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# Elaboration of marketing communication through visual media: An empirical analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Visual media plays a significant role in the marketing and promotion of several international tourism services in today's connected marketplace, in particular here, international tertiary education. This study was developed to examine how visual media influence potential audiences' perception towards a specific educational tourism destination through the theoretical framework of Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Researchers compare central and peripheral routes of individual persuasion via visual media and this aids marketers' understanding of how visual media impact consumers' purchase decisions. This study confirms a positive relationship between argument quality, audience engagement, source credibility, audience involvement and international students as tourists' perceived destination image. The findings suggest that peripheral routes of persuasion have stronger effects on individual adoption of information than central routes of persuasion. The study provides useful insight for tertiary education agents who promote international studies, destination marketers, and other users of visual media communicators.

## 1. Introduction

According to prior research, visual media shapes customers' perceptions and purchase intentions. These media include among others television, radio, newspapers, websites and advertisement on the Internet, books, brochures, social media, and movies; and other verbal media such as word-of-mouth communications, advertising, and other promotional materials (Bailey et al., 2016; Erkan and Evans, 2016b; Kavoura et al., 2015; Kim and Lennon, 2010; Poddar et al., 2009) and extend beyond sensory media to previous personal experiences. Technological advancements enable consumers to access numerous communication channels, and thus, visual and multimedia content have become integral components of marketers' communication toolkits. Visual media refers to a wide range of media, including television, movies, blogs, websites and more recently social networking sites in which visual content such as images, videos, infographics, cartoons, and memes display images as part of the message. In tourism in particular, visual media is an important source of information due to the sightseeing component of travelling, but also because of the nature of information consumption. In tourism, the majority of consumers ( $\pm 75\%$ ) rely on visual cues to aid in their decision processes (Lee and Gretzel, 2012).

Visual communication elements that routinely affect tourists' perceptions of potential destinations, and thus their destination choice, include photos, videos, and movies (Pan et al., 2014).

Destination marketers (DMs) increasingly use visual media to communicate with current and prospective tourists through online posts (Shu and Scott, 2014). Effects of both firm-generated, and user-generated content and its impacts on destination brand perceptions have been extensively investigated (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012a, 2012b; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). The user peer-posts (not firm-generated), photographs, videos, and comments are seen as trustworthy and credible, and thus influence the way tourists plan for and consume tourism products (Kavoura et al., 2015). TV commercials further assist audiences to develop mental images of a destination. Pan, Tsai, and Lee (2011) suggest that New Zealand tourism authorities emphasise nature, adventure, sports activities and local culture, which allows viewers to perceive New Zealand as a destination with sought-after destination attributes, such as cheerfulness, friendliness and freedom. Visual media marketing in particular Television and movie advertisements assisted greatly in creating the "Pure New Zealand" brand image to international tourists (Pan et al., 2011).

Despite the aforementioned evidence of visual media's impact on

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tourists' destination perception, relatively little is known about how consumers adopt visual media information and what persuades them to make purchase decisions. To address this gap, this study focuses on a significant, but rarely addressed tourism segment, namely international students, to further the discussion of scholar's understanding of the phenomenon. The study here investigates the characteristics of visual media representations in marketing communication, in particular online visual media including Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram and its effects on customers' perceptions of destination brand image in the context of educational tourism marketing.

International student travellers are one of the fastest growing tourism segments in developed nations, including the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand. For example, international education activity is the third largest export category in Australia, contributing approximately A \$28 billion to the Australian economy in the year 2017; an increase of 16% compared to the previous year. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). According to recent statistics, New Zealand hosted approximately 110,000 international student travellers during 2017, generating NZ\$4.4 billion to the New Zealand economy (Education, 2018). Today education exports is the fourth largest export sector of New Zealand (ICEF, 2018). Further, "New Zealand spends a comparatively large share of its national wealth on educational institutions" (OECD, 2019, p.1) and thus presents a good focus for this study. Of all the student enrolled in the twenty seven formal tertiary education institutions (8 universities and 19 poly technics) in NZ, 50% came from China and India, with others travelling from as far abroad as Canada, Saudi Arabia and Russia (OECD, 2019a). Further, "the number of international or foreign students per national student abroad is one of the highest among OECD and partner countries (OECD, 2019b). Despite its growing significance, very few studies focus their attention on international student travellers. Hence, we believe a deeper understanding of the characteristics of visual media communication and information adoption processes will help marketers to develop and deliver appropriate promotional messages, correct perceptions of traveller groups and tailor promotional strategies to a preferred set of target audiences, in this case, international student travellers (Baloglu, 1997; Mercille, 2005).

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. The following section presents a review of the current literature supporting the development of conceptual framework and hypotheses employed in this study. The second part presents the research methodology, sampling and data collection procedures. In the third section, our key findings are presented, followed by their implications for educational tourism marketing.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The concept of persuasion resulting from marketing communication and the factors that influence individuals' attitudes towards consumption of goods or services are considered as the theoretical basis of this paper. Persuasion refers to the process through which communicators influence people through a message aimed at modifying perceptions (Shu and Scott, 2014). The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Richard E. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) is regarded as an influential framework for investigating attitude formation, shifts and persuasion (Kitchen et al., 2014). The ELM explains how and why individuals accept messages in a particular communication and outlines two routes to individual persuasion: the central and the peripheral routes (Li and Suh, 2015; Shu and Scott, 2014). The preferred selection route depends on individuals' motivation, skills, and opportunities to process the received message and depends upon the level of elaboration (Kitchen et al., 2014; Pan and Hanus, 2015). Factors influencing an individual's motivation to process a message include the personal relevance of the message, the source credibility, argument quality and the degree of cognition needed to interpret the message. Expertise and

trustworthiness are considered to be the essential elements of source credibility construct (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Source credibility also indicates personal integrity, reliability, and character of the source of communication (Filieri et al., 2015; Yoo and Gretzel, 2012). Argument quality is measured by the content, accuracy, format, timeliness, completeness, understandability, personalisation and variety of the message transmitted (DeLone and McLean, 2003). Further, an individual's ability to process messages depends on a variety of factors, including the message content and type, presence of any distracting stimuli (noise), message repetitiveness, and the receiver's prior experience with the discussed issues (Kitchen et al., 2014; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Thus, both persuasion routes are influenced differently by similar factors, such as source, message, communication channel and other contextual factors of communication (Browning et al., 2018).

The ELM is a sound choice as theoretical framework of this study, due to its ability to explain how consumers process, adopt and diffuse marketing communication, and modify purchase decisions in various contexts (Manika and Gregory-Smith, 2017). ELM is also an extensively used information processing framework (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999) and appears in more than 125 academic studies (Kitchen et al., 2014). It is successfully used by advertisers and marketing professionals to predict individuals' attitudes behaviour towards marketing communication (Areni, 2003; Browning et al., 2018; Dotson and Hyatt, 2000; Li, 2013; Manika and Gregory-Smith, 2017). In this study, we consider a range of diverse communication channels and thus, the two different persuasion routes that consider various ways individuals examine communication (Manika and Gregory-Smith, 2017) are highly relevant. In destination marketing industries that employ a wide range of communication channels, awareness of the extent of elaboration by audiences is of great importance. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first empirical study to consider the ELM as it applies to visual media – especially for online marketing communications. Based on the premises of the ELM, the following sections discuss how marketing communication initiatives over visual media persuade individuals to adopt information and subsequently act based on the information they have processed and adopted.

### 2.2. Relevance of ELM to visual media marketing

As information and communication technologies advance and consumers turn to smartphones and other web-based media, visual and content marketing using media such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to enable content sharing, thus fostering customer engagement, is rapidly growing as influential marketing channel (Chang et al., 2015). Stelzner (2016) report that 74% of social media marketers use visual assets in their social media marketing. Marketing research firm, Kleiner Perkins reports that video content represented almost 75% of all Internet traffic in 2017 (KPMG, 2017). These statistics suggest multiple opportunities for using Internet-based visual media to generate profitable customer relationships and to effectively disseminate information (Chang et al., 2015).

#### 2.2.1. Argument quality

Argument quality refers to the persuasive strength of the arguments embedded in the message and is regarded as one of the key attributes of persuasion, since it enables audiences to analyse the merits and relevance of the information (Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006). Thus, the information quality determines the degree of information influence (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). According to Cheung (2014), for online customer communities, information timeliness and comprehensiveness contribute to the largest variance in information usefulness and adoption. Studies by Chen and colleagues report that recipients will consider a message useful only when the information is relevant, accurate and comprehensive (Chen et al., 2014; Cheung, 2014; Cheung et al., 2008). An early study by Wang and Strong (1996) identified three main dimensions of information quality, namely: intrinsic quality (e.g. accuracy

and believability), contextual quality (e.g. relevancy, timeliness etc.), and representational quality (e.g. ease of understanding) and accessibility quality (e.g. accessibility). More recently, scholars expounded this three-construct model in various contexts to include information quality attributes, such as completeness, personalisation, and security of the information received (DeLone and McLean, 2003; Filieri et al., 2015; Sussman and Siegal, 2003). In media communication context, argument quality indicates the accuracy, format, timeliness, completeness, understandability, personalisation and variety of the message transmitted (DeLone and McLean, 2003; Filieri et al., 2015). It should be noted that even though information quality is a multidimensional construct, it is a single phenomenon of which the underlying dimensions are not inherently independent (Lee et al., 2002). Table 1 presents the notable works on argument quality construct in the marketing literature.

In the travel/tourism industry, visual media particularly Web 2.0-based channels such as TripAdvisor, Lonely Planet, Yelp, and Expedia play a critical role in influencing tourists' willingness to choose a particular travel destination (Filieri et al., 2015; Garay Tamajón and Cánoves Valiente, 2015). Since decisions related to travelling are high-involvement decisions, tourists often seek visual information from various sources in the form of reviews, photos and videos of the travel destination they consider as potential destination (Xiang et al., 2017). Tourists form an overall image of a considered destination based on the evaluation of cognitive and affective information available, as supplied by destination marketers, current tourists and third parties (Tamajón & Valiente, 2015). ELM's main argument is that if the likelihood of elaboration is high, individuals take the central route of persuasion for processing the message. Individuals following the central route generally assess the contents of the message, evaluate its merits and demerits, evaluate the personal relevance, and determine whether to accept or reject the argument presented in the message (Browning et al., 2018). Therefore, the quality and strength of arguments are critical to convincing others to change their attitudes regarding the issue communicated (Shu and Scott, 2014). Guided by the ELM, this study hypothesises that central route of persuasion through argument quality of online visual media communication has a direct and positive effect on individuals' information adoption.

**H1.** Argument quality of online visual media communication positively influences international student's image of New Zealand as a study abroad destination.

### 2.2.2. Audience involvement

Audience involvement refers to the "degree to which audience[s] engage in reflection upon, and para social interaction with, certain media programs, resulting in overt behavioural change" (Fu et al., 2016, p.38). Brown (2015) reports that some audience involvement is achieved by using media persona (real or fictional) in communication. Therefore, audience involvement may also be referred to as the degree of psychological response of an individual to a mediated message or personae (Brown, 2015), such as television stars, movie celebrities and musicians (Sood, 2002). Studies applying the ELM to various communication domains report higher audience involvement associated with greater levels of audience motivation, opportunity and abilities to process the message, thus the resulting attitude is more likely to persist (Igartua, 2010; Jung and Hwang, 2016). For example, movies such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* are quite successful in transporting audiences to the beautiful locations of New Zealand, widely known as *Middle Earth*, resulting in positive associations with New Zealand - as if the audiences were there themselves - even though audiences have not travelled to New Zealand before (Beeton, 2006, 2008). Gotlieb and Sarel (1991) related audience involvement to personal relevance, suggesting that if advertisements achieve higher personal relevance, audience involvement may be higher, and when the audience is highly involved with media content, they exhibit higher levels of reflection. Therefore, it is assumed that argument quality of the transmitted communication may

lead to audience involvement. An additional benefit for marketers is that consumers with higher levels of involvement are more likely to watch programmes again through other visual media platforms (Patino et al., 2011). Studies suggest that this repeated watching of tourism commercials, movies or videos featuring destinations, may enhance the perceived destination image among its audience (Beeton, 2008; Fu et al., 2016; Suni and Komppula, 2012). Above mentioned literature indicates the mediating role of audience involvement in the persuasion process (Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). ELM states that central route persuasion occurs when audiences are highly involved with the issue(s) discussed in the advertisement (Pan and Hanusch, 2015). When audiences view the content of received messages as interesting and relevant, they demonstrate higher motivation to process the message. Thus, high levels of cognitive involvement result in making the individual's subsequent behaviour more predictive. Park and Young (1986) suggested that both cognitive and emotional involvement to television commercials may have different effects on brand attitude formation. Studies suggest that reality TV audiences are more likely to perceive the broadcasted destination image as authentic, due to higher levels of cognitive and emotional involvement audience develop through viewing those programs (Fu et al., 2016; Kim, 2012). Based on the above discussion, we posit that online visual media communication with higher argument quality leads to greater audience involvement and subsequent attitude formation.

**H1a.** Argument quality is directly related to international student's involvement in online visual media communication.

**H2.** Audience involvement in online visual media communication positively influences international student's perceptions of a destination.

### 2.2.3. Source credibility

Source credibility refers to the extent to which an information source is perceived to be trustworthy, competent, reliable, of high integrity and believable (Spence et al., 2013; Tseng and Wang, 2016), and is directly related to audiences' perception of message credibility (Xu, 2013). According to the ELM, source credibility is a peripheral cue for individuals during low elaboration likelihood conditions (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). In other words, when the strength of the communicated message is inadequate or argument quality is poor, audiences may rely on external cues such as the character of the source of communication to guide attitudes and decisions. Extant studies (refer Table 1) suggest that source credibility may influence audience to support or counter argue an advocated position (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). Therefore, the perceived usefulness of the communication received and subsequent adoption of information may be influenced by the credibility of the information sources (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). According to Xu (2013), various dimensions of source credibility may have different effects on an audience's attitude formation and change. Table 2 presents the conceptual understanding of source credibility construct, including its definitions and underlying dimensions.

Since tourists' attitudes toward a travel destination is important in tourism marketing, it is essential to determine how the visual component of advertisement and source credibility impacts destination image perceptions. Previous research suggests that source credibility is an antecedent to the attitude towards visuals presented in advertisements (Cutler and Javalgi, 1993). Studies over the past five decades conclude that greater source credibility results in higher persuasion in terms of both attitudinal and behavioural measures (Clark and Evans, 2014; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Therefore, this study anticipates that higher perceived credibility of the communicated information will result in audience engagement. In the context of educational tourism marketing, we anticipate that online source credibility has a direct positive effect on audience perceived destination image.

**H3.** Source credibility in online visual media communication has a

**Table 1**  
Notable works about information adoption in the marketing literature.

Reference	Topic	Variables	Key findings	Method	Sample	Study conducted at
Zhu et al. (2016)	Influence of C2C communication on purchase decision in online communities	argument quality, source credibility, tie strength, product usefulness evaluation, purchase decision	Argument quality, source credibility, and tie strength positively influence purchase decision through product usefulness evaluation	Partial Least Squares	324	China
Erkan & Evans (2016b)	Influence of eWOM in social media on consumer's purchase intention	Information quality, Information credibility, Needs of Information, Attitude toward information, Information usefulness, Information adoption, Purchase Intention	Information Quality, Information Credibility, usefulness, needs of information and attitude toward information are the key factors of eWOM in social media that influence consumer's purchase intention	Structural Equation Modelling	384	United Kingdom
Erkan & Evans (2016a)	Compares and test the influence of friend's recommendations on social media and anonymous reviews on shopping websites in the context of online shopping	Information quality, Information Credibility, Information usefulness, Information adoption, Purchase Intention	Anonymous reviews are found to be more influential on consumers online purchase intention than friend's recommendations on social media. Information quantity, information readiness, detailed and dedicated information make shopping websites superior to social media	Multiple Linear Regression	384	United Kingdom
Tseng & Wang (2016)	The role of perceived risk in influencing adoption of information from travel websites	Argument quality, source credibility, perceived risk, perceived usefulness, information adoption, involvement	Argument quality and source credibility effectively persuade customers to adopt information from travel websites. Perceived risk is directly related to information adoption.	Structural Equation Modelling	212	Taipei
(Xu and Yao, 2015)	Role of argument quality in the adoption of online reviews	Argument quality, argument perspective, perceived value, online reviews adoption, information credibility, quantity sufficiency	Argument quality and argument perspective influence perceived value of information as well as the adoption of online reviews. Information credibility and quantity sufficiency of online reviews are positively associated with argument quality	Structural Equation Modelling	208	China
(Li, 2015)	The effects of source credibility and argument quality on employees responses toward information system usage	argument quality, source credibility, playfulness, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, behaviour intention	Source credibility of the message has a positive influence on playfulness. Argument quality of the message has a positive influence on perceived use and perceived usefulness.	Structural Equation Modelling	124	Taiwan
Gunawan & Huarng (2015)	effects of social media on consumers purchase intention	Argument quality, source credibility, social integration, social influence, attitude toward information usefulness, subjective norms, perceived risk, behavioural intention	Source credibility and social influence critically affect subjective norms and attitude. Social influence together with perceived risk in Social media affects consumer's intention to purchase	Structural Equation Modelling; FsQCA (Fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis)	118	Indonesia
Wang (2015)	Relationship between electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and travel intention	Argument quality, source credibility, attitude, visit intention, WOM Intention	Argument quality of eWOM influences attitude toward a destination. Argument quality positively influences travel intention, attitude toward destination and WOM intention	Structural Equation Modelling	195	Finland
Cheung (2014)	Relationship between electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and Information adoption	Trustworthiness, Timeliness and Comprehensiveness, Quality, Relevance, Information Usefulness, Purchase Intention	Timeliness and comprehensiveness of the information, trustworthiness and quality of information have positive influence on information usefulness which	Partial Least Squares	100	Hong Kong

(continued on next page)



Table 1 (continued)

Reference	Topic	Variables	Key findings	Method	Sample	Study conducted at
(Li, 2013)	Influence of persuasive messages on information system acceptance	Argument quality, source credibility, normative social influence, effective response, cognitive response, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, informational social influence, behaviour intention	in turn affects purchase intention Source credibility of the message has a positive influence on the affective response, cognitive response and normative social influence. Argument quality of the message has a positive influence on perceived use and perceived usefulness.	Structural Equation Modelling	123	Taiwan
(Jun and Holland, 2012)	Information processing strategies in tourism	argument quality, audience involvement, text, picture attractiveness, attitude toward a product, purchase intention	Low involved individuals favour picture attractiveness to assess positive or negative values quickly. High involved audience focused on text argument quality and picture attractiveness for comprehensive evaluation	ANOVA	317	United States
Handley & Runnion (2011)	Relationship between unconscious thinking and persuasion based on argument quality	Argument quality, thought conditions, attitude, message relevance and processing effort, message thoughts and argument recall, author impressions,	individuals in the unconscious thought conditions reported more favourable attitude towards message communicated in response to strong versus weak arguments	Experiment	144	United States
(Zhang and Watts, 2008)	Information adoption in online communities	Argument quality, source credibility, disconfirming information, focused search, information adoption	Both argument quality and source credibility have a positive influence on information adoption in online communities. Greater the level of disconfirming information perceived in a message, the less source credibility affects information adoption	Partial Least Squares	254	United States
Lo et al. (2011)	Adoption of information in online communities	Argument Quality, Source Credibility, Information Usefulness, Information Adoption	Comprehensiveness and relevance of information were found to be positively influencing information usefulness which in turns influence information adoption	Structural Equation Modelling	154	China

positive influence on international student's perception about a destination.

#### 2.2.4. Audience engagement

Audience engagement is the degree to which viewers of media find the communicated message (such as a broadcasted video or an advertised message) noteworthy (Gerstner et al., 2013), and the degree of attention and effort afforded to a transmitted message (Scott and Craig-Lees, 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010). Audience engagement is often regarded as a way to increase reader/viewer traffic in communication (Meier et al., 2018). In marketing, customer engagement is defined as "the customer's behavioural manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers such as word of mouth activity, recommendations, helping other customers, or writing reviews" (Brodie et al., 2011, p.256). de Villiers (2015) reports on consumer enmeshment (alternative term to engagement) as indicative of consumers' willingness to engage in the organisation-generated messages and the likelihood to enact behavioural changes sought by the transmitted message (s). Whilst Mollen and Wilson (2010) defined online media engagement as "the customer's cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other online media designed to communicate brand value" (Brodie et al., 2011, p.256). Prior studies recognise three major dimensions of audience engagement: cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement (Brodie et al., 2011;

de Villiers, 2015; Hollebeek, 2011; Pham and Avnet, 2009). Patterson et al. (2006) suggested four constructs absorption, dedication, vigor, and interaction representing cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of audience engagement. Absorption refers to the level of individual concentration in communication and indicates the cognitive dimension of audience engagement. Dedication refers to the sense of belonging of the recipient to the brand who initiate the communication. In other words, dedication represents the emotional dimension of engagement. Vigor refers to the level of mental resilience and interaction refers to the process of two-way communication between audience and brand (Brodie et al., 2011). Both vigor and interaction represent the behavioural dimension of audience engagement.

The current study propose the mediating effect of audience engagement in media communication. Prior studies suggest that highly engaged customers are more likely to purchase an organisation's products and services than a brand-loyal consumer (Chen et al., 2018; Voyles, 2007). The integration of television, social media and other visual media channels allow consumers to actively participate in and to act as co-creators of customer value (Hallvard et al., 2016; Jenkins, 2006). According to Demangeot and Broderick (2016), audience engagement occurs in digital media, such as websites only when users find that the message is informative and credible, makes sense and provides potential for further exploration. Based on their analyses of consumer behaviour over retail websites, authors identified that audience engagement

**Table 2**  
Conceptual understanding of Source credibility.

Author(s)	Concept	Definition	Source credibility dimensions
Berlo et al. (1969)	Source credibility		Safety, Qualification, Dynamism
Biswas, Hussain, & O'Donnell (2009)	Source Credibility		Expertise, Trustworthiness
Campbell & Wright (2002)	Source Credibility	Individual perception regarding the credibility of the source of message received	Competence, Character
Clow (2011)	Source Credibility	the believability of the endorser, spokesperson, or individual in an advertisement	expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity and liking
Filieri et al. (2018)	Source Credibility of online reviews	Perceived expertise and trustworthiness of a reviewer	Expertise, Trustworthiness
Goldsmith et al. (2000)	Endorser credibility	The extent to which a spokesperson/endorser is perceived as possessing expertise relevant to the topic and can be trusted to give an objective opinion	Expertise, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness
	Corporate Credibility	The reputation of a company for honesty and expertise	Expertise, Trustworthiness
Dancer et al. (2014)	Source Credibility	The extent to which an information source is perceived to be believable, competent and trustworthy by information recipients	Expertise, Trustworthiness
Johnson & Kaye (2009)	Online Source Credibility	The judgement made by the users regarding a source which in turn motivates them to believe the information received as fair, accurate and in depth	Believability, Fairness, Accuracy, Depth
Ohanian (1990)	Source Credibility	The positive characteristics of the communicator that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message	Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise
O'Reilly et al., (2016)	Source Credibility		Expertise, Trustworthiness
Pornpitakpan (2004)	Source credibility		Expertise, Trustworthiness
Shan (2016)	Source Credibility of product review	Extent to which a reviewer is perceived as a credible source for information and trusted to give an objective opinion about the product reviewed	Trustworthiness, Expertise
Roy et al. (2013)	Source Credibility of celebrity endorsements	The efficacy of the message communicated by an endorser as	Expertise, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness

**Table 2 (continued)**

Author(s)	Concept	Definition	Source credibility dimensions
Sussman & Siegal (2003)	Source Credibility	perceived by the consumers Message recipient's perception of the credibility of a message source, reflecting nothing about the message itself	Competence, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Reliable
(Whitehead, 1968)	Source credibility		Trustworthiness, Competence, Dynamism
Yoon & Kim (2016)	Source credibility of spokespersons	A spokesperson's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message	Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise

dimensions particularly interaction engagement and activity engagement mediates the relationship between three source credibility characteristics 1) information exploration potential, 2) sense making potential and 3) experiential exploration potential and behavioural engagement (Demangeot and Broderick, 2016). Meier et al. (2018) comments that audience's interaction and engagement with a media depends on their trust and credibility towards the source. According to Hays et al. (2013), success of social media as a destination marketing tool is determined by the way the way its audience interact with the contents posted on those media. While conceptualising the online engagement construct in social media perspective, Dessart et al. (2015) identified that audience's identification and trust of the brands have a significant positive effect on their affective, cognitive and behavioural engagement dimensions. Further, in the context of marketing, van Doorn et al. (2010) found that credibility dimensions including firm's overall reputation, customers trust and commitment towards brand are the driving forces of a customer's engagement behaviour.

In social media, prospective engagement occurs when the information sources are found credible and prospective students can interact with sources of information. Compared to other visual media types, social media play an important role in providing travel related information to potential tourists including student travellers (Hays et al., 2013; Shu and Scott, 2014; Xiang et al., 2015). Considering the information needs of student travellers, Eder et al. (2010) explored various factors influencing international student's study abroad destinations and classified them into push, pull and structural factors. Push factors include personal growth, language, career whereas pull factors include characteristics of the college, physical geography of the location, and destination culture. Further, factors including visa issues, cost of studies etc. were classified as structural issues in selecting a study abroad destination (Eder et al., 2010). International students who have chosen New Zealand (NZ) to complete their tertiary education are likely to have gathered information about the destination and characteristics of various NZ education providers through popular online visual media including Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Marketing agencies report that Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook are the four most popular online communication media among young adults in the United States and we expect the same trend everywhere (Center, 2018; Perrin, 2015). For international studies, this interaction would take the form of queries, reviews, likes, shares, recommendations, uploaded pictures and videos. This behavioural dimension of engagement occurs only when the prospective students felt a sense of belonging to the brand who initiates the communication. The current study observed that a large portion of tertiary education providers (NZ) have promotional videos in their social media outlets where student services are demonstrated using current students as actors. Current promotional

digital channels provide opportunities for prospective students to interact and engage with current students and other stakeholders, allowing potential students to connect cognitively and emotionally with the providers. These result in enhanced source credibility and improved audience engagement behaviours. Based on the above discussion and literature evidences (Demangeot and Broderick, 2016; Scott and Craig-Lees, 2010; Shu and Scott, 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010), we propose that credibility of the source of communication is likely to influence the elaboration and processing of the communicated information and subsequent audience engagement. Thus, this study proposes:

**H3a.** Credibility of the communication source influence International student's engagement over online visual media.

**H4.** International student's engagement over online visual media influence their perception towards a destination.

### 2.2.5. Destination image

An individual's mental representation of knowledge, beliefs, feelings and overall emotions about a destination is termed their "destination image" (Fu et al., 2016; Crompton, 1979; Yacout and Hefny, 2015) and is created through information received over a period of time (Llodra-Riera et al., 2015). Similar to the audience involvement discussed above, destination marketing literature identifies cognitive, affective and conative dimensions of destination image construct (Kim and Richardson, 2003; Pike and Ryan, 2004; Stylos et al., 2016; Yacout and Hefny, 2015; Zhang et al., 2019). Cognitive destination image indicates the beliefs and knowledge an individual has of the destination attributes, such as natural attractions, climate, scenery, hygiene and cleanness (Llodra-Riera et al., 2015). Affective destination image indicates the emotions or overall feelings about a destination; that is, the perceptions of the destination as pleasant, relaxing, exciting or arousing (Fu et al., 2016). The conative component of destination image indicates the tourist's active consideration of a location as a potential tourism destination for specific activities. While the relationship between cognitive, affective and conative dimensions of destination image is still unclear, studies suggest that they all influence tourists' selection of particular travel destinations (Gartner, 1994; Kim and Richardson, 2003; Pike and Ryan, 2004). Prior research report that attitude and perception towards a travel destination is the most influential factor of tourists' readiness and willingness, i.e., travel intentions (Fu et al., 2016; Park et al., 2017). For example, a medical tourist's travel intention indicates his or her willingness to undergo required medical treatment in a foreign

destination (John et al., 2018), while an international student's travel intention indicates their readiness to travel to a foreign destination to pursue higher studies (Eder et al., 2010). Extant literature suggests that cognitive, affective and conative dimensions of destination image have a direct impact on potential tourists' travel intentions (Chew and Jahari, 2014; Stylos et al., 2016; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Accordingly, this study postulates:

**H5.** Perceived destination image influences potential tourists' intention to travel to a considered destination.

This study investigates the series of hypotheses postulated, as set out in Fig. 1, which presents the theoretical model of information adoption proposed in this study at a glance.

## 3. Research methods

Despite the importance of international students and the growing role of visual media in communication, only a few studies have addressed the influence of visual media on international students' selection of destinations to pursue higher studies abroad (away from their home country). Prior studies in educational tourism focus mainly on the key motivational drivers of students to travel and study at international institutions away from home (Ayalon and Schnell, 2014; Bodycott, 2009; Eder et al., 2010). To shed more light on the growing international education-and-tourism (E&T) market, we investigate the characteristics of visual media content that influences international students' perceived destination image and their intention to travel to that destination. This study's main purpose is to investigate the influence of visual media in particular, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat on developing tourist destinations' image, the impact of various visual media and the media users' intention to participate in tourism activities in a foreign market. Those specific social media were chosen for our analysis due to its features in communicating visual forms of information among online users. Further, these four media types are found to be highly popular and adopted among international student travellers (Reddy, 2014; Statista, 2019a, 2019b). Social media is regarded as one of the most important sources of travel information among all sort of tourists. According to Ho, Lin and Chen (2012, p.1470), "Currently, social media not only constitute a significant portion of results for online tourism information search, but also demonstrate their increasingly important role as an information source" (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

Since NZ has one of the highest shares of international students in

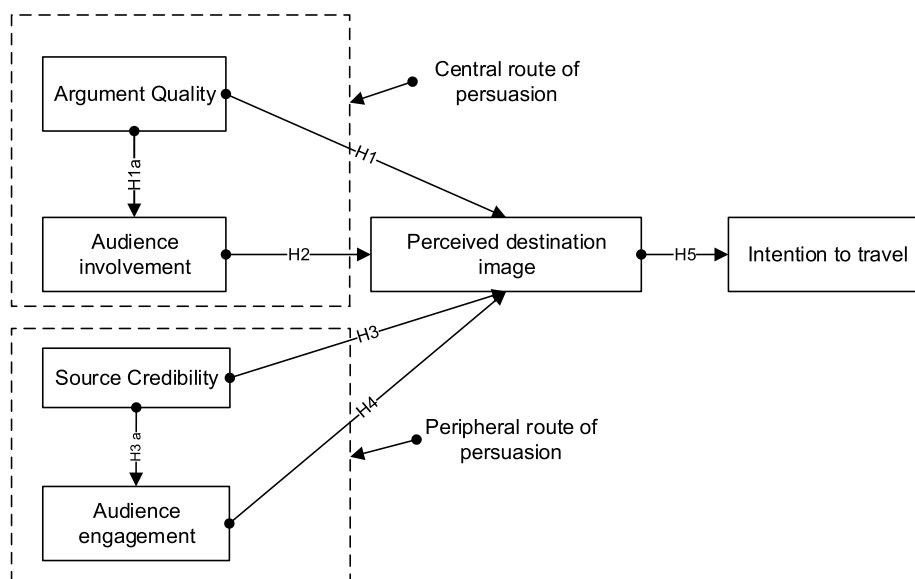


Fig. 1. Proposed model of Information adoption in marketing communication.

tertiary education (OECD, 2019a), an appropriate sample of 450 international paid-up, enrolled and on-campus tertiary students, was chosen as participants in this study. NZ's tertiary students is an appropriate study focus, since the proportion of adults (25-64 year-olds) in NZ educated to tertiary level is similar to the OECD average (39%), and "somewhat lower than in countries such as Australia (46%) and the United Kingdom (46%)" (OECD, 2019a, p.2). The pattern is similar among younger adults (25-34 year-olds). In addition, NZ is "the #1 English-speaking country for preparing students for the future", according to the Economist Intelligence Unit Educating for the Future Index 2018 (Barlow, 2019).

An online questionnaire was developed and distributed to full-time international students at eight universities and nineteen polytechnics in NZ, from September through to November 2017. Snowball sampling techniques were employed to collect the data promptly. Out of 450 questionnaire links distributed via email and social media, 252 responses were received from which 233 (51.78%) were found to contain data useful for analysis, after screening for missing data, skewness and kurtosis. Measurement items (See Appendix A) were carefully selected based on the existing literature to ensure content validity and reliability of all the measures. Descriptive statistics were generated using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 24) to explain the characteristics of the respondents. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling were conducted using AMOS version 24 (Ho, 2006; Hair et al., 1998) to test the validity of the proposed conceptual model and five hypotheses.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Descriptive statistics

The majority of respondents were female (60%), with the majority of ages ranging between 18 and 35 (98%). Most respondents (67%) continued their studies abroad after completing their undergraduate studies. The largest cultural subgroups constituted of Chinese (31%), American (16%) Indian (13%) international student travellers. More than 85% of respondents admitted that they learned about a target destination through various visual media. Visual communication elements, such as photos and videos shared via online media channels, were found to be influential among international student travellers. Facebook (85%), YouTube (65%), Instagram (56%), and Snapchat (40%) were the most popular media channels among selected traveller segments for visual media usage. Nearly 41% of the respondents reported they spend 1-3 h per day on the above media types, while another 30% spend 3-5 h per day on social media. Descriptive statistics of the current study is presented in Table 3.

### 4.2. Model analysis

To test this study's models, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used as a suitable test for the hypotheses, especially since the model includes multiple equations (Amaro et al., 2016). Before evaluating the fitness of the path model presented in Fig. 1, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to verify that the 26 measurement variables written to reflect the six observed constructs did so in a reliable manner. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 4. The factor loadings and their standardised regression weights for all variables were more than 0.70, which indicates that all the 26 measurement items were significantly represented by their respective latent constructs (Ho, 2006), illustrating the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability values for all the six constructs were more than 0.8, suggesting adequate internal consistency and reliability of the constructs and measurement items (Hair et al., 1998). In addition to the factor loadings, convergent validity is confirmed by examining the average of the variance extracted (AVE), which is more than 0.5 for all six constructs. Composite reliability of all constructs were found to be above 0.7. Results (refer Table 5) show that

**Table 3**  
Demographic profile of the respondents.

Variable	Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Age	Younger than 18	1	0.43
	18-25	182	78.11
	25-35	48	20.6
	35-45	1	0.43
Gender	Older than 45	1	0.43
	Female	140	60.09
Education level	Male	93	39.91
	Diploma/Certificate	29	12.45
	Undergraduate	155	66.52
	Master's degree	43	18.45
Nationality	PhD	6	2.58
	Chinese	71	30.05
	American	38	16.30
	Indian	31	13.3
	Korean	16	6.90
	Japanese	9	3.90
	Others	68	29.20
	Visual media sources	Facebook	199
YouTube	153	65.11	
Usage of visual media per day	Instagram	131	55.74
	Snapchat	96	40.85
	Movies	92	39.15
	TV	72	30.64
	Magazines	22	9.36
	Others	19	8.09
	Less than 1 h	13	5.53
1-3 h	97	41.28	
3-5 h	69	29.36	
5-7 h	36	15.32	
More than 7 h	20	8.51	

the square root of the AVE for any given construct is higher than the absolute correlation between pairs of constructs as recommended in the literature (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Park et al., 2017), supporting the adequate discriminant validity of the measurement scales.

The bold numbers on the diagonal are the square root of the variance extracted between constructs; off-diagonal elements are the squared correlation estimates between constructs.

Overall fitness of the measurement model and the structural model is presented in Table 6. Findings indicate that goodness of fit indices for both models are acceptable. Therefore, we examined the relationships proposed in the conceptual model. Table 7 presents the summary of the hypotheses' test results.

Our path analyses results (see Table 7) indicate that argument quality of communication has a positive and direct effect on international students' perception of destinations' image ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and their subsequent intention to travel ( $\beta = 0.73$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, quality of message arguments, in particular relevance, timeliness and accuracy of the information, has a significant influence on the adoption of information and students' travel decision making. Argument quality is found to be strongly correlated to involvement. Quality of the visuals help the audience to directly relate to and identify with the intended message. Videos and pictures posted by current students on institution websites, social media and other online forums influence potential international students to transport themselves and get involved. According to the results, audience involvement has a direct and positive effect ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) on the perceived destination image. This supported the first ( $H_1$ ) and second ( $H_2$ ) hypotheses. These results provide evidence of the influence of the central route of persuasion on marketing communication adoption. For  $H_3$ , testing the influence of source credibility on information adoption process, data findings indicate that trustworthiness and expertise of the source of communication is highly significant in attracting audience to engage with the visual communication. Source credibility does not significantly influence the perceived destination image; however, it significantly influences audience engagement. The attention and interest garnered from various communication sources motivates potential students to seek



**Table 4**  
Results of the confirmatory factor analysis (n = 233).

Constructs	Factor Loading	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	Average Variance extracted
<i>Argument Quality</i>		0.91	0.912	0.65
The videos and pictures in the online communities are relevant	0.848			
Pictures and videos I have watched in online communities such as Facebook, YouTube etc. provide accurate information.	0.828			
The videos and pictures in the online communities are appropriate.	0.802			
The contents of the messages in the online communities such as Facebook, YouTube etc. are of high quality	0.799			
The videos and pictures in the online customer communities are timely	0.768			
<i>Audience Engagement</i>		0.9	0.93	0.69
I paid close attention when I viewed videos about New Zealand.	0.851			
While watching the videos about New Zealand, I found myself daydreaming	0.846			
The navigation of videos and pictures about New Zealand through online communities was enjoyable	0.833			
The navigation of videos and pictures about New Zealand through online communities was exciting	0.814			
<i>Source Credibility</i>		0.89	0.881	0.67
The spokesperson in the videos and online posts appears to be sincere	0.85			
The spokesperson in the videos and online posts appears to be honest.	0.83			
The spokesperson in the videos and online posts appears to be knowledgeable.	0.82			
The spokesperson in the videos and online posts appears to be expert.	0.767			
<i>Audience Involvement</i>		0.93	0.94	0.78
I was mentally involved in the narrative while viewing videos and pictures about New Zealand	0.875			
I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative	0.891			
The narrative affected me emotionally.	0.86			
	0.895			

**Table 4 (continued)**

Constructs	Factor Loading	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	Average Variance extracted
When watching videos about New Zealand, I felt that I was a part of the story.				
<i>Destination Image</i>		0.85	0.857	0.54
Safe and Stable	0.837			
Good place to study	0.798			
Quality of Infrastructure	0.746			
Good Climate	0.681			
Suitable Accommodations	0.621			
<i>Intention to travel</i>		0.83	0.875	0.56
New Zealand is my first choice for studying overseas in the future	0.789			
I will save time and money within 24 months for the purpose of travelling and studying in New Zealand	0.767			
I would visit New Zealand rather than any other foreign destination for my education	0.763			
I will travel to New Zealand with my friends/family within 24 months	0.719			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

further recommendations, follow reviews posted by other students, and employ engagement behaviours to source trustworthy, authoritative sources (Brodie et al., 2011; Oh et al., 2017). This finding supports H<sub>3a</sub>. Analyses indicate a significant positive influence of audience engagement on perceived destination image (supporting H<sub>4</sub>). Results suggest that audiences' engagement behaviours, such as word-of-mouth activities, blogging, micro-blogging, seeking reviews, and participating in online communities, will increase their familiarity with the destinations, which ultimately help viewers to develop a favourable attitude toward destinations. Results related to H<sub>5</sub> indicate a positive and direct association between perceived destination image and travel intentions, which is consistent with prior similar studies (Fu et al., 2016; Pan et al., 2014).

### 5. Discussion and implications

This study investigated the major attributes of visual media communication that influence international student's perceived destination image. Internet based visual media particularly Facebook (nearly 85%), YouTube (65%) and Instagram (56%) were found to be the most popular sources of communication among our respondents. Advancement of technologies including smart phones, mobile applications etc. helped them to access those sites anytime anywhere. Audience engagement is found to be the most significant factor influencing destination image, followed by argument quality. Prior literature reports on audience engagement in online media, generally referred to as electronic word of mouth (eWOM), as an influential information source for consumers (Abubakar and Ilkan, 2016; O'Reilly et al., 2016). Similarly, recommendations from current international students were seen as more credible among potential travellers than information received from conventional promotional media. Therefore, tertiary educational institutions should encourage current students to post pictures, videos and written comments of their travel and learning experiences on the

**Table 5**  
Discriminant validity of the constructs.

Construct	AQ	AI	AE	DI	SC	INT
AQ	0.803					
AI	0.15	0.938216				
AE	0.19	0.12	0.912277			
DI	0.17	0.15	0.31	0.854751		
SC	0.19	0.098	0.12	0.11	0.81325	
INT	0.33	0.19	0.32	0.32	0.23	0.74725

**Table 6**  
Goodness of Fit measurement results.

Model	$\chi^2/df$	NFI	RFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Measurement model	1.38	0.92	0.911	0.974	0.977	0.041
Structural model	1.62	0.91	0.9	0.96	0.97	0.052
Recommended value	<3	≥0.9	≥0.90	≥0.90	≥0.90	<0.08

Recommended values are adapted from various literature (Ho, 2006; Hair et al., 1998; Park et al., 2017), NFI: Normalized Fit Index; TLI: Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI: Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

**Table 7**  
Summary of the Hypotheses tests.

Propositions	Proposed relationships	Path coefficient	Results
H <sub>1</sub>	Argument Quality Destination image	0.20***	Supported
H <sub>1a</sub>	Argument Quality Audience Involvement	0.60***	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	Audience involvement Destination image	0.11***	Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	Source credibility Destination image	0.13	Not Supported
H <sub>3a</sub>	Source credibility Audience engagement	0.49***	Supported
H <sub>4</sub>	Audience Engagement Destination image	0.36***	Supported
H <sub>5</sub>	Destination image Intention to travel	0.72***	Supported

institutional online and other authoritative social media pages. Prior literature evidenced that product reviews, online opinions and other user-generated contents assist target audiences to form a positive attitude towards products and services offered by brands (O'Reilly et al., 2016; Shan, 2016). Consistent with those results, our study confirmed that information about evaluation of student facilities, culture and lifestyle of the destinations, cost of living, and career opportunities received via visual media help them to form favourable attitudes towards a destination and education provider. Therefore, we recommend destination marketers should use visual media channels including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Flickr, blogs, websites and television advertisements to advocate travel destinations online. DVDs, digital brochures and multiple short-length videos describing the climate, personal growth opportunities, language, cost of living, culture and lifestyle of the host country, career opportunities, cost of living, cost of education (including scholarship opportunities and visa procedures) may be effectively distributed over online platforms.

Argument quality is found to be the second most important factor in adopting marketing information over visual media channels such as Facebook and YouTube. Results suggest that information communicated via pictures and videos should be relevant, accurate and in the correct format for a particular target audience. Therefore, destination marketers need to carefully identify their focused target audience for each visual media type used in marketing communication. As argument quality refers to the persuasive strengths of the arguments embedded in the transmitted message, destination marketers should use appropriate

graphical and video messages for particular visual channels (Bhattacharjee and Sanford, 2006). These visual contents should let the audience critically assess the information they receive without any peripheral cues and this cognitive processing of visual imagery should purposefully lead the target audience to develop a favourable destination image.

Source credibility is found to have a direct effect on the persuasion process. Results indicate the need to provide credible and reliable information related to destinations. Inconsistent promotions and claims through multiple channels are likely to negatively impact a tourists' intention to travel to or select a particular destination. Adept destination marketers select multimedia channels carefully, and disseminate consistent information through their chosen promotional channels, which aligns with integrated marketing communication theory (Madhavaram et al., 2005; Schultz and Patti, 2009). As perceived trustworthiness and perceived expertise are key dimensions of source credibility (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008), visual media content promoted by tourism marketers should be delivered by people trusted and dependable, as judged by the target market. It will thus offer a good return on marketers' effort to identify influencers and early adopters within the influence sphere of followers. Perceived credibility and effectiveness of the visual communication sources may vary with audience culture. Studies suggest that individuals from collectivist cultures rely to a greater extent on social media than others (Goodrich and de Mooij, 2014). Previous studies identified that consumers from individualist cultures including the USA, the UK and Australia are less likely to use social media for purchase decisions than Chinese or Thai consumers (Goodrich and de Mooij, 2014). Our study's empirical findings are consistent with prior studies' results. Therefore, marketers may need to examine the cultural orientation of their target market before deciding on potential communication channels and online sources for the most effective dissemination of information.

Audience involvement has been identified as another significant variable affecting destination image. Providing and promoting visual media channels (social media, Student TVs etc.) for student-centric discussions on various topics such as student experiences, university offerings and services, host country attractions, along with pictures and videos, may lower perceived risks for the target audience, while increasing user involvement and credibility of attractiveness. Therefore, marketers need to carefully design entertaining and informative content (Pletikosa Cvijikj, Dubach Spiegler, & Michahelles, 2013), particularly interactive and reaction-generating messages, using relevant and conversational visual media (Burton and Soboleva, 2011).

This study found Facebook, YouTube and Instagram to be the three most popular visual media channels among international student travellers. By carefully managing the content posted on visual online channels, marketers are likely to develop actively engaged relationships with prospects and customers. Since verbal and visual reports from current travellers are trusted above firm-generated information, destination marketers will benefit from creating opportunities and incentives (such as competitions, recognition and awards) for current customers to share their experiences with online users. This study, in line with several prior studies, suggests that with more quality information available, audiences are more likely to form a positive destination image, which in turn will affect travel intention and choice of destination.

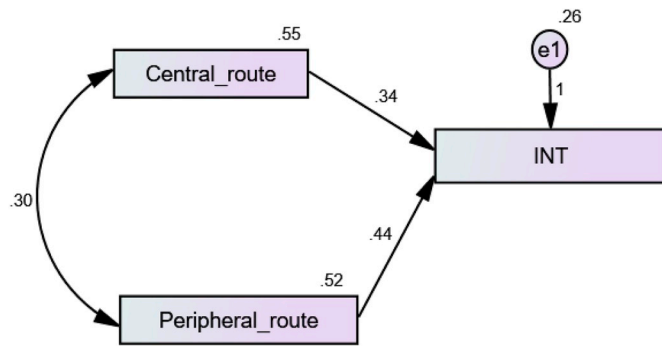


Fig. 2a. Effects of central and peripheral routes of elaboration on Travel Intention.

Further to the managerial implications mentioned above, the current study contributes to the marketing communication literature by investigating the differential effect of both central and peripheral routes of persuasion. This study tests the influence of central and peripheral routes of persuasion on both perceived destination image and users' travel intention. Our findings suggest that peripheral routes of persuasion have a significantly stronger influence on information adoption than the central routes of persuasion. This difference in effects are visualised in Fig. 2a and b.

6. Conclusion

This study empirically examined the visual marketing information adoption process for destinations (travel and tourism) based on the foundations of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Kitchen et al., 2014). The study empirically tested, validated and proposed a new conceptual model for the visual media adoption using an important segment of tourists who are digital natives.

The paper provides valuable insights for tourist destination marketers to improve the use and impact of integrated visual marketing communication (IVMC). This study's findings will improve marketers' understanding of relationships between argument quality, source credibility, audience involvement and audience engagement, attitudes towards a destination and prospects' intention to travel. Our findings assist tourism promoters (including destination marketers, travel agencies, and other stakeholders) with valuable insights into key foci to enhance their marketing strategies by employing visual media and integrating online channels. This study developed and empirically tested an integrative framework (IVMC) to explain the influence of visual media on tourists' intention to travel. Our results provide an evidence-based model of how travellers perceive various visual media channels, including social media, TV, movies and online magazines for gathering

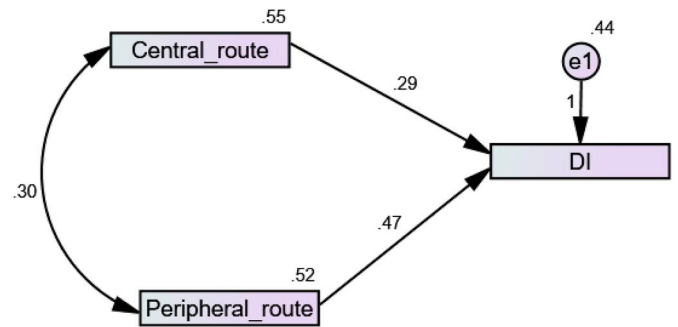


Fig. 2b. Effects of central and peripheral routes of elaboration on Destination image.

travel-related information, and how they develop a cognitive and affective image of various destinations. An enhanced understanding of this process aids destination marketers to develop more effective visual and online communication strategies. Even though the current study employed international students as its sample, its findings have implications to a large variety of international tourist market segments. This study provides clear guidelines for marketers to implement integrated visual marketing communication (IVMC) into their marketing toolbox to promote audience engagement and interaction. Marketers are guided to use visual media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, TV shows, movies, online magazines and corporate websites as platforms for third party marketing.

Although the current study makes a valuable contribution to marketing theory and practice, the following limitations exist. First of all, the scope of this study was limited to educational tourism marketing context in New Zealand and hence its findings may not be fully applicable to general tourism marketing. Even though educational tourism is a fast growing industry and plays a key role in shaping economies for many western countries including New Zealand, very few studies have addressed the marketing and consumer services in this sector. Further, exploring the information adoption among general tourists is challenging due to the difficulties in data collection and identifying suitable respondents. To ease the data collection procedures, data required for our study was collected from only international student travellers arrived in New Zealand. Therefore, to generalise the results and to further validate our proposed marketing communication model, we call for future studies that collect responses from a wider range of segments of the international tourist market. Lastly, the effectiveness of media communication among consumers may vary according to their culture, personality and other subjective norms. Our communication adoption model may be completed only if future studies include those variables as predictors of behaviour intention.

Appendix A. Measurement scale

Argument Quality (Cheung et al., 2008)

- The contents of the messages in the online communities such as Facebook, YouTube etc. are of high quality
- Pictures and videos I have watched in online communities such as Facebook, YouTube etc., provide accurate information.
- The videos and pictures in the online communities are relevant
- The videos and pictures in the online communities are appropriate.
- The videos and pictures in the online customer communities are timely

Source Credibility (Yoon and Kim, 2016)

- The spokesperson in the videos and online posts appears to be expert.
- The spokesperson in the videos and online posts appears to be knowledgeable.
- The spokesperson in the videos and online posts appears to be honest.
- The spokesperson in the videos and online posts appears to be sincere

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*Argument Quality* (Cheung et al., 2008)

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*Audience Engagement* (Demangeot and Broderick, 2016; Scott and Craig-Lees, 2010)

I paid close attention when I viewed videos about New Zealand.  
 While watching the videos about New Zealand, I found myself daydreaming  
 The navigation of videos and pictures about New Zealand through online communities was enjoyable  
 The navigation of videos and pictures about New Zealand through online communities was exciting  
 I will visit online communities such as Facebook and YouTube first when I want to travel again  
 I plan to use social media in the future  
 I intend to continue using social media and other online communities in the future

*Audience Involvement* (Cohen, 2001; Fu et al., 2016; Green and Brock, 2000)

I was mentally involved in the narrative while viewing videos and pictures about New Zealand  
 While I was reading the posts, I could easily picture the events in it taking place.  
 I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative  
 When watching videos about New Zealand, I felt that I was a part of the story.  
 I kept wondering if I knew persons that are similar to spokesperson in the pictures and videos.  
 I kept asking myself how things would evolve around spokespersons in the videos.  
 Occasionally, I wondered if spokespersons in the videos was similar to me or not.  
 While viewing videos about New Zealand, I felt as if I was part of the action.  
 While viewing videos about New Zealand, I forgot myself and was fully absorbed.  
 I was able to understand the events in the program in a manner similar to that in which spokespersons understood them.  
 While viewing the show I could feel the emotions spokespersons portrayed.

*Destination image* (Fu et al., 2016; Park et al., 2017)

Interesting and Friendly People  
 Good Value for Money  
 Suitable Accommodations  
 Good Climate  
 Unpolluted/Unspoiled Environment  
 Quality of Infrastructure  
 Safe and Stable  
 Good place to study

*Travel Intentions* (Abubakar and Ilkan, 2016; Park et al., 2017)

I will travel to New Zealand with my friends/family within 24 months  
 New Zealand is my first choice for studying overseas in the future  
 I would visit New Zealand rather than any other foreign destination for my education  
 I will save time and money within 24 months for the purpose of travelling and studying in New Zealand  
 I predict I will visit New Zealand in the future

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