

Digital Marketing Communication, e-WOM Amplification, and Consumer Loyalty: A Mediation Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the mediating role of e-WOM amplification in the relationship between digital marketing communication strategies and consumer loyalty among Indonesian social media users. Using a quantitative explanatory survey design, data were collected from 180 purposively selected respondents with prior experience in online purchasing and e-WOM activities. The study employed multiple linear regression and mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. The findings reveal that digital marketing communication strategies significantly influence e-WOM amplification and consumer loyalty. Consumer engagement and user-generated content emerged as the strongest indicators within the digital communication and e-WOM dimensions. The mediation analysis confirmed that e-WOM amplification partially mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication and consumer loyalty, indicating that digital communication becomes more effective when consumers actively participate in disseminating brand-related information through social media interactions. These findings highlight the strategic importance of interactive communication, information credibility, and participatory digital engagement in strengthening long-term

consumer loyalty. The study contributes theoretically by extending the conceptualization of e-WOM as an amplification mechanism within digital marketing communication and provides practical implications for companies seeking to optimize digital communication strategies in competitive online markets.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing Communication; Consumer Loyalty; E-WOM Amplification; Mediation Analysis; Social Media.*

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technology has fundamentally transformed marketing communication practices across industries. The emergence of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook has shifted communication patterns from one-way promotional models into interactive, participatory, and consumer-centered communication ecosystems (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Digital marketing communication has therefore become a strategic instrument for organizations seeking to strengthen customer engagement and maintain long-term relationships with consumers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Digital marketing communication refers to the use of internet-based platforms and digital technologies to deliver personalized, interactive, and measurable marketing messages to consumers (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Compared to traditional marketing communication, digital communication enables organizations to establish direct interaction with consumers through content interactivity, responsiveness, personalization, and real-time engagement (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This transformation also reflects broader changes in communication behavior in digital society, where social media increasingly functions as an interactive communication ecosystem connecting organizations and audiences in real time (Solihin et al., 2024). Contemporary consumers increasingly expect brands to provide not only promotional information but also meaningful digital experiences capable of fostering emotional attachment and trust (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Consumer loyalty has become one of the most important indicators of business sustainability in the digital economy. Loyalty is not limited to repeat purchase behavior but also includes emotional commitment, brand advocacy, positive recommendations, and resistance to switching toward competitors (Oliver, 2014). Loyal consumers provide strategic value for firms because they tend to generate long-term profitability while simultaneously functioning as voluntary promoters through their social networks (Rather et al., 2019). However, maintaining loyalty in digital markets is increasingly challenging because consumers have unlimited

access to product alternatives, online reviews, and competing brand information (Harrigan et al., 2021).

One of the most influential factors shaping consumer behavior in digital environments is electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). e-WOM refers to online communication among consumers regarding experiences, opinions, and evaluations of products or services distributed through social media, online reviews, discussion forums, and digital communities (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Compared with traditional advertising, e-WOM is considered more credible because consumers perceive peer-generated information as more authentic and independent (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The increasing dominance of social networking platforms has accelerated the spread of e-WOM, enabling information to reach broader audiences rapidly through reposting, sharing, hashtags, and user-generated content (UGC) (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

The growing importance of e-WOM is closely associated with changes in consumer communication behavior within participatory digital cultures. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages but active actors who contribute to shaping brand reputation and influencing purchasing decisions within online communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the Indonesian context, participatory communication through digital platforms has become increasingly important because consumers tend to rely on online interactions, social networking activities, and digital engagement in evaluating information credibility and brand trust (Solihin et al., 2023). This participatory communication model has encouraged companies to reconsider their marketing communication strategies by emphasizing audience engagement and interactive digital content (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). In many cases, consumers themselves become communication agents who amplify brand-related messages through reviews, testimonials, short videos, and viral content distribution.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that digital marketing communication positively affects customer engagement and brand loyalty. Also emphasized that digital communication transformation has strengthened participatory interaction patterns between organizations and audiences in online environments (Solihin et al., 2024). Godey et al. (2016) found that social media marketing activities significantly influence consumer loyalty by strengthening digital brand experiences. Similarly, Bilgin (2018) reported that interactive social media communication improves brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Tafesse and Wood (2021) further revealed that personalized and engaging digital communication strategies increase consumers' emotional attachment toward brands.

Meanwhile, previous studies regarding e-WOM have largely focused on its impact on purchase intention, trust, and customer satisfaction. Erkan and Evans (2016) demonstrated that e-WOM significantly influences online purchasing decisions due to the credibility of peer-generated information. Farzin and Fattahi (2018) also found that positive e-WOM contributes to increased customer trust and brand image in digital environments. Additionally, Ismagilova et al. (2020) emphasized that user-generated content and online reviews have become critical determinants of consumer behavior in digital marketplaces. However, most previous studies conceptualized e-WOM as either an independent variable or a direct outcome of digital interaction, rather than as a mediating amplification mechanism linking digital communication strategies and consumer loyalty.

Although numerous studies have examined digital marketing communication and e-WOM separately, limited research has investigated how e-WOM amplification mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication strategies and consumer loyalty, particularly within the Indonesian digital market context. Existing studies primarily emphasize purchase intention, customer satisfaction, and brand awareness, while the process through which consumers amplify digital marketing messages to strengthen loyalty remains underexplored (Alalwan, 2018). Furthermore, the emergence of algorithm-driven social media systems and influencer-based marketing ecosystems has intensified the role of participatory communication in shaping digital consumer behavior (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This condition highlights the need for more comprehensive research integrating digital marketing communication, e-WOM amplification, and consumer loyalty within a single analytical framework.

Indonesia represents an important context for examining this phenomenon because it is among the largest social media markets globally. Indonesian consumers demonstrate exceptionally high engagement levels on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, where purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by viral trends, peer recommendations, and influencer communication (Statista, 2024). The increasing popularity of live commerce, affiliate marketing, and user-generated content has further strengthened the role of e-WOM amplification within digital marketing ecosystems. Consequently, understanding how digital marketing communication stimulates e-WOM amplification and consumer loyalty has become strategically important for businesses operating in Indonesia's competitive online marketplace.

This study addresses the identified research gap by positioning e-WOM amplification as a mediating mechanism that strengthens the relationship between digital marketing communication and consumer loyalty. Unlike previous studies that primarily viewed e-WOM as a direct predictor of purchasing behavior, this study conceptualizes e-WOM amplification as a participatory communication process through which consumers actively extend the visibility, credibility, and persuasive impact of digital marketing messages. The study integrates Relationship Marketing Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and Integrated Marketing Communication Theory (Kotler & Keller, 2016) to explain how interactive communication and participatory digital engagement contribute to sustainable consumer loyalty.

The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to examine the influence of digital marketing communication strategies on e-WOM amplification; (2) to analyze the influence of e-WOM amplification on consumer loyalty; and (3) to investigate the mediating role of e-WOM amplification in the relationship between digital marketing communication strategies and consumer loyalty. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to digital marketing communication literature by expanding the conceptual understanding of e-WOM amplification as a mediating communication mechanism. Practically, the findings may provide strategic insights for organizations seeking to optimize digital communication practices and strengthen long-term consumer loyalty in competitive digital environments.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design and Participants

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design using survey methods to examine causal relationships among digital marketing communication strategies, e-WOM amplification, and consumer loyalty (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The target population comprised active social media users who had previously engaged with brand digital marketing communications and participated in e-WOM activities. Purposive sampling was applied using four inclusion criteria: (1) active social media user for a minimum of one year; (2) prior online purchase experience; (3) prior e-WOM engagement (commenting, reviewing, or recommending products online); and (4) experience with at least one brand's digital marketing content on Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook. A sample size of 180 participants was determined based on Hair et al.'s (2019) guideline of five to ten observations per variable indicator.

With 15 total indicators across three constructs, a minimum of 150 participants was required; 180 were recruited to allow for attrition.

2.2 Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected via a structured online questionnaire administered through Google Forms over a six-month period. The questionnaire measured three constructs using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree): (1) Digital Marketing Communication Strategy (5 indicators: content interactivity, message personalization, consumer engagement, information consistency, response speed); (2) e-WOM Amplification (5 indicators: information dissemination intensity, sharing and reposting frequency, user-generated content, information credibility, digital content virality); and (3) Consumer Loyalty (5 indicators: repeat purchase, recommendation to others, brand commitment, resistance to brand switching, positive product testimonials). To mitigate common method bias, procedural remedies included anonymous response administration, temporal separation between predictor and criterion items, and Harman's single-factor test, which confirmed that no single factor accounted for a majority of variance, suggesting common method bias was not a substantial concern.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and SmartPLS software. The analytical sequence comprised: (1) validity testing via confirmatory factor analysis (loading factors ≥ 0.70 ; Ghazali, 2021); (2) reliability testing via Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$); (3) descriptive analysis of respondent profiles and variable distributions; (4) assumption testing including multicollinearity (VIF), normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), and heteroscedasticity (Glejser test); (5) multiple linear regression for direct effect testing; and (6) mediation analysis using Hayes's (2018) PROCESS macro Model 4 with bootstrapped confidence intervals based on 5,000 resamples to test the indirect effect of digital marketing communication on consumer loyalty through e-WOM amplification. An indirect effect was considered significant if the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval did not include zero.

2.4 Research Flowchart

The research process followed a sequential analytical procedure: (1) problem formulation and research gap identification; (2) theoretical framework development based on Relationship Marketing Theory and IMC; (3) research instrument development and pilot testing; (4) data collection via online survey; (5) data cleaning and assumption testing; (6) validity and reliability testing; (7) multiple linear regression analysis; (8)

mediation analysis via PROCESS macro; (9) interpretation and discussion of findings; (10) conclusion formulation and implication development.

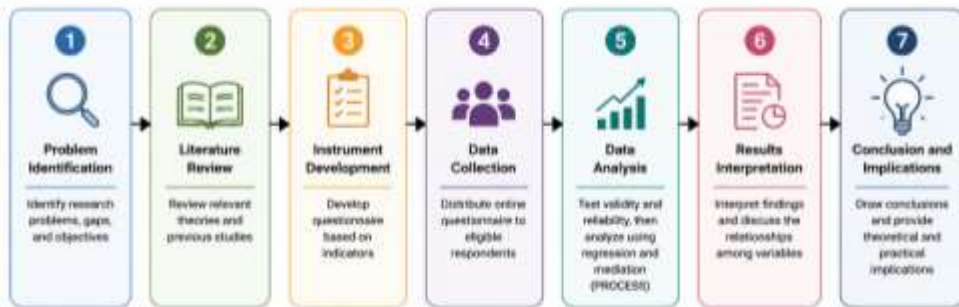


Figure 1. Research Flowchart of Digital Marketing Communication, e-WOM Amplification, and Consumer Loyalty Study

3. Results

This section presents the empirical findings obtained from descriptive statistics, validity and reliability testing, assumption testing, multiple linear regression analysis, and mediation analysis. The findings are presented systematically to explain the relationships among digital marketing communication strategies, e-WOM amplification, and consumer loyalty.

3.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 180 respondents participated, all meeting the four purposive sampling criteria. Participant characteristics are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Respondent Profile by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	78	43.3%
Female	102	56.7%
Total	180	100%

Source: Primary data, 2024

Female respondents (56.7%) outnumbered male respondents (43.3%), consistent with broader patterns of higher female social media engagement in Indonesia (Bilgin, 2018).

Table 2. Respondent Profile by Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
17–22 years	72	40.0%

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
23–28 years	68	37.8%
29–34 years	28	15.6%
>35 years	12	6.6%
Total	180	100%

Source: Primary data, 2024

The majority of respondents were aged 17–22 (40.0%) and 23–28 years (37.8%), reflecting the predominance of Gen Z and Millennial users in Indonesian social media communities.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis: Digital Marketing Communication Strategy (n = 180)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Content Interactivity	4.28	0.61	2	5
Message Personalization	4.11	0.68	2	5
Consumer Engagement	4.36	0.57	2	5
Information Consistency	4.20	0.63	2	5
Response Speed	4.14	0.65	2	5
Overall Mean	4.21	0.63	—	—

Source: Primary data, 2024. SD = Standard Deviation.

Consumer engagement received the highest mean score (M = 4.36, SD = 0.57), indicating that interactive digital content generating likes, comments, and shares is the most prominently perceived dimension of digital marketing communication. Response speed received the lowest mean (M = 4.14, SD = 0.65), suggesting that while generally positive, real-time responsiveness remains an area with room for improvement. Overall, the variable mean of 4.21 indicates favorable respondent perceptions across all dimensions.

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis: e-WOM Amplification (n = 180)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Information Dissemination Intensity	4.22	0.62	2	5
Sharing and Reposting Frequency	4.18	0.64	2	5
User-Generated Content	4.35	0.58	2	5
Information Credibility	4.31	0.60	2	5
Digital Content Virality	4.27	0.61	2	5
Overall Mean	4.26	0.61	—	—

Source: Primary data, 2024.

User-generated content achieved the highest mean ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.58$), reflecting the central role of consumer-produced content in e-WOM amplification processes. The uniformly high means (all > 4.18) may indicate a degree of social desirability bias; this is noted as a study limitation and was partially addressed through anonymous administration procedures.

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis: Consumer Loyalty ($n = 180$)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Repeat Purchase	4.16	0.66	2	5
Recommendation to Others	4.33	0.59	2	5
Brand Commitment	4.12	0.67	2	5
Resistance to Brand Switching	3.98	0.71	1	5
Positive Product Testimonials	4.29	0.61	2	5
Overall Mean	4.18	0.65	—	—

Source: Primary data, 2024.

Recommendation to others received the highest mean ($M = 4.33$), indicating that consumer loyalty in digital contexts is most strongly expressed through active brand advocacy. Resistance to brand switching received the lowest mean ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.71$), suggesting this loyalty dimension is most susceptible to competitive disruption, a finding consistent with the high substitutability of digital brands in Indonesian e-commerce markets (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

3.3 Validity and Reliability Testing

Table 6. Validity Test Results (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Variable	Loading Factor Range	AVE	Result
Digital Marketing Communication Strategy	0.71–0.88	0.63	Valid
e-WOM Amplification	0.74–0.91	0.67	Valid
Consumer Loyalty	0.70–0.89	0.61	Valid

Source: Primary data, 2024. All loading factors > 0.70 ; AVE > 0.50 , confirming convergent validity (Ghozali, 2021).

Table 7. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Result
Digital Marketing Communication Strategy	0.89	0.91	Reliable
e-WOM Amplification	0.91	0.93	Reliable
Consumer Loyalty	0.87	0.90	Reliable

Source: Primary data, 2024. Threshold: Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70 ; Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70 (Ghozali, 2021).

3.4 Assumption Testing

Prior to regression analysis, three statistical assumptions were verified. Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF): Digital Marketing Communication Strategy (VIF = 1.87) and e-WOM Amplification (VIF = 1.91), both below the threshold of 10, indicating no multicollinearity concern. Normality was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; residuals were normally distributed ($D = 0.062$, $p = 0.084$). Heteroscedasticity was assessed via the Glejser test; no significant heteroscedasticity was detected (all $p > 0.05$). Assumption testing confirmed the suitability of the data for multiple linear regression analysis.

3.4.1 Multiple Linear Regression: Direct Effects

Table 8. Multiple Linear Regression Results, Direct Effects

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Digital Marketing Comm. (X) \rightarrow e-WOM Amplification (Z)	0.682	0.069	9.874	< 0.001	[0.546, 0.818]
e-WOM Amplification (Z) \rightarrow Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.641	0.072	8.923	< 0.001	[0.499, 0.783]
Digital Marketing Comm. (X) \rightarrow Consumer Loyalty (Y), Direct	0.537	0.072	7.486	< 0.001	[0.395, 0.679]

Note: β = standardized coefficient; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval. Model fit: $R^2 (X \rightarrow Z) = 0.465$, $F(1, 178) = 97.50$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2 (X+Z \rightarrow Y) = 0.612$, $F(2, 177) = 140.03$, $p < 0.001$. Source: Primary data, 2024.

3.4.2 Mediation Analysis: Indirect Effect of e-WOM Amplification

Table 9. Mediation Analysis Results (PROCESS Macro, Model 4; Bootstrap n = 5,000)

Effect	β	SE	95% Bootstrapped CI	Conclusion
Total effect (X → Y)	0.974	0.092	[0.792, 1.156]	Significant
Direct effect (X → Y, controlling Z)	0.537	0.072	[0.395, 0.679]	Significant
Indirect effect (X → Z → Y)	0.437	0.062	[0.318, 0.561]	Significant (CI excludes 0)

Note: X = Digital Marketing Communication Strategy; Z = e-WOM Amplification; Y = Consumer Loyalty. Partial mediation is confirmed: both direct and indirect effects are significant. Source: Primary data, 2024.

The indirect effect of digital marketing communication strategy on consumer loyalty through e-WOM amplification was $\beta = 0.437$ (SE = 0.062, 95% CI [0.318, 0.561]). Because the confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect effect is statistically significant, confirming that e-WOM amplification partially mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication and consumer loyalty. The direct effect of digital marketing communication on consumer loyalty remained significant after controlling for e-WOM amplification ($\beta = 0.537$, $p < 0.001$), indicating partial rather than full mediation. This means digital marketing communication influences consumer loyalty both directly and indirectly through e-WOM amplification.

4. Discussion

This study examined three hypothesized relationships: (1) the effect of digital marketing communication strategies on e-WOM amplification; (2) the effect of e-WOM amplification on consumer loyalty; and (3) the mediating role of e-WOM amplification in the digital marketing communication–consumer loyalty relationship. All three hypotheses were supported. The following discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing literature, addresses contextual differences, and articulates theoretical and practical contributions.

4.1 Digital Marketing Communication and e-WOM Amplification

The significant positive effect of digital marketing communication on e-WOM amplification ($\beta = 0.682$, $p < 0.001$) is consistent with Kaplan and Haenlein’s (2010) argument that social media transforms consumers

into active participants in the marketing communication process. Consumer engagement emerged as the strongest individual indicator ($M = 4.36$), suggesting that two-way interactive content, rather than one-way broadcast messaging, is the primary driver of e-WOM amplification. This extends Bilgin's (2018) finding that social media marketing increases consumer interaction by specifying engagement-driven content as the key mechanism. The strong beta coefficient in this pathway ($\beta = 0.682$) is higher than comparable values reported in studies from European e-commerce contexts (e.g., Erkan & Evans, 2016: $\beta = 0.41$), suggesting that Indonesian social media users may amplify brand communications more actively, potentially reflecting higher platform engagement rates and stronger community-based sharing norms in the Indonesian digital landscape.

4.2 e-WOM Amplification and Consumer Loyalty

The significant effect of e-WOM amplification on consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.641$, $p < 0.001$) supports Cheung and Thadani's (2012) argument that e-WOM functions as a high-credibility information source that shapes consumer trust and brand attitudes. User-generated content and digital content virality emerged as the strongest e-WOM amplification indicators, consistent with Ismagilova et al.'s (2020) finding that UGC is particularly influential in shaping loyalty among digital-native consumers. Notably, resistance to brand switching received the lowest loyalty mean ($M = 3.98$), despite high overall loyalty scores. This pattern suggests that while digital consumers develop positive attitudes and advocacy behaviors relatively easily, behavioral lock-in, the most demanding loyalty indicator, remains challenging to achieve in the highly competitive Indonesian e-commerce environment. This finding diverges from Griffin's (2005) model, which treats switching resistance as a natural consequence of strong loyalty, and may reflect platform-specific factors such as price comparison ease and low switching costs in mobile commerce.

4.3 Mediation: e-WOM Amplification as a Partial Mediator

The mediation analysis confirmed that e-WOM amplification partially mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication and consumer loyalty (β indirect = 0.437, 95% CI [0.318, 0.561]). This finding indicates that digital marketing communication strategies become more effective in strengthening consumer loyalty when consumers actively participate in disseminating and amplifying brand-related information through digital platforms. The significant indirect effect demonstrates that e-WOM amplification functions as an important communication mechanism connecting brand-generated content with broader consumer interactions in online environments. This result

supports Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) argument that social media transforms consumers from passive audiences into active communication participants who redistribute and legitimize marketing messages within digital communities.

Compared to previous studies, the indirect effect identified in this research appears relatively strong. For example, Erkan and Evans (2016) reported that e-WOM primarily influenced purchase intention through information usefulness and credibility, whereas the present study demonstrates that e-WOM amplification also significantly contributes to long-term consumer loyalty formation. Similarly, Godey et al. (2016) emphasized the role of social media marketing in strengthening brand equity and consumer behavior, but did not specifically examine the mediating mechanism of e-WOM amplification. Therefore, this study extends prior scholarship by empirically positioning e-WOM amplification as a strategic mediating variable rather than merely an independent predictor or communication outcome.

The findings also reinforce Cheung and Thadani's (2012) assertion that e-WOM possesses higher persuasive credibility than traditional advertising because consumers perceive peer-generated information as more authentic and trustworthy. In the current study, consumers who actively encountered reposted content, online reviews, and user-generated content demonstrated stronger loyalty tendencies toward brands. This suggests that digital communication effectiveness is no longer determined solely by the quality of company-generated messages, but also by the extent to which consumers voluntarily participate in amplifying those messages through social interaction processes.

Furthermore, the significant pathway between digital marketing communication and e-WOM amplification ($\beta = 0.682$) indicates that interactive communication strategies such as personalized content, rapid response, and engagement-oriented communication substantially encourage participatory online behavior. This finding is consistent with Bilgin (2018), who found that social media marketing activities positively affect consumer interaction and brand engagement. However, the coefficient obtained in this study is relatively higher than those reported in several Western-context studies, suggesting that Indonesian social media users may demonstrate stronger participatory communication behavior due to intensive social media penetration and collectivistic digital interaction culture.

The significant effect of e-WOM amplification on consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.641$) also confirms Ismagilova et al.'s (2020) conclusion that user-generated content and online peer interaction play strategic roles in

maintaining loyalty in digital marketplaces. In highly competitive digital environments characterized by low switching costs, consumers increasingly rely on peer recommendations and online testimonials when evaluating products and brands. This finding is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where younger consumers dominate social media ecosystems and frequently engage in online recommendation culture through TikTok, Instagram, and other digital platforms.

Although e-WOM amplification significantly mediated the relationship between digital marketing communication and consumer loyalty, the direct effect of digital marketing communication on consumer loyalty remained statistically significant ($\beta = 0.537$). This confirms partial rather than full mediation, indicating that digital marketing communication contributes to consumer loyalty through both direct communication experiences and indirect social amplification processes. Theoretically, this finding advances the consumer loyalty literature by proposing a dual-pathway communication model integrating direct digital communication influence with mediated social amplification mechanisms. Unlike previous studies that generally treated e-WOM as either an antecedent or consequence variable, this study demonstrates that e-WOM amplification simultaneously functions as a strategic communication bridge, strengthening the relationship between digital marketing communication and sustainable consumer loyalty.

To provide a clearer understanding of the mediation relationship identified in this study, Figure 2 illustrates the direct and indirect pathways among digital marketing communication strategy, e-WOM amplification, and consumer loyalty. The model demonstrates that digital marketing communication not only directly influences consumer loyalty but also indirectly strengthens loyalty through consumers' participation in amplifying brand-related information across digital platforms.

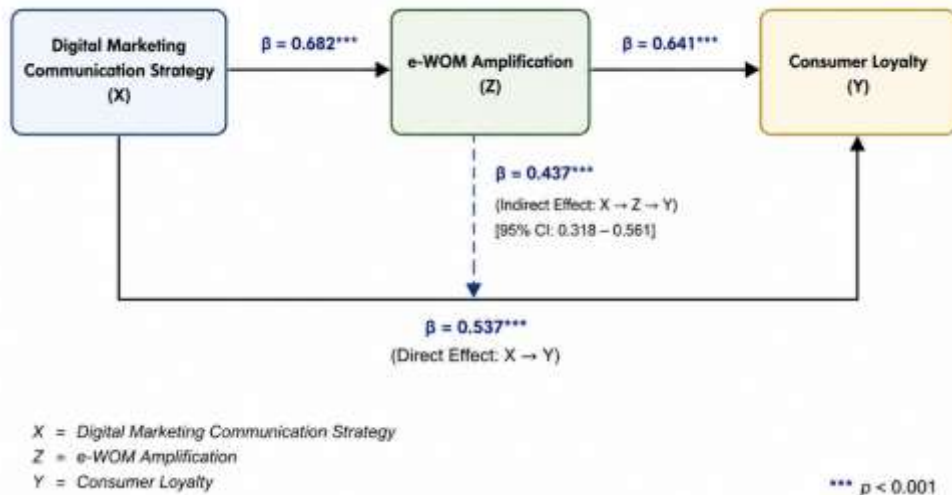


Figure 2. Mediation Model of e-WOM Amplification between Digital Marketing Communication and Consumer Loyalty

4.4 Limitations

Several limitations should inform the interpretation of these findings. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; the observed relationships are associational. Second, purposive sampling limits generalizability beyond active social media users with prior brand engagement experience, and the Indonesia-centric sample constrains cross-cultural applicability. Third, self-report Likert scale data are subject to social desirability bias, as evidenced by the uniformly high means across all variables (all > 3.98). While Harman's single-factor test did not indicate severe common method bias, this limitation cannot be fully eliminated through procedural controls alone. Fourth, the study did not control for potential confounders such as demographic variables, brand category, or platform type, which may moderate the observed relationships. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs, platform-specific sampling, and moderated mediation frameworks to address these limitations.

5. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that e-WOM amplification partially mediates the relationship between digital marketing communication strategies and consumer loyalty among Indonesian social media users. The total effect of digital marketing communication on consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.974$) was decomposed into a significant direct effect ($\beta = 0.537$) and a significant indirect effect through e-WOM

amplification ($\beta = 0.437$, 95% CI [0.318, 0.561]), confirming partial mediation. These findings resolve the ambiguity in prior literature regarding the mechanism through which digital marketing communication translates into consumer loyalty.

For practitioners, three actionable recommendations follow from these findings. First, firms should prioritize consumer engagement and user-generated content strategies as the highest-return digital marketing investments, given their strong associations with both e-WOM amplification and consumer loyalty. Second, content strategies should be explicitly designed to facilitate sharing and virality, not merely brand messaging, to activate the e-WOM amplification pathway to loyalty. Third, given the relatively low loyalty indicator of brand switching resistance ($M = 3.98$), firms should complement digital engagement strategies with switching cost mechanisms such as loyalty programs and exclusive digital community membership to strengthen behavioral loyalty beyond attitudinal commitment.

Theoretically, this study contributes a partial mediation model of e-WOM amplification in the digital marketing communication–consumer loyalty relationship, providing a more nuanced framework than prior studies that treat these variables in isolation. It also demonstrates contextual variation in effect sizes between Indonesian and Western digital markets, suggesting that platform engagement norms and community-sharing behaviors moderate the magnitude of digital marketing loyalty pathways. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to establish temporal precedence, include platform-specific sampling (e.g., TikTok vs. Instagram users), test moderated mediation models incorporating demographic and brand category moderators, and extend the framework to business-to-business digital marketing contexts.

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