



Service Quality and Emotional Experience as Key Drivers of E-Wom in the Hospitality Sector

Muhammad Zain Maajid¹, Mahmud Mahmud^{2*}, Tubagus Achmad Darodjat³

¹Postgraduate student, Master of Management Study Program,
Universitas Semarang, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

²Associate Professor, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Dian Nuswantoro,
Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

³Associate Professor, International College (IC, RMUTK), Rajamangala University of
Technology Krungthep, Bangkok, Thailand

E-mail : mzainmaajid@gmail.com, mahmud@dsn.dinus.ac.id, bagus2m@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: mahmud@dsn.dinus.ac.id*

Abstract : *This study aims to examine the effect of service quality and positive emotional experience on customer satisfaction and positive eWOM at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention. Service quality and positive emotional experience are considered important factors that can increase customer satisfaction and influence the behavior of sharing positive experiences through digital platforms. The research method used is a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to 181 respondents who had stayed at the hotel. The results showed that service quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction and positive eWOM. Positive emotional experience also has a significant effect on customer satisfaction, but does not have a direct effect on positive eWOM. In addition, customer satisfaction is proven to function as a mediator connecting service quality and positive eWOM. These findings underline the importance of improving service quality and attention to customer emotional experiences to encourage them to share positive experiences online. The implications of this study suggest that hotel managers need to prioritize service quality and create pleasant emotional experiences to increase customer satisfaction and utilize positive eWOM as an effective promotional tool. This research contributes to theory development in hospitality, by providing a deeper understanding of the role of service quality and emotional experiences in creating customer satisfaction and positive experience sharing behavior .*

Keywords: e-WOM, Positive Emotional, Satisfaction, Service Quality.

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has undergone significant transformation since the advent of digital technology, which enabled two-way interaction between hotels and consumers. One of the most striking changes is the emergence of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), which is now a major factor in the consumer decision-making process. As a form of informal communication delivered through digital platforms, eWOM, especially positive ones, influence consumers' decisions to choose a product or service, in this case, a hotel (Cantallops et al., 2018). Previously, traditional marketing communications relied on a one-way channel from the company to the consumer, but with the advent of Web 2.0, information is now more easily exchanged between customers and companies, accelerating the process of information dissemination and expanding the reach of messages. In the hospitality industry, positive eWOM has a particularly strong influence on customer purchasing decisions, with customers more likely to trust reviews and

recommendations from fellow customers than advertising delivered by the company (Chen & Law, 2016).

According to the latest report from Wen et al., (2020), more than 70% of consumers look for online reviews before making a decision to stay at a hotel. This data shows how important eWOM is in shaping perceptions and purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, service quality and positive emotional experiences at hotels play a key role in encouraging customers to share their experiences positively. High service quality and positive emotional experiences received by customers directly contribute to customer satisfaction levels, which in turn strengthen positive eWOM.

Previous studies have shown that positive eWOM has a significant impact on consumers' attitudes and booking intentions (Gavilan et al., 2018; Viglia et al., 2016). Today's consumers tend to seek online reviews and recommendations to make their choices, and often consider information obtained from fellow consumers to be more credible than conventional advertising (Cho et al., 2023). This makes positive eWOM one of the pillars in hotel marketing, because online reviews can influence consumers' perceptions of service quality and ultimately increase hotel occupancy rates.

However, although many studies have explored the influence of eWOM on purchasing decisions, research on the factors that influence the formation of positive eWOM in the hospitality sector is still limited. Service quality and positive emotional experiences are often considered as two factors that can influence customer satisfaction, which in turn has the potential to increase positive eWOM (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between service quality and eWOM, and positive emotional experiences experienced by customers during their stay at a hotel can strengthen their desire to share positive experiences through digital platforms (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2020).

Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention was chosen as the object of this research because this hotel faces significant challenges in the increasingly tight hotel competition in Semarang City, where many new hotels are emerging. In this context, this hotel must have an effective strategy to attract customers and increase room occupancy rates. Despite its advantages, such as strategic location and complete facilities, this hotel still faces challenges in terms of service, where some customers complain about room cleanliness, damaged facilities, and slow service. These issues certainly affect the level of customer satisfaction and the potential for positive eWOM.

The problem faced by Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention is how to improve customer service and satisfaction so that it can have an impact on Positive E-WOM, so the formulation of the problem in this study is how to build a useful model to improve positive e-WOM at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention. This study aims to identify and measure the influence of service quality and positive emotional experience on positive eWOM at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. It is hoped that this study can provide deeper insight into how hotels can improve service quality and positive emotional experience to encourage positive eWOM, and how customer satisfaction can strengthen this influence. This study also attempts to answer the existing research gap regarding antecedent variables that influence customer intentions to share their experiences online, as well as their contribution to a more effective hotel marketing strategy. In this study there are 3 (three) research questions, namely: (1) How does service quality affect positive eWOM at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention?, (2) What are the main factors that influence the formation of positive eWOM in the context of hospitality? (3) How can positive emotional experiences influence positive eWOM at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention?

By identifying the key factors influencing positive eWOM in the hotel context, this study will make an important contribution to the development of eWOM theory and service marketing. This study also provides practical suggestions for hotel managers to enhance their competitiveness through improving service quality and better customer emotional experiences.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

Service quality refers to the extent to which the service provided by a company meets or exceeds customer expectations. Service quality is one of the important factors in creating customer satisfaction. Good service quality includes various dimensions, such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible (Parasuraman., 2014). Parasuraman et al., (2018) also stated that high service quality will improve customer perceptions of a company and create satisfaction, which will encourage loyalty and positive experience sharing behavior, such as eWOM. Research by Serra-Cantallos, A. et al., (2018) supports this by showing that good service quality in hotels is directly related to higher levels of customer satisfaction, which ultimately strengthens positive recommendations and reviews online . The service quality indicators used in this study

based on Serra-Cantalops, A. et al., (2020) are: Friendly and responsive staff service to customers, Guaranteed food quality and cleanliness, Quality and suitable facilities for use

Positive Emotional Experience

Positive emotional experiences occur when customers feel pleasant emotions during interactions with a company. Serra-Cantalops et al., (2018) stated that positive emotional experiences are experiences that trigger feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure. The indicators used to measure positive emotional experiences are: Good food quality and taste, Special service to each guest, Comfortable and memorable impressions during the stay, Making the customer's mood better, Relaxed impressions during the stay (staycation).

Positive eWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth)

Positive eWOM refers to reviews and recommendations given by customers online regarding their experiences with a product or service. Serra-Cantalops, A. et al., (2020) identified the following indicators of positive eWOM: Enjoying positive comments on Instagram, Writing positive reviews on Instagram and Google Reviews, Uploading photos or videos with positive content.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of their experience with a product or service after comparing expectations with reality. Zeithaml. et al., (2018) explained that satisfaction occurs when the experience exceeds or meets customer expectations. Indicators of customer satisfaction according to Serra-Cantalops, A. et al., (2020) include: Satisfaction with hotel conditions, Satisfaction with available facilities, Accommodation meets customer expectations, Overall satisfaction during stay.

Relationship Between Variables

The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

Previous studies have shown that good service quality is directly related to customer satisfaction. Service quality that meets customer expectations creates a positive evaluation of their experience, which ultimately increases satisfaction. Al-Hawari & Ward, (2016) stated that customer expectations of service quality will shape their perception of satisfaction, which if met will lead to increased loyalty and recommendations. Along with the rapid growth of digital technology, service quality is increasingly becoming one of the main drivers for customers to share their experiences, especially through digital platforms that support positive eWOM. Based on the results of Aulia et al., (2023) research, optimal service quality can improve customer perceptions of their stay experience, resulting in

higher levels of satisfaction and increasing their tendency to share positive reviews. Therefore, the first hypothesis proposed is:

H1 : Service quality has a direct influence on customer satisfaction.

The Influence of Service Quality on Positive eWOM

High service quality will encourage customers to share their positive experiences through eWOM. Park & Lee, (2023) found that good service quality, including food quality, facilities, and service, greatly influences customers' tendency to share their positive experiences. Cheung & Lee, (2012) also showed that customers who are satisfied with service quality are more likely to share their experiences through digital platforms, such as review sites and social media, as a form of recommendation to others. Positive e-WOM can have a very strong impact in the hospitality industry, because reviews and recommendations from fellow customers are trusted higher than advertising or promotions from the hotel itself (Gavilan et al., 2018). Therefore, good service quality encourages customers to write positive reviews and provide recommendations that can improve the hotel's image. This study supports the following second hypothesis:

H2 : Service quality has a positive effect on eWOM.

The Influence of Customer Satisfaction on Positive eWOM

Research shows that customer satisfaction is directly related to their intention to share positive experiences through eWOM. Lee & Yoo, (2021) found that satisfied customers are more likely to recommend a hotel to their friends and family, as well as share their positive experiences on social media and review sites. Hosany et al., (2017) also stated that customer satisfaction is a key driver in shaping positive experience sharing behavior on digital platforms. Satisfied customers feel compelled to provide positive feedback as a form of recognition for the good service they received. In contrast, dissatisfied customers tend to avoid sharing their experiences or write negative reviews . Based on this, the third hypothesis proposed is:

H3 : Customer satisfaction influences positive eWOM.

The Influence of Positive Emotional Experience on Customer Satisfaction

Positive emotional experiences refer to the feelings of pleasure, comfort, and satisfaction experienced by customers during interactions with a company, involving various emotional aspects of their experiences (Cantallos et al., 2018). Serra-Cantallos, A. et al., (2018) showed that positive emotional experiences can increase customer satisfaction, because satisfying experiences can increase positive feelings related to customer loyalty. Emotional experiences that exceed expectations contribute greatly to

overall satisfaction. These emotional experiences include feelings of happiness or honor when served well, as well as small surprises that leave a deeper impression on customers (Kim et al., 2023). According to Serra-Cantalops et al., (2020), positive emotional experiences are also directly related to increased customer satisfaction, because pleasant emotions tend to strengthen affective relationships with the company, making customers feel appreciated and trying to share their experiences. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis proposed is:

H4 : Positive emotional experiences have an influence on customer satisfaction.

The Influence of Positive Emotional Experience on Positive eWOM

Cantalops et al., (2018) argued that positive emotional experiences motivate customers to share their experiences online. Choi & Kim, (2022) found that customers who had a pleasant emotional experience during their hotel stay were more likely to share their positive experiences through digital platforms. This intense emotional experience leads to feelings of happiness and satisfaction that encourage them to share positive reviews online as a form of recognition for the experience. Customers who feel happy and satisfied with their emotional experiences are more likely to share their positive experiences with others through social media or review platforms. In addition, positive emotional experiences also strengthen customer loyalty, which further encourages them to share positive experiences with others (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018). Therefore, the fifth hypothesis proposed is:

H5 : Positive emotional experiences influence positive eWOM.

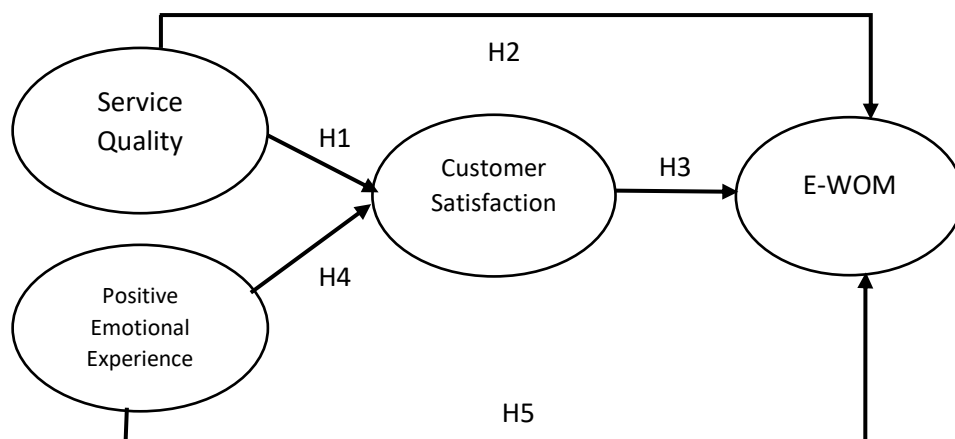


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey design to analyze the relationship between service quality, positive emotional experiences, customer satisfaction, and positive eWOM in the hospitality sector. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows the collection of objective and measurable data, which can be analyzed to test predetermined hypotheses. Surveys are an effective method for collecting large amounts of data from relevant respondents, allowing for better generalization of results in a broader context (J. F. Hair et al., 2017). data collection methods, this study relies on online surveys using Google Forms distributed through social media such as Instagram and WhatsApp. The use of quantitative data allows for more objective measurements and facilitates the analysis of relationships between variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017).

This research design also uses non-probability sampling with purposive sampling, which is a sampling technique in which respondents are selected based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives. In this study, samples were taken from guests who had stayed at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention, which was chosen because this hotel represents the mid-range hotel sector with services that focus on customer emotional experiences. The selection of this hotel is expected to reflect a broader phenomenon in the hotel industry, especially in the larger domestic market in Indonesia. Thus, Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention provides the right context to explore the relationship between service quality, emotional experience, customer satisfaction, and positive eWOM (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2018).

Population and Sample

The population in this study were all guests who had stayed at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention, who were experienced respondents and had knowledge about the quality of service, emotional experience, and positive eWOM studied. Given the unknown population, the determination of the sample size followed the recommendation of J. Hair et al., (2019). J. F. Hair et al., (2017) which stated that the minimum sample size is 10 times the number of indicators used. Based on the indicators used in this study, which amounted to 16, the number of samples taken was 160 respondents.

For sample selection, a purposive sampling technique was used, namely selecting respondents based on certain criteria, namely: (1) Respondents aged over 25 years, considered capable of making rational decisions, (2) Respondents already working or

being self-employed, so they have the ability to pay hotel costs, (3) Respondents have stayed at least twice at the Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention.

Research Variables and Operational Definitions

This study measures four main variables: service quality, positive emotional experience, customer satisfaction, and positive eWOM. Each variable is operationally defined with relevant indicators.

- Service Quality is measured using the SERVQUAL scale which consists of five dimensions: tangible (physical evidence), reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988).
- Positive Emotional Experience is measured through the emotional sensing felt by customers during their stay, such as happiness, comfort, and feeling appreciated, using a Likert scale.
- Customer Satisfaction was measured using a scale validated by Oliver (1980), which includes aspects of conformity to expectations and customer experience during their stay.
- Positive eWOM is measured based on the extent to which customers share their experiences positively through online reviews and recommendations on social media, which is measured using a behavioral-based measurement scale for sharing experiences (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

The operational definition of each of these variables ensures valid and reliable measurement, with scales that have been proven effective in previous literature. The instruments used to measure these variables have been tested for validity and reliability in the pilot phase, and were adapted from instruments that have been proven effective in previous studies (Cantallops et al., 2020).

Data Analysis Techniques

In this study, the analysis technique used is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS) software. SEM was chosen because of its ability to test the relationship between several variables that interact simultaneously, as well as its ability to measure and estimate complex measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2017). The SEM-PLS method has the ability to test complex relationships between latent variables and manifest variables, as well as its ability to handle non-normally distributed data and small samples, which often occur in social and managerial research (Ghozali & Latan, 2017).

The SEM model in this study was used to test the proposed hypothesis, namely the relationship between service quality, positive emotional experience, customer satisfaction, and positive eWOM. In this model, customer satisfaction functions as a mediating variable that connects service quality and positive eWOM, as well as the direct influence of positive emotional experience on positive eWOM. The analysis steps using PLS include testing the measurement model to ensure validity and reliability, followed by testing the structural model to analyze the relationship between variables. Process carried out using SmartPLS software consists of two main stages:

- a) **Measurement Model (Outer Model):** this stage tests the validity and reliability of the indicators used to measure latent variables. Validity is tested using convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. Reliability is measured by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability.
- b) **Structural Model (Inner Model):** This stage tests the relationship between latent variables, including testing the coefficient of determination (R-square), predictive relevance (Q-square), and hypothesis testing using t-statistics and p-value. Researchers can measure how well the structural model describes the relationship between variables and whether the proposed hypothesis is acceptable (J. Hair et al., 2019).

Operational Definition of Variables and Indicators

The following are **operational definitions** and **indicators** of the variables studied in this study:

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Variables and Indicators

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicator
Quality of Service	Service quality refers to the service provided by the hotel which affects customer satisfaction.	1. The completeness of the facilities offered is very good (Tangible) 2. Responsive staff service 3. Staff are responsive to customer complaints 4. Staff are friendly and professional 5. Staff know what customers want (Serra-Cantallops, A. et al., 2020)
Positive Emotional Experience	The experience felt by customers that creates positive memories and happy feelings associated with the hotel.	1. Providing special services to guests 2. Hotels provide a comfortable impression 3. Creating a better mood 4. Staycations provide a more relaxed impression (Serra-Cantallops, A. et al., 2020)
Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction is the customer's evaluation after comparing expectations and	1. Satisfied with hotel conditions 2. Satisfied with enjoying hotel facilities 3. Accommodation meets expectations

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicator
	the reality of the service received.	4. Overall satisfied (Serra-Cantallops, A. et al., 2020)
Positive eWOM	Positive Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) refers to the sharing of positive experiences through online platforms.	1. Enjoy making positive comments on Instagram 2. Often write positive responses on Instagram 3. Upload positive reviews on Instagram and social media 4. Enjoy uploading photos or videos via Instagram (Kotler & Keller, 2016)

Measurement for each variable was carried out using a 5-point Likert scale, which is used to assess the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the statement given. This scale is used to measure respondents' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding the variables studied (Hatmawan & Riyanto, 2020).

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

In this study, the demographic characteristics of respondents in this study provide an overview of the socio-economic background of guests staying at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention. Of the 181 questionnaires distributed, 30 questionnaires were invalid (outliers), and 6 questionnaires had incomplete data, so that only 145 questionnaires could be processed. The distribution of respondents by gender showed that the majority of respondents were female, with 57% female and 43% male. Based on age, the majority of respondents were in the age range of 26-40 years (63.4%), indicating that the majority of hotel guests were professional workers of productive age. Respondents who were self-employed and private employees dominated, covering 39% and 34% of the total respondents, with the highest monthly income in the range of IDR 10,937,501 - IDR 13,750,500 (29%).

These characteristics provide an illustration that hotel visitors are mostly financially and professionally established individuals, with a preference for staying at starred hotels in Semarang. In addition, this data illustrates how demographic segmentation can affect the quality of service and emotional experience felt by hotel guests.

SEM-PLS Data Analysis Test Results

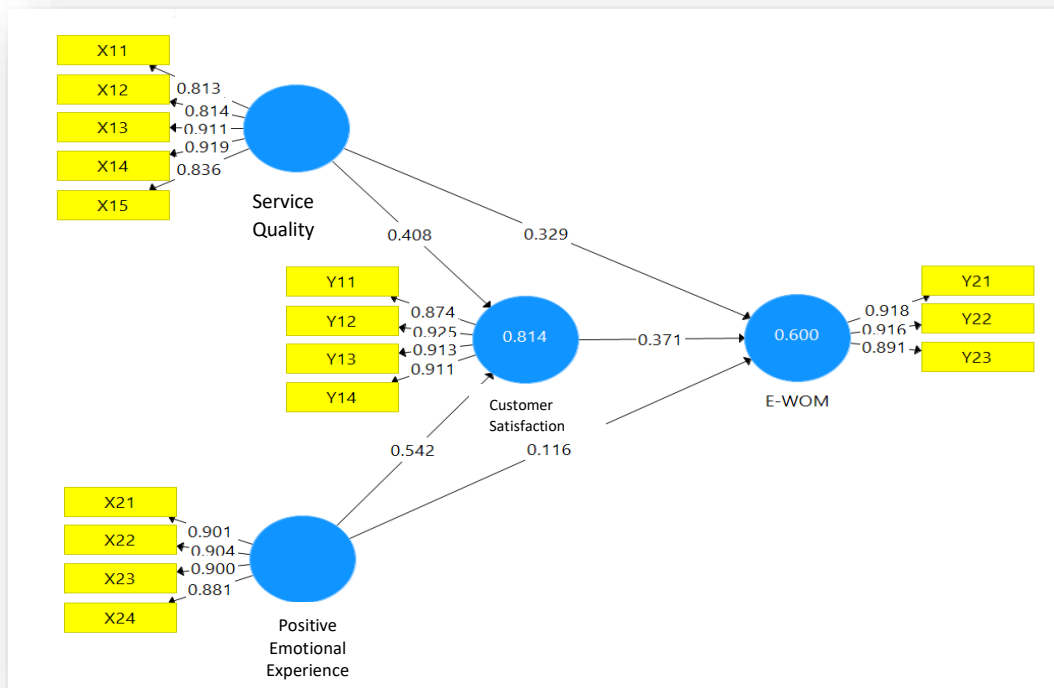


Figure 2 . Bootstrapping Test

Measurement Model Test (Outer Model)

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha value

	Cronbach's Alpha
E-WOM	0.852
Customer Satisfaction	0.932
Service Quality	0.921
Positive Emotional Experience	0.936

Source: SmartPLS Output, (2025)

Tabel 3. Hasil Composite Reliability

Variabel	Composite Reliability
E-WOM	0,938
Customer Satisfaction	0,908
Service Quality	0,859
Positive Emotional Experience	0,893

Sumber : Output SmartPLS, (2025)

Tabel 4. Test Results Average Variance Extracted

Variabel	Average Variance Aextracted (AVE)
E-WOM	0,699
Customer Satisfaction	0,832
Service Quality	0,762
Positive Emotional Experience	0,838

Sumber : Output SmartPLS, (2024)

Table 5. Fornell-Lacker's Cross Loading Test

	E- WOM	Customer Satisfaction	Service Quality	Positive Emotional Experience
E-WOM	0.908			
Customer Satisfaction	0.748	0.906		
Service Quality	0.734	0.842	0.860	
Positive Emotional Experience	0.701	0.868	0.800	0.896

Source: SmartPLS Output, (2025)

The measurement model testing aims to measure the validity and reliability of the constructs in the research model. Based on the results of the SEM-PLS analysis, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability tests were carried out.

Construct Reliability and Validity were tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. The results of the analysis generated from the SmartPLS output, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all variables were more than 0.7, indicating that this research instrument has good internal consistency. This shows that all variables in this study meet the reliability standards required for further analysis (J. Hair et al., 2019).

Convergent Validity is measured using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Based on the results of the analysis, all AVE values are greater than 0.5, which indicates that the measurement model has good convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity was tested using cross-loading and Fornell-Larcker Criterion. Based on the cross-loading results, it shows that all question items for different variables have lower values compared to the values for relevant variables, indicating that discriminant validity is achieved. Therefore, this model can be relied on to measure the relationship between variables.

Inner Model Test Results

Table 6. R-Square Test Results

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
E-WOM	0.600	0.592
Customer Satisfaction	0.814	0.811

Source: smartPLS output, (2025)

Inner model testing was conducted to evaluate the relationship between latent variables in the research model showing that this model has quite good power in explaining the relationship between variables. Based on the R-square results, the Positive eWOM variable has an R-square value of 0.592, which indicates that this model can explain 59.2% of the variability in Positive eWOM. This indicates that the variables Service Quality, Positive Emotional Experience, and Customer Satisfaction together have a significant contribution in influencing Positive eWOM. In addition, the adjusted R-square value of 0.592 indicates that this model has quite good predictive power to describe the relationship between the variables in the model .

For Customer Satisfaction, the R-square value of 0.811 indicates that this model is able to explain 81.1% of the variability in customer satisfaction influenced by Service Quality and Positive Emotional Experience. This indicates that Customer Satisfaction is influenced by strong internal factors, which are driven by the quality of service received and the emotional experience felt by customers.

Bootstrapping testing is done to test the stability of the estimate and see the significance of the relationship between variables. Bootstrapping results with significant p-values for most relationships between variables with p-values less than 0.05, confirm that the results of this test are valid and can be used to test the proposed hypothesis.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 7. Hypothesis Test Results (Path Coefficients)

	Original Sample...	Sample Mean...	Standard Deviation...	T Statistics...	P Values
Kepuasan Pelanggan -> E-WOM	0.371	0.367	0.098	3.787	0.000
Kualitas Layanan -> E-WOM	0.329	0.333	0.117	2.805	0.005
Kualitas Layanan -> Kepuasan Pelanggan	0.408	0.413	0.083	4.904	0.000
Pengalaman Emosional Positif -> E-WOM	0.116	0.115	0.122	0.948	0.344
Pengalaman Emosional Positif -> Kepuasan Pelanggan	0.542	0.536	0.082	6.609	0.000

Source: SmartPls Output, (2024)

Hypothesis testing is conducted to test the influence between variables in the model. Based on the test results, it shows that all hypotheses, except the fifth hypothesis, are accepted with a p-value <0.05 , indicating a significant influence.

- Hypothesis 1 (Service Quality $\rightarrow$ Customer Satisfaction) is accepted with an original sample value of 0.408 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that Service Quality has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction, in accordance with the findings of Zeithaml et al. (2018) which shows that good service quality will increase customer satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 2 (Service Quality $\rightarrow$ Positive eWOM) is accepted with an original sample value of 0.329 and a p-value of 0.005, indicating that Service Quality also has a positive and significant effect on Positive eWOM. This finding supports the theory that good service quality tends to encourage customers to share their positive experiences online (Gavilan et al., 2018).
- Hypothesis 3 (Customer Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Positive eWOM): With an original sample value of 0.371 and a p-value of 0.000, this hypothesis is accepted, indicating that Customer Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on Positive eWOM. This finding is consistent with research by Yang (2017) which shows that satisfied customers are more likely to share their positive experiences on online review platforms .
- Hypothesis 4 (Positive Emotional Experience $\rightarrow$ Customer Satisfaction) is accepted with an original sample value of 0.542 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that Positive Emotional Experience has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction. This finding supports research by Huang et al. (2020) which shows that positive emotional experiences can increase customer satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 5 (Positive Emotional Experience $\rightarrow$ Positive eWOM). With a p-value of 0.344, which is greater than 0.05, this hypothesis is rejected, indicating that there is no significant influence between Positive Emotional Experience and Positive eWOM. This may be influenced by other factors that are more dominant in influencing Positive eWOM, such as Customer Satisfaction, which plays a greater role in motivating experience sharing behavior.

5. DISCUSSION

The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction and Positive eWOM

Service quality plays a major role in creating customer satisfaction, as stated by Parasuraman, A. et al., (1988) in the SERVQUAL model. This study found that Service Quality has a significant positive effect on Customer Satisfaction and Positive eWOM at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention. This finding supports many previous studies showing that high service quality tends to increase customer satisfaction and potentially encourages them to share positive experiences online (Choi & Kim, 2021; Hoang et al., 2023). In this study, the path coefficient value for the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction is 0.408 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that service quality has a strong influence on customer satisfaction. This study confirms that good service, both in terms of physical facilities and staff behavior, not only increases customer satisfaction but also motivates them to share their positive experiences online.

The theory underlying these findings is the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory which states that customer satisfaction is achieved when the experience they receive matches or exceeds their expectations. If the service provided by the hotel matches or even exceeds customer expectations, then customers will feel satisfied, which in turn increases their likelihood of providing Positive eWOM (Richard, 1980). This study shows that service quality, which includes cleanliness, comfort, friendly and professional staff service, and completeness of facilities, is very important in shaping customer perceptions of the hotel and increasing their satisfaction. This is in line with the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, A. et al., (1988), which states that service quality dimensions, such as reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles (physical evidence), influence customer perceptions of service quality. This finding is in line with a study by Zeithaml. et al., (2018) which emphasizes that high service quality can result in greater satisfaction, which ultimately encourages customers to communicate positively about the service received. Service quality in this study includes dimensions such as cleanliness, comfort, friendly staff service, and responsiveness to customer complaints. This study found that customers who are satisfied with these aspects tend to be more loyal and willing to provide Positive eWOM through various online review platforms. This suggests that managing service quality should be a top priority for hotel managers, as it can directly affect customer perception and loyalty.

The positive influence of Service Quality on Positive eWOM found in this study is in line with the findings by (Gavilan et al., 2018) and (Choi & Kim, 2022) which show that customers who are satisfied with service quality are more likely to share their positive experiences through digital platforms. This confirms that eWOM plays an important role in building a hotel's online reputation and serves as an effective promotional tool. As online review platforms such as Google Reviews and TripAdvisor continue to grow, hotels need to pay attention to service quality as one of the key factors that encourage customers to share their positive experiences widely.

The Influence of Positive Emotional Experience on Customer Satisfaction

This study also shows that Positive Emotional Experience has a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction (path coefficient = 0.542; p-value = 0.000). This finding is in line with previous literature stating that pleasant emotional experiences, such as feeling appreciated or receiving special treatment, can increase overall customer satisfaction (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018). In the hospitality context, emotional elements such as personalized service, comfortable atmosphere, and attention to detail can strengthen the emotional bond between customers and the hotel, which increases customer satisfaction.

Research by (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018) suggests that positive emotional experiences contribute greatly to creating customer loyalty. Intense emotional experiences, such as feeling happy and appreciated during a stay, not only increase customer satisfaction but also extend the customer's emotional connection with the hotel. In this case, the results of this study indicate that emotional factors in customer experience not only influence their perception of the hotel but also shape their decision to recommend the hotel to others or share their positive experiences online.

However, although Positive Emotional Experience plays an important role in increasing customer satisfaction, the findings of this study indicate that there is no direct influence of Positive Emotional Experience on Positive eWOM. This indicates that other factors, such as Customer Satisfaction itself, are more dominant in encouraging customers to share their experiences on digital platforms. Therefore, managing the emotional aspect of customer experience is indeed important to create satisfaction, but more practical or transactional factors, such as service quality and service value received, encourage positive experience sharing behavior.

The Insignificant Influence of Positive Emotional Experiences on Positive eWOM

Although Positive Emotional Experience is proven to have a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction, the findings of this study indicate that Positive Emotional Experience does not have a direct effect on Positive eWOM ($p\text{-value} = 0.344$). This finding is different from several previous studies that show that positive emotional experiences can encourage positive experience sharing behavior on online platforms (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2018). One possibility that can explain this finding is that Customer Satisfaction functions as a more dominant mediator in encouraging customers to share their experiences online. Customers who feel satisfied, both emotionally and overall, tend to share more of their positive experiences through social media and review sites.

This finding may also be influenced by the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, income, and occupation, who are mostly professional workers with a higher level of experience in interacting with hotel services. They may focus more on the utilitarian aspects of hotel services (such as cleanliness and comfort) than on the more subjective emotional experiences. Therefore, although positive emotional experiences can increase satisfaction, other factors such as Service Quality and customer loyalty may play a greater role in encouraging them to provide Positive eWOM.

The Role of Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator

This study also confirms that Customer Satisfaction acts as a strong mediator in the relationship between Service Quality and Positive eWOM. This finding supports previous studies that stated that Customer Satisfaction is a key factor that drives positive experience sharing behavior (Prayag et al., 2017; Rahmah Umniyyati & Silitonga, 2023). Customer Satisfaction serves as a bridge between the experience provided by the hotel and the customer's intention to share their experience with others. In other words, customers who are satisfied with the service provided by the hotel, both physically and emotionally, tend to be more willing to provide positive recommendations through eWOM. Customer satisfaction is not only influenced by the practical aspects of the service provided, but also by emotional factors, as found in this study. Therefore, for hotel management, ensuring that customers are satisfied with the quality of service provided and that their emotional experience during their stay is more than just meeting their basic needs will encourage them to share more positive experiences.

6. CONCLUSION

This study provides significant insights into the influence of Service Quality and Positive Emotional Experience on Customer Satisfaction and Positive eWOM in the hospitality sector, particularly at Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention. The main findings of this study indicate that Service Quality has a significant positive influence on Customer Satisfaction and Positive eWOM, supporting the existing theory that good service quality will increase customer satisfaction and encourage them to share positive experiences online. In addition, Positive Emotional Experience is also proven to have a positive effect on Customer Satisfaction, although it does not have a direct effect on Positive eWOM. This study found that Customer Satisfaction acts as a strong mediator in the relationship between Service Quality and Positive eWOM, indicating that customer satisfaction is a key factor in encouraging positive experience sharing behavior through digital platforms.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations of the study should be considered in interpreting the findings. One major limitation is the use of purposive sampling which may limit the representativeness of the sample and limit the generalizability of the findings. Most of the respondents in this study were professional workers with established economic status, who may have different views and expectations compared to customers with more diverse socioeconomic profiles. Therefore, future research can include a more diverse sample from different demographics to increase the diversity of the findings and the generalizability of the results. Future research should involve more hotels in different locations using random sampling to increase the representativeness of the sample and broaden the contextual limitations.

This study is also limited to a single hotel location, which may not fully reflect the results in the hotel industry as a whole. Future research could expand the scope by examining more hotels in different locations or countries to test for contextual limitations in the study results.

RECOMMENDATION

The findings in this study have significant practical implications for Patra Semarang Hotel & Convention managers in designing marketing strategies and improving customer experience. One of the main findings is that good service quality directly contributes to increased Customer Satisfaction and Positive eWOM. Therefore, hotels need to continue to

strive to improve service quality, by paying attention to better facilities, faster and more responsive service, and creating a more comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere for guests.

In addition, positive emotional experiences, although they do not directly affect Positive eWOM, must still be managed well. Hotel management must ensure that customers feel valued and cared for, because Customer Satisfaction created from positive emotional experiences will encourage them to share those experiences online.

For further research, some areas that can be explored are the influence of other demographic factors, such as age, education level, and previous stay experience, on the relationship between service quality, emotional experience, satisfaction, and eWOM. In addition, external factors such as the influence of social media and digital technology on customer experience sharing behavior can be interesting topics for further research.

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