

E-WOM on Social Media Platform: An Investigation on Before and After Visiting Café, Study in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The coffee culture in Indonesia focuses on drinking coffee while hanging out and socializing in a coffee shop or café. When choosing a café, many consumers are affected by word-of-mouth (WOM) on social media. Hence, it is important to analyze what consumers look for in e-WOM before visiting a café. Also, what consumer write after visiting a café as e-WOM. This research uses qualitative descriptive analysis, using participants that represent four provinces in Indonesia. However, the results show that all participants are looking for e-WOM on social media before visiting the café. Conversely, participants' reviews on their social media are affected by various motives, such as helping others, a form of criticism, and maintaining a good image of the e-WOM giver. Hence, all participants agree that giving e-WOM on social media helps promote the café.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, coffee shops and cafés have multiplied in Indonesia. As the largest coffee-producing country with Brazil, Vietnam, and Colombia, Indonesia has a great coffee consumer growing popularity (Sunarharum et al., 2021). For today's generation, consuming coffee has become a significant lifestyle choice, reflecting a personal preference and a cultural phenomenon. This trend highlights a deeper appreciation for quality and the ritualistic nature of enjoying coffee in daily life. Howe and Strauss (2000) stated that some consumers, especially millennials, like spending money on eating as a recreational experience. Despite having considerations for their health, drinking too much coffee brings adverse effects on the body, but drinking coffee also refreshes and improves mood (Samoggia, 2018).

As a result, frequenting a café has evolved into a lifestyle choice, serving as a setting for collaborative work and as a means to address individual needs (Putri, 2020). Hence, the development of café is also growing rapidly in almost every province in Indonesia. According to Budiman and Dananjoyo (2021), the café can be described as a place that sells coffee with simple snacks at low prices, supported by other facilities. Individuals frequent cafés not only to enjoy coffee but also to socialize with family and friends. The culture of hanging out in a café is called "*nongkrong*," which builds a coffee culture in Indonesia that focuses more on socializing and community aspects, which is different from the coffee culture in Western (Safitri et al., 2025).

According to Toffin's research on "2020 Brewing in Indonesia," the number of cafés and coffee shops in Indonesia grew to 4,000 in 2020 and is expected to continue growing in the future. Furthermore, the decision to choose a café is also affected by many things. Budiman (2021) found that in choosing a café, Gen Z considers the café atmosphere, such as exterior, interior, point of purchase display, and store layout that is comfortable and unique. Some people stated that hanging out in a café because of prestige and overcoming boredom (Michael & Abdul, 2022). However, Siswati et al. (2024) found that consumer purchasing decisions in a café affected by social, personal, and psychological variables. Reference groups such as families and friends can form a choice to visit a café by making some recommendations or word-of-mouth.

Consumers in Indonesia increasingly rely on social media to decide which cafés to visit. This is because social media can reach a vast audience in real time, meaning anyone can contribute to conversations that impact the whole world, making social media a vital tool for raising awareness and driving change (Sulistiyo, 2018). Due to the changes in information and ideas, social media can potentially be an emerging platform for customer-to-customer interaction, known as e-WOM (Ratchford, 2015). According to Datareportal, in 2024, 139 million social media users in Indonesia are spreading through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), and others. Therefore, it is opening a new way of word-of-mouth between consumers supported by social media. For example, on Instagram, whether the café owner or the visitor can recommend a café, including giving reviews about the café (Putri, 2020), hence it becomes a marketing strategy that also helps the consumers to decide

simultaneously. While being a resource used by many potential customers, word-of-mouth was found to be one of the influential factors affecting consumer behavior (Daugherty et al., 2014). While the conversation naturally occurs, word-of-mouth becomes the original consumer talk in social media (Sulistiyo, 2018). This research examines how consumers engage in e-WOM before and after visiting a café and how social media is used in that process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

e-WOM

Word-of-mouth is not just a conversation that occurs between people, but it can affect the behavior of the consumers. Iulana-Raluca (2012) noted that word-of-mouth could create formal or informal discussions about a product, service, or brand between current and potential customers. As a result of digitalization, today, word-of-mouth is known as electronic word-of-mouth. Increasing internet opinion sites and social media can help consumers engage and receive word-of-mouth via internet, so it becomes e-WOM (Liu et al., 2024). Consumers tend to seek information regarding the products they need to purchase online, whether on a review-sharing platform such as Zomato, an online community such as Kaskus, or e-commerce itself (Sulistiyo, 2018). Hence, e-WOM is a statement made by previous or potential consumers where the information is available through the internet (Hennig-Thurau, 2004).

However, indifferent to WOM, e-WOM also affected consumer behavior. Today, e-WOM can affect the customer journey before, during, and after purchasing (Liu, 2024). Hence, it can adjust consumer behavior to a product, service, or brand. There are two main reasons why consumers use e-WOM to gain information: first, because the information is quicker, they do not have to wait for any acquaintance to offer an opinion, but they can get the information from everyone on the internet, second because they can verify the information they get from the internet, which make the information more credible (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Abdullah et al. (2016) found that young consumers post their visual e-WOM about the restaurant experience for social concern, which helps others and promotes the company. Meanwhile, Sulistiyo (2018) found that e-WOM significantly influences young consumers' decisions when purchasing in a restaurant.

Social Media

Social media act as a medium for consumer conversation and interaction in this age. Consumer tends to look for information about a product, even purchasing and communicating with another consumer on social media (Stephen, 2016). Using social media can help meet what consumers are looking for more easily. Hence, Nasir et al. (2012) found that using social media is based on customer needs, knowledge, and liking towards the product or services. Through social media, customers can look for a product or service on the business's social media itself. Generally, the firms' social media also shows the product or service information and how to buy it, or the customer can even buy it through social media. Hence, social media can also be used as a platform for conversation between customers.

Social media encompasses various forms, including community forums and social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and others. Hence, Kotler and Keller (2012) define social media as a way for consumers to share information in the form of text, audio, video, and images with each other. On the other side, Nurfitriani (2016) stated that social media allows consumers to create personalized profiles, allowing them to connect and interact with individuals of their choosing selectively. Together with e-WOM, social media builds digital consumer behavior. Belk (2013) stated that consumers create an online persona from social media, such as bloggers, vloggers, and food enthusiasts. Thus, through social media, consumers not only accept information but also create and share it, influencing potential customer behavior (Stephen, 2016). Finally, social media should be considered a platform with a high potential to drive consumer behavior.

Consumer Behavior

According to Solomon (2019), consumer behavior is defined as the implication of the consumer to choose or not to choose, to buy or not to buy products, services, or experiences. Consumer behavior is influenced by various factors, as explained by Rachman (2024), this includes both consumer psychology and activity before and after making a purchase. Nowadays, technology also plays a significant role in consumer behavior. With the rapid development of technology, consumers are exposed to many products and services easily in their daily lives. There is also much content created by the firms themselves or by influencers on social media. Varghese (2021) found that consumers are more attracted to content that shows discounts and content made by influencers because all of the content has the competence to stir consumer opinion and perception, hence their behavior. Supported by Utama et al. (2021) found that searching for a café and restaurant can significantly affect buying and sharing decisions with other people. Hence, it is important that firms build great brand awareness so that consumer response and behavior can be driven positively (Ambika, 2023).

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) explains that an individual's behavior is created by what information one accepts and how the individual processes it (Levy, 2021). The theory has the capability to predict consumer decisions related to a product or service effectively. Kumar and Nayak (2023) stated that the TPB framework helps understand consumers' intentions and behavior by determining human actions and perceived behavior. This research investigates the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on social media platforms, specifically focusing on how it affects consumer behavior in selecting and visiting cafés. However, e-WOM is found to have a pivotal role in shaping consumer attitudes, including the credibility of influencers who convey (Haq et al., 2024). According to Ajzen (2020), every behavior involves a choice among alternative actions, and TPB can help to sort out the options using the three determinants: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavior. Hence, using e-WOM, this study seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of e-WOM as a marketing

tool and its role in influencing consumer choices in the food and beverage industry.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative methods and descriptive analysis, focusing on how social media and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) influence consumer behavior before and after visiting cafes. In-depth interviews were conducted with four participants from various regions in Indonesia who have experienced enjoying cafés. All four participants represent four provinces in Indonesia, which are East Java, Bali, South Sulawesi, and East Nusa Tenggara. Furthermore, this research covers various provinces to build triangulation, which is known in social science research to study a phenomenon by combining data from divergent sources (Turner & Turner, 2009). Triangulation can be achieved in several ways; this research uses participants in different places to gather authentic data as well as validate and verify data (Donkoh, 2023). The participants in this study are individuals aged between 25 and 30 years. They possess prior experience in visiting cafés within their respective areas of residence and have engaged in electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communication at least once through their personal social media platforms.

RESEARCH RESULT

Participant 1 has lived in Bali for about 3 years; she knows that Bali has a variety of café that are interesting and have particular themes. She usually comes to a café on the weekend with her friends to spend leisure time or even goes for some work there because she usually also does work from anywhere (WFA). On one occasion, she visited a café that collaborated with her favorite influencer on Instagram. While the café concept is not her preferred setting, she chose to visit to sample the collaboration menu and expressed her satisfaction with the flavors offered. She reported that the café tends to remain uncrowded even during weekends, which provided her with an enjoyable experience and opportunities to capture photographs with her friends. Hence, the café interior and exterior are Instagrammable, which means it is good to take photos there for Instagram photos. She admitted that after going to the café, she posted her review on her own Instagram to tell her followers about the café ambiance and food, and she also tagged the café's Instagram account. She feels that her review can help many of her followers find a good place, as well as promote the café. On the other side, before going to a café, she always checks the café social media (Instagram and TikTok) and their Google review. It is important for her to get to know the atmosphere and the food quality there, which she sometimes cannot find just from the café's promotional content. That is why she needs to read reviews from previous customers.

Participant 2 lives in Makassar, South Sulawesi. She stated that she often comes to the same café 2-3 times with various groups of people if she feels comfortable with the café ambiance. The café was discovered through social media, specifically Instagram, and it features a diverse brunch menu that is not commonly available at other places. Hence, she visited with her friends and tried some patisseries. Following her recent visit to the café, she brought her family,

who were eager to hear her accounts of the café. She looks forward to sharing this delightful setting and exceptional culinary offerings with them on their upcoming visit. In addition to informing her family about the café, she shared her experiences on social media, specifically Instagram, and left a review on Google's platform. Moreover, she feels good about sharing her review because she helps promote the café. She even thinks of revisiting the café in the future because she feels satisfied with the ambiance and the food. Also, the café is Instagrammable, so she loves to post her reviews and photos in the café. When looking for information about the café, she was intrigued. She searched for previous customer reviews on Google and Instagram, especially on the café's social media content, and felt curious to come. Added by the café also has a visually appealing atmosphere that is perfect for Instagram photos.

Participant 3 enjoys visiting a café in Batu City, East Java. He chooses to visit a café in the mountain hills because of some content he sees on the social media Instagram. He found that the café offers beautiful scenery and a relaxing ambiance because of the location, which is far from the big road. When he decided to travel to the café, he felt dissatisfied because the route was rugged and steep, and the prices of food and drinks were relatively high compared to standard café prices. However, the scenery and the services are exceptional because the staff can take a pretty picture of the customer. He acknowledged that the oversight was due to his lack of attentiveness to the Google review. Instead, he placed his trust in the opinion of a friend. On the other hand, he stated that after visiting the café, he often writes reviews on social media, Instagram, and WhatsApp Stories. Nevertheless, he said he only wrote a positive review to increase awareness among his friends and family about a good café he visited and helped promote the café. If there is a negative review, he chooses to keep it himself and only tells if anybody asks about that.

Finally, the last participant lives in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara. At first, it was noted that the options for cafés in Kupang are somewhat limited. Consequently, he engaged with content on Instagram that highlighted a new café near his office. The content shows some unique beverage and food menus in the new café. He decided to visit because he was curious about the food quality, price, and atmosphere when looking for café information on social media, Instagram, or Google Reviews. He feels satisfied as the café exceeds his expectations. The food is exceptional, both in taste and presentation. The barista showcases extensive knowledge, discussing the origins of the coffee beans and various brewing methods, enhancing the overall experience. He indicated that he rarely shares reviews of the café he visited on social media. He chooses to write reviews if he feels satisfied with the café overall and as a way to promote a good place he likes. On the contrary, if he had a terrible experience at the café, he would write a critical review to address the café's development. However, if his experience was merely average, he chose not to write a review.

DISCUSSION

According to interviews, all participants used social media to search for café information before visiting the café. Hence, there are many types of social media;

all participants choose Instagram and Google Review as dependable information resources. Participant 4 learned about the café from content made by the café. Therefore, he looked for other information about the café from social media. It is aligned with Kadang et al. (2023), who stated that social media can build e-WOM from other consumers and significantly influence how visitors enjoy the café's services. Furthermore, Rahayu et al. (2024) found that promotion from social media, especially Instagram, can influence consumer behavior. Instagram promotion consists of content developed by the café, as well as how this content is shared and engaged with by the community. Hence, Participant 3 was dissatisfied with the incomplete word-of-mouth he received about the café. The traditional word-of-mouth he receives is found to be more lacking than the electronic word-of-mouth in social media. E-WOM offers an interactive nature that emphasizes the interaction between the customers and the brand itself. Therefore, the information can be more detailed (Liu et al., 2024).

Participant 1 decided to visit the café as a result of the influence exerted by a social media influencer. Social media influencers found building their credibility through interaction and relationships with their followers, usually by forming an online community (Wahab et al., 2024). Although the café is not really her style, Participant 1 still visits the café because of the collaboration with her favorite influencer in social media. It is aligned with Wahab et al. (2024), which found that the influencer's credibility does not influence their followers. Instead, it is mediated by e-WOM, and then it becomes significant. Therefore, observing only an influencer is insufficient; the content, concepts, and ideas that influencers present to their followers are also crucial. However, in e-WOM 2.0, influencers' recommendations strongly influence consumer behavior (Liu et al., 2024).

Therefore, Participant 2 invited her family to the café she visited and created a word-of-mouth for her closest circle. It is found that word-of-mouth can have a strong tie if the relationship between the individual is intimate and the individual is willing to decide because of the positive influences (Iuliana-Raluca, 2012). All participants were willing to share their reviews about the café on their own social media. Among all the reasons for posting reviews, altruism stands out as a key motivator. Consumers feel compelled to contribute and assist other customers by sharing their experiences about the café (Whiting, 2018). Hence, Participant 1 said, "Some of my friends visiting the café that I have recommended from my social media, I feel so happy about it," shows that she intends to be helpful. Azer (2022) stated that altruistic motives can help others make the right decision. Hence, the effect is rewarding to the people who giving e-WOM itself.

However, altruism should be done by giving positive and negative e-WOM as honestly as possible so that it can really help others (Azer, 2022). Nevertheless, Participant 3 stated, "I only said about positive e-WOM in my social media, but if my followers ask for more reviews, then I also tell them the negative side on personal chat." The text illustrates a selfless commitment that reflects genuine concern for others (Whiting, 2018). However, this quality may lead to misunderstandings, as it often necessitates more private communication with the e-WOM provider rather than being disseminated to a broader audience. Furthermore, Participant 4 stated, "I also said negative experiences on my social

media show disappointment about my experience and, at the same time, represent my criticism of the café. I hope my review can help them improve." Participant 4 reason for e-WOM posting aligns with Abdullah et al. (2016), who stated that some young consumers posted visual e-WOM as evidence of their disappointment. Posting on social media as a criticism can also bring out a resolution to correct an undesirable state. It is more convenient to show critics on social media because it is easier and faster, and the company is more responsive on social media (Whiting, 2018).

On the other side, Participant 2 stated, "I often share my review on social media, plus if the café is Instagramable, I can take many pretty pictures there that I can post on social media along with the review; on the other side, I can help promote the café, right?". Abdullah et al. (2016) found that e-WOM posting is also influenced by the desire for self-enhancement, which is the need to show a good side of self and maintain self-esteem. As long as the picture is good enough to share on social media, it helps the desire for positive recognition from others, as well as seeking status and prestige on social media (Whiting, 2018). The motivation to create a favorable impression differs from altruism, and it is primarily driven by the e-WOM provider's desire to enhance their image among their followers. This pursuit often results in intangible benefits (Azer, 2022).

Still, all participants intend to help promote the café. This motive can be explained as the consumer giving the company in return for their good experiences when visiting the café (Whiting, 2018). Hence, all of them agree that posting their review on social media can help share awareness of the good places they visited. Moreover, they all feel good if they can help the café gain more consumers because of their reviews. It has become a strategy for the café to maintain an excellent consumer experience and bring a positive e-WOM to social media. The concept of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) plays a significant role in shaping the marketing process. To effectively leverage e-WOM, the company needs to comprehend the function of social media and the dynamics of e-WOM itself (Yuniarty, 2020). Hence, the TPB can help cafe building a right strategy on their consumer behavior.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media platforms, along with electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) from online reviews, play a significant role in influencing consumers' decisions to visit a café. Hence, people tend to look for information on social media about the café. However, the information on social media consists of marketing promotion from the Café or e-WOM and online reviews. This research found that many potential consumers believe and read to e-WOM. Since the review was according to real people who visited the café, which is more genuine and credible. Furthermore, in social media, e-WOM is two-way and can build conversations between many customers. In addition, this research found that posting reviews after visiting a café influenced by various reasons. First, it is a form of altruism that helps other people by sharing their experiences. Second, negative e-WOM is a form of criticism for the café and the café development. Last, e-WOM also builds self-enhancement, maintaining a good image of the e-

WOM giver. However, all the participants agree that e-WOM can help share awareness of the good places they like and promote the café.

Furthermore, the café needs to pay more attention to providing the best services to the customer since the customer experience will influence their e-WOM on social media. Also, the café needs to maintain a good e-WOM on social media by providing what consumers need and responding to critics for their development.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study limited to four province in Indonesia, which is East Java, Bali, South Sulawesi, and East Nusa Tenggara. The possibility of another customer response regarding e-WOM before and after visiting a café is still extensive. Otherwise, there are many theories that can be used in analyzing social media e-WOM rather than theory of planned behavior. Future research can still improve regarding the participants. Or else, regarding social media e-WOM the future research can used other method including quantitative or mix method.

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