

# The Role of e-WOM and Service Quality in Building Satisfaction-Based Customer Loyalty: A Study of Popular Bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh City

Muhammad Hasan  
STIES of Banda Aceh, Indonesia  
Corresponding Author: [hasanmuh5@gmail.com](mailto:hasanmuh5@gmail.com)

JBEEM  
February 2026

Received 13 January 2026  
Revised 3 February 2026  
Accepted 28 February 2026

## Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and service quality shape customer loyalty through the mediating role of customer satisfaction, with a specific focus on popular meatball (bakso) micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Banda Aceh City. The culinary sector in Aceh has shown remarkable resilience and growth; however, empirical studies examining the digital marketing dynamics of local culinary MSMEs remain limited. This study employs a quantitative design by collecting data from 152 respondents selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria that they had visited the selected MSMEs at least twice and had either read or provided digital reviews. Statistical analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.1.1.2 software. The findings show that e-WOM and service quality have a positive and significant effect on both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction is also proven to significantly mediate the relationship between e-WOM and customer loyalty, as well as the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. These findings provide practical implications for bakso MSME operators: consistently delivering service quality while building a positive digital discussion ecosystem constitutes two main pillars that drive customer satisfaction and, in turn, create long-term loyalty.

**Keyword** Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, e-WOM, Service Quality

## Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a strategic sector that serves as one of the main pillars of Indonesia's national economy. The role of MSMEs is reflected not only in their ability to stimulate production and economic distribution, but also in their capacity to absorb labor across various business sectors. Based on 2024 data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of the Republic of Indonesia, the number of MSMEs in Indonesia reached more than 64 million business units, contributing 61.07% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In addition, the MSME sector absorbs around 117 million workers, equivalent to more than 97% of the national workforce. These conditions demonstrate that MSMEs occupy a vital position in maintaining national economic stability and growth amid increasingly competitive business conditions.

Along with changes in consumption patterns and market behavior, the sustainability of MSMEs is greatly influenced by business actors' ability to build long-term relationships with consumers. Customer loyalty is an important factor that determines business success, particularly in the culinary sector, which is characterized by intense competition and relatively homogeneous products. In increasingly tight competition, MSME actors are required to create customer satisfaction through product quality, service quality, and positive consumption experiences so that customers continue to make repeat purchases.

Several bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh have developed strong images and reputations among the public, such as Bakso Idaman Barata in Kampung Baru Baiturrahman, Bakso Paknu

© 2026 Muhammad Hasan. Published by PT Cendekia Mandiri Nusantara. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). The use, distribution, and reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution, or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.



Lampineng in Ulee Kareng, Bakso Nanggroe in Banda Raya, Bakso Mas Doel in Lueng Bata, and Bakso Isaura Premium in the Peunayong area. High customer visits and numerous positive reviews on digital platforms indicate that bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh have substantial potential to create customer loyalty and maintain business existence amid increasingly competitive market conditions. Therefore, it is important for bakso MSME operators to understand the factors that influence customer loyalty so that their businesses can survive and develop sustainably. In the era of digital transformation, consumer behavior has undergone a fundamental shift. Purchasing decisions are no longer based solely on direct experience, but are strongly influenced by reviews and recommendations circulating on digital platforms. This phenomenon is known as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), namely a form of internet-based informal communication that enables consumers to share positive or negative experiences with a much wider audience than conventional word-of-mouth communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Recent studies show that positive online reviews can increase consumer trust, encourage repeat visits, and ultimately build sustainable loyalty (Haro-Sosa et al., 2024; Ali-Asaadi et al., 2025).

On the other hand, service quality remains a major determinant in shaping consumer perceptions and behavior. When customers receive service experiences that exceed their expectations, satisfaction develops organically and becomes a bridge toward loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Recent studies conducted in the restaurant industry across various countries consistently show that service quality is a crucial differentiating factor in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ali-Asaadi et al., 2025; Le et al., 2025).

Although a number of studies have examined the relationship among e-WOM, service quality, satisfaction, and customer loyalty, several gaps still need to be addressed. First, most studies focus on large-scale businesses or e-commerce platforms, while the context of local culinary MSMEs, particularly in Aceh, remains rarely explored in depth. Second, previous empirical findings are inconsistent regarding the significance of the influence of e-WOM on customer loyalty: some studies find a significant effect (Elsje et al., 2023; Haro-Sosa et al., 2024), while others report insignificant results (Putri et al., 2023). This inconsistency opens opportunities for further research, especially in the context of traditional product-based culinary MSMEs such as bakso.

This study is designed to fill these gaps by selecting popular bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh City as the object of investigation. The choice of bakso as the focus of this study is not without reason; bakso is a culinary product with a very broad market, crosses consumer segments, and has become part of the daily consumption habits of Acehnese society. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of digital marketing and consumer behavior studies. Practically, the findings can serve as strategic guidance for bakso MSME actors in designing customer-satisfaction-based marketing programs to create sustainable loyalty.

## Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### e-WOM (Electronic Word-of-Mouth)

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) was first comprehensively conceptualized by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) as any positive or negative statement made by actual, potential, or former customers about a product or company, disseminated through the internet and accessible to a broad audience. This definition was later expanded by Cheung and Thadani (2012), who

In a more contemporary context, [Ismagilova et al. \(2017\)](#) define e-WOM as a dynamic form of communication that is open to all internet users and includes positive and negative reviews from various consumer categories. The main advantage of e-WOM over traditional WOM lies in its ability to transcend geographic and temporal boundaries; a review posted on a digital platform can be accessed by millions of people worldwide within seconds. This unlimited dissemination capability makes e-WOM a more effective and far-reaching marketing instrument ([Ismagilova et al., 2017](#); [Cheung & Lee, 2012](#)). [Rahman, Elmas, and Amani \(2026\)](#) state that electronic word-of-mouth is a form of communication, whether in the form of positive or negative responses, conveyed by potential consumers, former customers, or active consumers regarding a product or company and subsequently disseminated through the internet to other individuals or companies.

Recent research by [Haro-Sosa et al. \(2024\)](#) in the restaurant context found that the motivation to consult e-WOM before deciding to visit a restaurant is strongly influenced by informational and social motives. Meanwhile, [Alzaydi's \(2024\)](#) study on online food delivery services confirms that the adoption of e-WOM reviews is one of the main antecedents of continued usage intention. This indicates that the digital ecosystem has transformed the way consumers evaluate their culinary options.

In this study, the e-WOM dimensions used refer to [Soinbala and Bessie \(2020\)](#), consisting of platform assistance, seeking advice, expressing positive feelings, and customer satisfaction. The operational indicators are based on [Ismagilova et al. \(2017\)](#), covering: (a) positive reviews circulated on digital platforms, (b) the activity of recommending products or services to others, (c) the behavior of reading online reviews before visiting, and (d) confidence in making purchasing decisions based on digital information.

### Service Quality

Service quality is a multidimensional construct that has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners for several decades. [Parasuraman et al. \(1988\)](#), in their seminal work, define service quality as the comparison between customer expectations and their perceptions of the actual service performance received. The SERVQUAL model developed by [Parasuraman et al. \(1988\)](#) identifies five main dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, which remain the dominant framework for measuring service quality. From the perspective of modern marketing management, [Kotler and Keller \(2016\)](#) define service quality as customers' assessment of the overall excellence or superiority of a product or service. This definition emphasizes its subjective and perceptual nature, in which quality is not merely about technical standards set by the company, but about how those standards are perceived and evaluated by customers. Superior service quality creates value for customers and becomes a source of competitive advantage that is difficult for competitors to imitate. [Ardhi, Firmansyah, and Adam \(2025\)](#) state that service quality is an important factor influencing consumer satisfaction.

Recent research by [Le et al. \(2025\)](#) in the food and beverage franchise industry strengthens the relevance of service quality as a determinant of customer satisfaction. Their findings show that an organizational culture oriented toward service excellence is significantly and positively correlated with perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, [Ali-Alsaadi et al. \(2025\)](#), in their study of the fast-food industry in the United Arab Emirates,

The dimensions and indicators of service quality operationalized in this study refer to [Indrasari \(2019\)](#), including: (1) tangibles, namely the appearance of physical facilities,

equipment, and environmental cleanliness of the bakso stall; (2) reliability, namely the ability to serve bakso products consistently and on time; (3) responsiveness, namely the alertness of owners or employees in responding to customer requests and complaints; (4) assurance, including product knowledge, courtesy, and the ability to build customer trust; and (5) empathy, namely sincere personal attention to each customer.

### Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a central construct in marketing science that has undergone conceptual evolution since the 1970s. [Oliver \(1980\)](#) describes satisfaction as a post-consumption evaluation reflecting whether the actual experience received by customers matches, exceeds, or falls below their prior expectations. When actual experience exceeds expectations, deep satisfaction is formed and has the potential to become long-term loyalty. [Kotler and Keller \(2016\)](#) define customer satisfaction as the feeling of pleasure or disappointment experienced by a person as a result of comparing perceived product or service performance with expectations. This formulation confirms that satisfaction is dynamic and relative to consumers' initial expectations, requiring business actors to continuously understand and even exceed customer expectation standards.

[Indrasari \(2019\)](#) clarifies that customer satisfaction can be achieved when customers perceive a match between the product or service received and their needs and desires. This condition not only encourages repeat visits but also motivates customers to voluntarily recommend the business to others, both through face-to-face communication and digital platforms. Recent research by [Alzaydi \(2024\)](#) in the context of online food delivery confirms that customer satisfaction is a crucial mediator between service quality and loyalty.

The customer satisfaction indicators used in this study refer to [Indrasari \(2019\)](#), namely: (1) conformity with expectations, namely the degree of alignment between the actual service and bakso product received and the customer's initial expectations; (2) revisit intention, namely the customer's willingness and desire to return; and (3) willingness to recommend, namely the spontaneous drive of customers to influence others to visit.

### Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a concept that goes far beyond repeat purchase behavior. [Oliver \(1999\)](#) defines loyalty as a deeply held commitment to repurchase or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts that have the potential to cause switching behavior. This definition emphasizes the psychological and emotional dimensions of loyalty beyond mere purchasing routines. In the strategic marketing management approach, [Kotler and Keller \(2016\)](#) describe loyal customers as the most valuable business assets. Loyal customers not only provide more stable and predictable revenue but also act as brand ambassadors who voluntarily recommend products or services to their social networks, creating a highly valuable multiplier effect, especially for MSMEs with limited marketing budgets.

[Srisusilawati et al. \(2023\)](#) emphasize that customer loyalty plays a deep role in reconstructing future product or service priorities, indicating that customer loyalty affects

The dimensions of customer loyalty used in this study refer to [Srisusilawati et al. \(2023\)](#), including: (1) repeat purchase, namely the intensity of customer repeat visits to bakso MSMEs; (2) referral, namely customers' active willingness to promote the business to others; (3) customer retention, reflecting the business's ability to retain customers from switching to

---

competitors; and (4) positive feedback, namely customers' tendency to provide constructive and supportive responses.

This research model was developed based on a synthesis of marketing theory and a comprehensive review of empirical literature. The conceptual framework places e-WOM (X1) and service quality (X2) as independent variables, customer loyalty (Y) as the dependent variable, and customer satisfaction (Z) as the mediating variable. The relationships among variables in this model are visualized through seven hypothesis paths formulated based on a solid theoretical foundation and relevant empirical evidence.

### **The Effect of e-WOM on Customer Loyalty**

e-WOM disseminated across various digital platforms, including Google Reviews, Instagram, TikTok, and GoFood/GrabFood, has great potential to shape the perceptions and decisions of potential consumers. When positive reviews about a bakso stall dominate the digital space, this not only attracts new customers but also strengthens the commitment of existing customers to keep visiting the stall. [Elsje et al. \(2023\)](#) found that brand trust and e-WOM simultaneously contribute significantly to Shopee customer loyalty in Manado. [Haro-Sosa et al. \(2024\)](#) also confirmed the relevance of e-WOM in encouraging consumers' restaurant visit decisions. Furthermore, a study on culinary MSMEs by [Nawastuti and Irmawati \(2023\)](#) showed a positive effect of e-WOM on customer loyalty.

H1: e-WOM has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

### **The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty**

Excellent service quality is a strong determinant of customer loyalty in the culinary sector. When servers are friendly, orders are prepared quickly, and hygiene standards are well maintained, customers tend to feel comfortable and motivated to return. [Ali-Alsaadi et al. \(2025\)](#), in their study of the fast-food industry, confirmed that service quality is a significant predictor of customer loyalty mediated by satisfaction. A study in Indonesia by [Soerjanto et al. \(2024\)](#) also confirms that improving restaurant service quality directly contributes to strengthening loyalty.

H2: Service quality has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

### **The Effect of e-WOM on Customer Satisfaction**

Informative and credible digital reviews can influence customer expectations before they visit. When the actual experience obtained matches or even exceeds expectations formed through e-WOM, high satisfaction is created. [Rizkyta et al. \(2024\)](#) found that e-WOM has a direct positive impact on Shopee customer satisfaction in Semarang. [Indriani et al. \(2025\)](#) also confirmed the positive relationship between e-WOM and Shopee Food customer satisfaction in Pekanbaru. International research by [Alzaydi \(2024\)](#) on online food delivery platforms in an emerging market also supports this relationship.

H3: e-WOM has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

### **The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is formed from the direct interaction between consumer expectations and perceptions of the service quality received. The five service quality dimensions in the SERVQUAL framework collectively shape customers' perceptions of the value they obtain from a consumption experience. [Le et al. \(2025\)](#) proved that service quality

is a direct predictor of customer satisfaction in the food and beverage franchise industry. Mashuri and Darianto (2025) found that service quality positively affects Grab customer satisfaction in Lamongan. Dewi et al. (2021), in their study of the service industry in Indonesia, revealed similar findings.

H4: Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

### The Effect of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

The positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty has become one of the most consistent propositions in marketing literature. Truly satisfied customers not only tend to return but also develop into brand advocates who voluntarily promote the business to their social networks. Alzaydi (2024) confirmed that customer satisfaction plays a crucial mediating role between service quality and loyalty in the context of online food delivery. Ali-Alsaadi et al. (2025) also found that satisfaction built from service quality and relational benefits significantly strengthens restaurant customer loyalty.

H5: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

### The Effect of e-WOM on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Customer Satisfaction

The mechanism through which e-WOM influences customer loyalty is not always direct; customer satisfaction acts as a transmission mechanism that converts the impact of e-WOM into long-term commitment. When positive reviews spread on the internet build expectations that are later fulfilled by actual experiences, satisfaction is created and loyalty follows. Rizkyta et al. (2024) confirmed that satisfaction functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between e-WOM and Shopee consumer loyalty. Nawastuti and Irmawati (2023) also found a similar mediation pattern among TikTok Shop customers.

H6: e-WOM has a positive effect on customer loyalty mediated by customer satisfaction.

### The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Customer Satisfaction

The indirect path from service quality to loyalty through customer satisfaction represents an important psychological mechanism. Satisfying service first creates a positive emotional experience, and that positive emotion then encourages loyal behavior. Ali-Alsaadi et al. (2025) proved this mediation mechanism in the context of fast-food restaurants in the UAE. Setianingsih and Hastuti (2024) found that customer satisfaction mediates the effect of service quality on customer loyalty at a motorcycle dealer in Boyolali. Soerjanto et al. (2024) confirmed the same pattern in restaurants in Indonesia.

H7: Service quality has a positive effect on customer loyalty mediated by customer satisfaction.

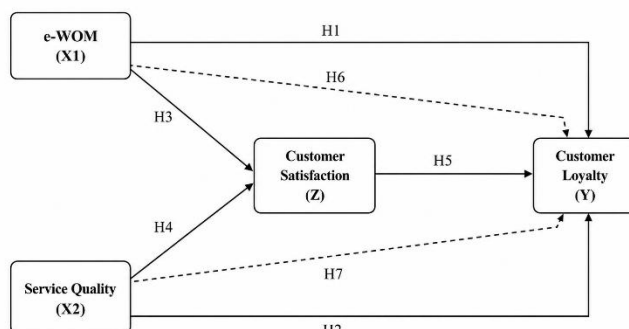


Figure 1. Research Framework

**Type of Research and Population Overview**

This study uses a quantitative approach oriented toward hypothesis testing and drawing conclusions based on statistical analysis of systematically collected numerical data (Sugiyono, 2021; Candra Susanto et al., 2024). The quantitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to measure the strength and direction of relationships among variables objectively through standardized measurement instruments. The target population of this study comprises all active customers of popular bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh City who fall into the productive adult age category, namely 18 to 59 years (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025), whose exact number is unknown.

**Sampling Technique**

Because the total population is not precisely defined, the sample size in this study refers to the formula by Hair et al. (2022), which recommends multiplying the number of indicators by 5 to 10. With a total of 19 indicators used across all research constructs, the sample calculation produced  $19 \times 8 = 152$  respondents. This number is considered representative and adequate for valid PLS-SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2022).

The sampling technique applied was purposive sampling, namely the deliberate selection of samples based on predetermined criteria (Sugiyono, 2021). The inclusion criteria established in this study were: (1) respondents were customers of popular bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh City who had visited at least twice; and (2) respondents had either provided reviews or read product reviews on digital platforms such as Google Reviews, GoFood, GrabFood, or social media.

**Data Collection Technique and Data Sources**

Primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire developed based on the operational indicators of each research variable. The questionnaire was distributed directly to respondents encountered at the sample bakso MSME locations and through digital media. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' level of agreement with each statement, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Secondary data were collected from various sources, including publications from Statistics Indonesia of Aceh, reports from the Banda Aceh Office of Cooperatives and SMEs, and literature reviews from relevant national and international scholarly journals.

**Data Analysis Technique**

Data analysis in this study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS version 4.1.1.2. PLS-SEM was selected based on several strong methodological considerations: first, this approach is highly suitable for exploratory and prediction-oriented research; second, PLS-SEM does not require strict normal distribution assumptions; and third, this method can handle complex research models with mediating variables simultaneously and efficiently (Hair et al., 2022). Model evaluation in PLS-SEM consists of two main stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model).

At the outer model evaluation stage, convergent validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values required to be  $> 0.50$  and loading factor values  $> 0.70$ , while

discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Construct reliability was verified using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability with a threshold of > 0.70. The inner model evaluation included testing R-square, Q-square, and path coefficients for each hypothesis. Hypothesis significance was determined based on T-statistics > 1.96 and P-values < 0.05 at a 95% confidence level (Hair et al., 2022).

## Results

### Respondent Characteristics

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristics**

Category	Description	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	67	44.1%
	Female	85	55.9%
Age	18-29 years	103	67.8%
	30-39 years	24	15.8%
	40-49 years	17	11.2%
	50-59 years	8	5.2%
Visit Frequency	Twice	22	14.5%
	More than twice	130	85.5%

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Based on Table 1, the respondent profile in this study was dominated by women at 55.9% and men at 44.1%. In terms of age, the young productive age group between 18 and 29 years dominated with a proportion of 67.8%, indicating that bakso consumers in Banda Aceh are dominated by a generation familiar with digital technology and active in sharing online reviews. In terms of visit frequency, most respondents (85.5%) had visited more than twice, indicating that the research sample had sufficient consumption experience to assess service quality and provide meaningful feedback.

### Validity Test Results

**Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Test Results**

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Description
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.808	Valid
Service Quality (X2)	0.751	Valid
Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.572	Valid
e-WOM (X1)	0.579	Valid

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Based on Table 2, all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for the four research variables are above the required threshold of > 0.50, indicating that convergent validity has been fully met. The high AVE values for customer satisfaction (0.808) and service quality (0.751) indicate that the indicators used are able to explain the variance of the constructs very well.

**Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Test Results**

Variable	Customer Satisfaction	Service Quality	Customer Loyalty	e-WOM	Description
Customer Satisfaction	0.899				Valid
Service Quality	0.667	0.867			Valid
Customer Loyalty	0.706	0.658	0.756		Valid
e-WOM	0.537	0.540	0.573	0.761	Valid

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The discriminant validity test results using the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 3 show that the square root of AVE on the diagonal of each construct is greater than the correlations between constructs in the same column and row. This condition proves that all research variables meet good discriminant validity standards, meaning that each construct truly measures a distinct phenomenon and does not overlap excessively with others (Astuti & Wardani, 2024).

### Reliability Test Results

**Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Description
Customer Satisfaction	0.954	0.956	0.963	Reliable
Service Quality	0.964	0.966	0.969	Reliable
Customer Loyalty	0.891	0.905	0.914	Reliable
e-WOM	0.893	0.905	0.916	Reliable

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Table 4 shows that all research variables obtained Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values (both rho\_a and rho\_c) far above the minimum threshold of > 0.70. These high reliability values indicate that the measurement instruments used in this study have very good internal consistency and can be relied upon to produce stable data that can be replicated in different measurements.

### Inner Model and Hypothesis Test Results

**Table 5. Multicollinearity Test - Inner VIF**

Variable	Customer Satisfaction	Customer Loyalty	Description
Customer Satisfaction		1.943	No multicollinearity
Service Quality	1.405	1.955	No multicollinearity
e-WOM	1.405	1.528	No multicollinearity

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

All inner VIF values in Table 5 are far below the critical limit of 5.0, proving that there is no multicollinearity problem among predictor variables in the structural model. This condition is important to ensure that the resulting path coefficients are valid estimates and are not distorted by excessive correlations among variables.

**Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results**

Path Coefficient	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Description
e-WOM -> Customer Satisfaction	0.251	2.891	0.004	Significant
e-WOM -> Customer Loyalty	0.209	2.214	0.027	Significant
Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty	0.418	3.612	0.000	Significant
Service Quality -> Customer Satisfaction	0.534	6.105	0.000	Significant
Service Quality -> Customer Loyalty	0.270	2.289	0.023	Significant
Service Quality -> Satisfaction -> Loyalty (Indirect)	0.223	2.998	0.003	Significant
e-WOM -> Satisfaction -> Loyalty (Indirect)	0.105	2.038	0.042	Significant

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

**Table 7. R-square Test Results**

Endogenous Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Customer Satisfaction	0.489	0.481
Customer Loyalty	0.587	0.577

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The R-square value for customer satisfaction of 0.489 indicates that 48.9% of the variation in customer satisfaction among bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh can be jointly explained by e-WOM and service quality. Meanwhile, the R-square value for customer loyalty of 0.587 shows that the research model can explain 58.7% of the variation in customer loyalty through the combination of e-WOM, service quality, and customer satisfaction as a mediator. R-square values in the moderate to substantial range indicate that the research model has adequate predictive power (Hair et al., 2022).

## Discussion

### The Effect of e-WOM on Customer Loyalty

The test of the first hypothesis (H1) proves that e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty among bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh (path coefficient = 0.209; T-statistic = 2.214; P-value = 0.027). This finding means that the more positive, informative, and widespread digital reviews about the relevant bakso MSMEs are, the greater the tendency of customers to remain loyal and not switch to competitors. In the context of culinary MSMEs in Banda Aceh, which have an active online review ecosystem across platforms such as Google Maps and digital food ordering platforms, this finding has highly relevant and strategic implications.

This finding is in line with [Elsje et al. \(2023\)](#), who found the significant role of e-WOM and brand trust in shaping Shopee customer loyalty in Manado. Similarly, [Haro-Sosa et al. \(2024\)](#), in their study of millennial restaurants in Ecuador, proved that e-WOM consultation motivation positively encourages restaurant visit decisions. Research by Nawastuti and

### The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty

The second hypothesis (H2) is accepted, proving that service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty among bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh (path coefficient = 0.270; T-statistic = 2.289; P-value = 0.023). This result confirms that when bakso stall owners and employees are able to provide friendly, responsive, reliable service and assurance of satisfaction with sincere empathy, customers perceive value beyond simply obtaining a bowl of bakso. This added value then settles into preference and loyalty that is difficult to shake, even when competitors make offers.

The consistency of this finding with [Ali-Asaadi et al. \(2025\)](#) in the UAE fast-food industry, which found service quality to be a strong predictor of customer loyalty mediated by satisfaction, as well as [Soerjanto et al. \(2024\)](#) in Indonesian restaurants, strengthens the universality of the role of service quality in building loyalty across industry and geographic contexts. The practical implication is clear: investment in service skills training and the development of service standard operating procedures is a strategic step that will yield returns in the form of a stable loyal customer base.

### The Effect of e-WOM on Customer Satisfaction

The third hypothesis test (H3) confirms that e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction (path coefficient = 0.251; T-statistic = 2.891; P-value = 0.004). The mechanism underlying this relationship is expectation-based: positive reviews read before visiting form realistic yet encouraging expectations, and when the actual experience matches or exceeds those expectations, satisfaction is naturally formed. Conversely, accurate and honest e-WOM also helps customers calibrate their expectations so they do not become excessive, thereby reducing the risk of post-visit dissatisfaction.

This finding is consistent with [Rizkyta et al. \(2024\)](#), who confirmed the positive impact of e-WOM on Shopee consumer satisfaction in Semarang, and [Indriani et al. \(2025\)](#), who found a similar positive relationship among Shopee Food consumers in Pekanbaru. In the international context, [Alzaydi \(2024\)](#) proved that e-WOM review adoption is a strong antecedent of customer satisfaction on online food delivery platforms in emerging markets. Based on these findings, bakso MSME actors need to actively encourage satisfied customers to post positive reviews across digital platforms, as this will create a beneficial positive cycle.

### The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

The fourth hypothesis test (H4) shows that service quality has the strongest effect on customer satisfaction compared with other variables in this model (path coefficient = 0.534; T-statistic = 6.105; P-value = 0.000). The magnitude of this path coefficient reflects the central role of service interaction in shaping customer satisfaction at bakso stalls. Customers who are welcomed with a smile, served quickly and accurately, assured of product halalness and cleanliness, and treated with care will experience holistic culinary satisfaction, not merely the consumption of food.

This finding is strengthened by various recent studies, including [Le et al. \(2025\)](#), who proved a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in food and beverage franchises, and [Mashuri and Darianto \(2025\)](#), who confirmed the same in Grab services in Indonesia. [Ali-Asaadi et al. \(2025\)](#) in the UAE fast-food restaurant sector also highlighted that service quality combined with relational benefits produces much higher levels

---

of customer satisfaction. The consistency of these findings across contexts confirms that service quality is a non-negotiable variable in the marketing strategy of culinary MSMEs.

### **The Effect of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty**

The fifth hypothesis (H5) is supported with highly significant results (path coefficient = 0.418; T-statistic = 3.612; P-value = 0.000). This finding confirms the classic proposition in marketing science that satisfaction is the strongest predictor of customer loyalty. In the context of bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh, customers who experience deep satisfaction from the combination of authentic taste, a comfortable stall atmosphere, and friendly service will naturally form an emotional bond with the bakso stall. This emotional bond is then manifested in loyal behavior: returning regularly, recommending the stall to family and friends, and providing positive support on digital platforms.

This finding is consistent with [Alzaydi \(2024\)](#), who confirmed the crucial mediating role of customer satisfaction in shaping loyalty on food delivery platforms in emerging markets. [Ali-Asaadi et al. \(2025\)](#) also found that satisfaction built from service quality significantly drives loyalty in the fast-food restaurant industry. Recent research by [Anjani \(2024\)](#) in Indonesia further strengthens this finding in the cafe industry context.

### **The Effect of e-WOM on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Customer Satisfaction**

The sixth hypothesis test (H6) proves that e-WOM has a positive and significant indirect effect on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction as a mediator (indirect path coefficient = 0.105; T-statistic = 2.038; P-value = 0.042). This mediation finding has important theoretical implications: the effect of e-WOM on loyalty is not entirely direct, but is largely mediated by the process of forming and confirming satisfaction. In other words, positive e-WOM builds expectations which, when confirmed by real experience, produce satisfaction that then converts into loyalty.

This mediation pattern is consistent with [Rizkyta et al. \(2024\)](#), who found satisfaction to be a partial mediator in the relationship between e-WOM and Shopee consumer loyalty, as well as [Nawastuti and Irmawati \(2023\)](#), who confirmed a similar mechanism among TikTok Shop customers. From a managerial perspective, this finding suggests that e-WOM strategies should be designed as an integral part of a comprehensive customer satisfaction management strategy, rather than as a stand-alone marketing campaign.

### **The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Customer Satisfaction**

The seventh hypothesis (H7) is also significantly supported, with an indirect path coefficient of 0.223, T-statistic of 2.998, and P-value of 0.003. This mediation coefficient is even greater than the direct coefficient of service quality on loyalty, indicating that customer satisfaction is a highly important transmission mechanism in the path from service quality to loyalty. In other words, the greatest impact of service quality on loyalty occurs through the indirect path that first passes through the formation of satisfaction.

This finding is consistent with [Ali-Asaadi et al. \(2025\)](#), who found satisfaction to be a significant mediator between service quality and loyalty in fast-food restaurants in the UAE, and [Setianingsih and Hastuti \(2024\)](#), who confirmed the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and loyalty in a motorcycle dealer in Indonesia. [Soerjanto et al. \(2024\)](#) also proved the same mediation mechanism in Indonesian restaurants. Practically,

---

this finding implies that bakso MSME actors need to view customer satisfaction not merely as an end goal, but as a stepping stone that connects service quality with long-term loyalty.

## Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive PLS-SEM analysis, this study successfully proves all seven proposed hypotheses. e-WOM is proven to have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty (H1) and customer satisfaction (H3). Service quality is proven to have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty (H2) and customer satisfaction (H4). Customer satisfaction is proven to have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty (H5). In addition, customer satisfaction also significantly mediates the relationship between e-WOM and customer loyalty (H6), as well as the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty (H7). Service quality is shown to be the variable with the strongest influence in the model, particularly on customer satisfaction, indicating that direct service experience remains the most determinant factor in shaping positive customer attitudes toward bakso MSMEs in Banda Aceh.

Practical implications for bakso MSME actors in Banda Aceh include three main strategic recommendations. First, business actors need to consistently improve service quality standards across all SERVQUAL dimensions, from improving physical facilities and enhancing product service reliability to developing employee empathy through intensive training. Second, business actors need to proactively build a positive e-WOM ecosystem by encouraging satisfied customers to leave reviews on Google Maps, GoFood, GrabFood, and social media, and by responding to customer reviews professionally and promptly. Third, MSMEs need to implement a continuous customer satisfaction monitoring system, such as short post-visit surveys or routine monitoring of digital reviews, to identify areas for improvement before dissatisfaction develops into a loyalty risk.

## References

- Ali-Alsoadi, A. A., Cabeza-Ramírez, L. J., Santos-Roldán, L., & González-Mohino, M. (2025). Understanding customer loyalty in fast-food restaurants: Exploring the moderating effect of relational benefits in the United Arab Emirates. *SAGE Open*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251339805>
- Alzaydi, Z. (2024). Investigating the factors influencing customer loyalty and the mediating effect of customer satisfaction in online food delivery services: Empirical evidence from an emerging market. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2431188>
- Anjani, D. (2024). Pengaruh Suasana Kafe, Daya Tarik Produk, dan Gaya Hidup terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan dengan Kepuasan Konsumen sebagai Variabel Intervening (Studi pada Konsumen CW Coffee & Eatery Kal-Bar). *JIMPS*, 9(4), 665-681. <https://doi.org/10.24815/jimps.v9i4.32948>
- Arduyan, E., Kurniawan, D., Istiatin, I., & Luhgiatno, L. (2021). Does customers' attitude toward negative eWOM affect their panic buying activity in purchasing products? *Cogent Business and Management*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1952827>
- Ardhi, M., Firmansyah, R. M., & Adam, M. A. (2025). Pengaruh Digital Marketing, Kualitas Pelayanan, dan Lokasi terhadap Kepuasan Konsumen pada Homestay 105. *EBIZER: Jurnal Ekonomi, Manajemen, Akuntansi, dan Bisnis*, 1(1), 12-23.

- Astuti, M. D., & Wardani, M. K. (2024). Pengaruh Kemudahan Penggunaan Paylater Terhadap Perilaku Konsumtif dengan Lifestyle sebagai Pemoderasi. *MASTER: Jurnal Manajemen Strategik Kewirausahaan*, 4(2), 147-154.
- Candra Susanto, P., Ulfah Arini, D., Yuntina, L., Panatap Soehaditama, J., & Nuraeni, N. (2024). Konsep Penelitian Kuantitatif: Populasi, Sampel, dan Analisis Data. *Jurnal Ilmu Multidisiplin*, 3(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.38035/jim.v3i1.504>
- Cheung, C. M. K., & Lee, M. K. O. (2012). What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms. *Decision Support Systems*, 53(1), 218-225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2012.01.015>
- Cheung, C. M. K., & Thadani, D. R. (2012). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision Support Systems*, 54(1), 461-470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2012.06.008>
- Dewi, Hajadi, F., Handranata, Y. W., & Herlina, M. G. (2021). The effect of service quality and customer satisfaction toward customer loyalty in service industry. *Uncertain Supply Chain Management*, 9(3), 631-636. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.uscm.2021.5.007>
- Dharma, I. M. S. Y., & Aksari, N. M. A. (2023). Peran Kepuasan Pelanggan Memediasi Pengaruh Kualitas Pelayanan Terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan. *E-Jurnal Manajemen*, 12(12), 1265-1286. <https://doi.org/10.24843/EJMUNUD.2023.v12.i12.p01>
- Dinas Koperasi dan UKM Kota Banda Aceh. (2023). *Data UMKM Kuliner Kota Banda Aceh 2023*. Banda Aceh: Dinas Koperasi dan UKM.
- Elsje, V., Tulung, J. E., & Tielung, M. V. (2023). The roles of brand trust and e-WOM on Shopee's customer loyalty in Manado. *Jurnal EMBA*, 11(1), 1295-1307.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2022). *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)* (3rd ed.). Sage Publishing.
- Haro-Sosa, G., Moliner-Velázquez, B., Gil-Saura, I., & Fuentes-Blasco, M. (2024). Influence of electronic word-of-mouth on restaurant choice decisions: Does it depend on gender in the millennial generation? *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 19(1), 615-632. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer19010033>
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), 38-52. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.10073>
- Indrasari, M. (2019). *Pemasaran & Kepuasan Pelanggan* (1st ed.). Unitomo Press.
- Indriani, Y., Hardilawati, W. L., & Abunawas. (2025). Pengaruh e-WOM, E-Service Quality dan Kepercayaan Terhadap Kepuasan Konsumen Shopee Food di Kota Pekanbaru. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Merdeka EMBA*, 4(1), 1165-1178.
- Ismagilova, E., Dwivedi, Y. K., Slade, E., & Williams, M. D. (2017). *Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) in the Marketing Context*. SpringerBriefs in Business.
- KemenKesRI. (2025). *Kelompok Usia Dewasa*. Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia. <https://ayosehat.kemkes.go.id/kategori-usia/dewasa>
- Kementerian Koperasi dan UKM RI. (2023). *Laporan Kinerja KUMKM 2023*. Jakarta: Kemenkop UKM.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Le, D. C. T., Nguyen, L. T., Huynh, G. L., Fathorrahman, Herget, J., & Karnawati, T. A. (2025). Relationship between corporate culture, service quality, and customer satisfaction of

- food and beverage franchise enterprises. *F1000Research*, 14, 155. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.154431.1>
- Mashuri, & Darianto. (2025). Pengaruh Kualitas Layanan Dan Kepuasan Konsumen Terhadap Loyalitas Konsumen Grab (Studi Kasus Pada Kota Lamongan). *Economics and Digital Business Review*, 6(1), 592-603.
- Mutiara, R., & Sapruwan, M. (2024). Pengaruh Motivasi Memasuki Dunia Kerja Terhadap Kesiapan Kerja dengan Efikasi Diri sebagai Intervening. *MASTER: Jurnal Manajemen Strategik Kewirausahaan*, 4(2), 215-223.
- Nawastuti, N., & Irmawati. (2023). Pengaruh Influencer dan e-WOM terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan Melalui Kepuasan Pelanggan sebagai Variabel Mediasi Pada Pelanggan TikTok Shop. *Jurnal Informatika Ekonomi Bisnis*, 5, 1415-1421. <https://doi.org/10.37034/infeb.v5i4.735>
- Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 17(4), 460-469.
- Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 63(4\_suppl1), 33-44.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-40.
- Putri, I. K., Srijani, N., & Wirawan, Y. R. (2023). Pengaruh Brand Image Dan e-WOM Terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan Pada Penggunaan Aplikasi Tiktok Shop Mahasiswa. *Gulawentah: Jurnal Studi Sosial*, 8(1), 110-117. <https://doi.org/10.25273/gulawentah.v8i1.17376>
- Rahayu, S., & Syafe'i, D. (2022). Pengaruh Kualitas Pelayanan, Harga Dan Promosi Terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan Melalui Kepuasan Pelanggan. *JESYA (Jurnal Ekonomi & Syariah)*, 5(2), 2192-2207.
- Rahman, M. W. T., Elmas, M. S. H., & Amani, T. (2026). Pengaruh Promosi Media Sosial, E-Wom, dan Citra Merek terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Ulang di Kue Lapis Tugu Malang Cabang Probolinggo. *EBIZER: Jurnal Ekonomi, Manajemen, Akuntansi, dan Bisnis*, 2(1), 1-14.
- Rizkyta, A., Widayanto, & Farida, N. (2024). Pengaruh e-WOM dan Kualitas Pelayanan Terhadap Loyalitas Konsumen Melalui Kepuasan Sebagai Variabel Intervening (Studi Pada Konsumen Shopee Kota Semarang). *Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi Bisnis*, 13(1), 58-67. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jiab.2024.40043>
- Setianingsih, W., & Hastuti, I. (2024). Pengaruh Fasilitas Dan Kualitas Pelayanan Terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan Melalui Kepuasan Pelanggan Sebagai Variabel Intervening (Studi Kasus Pada Dealer Marcel Motor Andong Boyolali). *Jurnal Bisnis Manajemen Dan Akuntansi (BISMAK)*, 4(1), 11-22. <https://doi.org/10.47701/bismak.v4i1.2943>
- Sholikhah, A. F., & Hadita. (2023). Pengaruh Kualitas Layanan, Kualitas Produk Dan Harga Terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan Melalui Kepuasan Pelanggan Mie Gacoan Di Bekasi Timur. *Jurnal Economia*, 2(2), 692-708.
- Soinbala, R., & Bessie, J. (2020). Pengaruh Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) melalui Media Sosial Instagram terhadap Keputusan Pembelian. *GLORY: Jurnal Ekonomi & Ilmu Sosial*, 1(1), 65-83.
- Soerjanto, S., Priyanto, P., & Rahayu, N. (2024). Meningkatkan Loyalitas Pelanggan Restoran Melalui Kualitas Layanan Dengan Kepuasan Pelanggan Sebagai Variabel Mediasi. *Jurnal Kepariwisata*, 23(1), 67-77.

- 
- Srisusilawati, P., Burhanudin, J., Trenggana, A. F. M., et al. (2023). *Loyalitas Pelanggan*. CV. Widina Bhakti Persada.
- Sugiyono. (2021). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan*. Alfabeta.
- Supriyanto, A., Wiyono, B. B., & Burhanuddin, B. (2021). Effects of service quality and customer satisfaction on loyalty of bank customers. *Cogent Business and Management*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1937847>

Journal of  
Business  
Evolution and  
Economic  
Management

JBEEM  
February 2026

---

Vol. 1 No. 1  
E-ISSN:  
DOI: