

THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL EXPERIENCE AND E-WOM ON PURCHASE DECISIONS AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY OF GRAND TAMAN SAFARI INDONESIA, PASURUAN

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of digital experience and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) on purchase decisions and their implications for customer satisfaction among visitors to The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia, Prigen, Pasuruan. An explanatory quantitative approach was employed, with data collected from 99 respondents and analyzed using SmartPLS. The findings indicate that digital experience has a positive but insignificant effect on both purchase decisions and customer satisfaction. Similarly, E-WOM shows a positive but insignificant effect on customer satisfaction, while it significantly influences purchase decisions. Furthermore, purchase decisions have a significant and positive impact on customer satisfaction. Mediation analysis reveals that purchase decisions do not significantly mediate the relationship between digital experience and customer satisfaction, but they do significantly mediate the effect of E-WOM on customer satisfaction. These results highlight the importance of optimizing E-WOM strategies to enhance customer engagement and satisfaction in the tourism sector. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing in tourism by emphasizing the mediating role of purchase decisions and providing practical insights for managing digital customer experiences.

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1. Introduction

Tourism in Indonesia has experienced rapid growth in recent decades. With its rich cultural diversity, natural landscapes, and culinary heritage, the country continues to attract millions of domestic and international visitors each year (Andika, 2023). East Java is one of the provinces that significantly contributes to this growth, offering a wide range of tourism attractions such as nature-based destinations, cultural experiences, and gastronomic tourism (Aushafina & Giveraldy, 2018). Among its prominent attractions is The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia in Prigen, Pasuruan Regency, which

stands out not only as a modern safari park but also as an educational and conservation center where visitors can interact closely with wildlife from across the globe.

Customer satisfaction plays a central role in determining the success and sustainability of tourism services. It reflects the extent to which visitor expectations are fulfilled and directly influences repeat visits and word-of-mouth promotion. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), satisfaction or dissatisfaction significantly affects consumer behavior, while service quality is one of its key determinants (Basari et al., 2020). In recent years, the concept of *digital experience* has emerged as an important factor in shaping perceptions and engagement with tourism services. This refers to consumers' interactions with digital platforms that provide both functional value—such as ease of access—and emotional value through immersive and engaging content (Donnelly, 2020). Studies suggest that allowing travelers to virtually explore destinations before visiting can significantly increase interest, confidence, and eventual satisfaction (Ernawati & Hananto, 2023).

Another critical factor is *electronic word of mouth* (E-WOM), which refers to consumer-generated online communication such as reviews, comments, or testimonials shared via social media, forums, blogs, and digital marketplaces. Because it reflects authentic consumer experiences, E-WOM is often perceived as more credible than traditional marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Research shows that E-WOM enhances consumer trust and influences their purchasing decisions (Prasetya & Sigit, 2023). Supporting this, Solihah et al. (2024) found that E-WOM has a positive and significant impact on both consumer trust and purchase decisions, and that trust mediates the relationship between E-WOM and purchasing behavior. This highlights the importance of not only the content of online reviews but also the perceived credibility and emotional connection fostered through such communication.

Purchasing decisions themselves are shaped by a cognitive process that includes recognizing needs, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making the decision, and engaging in post-purchase behavior (Solomon, 2017). In the tourism industry, these decisions are heavily influenced by factors like digital content, social proof, and overall experience design, which in turn affect visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Study & Resort, n.d.).

Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore the role of digital experience and E-WOM in influencing purchasing decisions and their implications for customer satisfaction in the context of The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia, Prigen. It examines whether digital experience and E-WOM exert direct or indirect effects on customer satisfaction through the mediating role of purchase decisions. By integrating constructs from consumer behavior and digital marketing, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how modern tourists make informed decisions in an increasingly digital environment.

Hypothesis Development

The digital experience refers to the holistic perception formed by consumers based on their interactions with a brand or product through various digital platforms, including websites, mobile applications, e-commerce platforms, and social media. This

experience encompasses dimensions such as accessibility, convenience, personalization, trust, and emotional engagement (McLean & Wilson, 2019). A well-designed digital experience can create positive impressions and influence consumer behavior, especially in industries such as tourism, where the pre-purchase phase is heavily shaped by online content and interactive media (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Digital channels not only function as information sources but also serve as immersive environments that influence consumers' expectations, perceptions, and decision-making processes.

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), meanwhile, plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior in digital environments. E-WOM is defined as online communication where individuals share opinions, reviews, and recommendations about products or services via platforms such as social media, online forums, blogs, and review websites (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Due to its origin in real user experiences, E-WOM is often perceived as more credible and trustworthy than company-generated advertising. Empirical studies have confirmed its influence in enhancing consumer trust and shaping purchasing intentions (Prasetya & Sigit, 2023). Supporting this, Solihah et al. (2024) emphasized that E-WOM significantly affects both consumer trust and purchasing decisions, with trust acting as a mediator in this relationship.

The purchasing decision itself is a multi-stage process that includes need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, the decision to purchase, and post-purchase evaluation (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). This process is dynamic and is influenced by internal factors such as motivation and perception, as well as external influences such as social recommendations and digital interactions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the tourism context, purchase decisions are not only driven by functional factors like price and access but also by affective factors such as emotional connection, perceived authenticity, and the influence of peer feedback.

Customer satisfaction is the psychological outcome that emerges when consumers compare their expectations with the actual performance of a product or service. A high level of satisfaction occurs when perceived performance exceeds expectations, while dissatisfaction arises when performance falls short (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In service-oriented sectors such as tourism, satisfaction is strongly linked to customer loyalty, willingness to recommend, and future purchasing behavior. The literature also suggests that purchasing decisions often mediate the relationship between digital experience or E-WOM and satisfaction, as they reflect the outcome of prior evaluations influenced by digital interactions.

Based on the theoretical foundation and prior empirical findings, this study investigates the direct and indirect relationships among digital experience, E-WOM, purchasing decisions, and customer satisfaction within the context of tourism. It further explores the mediating role of purchasing decisions in linking digital stimuli (i.e., digital experience and E-WOM) to satisfaction outcomes. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- H1** : Digital Experience (X1) has a significant positive effect on Customer Satisfaction (Y). (*Donnelly, 2020; Ernawati & Hananto, 2023*)
- H2** : Digital Experience (X1) has a significant positive effect on Purchase Decision (Z). (*Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; McLean & Wilson, 2019*)

- H3** : Purchase Decision (Z) has a significant positive effect on Customer Satisfaction (Y). (*Solomon, 2017; Magenta & Sugiarto, 2015*)
- H4** : E-WOM (X2) has a significant positive effect on Customer Satisfaction (Y). (*Kotler & Keller, 2016; Setiadi et al., 2024*)
- H5** : E-WOM (X2) has a significant positive effect on Purchase Decision (Z). (*Solihah et al., 2024; Prasetya & Sigit, 2023*)
- H6** : Purchase Decision (Z) significantly mediates the effect of Digital Experience (X1) on Customer Satisfaction (Y). (*Fiani & Novitasari, 2022; Rismawati et al., 2024*)
- H7** : Purchase Decision (Z) significantly mediates the effect of E-WOM (X2) on Customer Satisfaction (Y). (*Kadi et al., 2021; Solihah et al., 2024*)

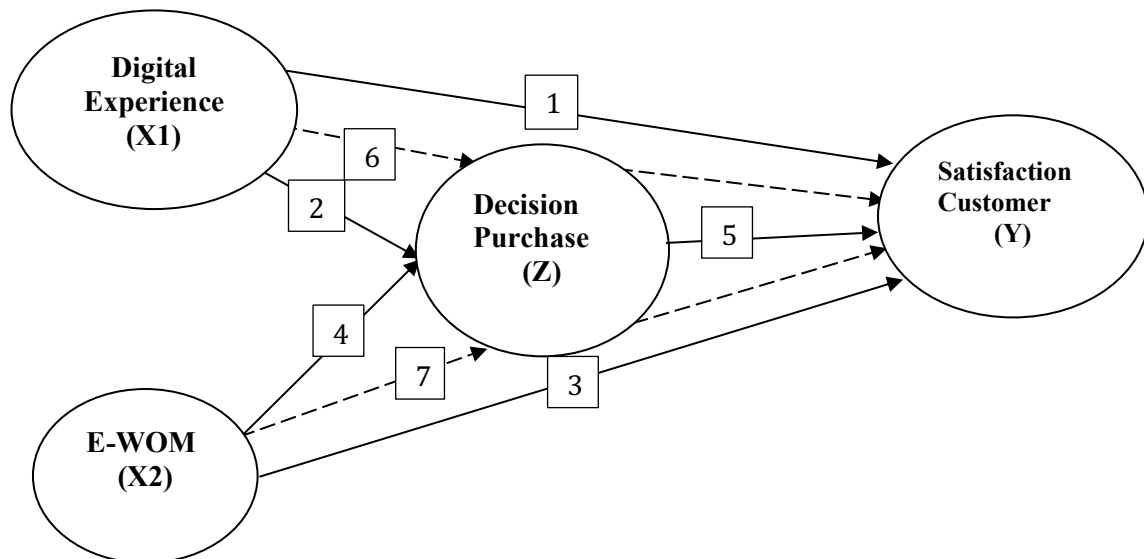


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework of Research

2. Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach with an explanatory design to examine the relationships between digital experience, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), purchasing decisions, and customer satisfaction in the context of The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia, located in Prigen, Pasuruan, East Java. The target population consisted of visitors who had experienced the services at the tourist destination. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who had visited at least once and were over the age of 17.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to measure all research variables. In addition to primary data, secondary data in the form of documentation and institutional records were also utilized to support the analysis.

The study examined four main variables: digital experience and E-WOM as independent variables, purchasing decision as a mediating variable, and customer satisfaction as the dependent variable. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS 3.0 software, which facilitated the assessment of construct validity, reliability, and path analysis to identify both direct and indirect relationships among variables.

This methodological approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which digital interactions and peer-generated online content influence tourist decision-making and satisfaction in the digital era.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

The study involved 99 respondents who had visited The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia in Prigen, Pasuruan. Based on gender (Table 1), the majority of respondents were female (56 respondents or 56.57%), while male respondents accounted for 43 individuals (43.43%). This indicates a greater representation of female visitors in the sample, which may reflect a gender-based interest or engagement pattern in digital platforms and tourism-related decision-making.

Table 1 Characteristics by gender

No	Gender	Amount	Percentage %
1	Man	43	43.43%
2	Woman	56	56.57%
	Amount	99	100%

Source: Processed data using Excel (2025)

In terms of age distribution (Table 2), the largest group of respondents was between **25–30 years old** (28.57%), followed by the **17–24 age group** (24.49%) and the **31–35 age group** (21.43%). Smaller proportions of respondents were aged **36–40 years** (16.33%), **41–45 years** (3.06%), and **above 45 years** (6.12%). These findings suggest that the majority of visitors are in their productive and digitally active age, which is relevant to studies involving digital experience and online influence.

Table 2 Characteristics by age

No	Age	Amount	Percentage %
1	17 – 24 Years	24	24.49%
2	25 – 30 Years	28	28.57%
3	31 – 35 Years	21	21.43%
4	36 – 40 Years	16	16.33%
5	41 – 45 Years	3	3.06%
6	> 45 Years	6	6.12%
	Amount	99	100%

Source: Processed data using Excel (2025)

Regarding income level (Table 3), the highest percentage of respondents (38%) earned between **IDR 3.1 million and 5 million**, followed by **26%** in the **IDR 5.1 million – 7 million** range, **19%** earning more than **IDR 7 million**, and **16%** earning between **IDR 1 million and 3 million**. This distribution indicates that most respondents belonged to the middle-income segment, which is often associated with discretionary spending on tourism and leisure activities.

Table 3 Characteristics based on Income

No.	Income	Amount	Percentage %
1	1 million – 3 million	16	16%
2	3.1 million – 5 million	38	38%
3	5.1 million – 7 million	26	26%
4	More than 7 million	19	19%
Amount		99	100%

Source: Processed data using Excel (2025)

Outer Model Analysis

The outer model evaluation was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the measurement constructs. All constructs showed satisfactory **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** values above 0.5, indicating good convergent validity. In addition, **Composite Reliability** and **Cronbach's Alpha** values were above the threshold of 0.7, confirming internal consistency across items.

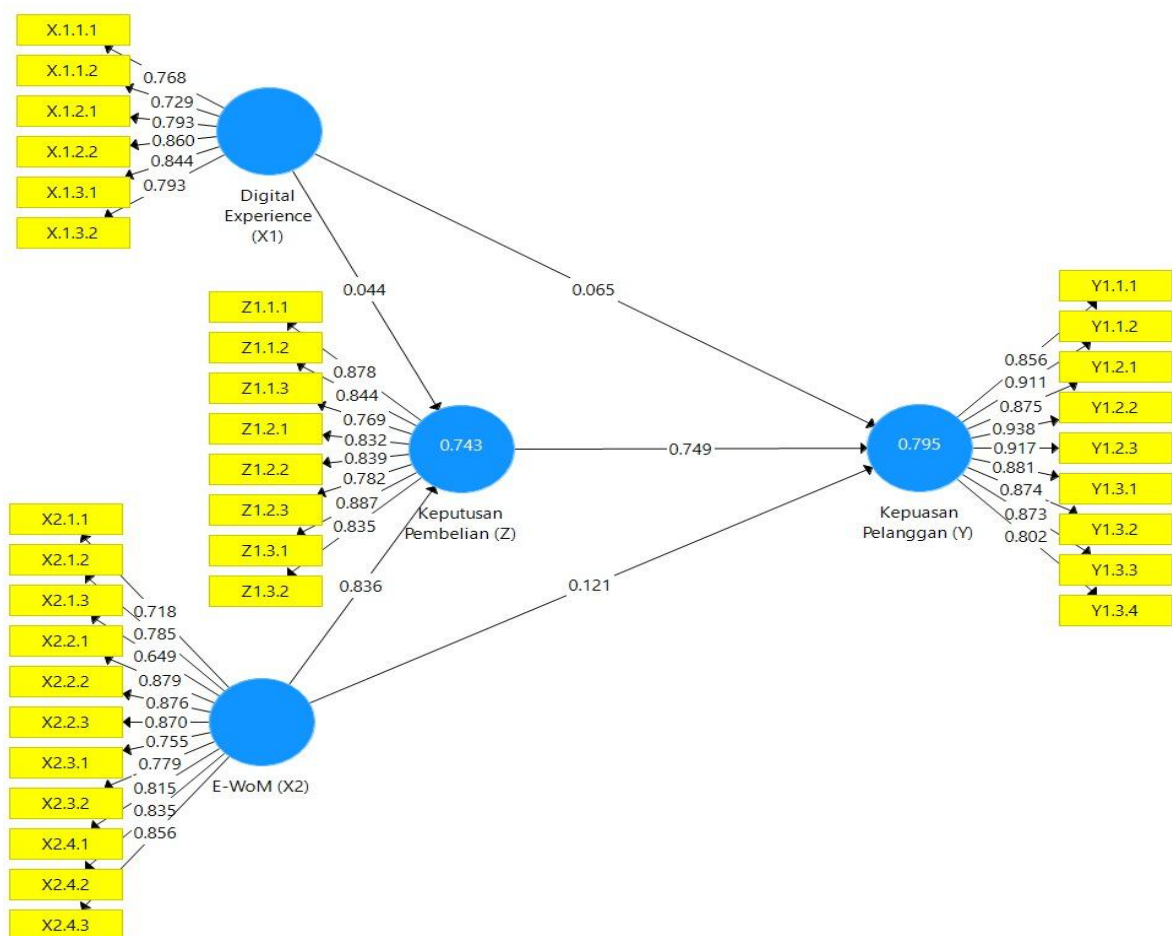


Figure 2 Outer Model Results

Source: Processed data using PLS 3.0 (2025)

Table 4 Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Digital Experience (X1)	887	914	639
E-WOM (X2)	945	952	647
Purchase Decision (Z)	937	948	696
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	964	969	777

Source: Processed data using PLS 3.0 (2025)

The outer model was assessed to evaluate the validity and reliability of the measurement constructs. As presented in Table 4, all constructs meet the minimum criteria for convergent validity and internal consistency. First, the **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** values for all constructs exceed the threshold of 0.50, confirming good convergent validity. Specifically, the AVE values are as follows: Digital Experience (X1) = 0.639, E-WOM (X2) = 0.647, Purchase Decision (Z) = 0.696, and Customer Satisfaction (Y) = 0.777. These results indicate that over 50% of the variance in the indicators is explained by their respective latent variables.

In terms of reliability, both **Composite Reliability (CR)** and **Cronbach's Alpha (CA)** for all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, suggesting strong internal consistency. The CR values are: Digital Experience (0.914), E-WOM (0.952), Purchase Decision (0.948), and Customer Satisfaction (0.969). Likewise, the CA values are: Digital Experience (0.887), E-WOM (0.945), Purchase Decision (0.937), and Customer Satisfaction (0.964). Overall, the measurement model demonstrates adequate psychometric properties, ensuring that the constructs used in this study are both valid and reliable for subsequent structural analysis.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The R-square value for **Customer Satisfaction (Y)** was 0.795, meaning that 79.5% of the variance in satisfaction is explained by Digital Experience, E-WOM, and Purchase Decision. The R-square for **Purchase Decision (Z)** was 0.743, indicating that Digital Experience and E-WOM account for 74.3% of the variance in purchasing decisions. These values indicate strong explanatory power of the model.

Table 5. R-Square

Endogenous Latent Variables	R-Square
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0.795
Purchase Decision (Z)	0.743

Source: Processed data using PLS 3.0 (2025)

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was tested using path analysis. The results are summarized as follows:

Table 6. Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	P Values	T-Statistics	Conclusion
H1	Digital Experience (X1) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0.456	0.745	Rejected
H2	Digital Experience (X1) -> Purchase Decision (Z)	0.675	0.420	Rejected
H3	E-WoM (X2) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0.367	0.902	Rejected
H4	E-WoM (X2) -> Purchase Decision (Z)	0.000	8,577	Accepted
H5	Purchase Decision (Z) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0.000	7,379	Accepted
H6	Digital Experience (X1) -> Purchase Decision (Z) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0.672	0.423	Rejected
H7	E-WoM (X2) -> Purchase Decision (Z) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0.000	5,609	Accepted

Source: Processed data using PLS 3.0 (2025)

The results of hypothesis testing in this study reveal varying levels of significance across the proposed relationships. The relationship between digital experience and customer satisfaction was found to be positive but statistically insignificant, with a p-value of 0.456. This indicates that digital experience does not have a meaningful influence on customer satisfaction within the context of visitors to The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia Prigen. Similarly, the relationship between digital experience and purchasing decisions was also positive yet statistically insignificant, with a p-value of 0.675. This suggests that digital interactions alone do not significantly affect the decision-making process of visitors in selecting or evaluating their tourism experiences. The effect of E-WOM on customer satisfaction also showed no statistical significance, with a p-value of 0.367. Although the direction of the relationship was positive, the result implies that online word-of-mouth communication does not directly influence the satisfaction levels of respondents in this study.

In contrast, the relationship between E-WOM and purchasing decisions was found to be statistically significant and positive, as indicated by a p-value of 0.000. This means that E-WOM plays an important role in shaping consumer purchase decisions in the context examined. Furthermore, the relationship between purchasing decisions and customer satisfaction also demonstrated a statistically significant and positive effect, with a p-value of 0.000. This confirms that purchasing decisions made by visitors are closely associated with their subsequent satisfaction. In terms of mediation, the role of purchasing decisions in mediating the relationship between digital experience and customer satisfaction was found to be statistically insignificant, with a p-value of 0.672. This suggests that the indirect effect of digital experience on satisfaction through purchasing decisions is not supported by the data. On the other hand, purchasing decisions were found to significantly mediate the relationship between E-WOM and customer satisfaction. The p-value of 0.000 indicates a

strong and significant indirect effect, highlighting the mediating role of purchase behavior in translating online word-of-mouth into customer satisfaction outcomes.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study provide meaningful insights into the relationships among digital experience, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), purchasing decisions, and customer satisfaction in the context of tourism services at The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia Prigen. The discussion is structured into three perspectives: theoretical relevance, descriptive linkage, and practical implications.

3.2.1 Theoretical Relevance

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings partially support the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intentions and actual behavior. In this context, E-WOM can be understood as part of the subjective norm or social influence, which significantly affects purchasing decisions, aligning with TPB. The significant relationship between E-WOM and purchasing decisions supports previous research that highlights the persuasive power of online reviews and peer recommendations in shaping consumer decision-making (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012); (Budhiraharja & Tjahtjono, 2017); (Hossain et al., 2024). Additionally, the positive and significant effect of purchasing decisions on customer satisfaction is consistent with expectation-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980), which explains that satisfaction is the result of expectations being confirmed or disconfirmed through actual experience. This supports the view that well-informed and confident purchasing decisions—such as those influenced by E-WOM—can lead to greater satisfaction (Chen et al., 2015); (Kansal & Kaushik, 2024).

On the other hand, the insignificant effects of digital experience on both purchasing decisions and customer satisfaction contrast with some prior findings that emphasize the importance of digital touchpoints in building consumer trust and engagement [(McLean & Wilson, 2019); (Donnelly, 2020)]. However, similar results were also found by (Purwanto & Rofiah, 2020), who argue that digital platforms may not always produce significant behavioral outcomes unless accompanied by emotional resonance, strong brand presence, or interactive engagement. The mediating role of purchasing decisions in the relationship between E-WOM and customer satisfaction is statistically supported, reinforcing the idea that E-WOM primarily impacts satisfaction indirectly through its influence on decision-making. This confirms the findings of (Alzubi, 2022); (Wang, 2015), who emphasize the centrality of trust and informed choice as mediators in the E-WOM–satisfaction linkage. Conversely, the mediating role of purchasing decisions in the digital experience–satisfaction relationship was found to be insignificant, suggesting that digital engagement alone may not be sufficient to influence deeper outcomes without other psychological drivers.

3.2.2 Link to Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic profile of respondents provides further context to interpret these findings. The dominance of female respondents (56.57%) may be associated with greater social media usage and responsiveness to peer opinions, which aligns with the significant role of E-WOM in influencing purchasing decisions. Research shows that while both genders rely on online reviews, women tend to write more emotionally rich reviews and are more influenced by authenticity and positive affect in peer-generated content (Ravula et al., 2023); this may partially explain the stronger influence of E-WOM in this study's sample.

The majority of respondents were in the 25–30 age group (28.57%) and 17–24 age group (24.49%), indicating a young, tech-savvy demographic highly exposed to digital channels. However, the insignificant impact of digital experience suggests that the platforms used by the tourism provider may not yet offer optimal interactivity or emotional engagement—factors crucial for influencing younger consumers (Hidalgo-Alcázar et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the largest income group was in the IDR 3.1–5 million range (38%), indicating a middle-income demographic likely to engage in occasional leisure spending. This group is generally price-sensitive but experience-driven, and tends to rely on external cues such as online reviews before making decisions—further reinforcing the strong influence of E-WOM (Sofronijević & Kocic, 2022).

3.2.3 Practical Implications

The practical implications of this research are particularly relevant for tourism service providers such as The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia Prigen and similar attractions. First, the results underscore the strategic importance of E-WOM management. Encouraging satisfied customers to share their experiences through online platforms, reviews, and social media can significantly influence future visitors' purchasing behavior. Initiatives could include review campaigns, user-generated content contests, and showcasing testimonials on official websites. Second, while a digital presence is essential, this study shows that digital experience alone may not be sufficient to influence decisions or satisfaction. Tourism managers should therefore invest in improving the quality, personalization, and emotional resonance of their digital interfaces—through virtual tours, AI-driven recommendations, immersive storytelling, or real-time interactions—to increase engagement and conversion among younger consumers (Hidalgo-Alcázar et al., 2021). Third, the critical role of purchasing decisions as a mediator highlights the importance of providing clear, credible, and engaging information that helps guide customers. This includes transparent pricing, rich multimedia content, embedded review platforms, and intuitive navigation, all of which improve confidence in decision-making (Quambusch, 2015). Finally, this study contributes to the tourism marketing literature by reaffirming that peer-based influence (E-WOM) remains a powerful force in shaping travel-related consumer behavior—often more impactful than digital presence alone, especially when trust and relevance are lacking.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

4.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that **Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)** plays a significant role in influencing **purchasing decisions**, which in turn significantly impacts **customer satisfaction** among visitors of The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia Prigen, Pasuruan. The findings confirm that E-WOM, particularly in the form of credible online reviews and peer recommendations, can effectively drive consumers' decision-making processes. Furthermore, purchasing decisions are proven to act as a significant **mediating variable** between E-WOM and customer satisfaction, strengthening the indirect relationship between the two. Conversely, the study finds that **digital experience**, although perceived positively, does not show a statistically significant direct effect on either purchasing decisions or customer satisfaction. This indicates that while digital touchpoints are necessary, they may not yet be impactful enough in this context without emotional engagement, personalization, or interactivity enhancements. Overall, the study reinforces the importance of managing **E-WOM and purchase decision pathways** as part of a strategic approach to increase **customer satisfaction** in the tourism sector. It also highlights the need for improving the **quality and emotional resonance of digital experiences** to ensure their effectiveness in influencing

tourist behavior.

4.2 Suggestions

For Future Research: Future studies are encouraged to explore additional variables that may influence purchasing decisions and customer satisfaction, such as **brand image, perceived value, customer trust, service quality, and customer loyalty**. Furthermore, incorporating **qualitative or mixed-method approaches** could yield richer insights into consumer motivations and experiences. Expanding the study across **different types of tourism destinations or geographic regions** would also improve the generalizability of the findings and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of digital consumer behavior in the tourism industry.

For Managerial Practice (The Grand Taman Safari Indonesia Prigen): Management should prioritize enhancing the **digital customer experience**, focusing on aspects such as personalized content, user-friendly interfaces, immersive virtual previews, and real-time interaction. Strengthening **E-WOM strategies** through campaigns that encourage satisfied visitors to share their experiences on social media and review platforms is also essential. This can be done by leveraging **current content trends**, engaging influencers, and providing incentives for user-generated content that highlights authentic and positive visitor narratives. These efforts are expected to increase consumer engagement, drive conversion, and ultimately improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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