were analyzed anonymously and the analytical dataset was prepared without personal identifiers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics and Digital Exposure

The final analytical sample consisted of 230 respondents distributed across Manado (80; 34.8%), Bitung/Batu Angus (70; 30.4%), Tomohon (40; 17.4%), and North Minahasa/Likupang (40; 17.4%). Respondents aged 17-25 years represented 45% of the sample, those aged 26-35 years represented 35%, and respondents older than 35 years represented 20%. Women accounted for 52% and men for 48%. Sixty-five percent

had previously visited Batu Angus, while 35% were prospective visitors. Half of the respondents travelled one to two times per year and the other half travelled more than twice per year.

Digital exposure was concentrated on visually oriented platforms. Instagram was the main source of exposure to tourism enterprise content (60%), followed by TikTok (30%) and Facebook (10%). Short-form videos, including Reels and TikTok posts featuring natural attractions and culinary offerings, were the most frequently viewed content type (55%), followed by feed/story photographs (30%) and reviews or vlogs (15%). Field observations indicated that short videos combining Batu Angus scenery with recommendations for local culinary products generated the strongest 'tag-a-friend' interaction pattern. This pattern is consistent with evidence that visual characteristics influence engagement with destination posts and that short tourism videos can stimulate destination-related e-WOM (Blanco-Moreno et al., 2024; Yin et al., 2024).



Table 4. Respondent and digital exposure profile (n = 230)

Characteristic	Category	Percentage / n
Area	Manado	80 (34.8%)
	Bitung/Batu Angus	70 (30.4%)
	Tomohon	40 (17.4%)
	North Minahasa/Likupang	40 (17.4%)
Age	17-25 years	45%
	26-35 years	35%
	>35 years	20%
Gender	Male	48%
	Female	52%
Visit status	Previously visited Batu Angus	65%
	Prospective visitor	35%
Main platform	Instagram	60%
	TikTok	30%
	Facebook	10%
Main content type	Short video/Reels/TikTok	55%
	Feed/Story photo	30%
	Review/Vlog	15%

Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Model

All four constructs showed relatively high mean scores. Destination brand equity recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.60$), followed by content marketing value ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.65$), e-WOM ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.68$), and social media engagement ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.70$). The slightly lower mean for engagement suggests that favorable content evaluation does not automatically translate into an equally high level of active interaction, supporting its treatment

as a distinct mechanism rather than as a proxy for content appreciation.

The reflective measurement model met the reported reliability and validity criteria. All retained outer loadings exceeded 0.708 and ranged from 0.745 to 0.890. Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.75 and composite reliability values were above 0.80 for all constructs. AVE ranged from 0.58 to 0.72, supporting convergent validity, while all HTMT ratios were below 0.85, supporting discriminant validity. Full-collinearity VIF values were below 3.3, indicating no serious common-method collinearity problem.



Table 5. Construct-level descriptive statistics and measurement evidence

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Measurement evidence
Content Marketing Value	5	4.12	0.65	Loadings 0.745-0.890; $\alpha > 0.75$; CR > 0.80; AVE 0.58-0.72; HTMT < 0.85; full-collinearity VIF < 3.3.
Social Media Engagement	4	3.95	0.70	Loadings 0.745-0.890; $\alpha > 0.75$; CR > 0.80; AVE 0.58-0.72; HTMT < 0.85; full-collinearity VIF < 3.3.
Electronic Word of Mouth	4	4.05	0.68	Loadings 0.745-0.890; $\alpha > 0.75$; CR > 0.80; AVE 0.58-0.72; HTMT < 0.85; full-collinearity VIF < 3.3.
Destination Brand Equity	5	4.20	0.60	Loadings 0.745-0.890; $\alpha > 0.75$; CR > 0.80; AVE 0.58-0.72; HTMT < 0.85; full-collinearity VIF < 3.3.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model showed no problematic multicollinearity, with inner VIF values ranging from 1.4 to 2.5. The model explained meaningful proportions of variance in the endogenous constructs: adjusted R^2 was 0.45 for SME, 0.52 for e-WOM, and 0.61 for DBE. Effect sizes ranged from $f^2 = 0.15$ to 0.35, indicating medium to large effects, while $Q^2/PLSpredict$ values ranged from 0.25 to 0.40 and were consistently above zero, demonstrating positive predictive relevance.

All six direct hypotheses were supported. CMV had a positive effect on DBE (H1: $\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that audiences who perceived tourism enterprise content as more valuable also evaluated the destination brand more positively. CMV had its strongest direct effect on SME (H2: $\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), while SME positively affected DBE (H3: $\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$). CMV also positively affected e-WOM (H4: $\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$), e-WOM positively affected DBE (H5: $\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), and SME positively affected e-WOM (H6: $\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 6. Direct structural effects

Hypothesis	Structural path	β	p-value	Decision
H1	CMV -> DBE	0.25	< 0.01	Supported
H2	CMV -> SME	0.55	< 0.001	Supported
H3	SME -> DBE	0.30	< 0.01	Supported
H4	CMV -> e-WOM	0.40	< 0.001	Supported
H5	e-WOM -> DBE	0.35	< 0.001	Supported
H6	SME -> e-WOM	0.45	< 0.001	Supported



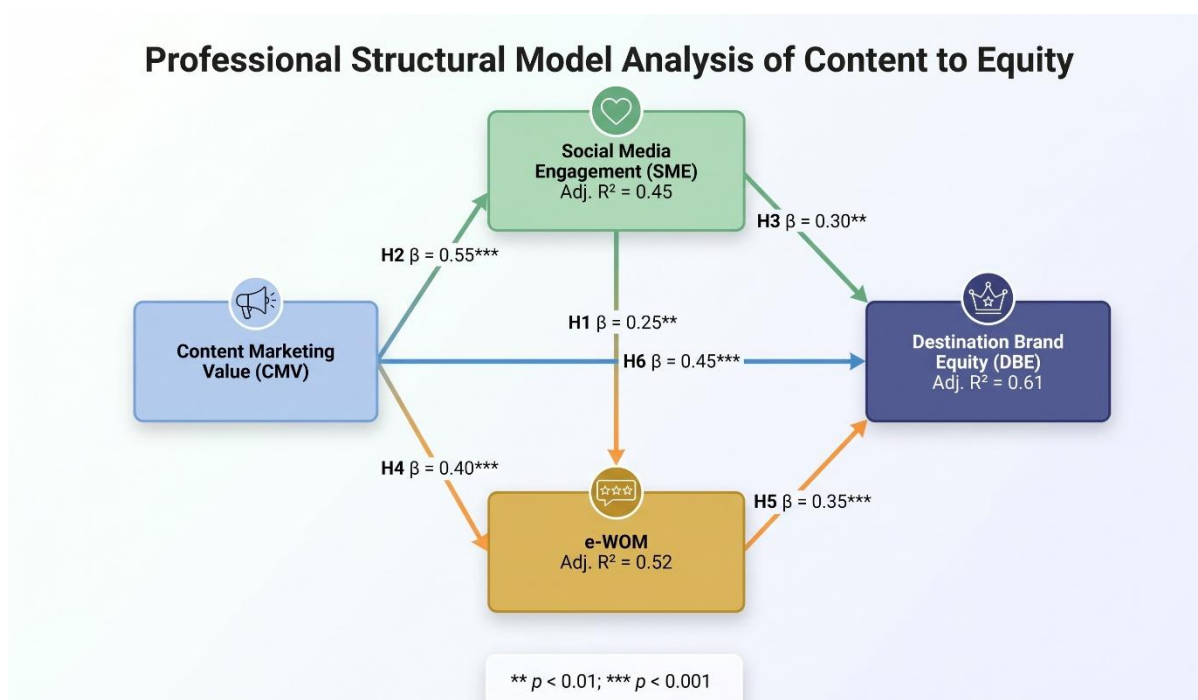


Figure 2. Structural model and standardized direct path coefficients.

Mediating and Sequential Effects

Both proposed mediation mechanisms were significant. The indirect effect of CMV on DBE through SME (H7) was significant ($p < 0.01$), indicating that valuable content contributes to destination brand equity partly by activating audience engagement. The indirect effect through e-WOM (H8) was also significant ($p < 0.01$), showing that valuable content can strengthen destination equity by stimulating recommendation and peer-to-peer communication. Because the direct CMV $\rightarrow$ DBE effect remained significant,

the pattern is consistent with partial mediation.

The exploratory sequential pathway CMV $\rightarrow$ SME $\rightarrow$ e-WOM $\rightarrow$ DBE was also significant ($p < 0.01$). This result positions engagement and e-WOM as linked stages in a digital communication process. Audiences may initially respond to valuable content by paying attention, liking, saving, or commenting; these responses can then increase the likelihood of tagging, recommending, or sharing, which broadens the social visibility of destination-related information and contributes to destination brand equity.

Table 7. Indirect and sequential effects

Effect	Path	Significance	Interpretation
H7	CMV $\rightarrow$ SME $\rightarrow$ DBE	$p < 0.01$	Significant mediation
H8	CMV $\rightarrow$ e-WOM $\rightarrow$ DBE	$p < 0.01$	Significant mediation
Sequential	CMV $\rightarrow$ SME $\rightarrow$ e-WOM $\rightarrow$ DBE	$p < 0.01$	Significant sequential mediation

Discussion

Content Value as a Destination-Level Value-Creation Mechanism

The positive CMV $\rightarrow$ DBE relationship demonstrates that audiences do not evaluate local-enterprise communication entirely separately from the destination represented in that communication. When tourism enterprise content is perceived as useful, credible, attractive, and interaction-worthy, part of that positive evaluation appears to transfer to the destination brand. This extends the firm-level evidence of Kolibu et al. (2025) by showing that content marketing value can contribute to a geographically broader branding outcome. The result also complements Qi et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of interactive and consistent digital communication for destination brand equity.

This mechanism is particularly relevant to destinations where local enterprises are highly visible online. Tourism enterprises do not communicate only their own products; they also display scenery, food culture, routes, visitor activities, and recognizable place cues. Their content can therefore operate as distributed destination communication. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that social media communication contributes to destination-brand outcomes (Stojanovic et al., 2022; Abbasi et al., 2024) and with rural-tourism evidence that interactive platform affordances can influence destination image formation (Liu et al., 2024).

Engagement and e-WOM as Relational Conversion Mechanisms

The strongest direct coefficient was CMV $\rightarrow$ SME ($\beta = 0.55$), suggesting that audience engagement is particularly sensitive to the perceived value of the content itself. The finding aligns with Abbasi et al. (2023), who show that perceived value in destination-related social media images can stimulate

engagement, and with Blanco-Moreno et al. (2024), who demonstrate that destination-post characteristics influence interaction. In the North Sulawesi context, the dominance of Instagram and short-form video means that tourism enterprises compete for attention in highly visual and rapidly consumed environments. Content must therefore offer both information and a reason for users to stop, watch, react, save, comment, or share.

SME also had a positive direct effect on DBE ($\beta = 0.30$). Active interaction can increase the cognitive and affective salience of destination-related information, reinforcing recognition, imagery, and perceived quality. The e-WOM relationships deepen this interpretation. CMV positively affected e-WOM ($\beta = 0.40$), SME positively affected e-WOM ($\beta = 0.45$), and e-WOM positively affected DBE ($\beta = 0.35$). Recommendation is therefore not only a direct response to content quality; it can also emerge after engagement. This process corresponds with Hervás-Cortina et al. (2024), Abbasi et al. (2023), and recent work showing that e-WOM mediates the relationship between social-media-induced destination image and travel intention (Shekhar et al., 2026).

The observed 'tag-a-friend' behavior provides a concrete local example of this mechanism. Short videos that combined Batu Angus scenery with local culinary recommendations generated the strongest tagging pattern. Tagging transforms a one-to-one content exposure into socially distributed communication and resembles the sharing process identified by Soonsan et al. (2025), who show that positive local-food evaluations can stimulate social-media sharing. It also supports the broader argument that local food and social media can jointly contribute to memorable destination experiences (Sartika et al., 2025).



Applied Relevance for Local Agrifood and Agro-Tourism Promotion

The findings have practical relevance beyond general tourism promotion because local-resource products can be embedded in destination communication. This does not imply that the empirical sample represents farmers or agro-tourists; rather, the results show a communication mechanism that can be applied by agrifood enterprises and agro-tourism operators when they participate in destination ecosystems. The digital-transformation evidence of Kawet et al. (2026a) indicates that agricultural and agrifood retailers increasingly combine physical and digital channels, while Han et al. (2022) show that agricultural product characteristics influence social media marketing adoption. These studies suggest that content design and channel use are increasingly relevant to how agricultural products reach audiences.

North Sulawesi also offers a clear place-based linkage between tourism and local resources. Kawet et al. (2026b) identify marketing opportunities for local food commodities in Tomohon, while Tindi et al. (2026) show that digital information can support the evaluation of agritourism and horticultural destinations in the same city. Razak et al. (2025) further demonstrate the measurable value that agro-educational tourism can create for stakeholders. When these findings are considered alongside the present study, a practical implication emerges: local agrifood products and agro-tourism experiences may gain visibility when they are communicated as part of a coherent destination story rather than as isolated products.

The local-food literature reinforces this implication. Alexandra and Choirisa (2024) show that social media interaction and consumption values contribute to food destination image among Indonesian consumers. Thus, content that combines a recognizable place with local culinary

products, farm-based experiences, horticultural attractions, or food-production stories can potentially generate both product visibility and destination value. The present study's significant CMV → SME → e-WOM → DBE pathway indicates why such integration matters: valuable content must first attract and involve audiences, then encourage interpersonal redistribution, before broader brand value is strengthened.

Managerial Implications

Tourism enterprises, local food businesses, agro-tourism operators, and destination stakeholders in North Sulawesi should prioritize content that combines functional information with vivid place representation. Short videos can integrate natural scenery, local culinary products, production stories, visitor activities, routes, and recognizable location cues. Content should be designed to invite interaction through save-worthy information, questions, tagging prompts, and clear reasons to share. e-WOM should also be facilitated deliberately by encouraging visitors to mention companions, share itineraries, post experience-based recommendations, and connect local products with the wider destination narrative.

For agrifood and agro-tourism promotion, cross-promotion is likely to be more useful than isolated product posting. A culinary enterprise can link a local food product with a nearby attraction; an agro-tourism operator can combine horticultural activities with nearby culinary offerings; and destination stakeholders can coordinate thematic content around local food, farms, landscapes, and visitor experiences. Such integration increases the likelihood that enterprise-level communication contributes to destination-level value while simultaneously expanding the visibility of local resources.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be recognized. The cross-sectional design identifies structural associations but does not establish temporal causality. The sample was obtained through purposive online recruitment and concentrated in selected North Sulawesi areas, which limits statistical generalization to all tourists. The study measured perceived content value and self-reported digital responses rather than platform-level behavioral traces. It also did not sample exclusively from identified agrifood enterprises, farm-based tourism businesses, or agricultural producers; therefore, the agricultural implications should be interpreted as applied extensions of the observed communication mechanism rather than as direct evidence of agricultural-sector behavior.

Future research can strengthen the agroecotechnology relevance by sampling audiences of identified agrifood microenterprises, farm-based tourism businesses, horticultural destinations, and local food producers. Survey data can be linked with social media analytics, online reviews, sales, visitation, or product-demand indicators. Multi-group analysis could compare visitors and prospective visitors, platforms, content types, or locations. Longitudinal and experimental designs would also help establish how repeated exposure to local-resource content contributes to destination equity and whether destination-brand effects translate into measurable market outcomes for local agricultural products.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that tourism micro, small, and medium enterprise content can contribute to destination brand equity when audiences perceive the content as valuable and when that value is converted into social interaction and peer communication.

Content marketing value had significant positive effects on destination brand equity, social media engagement, and e-WOM. Engagement strengthened both destination brand equity and e-WOM, while e-WOM strengthened destination brand equity. Both proposed mediation paths were significant, and the sequential pathway from content marketing value through engagement and e-WOM to destination brand equity was also significant. The model explained 61% of the adjusted variance in destination brand equity and showed positive predictive relevance. For North Sulawesi, the findings indicate that visually compelling, useful, credible, and interaction-oriented content can support destination branding while also providing a practical communication pathway for local food, agrifood products, and agro-tourism experiences. The most defensible strategy is to integrate these local resources into coherent destination narratives that invite audiences to engage, tag, recommend, and share.

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