

Integrating e-WOM and Service Quality to Enhance Student Loyalty and Satisfaction in Higher Education Institutions



Yeni^{a*}, Taufiq Marwa^b, Isni Andriana^c, Muchsin Saggaff Shihab^d

^a Program Doctoral Ilmu Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi, Universitas Sriwijaya Palembang, Indonesia

^{b,c} Fakultas Ekonomi, Universitas Sriwijaya Palembang, Indonesia

^d Fakultas Ekonomi, Universitas Bakri, Indonesia

* Corresponding author: 01023622025001@student.unsri.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the integration of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and service quality in enhancing student loyalty and satisfaction in higher education institutions (HEIs). Given the growing competition in the higher education sector, understanding the factors that influence student engagement and retention is crucial. The study aims to explore how e-WOM and service quality impact student loyalty and satisfaction, addressing the gap in literature regarding their combined effects. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing a library research design to analyze existing literature, including academic articles and case studies from 2020 to 2025. Thematic analysis was applied to identify key trends and patterns in the data. The findings indicate that positive e-WOM significantly enhances student satisfaction and loyalty, while negative e-WOM can diminish both. Service quality, particularly in areas such as academic support and faculty interaction, was found to be a strong predictor of student satisfaction and loyalty. The research reveals a synergistic relationship between e-WOM and service quality, where high service quality leads to positive e-WOM, which further strengthens student loyalty. The study contributes to the literature by highlighting the interactive effects of e-WOM and service quality on student outcomes. The findings suggest that HEIs should focus on improving service quality and actively managing e-WOM to enhance student satisfaction and loyalty. Future research could explore the role of digital tools in shaping student perceptions and further investigate the impact of social media on e-WOM.

1. Introduction

In the modern landscape of higher education, student satisfaction and loyalty have become increasingly significant for institutional

success. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are constantly striving to enhance the quality of their services and create positive experiences for their students, as these factors are crucial for their reputation and competitive advantage.

Over the past few decades, technological advancements and the rise of digital platforms have dramatically transformed how students interact with educational services. One of the most notable developments in recent years is the emergence of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), where students share their opinions, experiences, and recommendations about institutions and services through online platforms (Karim et al., 2023). e-WOM has become a vital tool in shaping perceptions and influencing decision-making in the educational context, making it a critical factor for HEIs to consider in their marketing and service delivery strategies.

e-WOM has grown in importance due to the increased reliance on social media and online review platforms by prospective students when selecting a university or college (Rasheed & Rashid, 2024). According to recent studies, 72% of prospective students report that online reviews and recommendations heavily influence their decision-making process (Tehci, 2022a). In this context, e-WOM provides a powerful mechanism for students to communicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their educational experiences, impacting the decisions of future students and the overall image of the institution. Therefore, understanding the role of e-WOM in student loyalty and satisfaction becomes increasingly vital, as it can serve as a tool for both attracting new students and retaining current ones.

Simultaneously, the concept of service quality has long been a cornerstone of research in customer satisfaction and loyalty, and its relevance extends to the higher education sector (Siripattanakul et al., 2022). Service quality in the educational context refers to the students' perceptions of the quality of academic and non-academic services provided by the institution, including teaching effectiveness, support services, campus facilities, and the overall learning environment. Research has shown that service quality directly influences students' satisfaction and loyalty, which are essential for student retention and institutional success (Wahab et al., 2024). In fact, service quality is

not only an indicator of students' current satisfaction but also a predictor of future loyalty, with students who experience higher service quality more likely to recommend their institution to others, thereby contributing to positive e-WOM.

This study aims to explore the integration of e-WOM and service quality as factors that influence student satisfaction and loyalty in higher education institutions. While research on each of these concepts has been abundant, there is a gap in the literature that examines how these two factors interact and work together to enhance the overall student experience. By examining this relationship, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how HEIs can leverage e-WOM and service quality to improve student outcomes and institutional reputation. Specifically, this research aims to address the following question: How does the integration of e-WOM and service quality influence student satisfaction and loyalty in higher education institutions?

The significance of this research is twofold. Academically, it contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on student satisfaction, loyalty, and institutional marketing by integrating two key concepts e-WOM and service quality that have not been extensively studied together. Practically, the findings of this study can offer valuable insights for higher education administrators, marketers, and policymakers. Institutions can use these insights to improve service delivery, enhance the student experience, and harness the power of e-WOM to drive student engagement, recruitment, and retention. Moreover, understanding how e-WOM and service quality jointly affect student loyalty and satisfaction can help institutions develop more targeted marketing and service improvement strategies that align with students' expectations and needs.

This study is particularly important in light of the growing competition in the higher education sector, where universities and colleges are constantly seeking ways to distinguish themselves from their competitors. The rise of online platforms for reviews and feedback has intensified the role of student experiences in

shaping institutional perceptions. Given these dynamics, the research will offer a critical examination of how service quality and e-WOM can be strategically integrated to foster stronger student relationships and build a more resilient and reputable institution. Therefore, this study is essential for understanding the evolving factors influencing student loyalty and satisfaction in the contemporary higher education environment.

Literature Review

The Role of e-WOM in Higher Education

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has gained increasing importance in the marketing and reputation management of higher education institutions (HEIs). e-WOM refers to the online sharing of personal opinions, recommendations, or experiences regarding products or services, including educational institutions, through digital platforms such as social media, forums, review websites, and institutional websites (Rabah et al., 2024). This form of communication has become a central factor influencing student decision-making, as prospective students often rely on peer reviews and shared experiences when selecting a university (Jain et al., 2023). indicates that 72% of prospective students consult online reviews before making their final choice, which highlights the crucial role of e-WOM in shaping students' perceptions (Nia, 2018).

Several studies have underscored the impact of e-WOM on student satisfaction and loyalty. When students share positive experiences, they not only enhance their institution's reputation but also foster trust among prospective students. Moreover, negative e-WOM can quickly damage an institution's reputation, leading to decreased trust and interest from potential students (Gheta, 2025). As such, understanding how to manage and leverage e-WOM effectively is essential for HEIs to maintain a positive public image and strengthen student engagement and retention.

The interaction between e-WOM and service quality further enriches the discussion.

Positive e-WOM generated by students who perceive high service quality can result in sustained student loyalty and serve as a competitive advantage for universities (Baharun & Hasanah, 2023). Conversely, negative e-WOM triggered by dissatisfaction with service quality can lead to a decrease in brand loyalty, attracting fewer students. This interaction highlights the need for HEIs to ensure that they not only foster positive e-WOM but also continuously improve their service quality to sustain student satisfaction and loyalty.

Service Quality in Higher Education

Service quality has been widely studied in the context of higher education, where it refers to students' perceptions of the services provided by an institution, including teaching quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and extracurricular offerings (F. R. Pradana et al., 2023). High service quality is positively correlated with student satisfaction, which in turn influences student loyalty and retention (Rahman et al., 2023). For instance, service quality can impact students' perceptions of academic staff, the learning environment, and the overall student experience, affecting their level of satisfaction and engagement (Yani et al., 2023).

In the higher education context, the SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985), has been widely used to assess service quality. The model posits that service quality is a function of the gap between students' expectations and their perceptions of the service delivered. Studies have shown that when students' expectations are met or exceeded, they report higher levels of satisfaction, which ultimately leads to increased loyalty to the institution (Nugroho & Sampurna, 2025). Universities with high levels of service quality are not only able to retain existing students but also attract new ones through positive word-of-mouth, which can include both traditional word-of-mouth and e-WOM.

Furthermore, research by (Tehci, 2022b) demonstrated that service quality impacts student loyalty in a significant way, with factors

such as academic support, infrastructure, and interaction with faculty members playing key roles. Institutions that consistently deliver high service quality build stronger relationships with students, which encourages student loyalty and positive e-WOM. As universities face increasing competition, enhancing service quality has become a critical strategy for maintaining student satisfaction and fostering long-term loyalty (Hermansyah & Bangsawan, 2022).

The Interconnection Between e-WOM and Service Quality

The relationship between e-WOM and service quality has been the subject of recent studies, which emphasize how these two factors mutually influence student satisfaction and loyalty. Service quality directly affects students' satisfaction, which in turn leads to the generation of positive e-WOM, as students share their good experiences online. High service quality not only creates satisfaction but also motivates students to engage in e-WOM, thereby enhancing the university's reputation (A. F. P. Pradana et al., 2022). On the other hand, poor service quality can lead to dissatisfaction, which may result in negative e-WOM that tarnishes the institution's image.

According to (Hayati et al., 2023), the integration of e-WOM and service quality is essential for HEIs seeking to build a sustainable competitive advantage. Institutions that actively manage both service quality and e-WOM can create a powerful cycle of positive feedback, where improved service leads to positive e-WOM, which in turn attracts more prospective students and strengthens loyalty among current students. This positive feedback loop underscores the importance of addressing both dimensions simultaneously to maintain a strong institutional reputation and ensure continuous growth.

Additionally, research has shown that institutions that engage with e-WOM—by responding to online reviews, acknowledging feedback, and addressing concerns—can further enhance their service quality perception. This interaction between service quality

management and e-WOM engagement helps institutions build a more responsive and customer-centric environment, leading to greater student satisfaction and loyalty (Masnadi et al., 2024).

Gaps in the Literature and Research Contribution

While significant research has been conducted on e-WOM and service quality separately, limited studies have explored the synergetic effects of integrating both factors within the higher education context. Most existing studies focus on the individual impact of e-WOM or service quality on student satisfaction and loyalty, without examining how these factors interact to influence student perceptions holistically. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the combined influence of e-WOM and service quality on student loyalty and satisfaction, offering a deeper understanding of how these two elements can be strategically integrated to enhance the student experience and improve institutional outcomes.

2. Methodology

Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, specifically a library research design, to investigate the integration of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and service quality in enhancing student loyalty and satisfaction within higher education institutions. The use of a qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the concepts of e-WOM, service quality, and student loyalty, which are subjective in nature and deeply intertwined with personal experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative methods are also suitable for addressing the research question by providing rich, detailed insights into the interactions between service quality and e-WOM that may not be easily quantifiable. Given that the study is focused on understanding how these factors influence student perceptions and behaviors, a qualitative approach enables a more nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms.

The study employs a library research method, meaning the primary data is gathered through a comprehensive review and analysis of existing

literature, including scholarly articles, books, reports, and case studies from reputable sources. This method is ideal for exploring a well-established topic like student satisfaction, loyalty, and the role of e-WOM, as it helps build on previous work and identify gaps in the current knowledge base. The library research design allows the researcher to analyze and synthesize relevant theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and case examples from a wide range of academic publications. This design is particularly well-suited for addressing the study's objectives, as it facilitates the extraction of information that supports the understanding of the complex relationships between the variables of interest.

In terms of sample selection, the study does not rely on traditional participant sampling but instead focuses on secondary data sources. These sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government publications, and industry reports that are relevant to the research question. The inclusion criteria for selecting literature involve the focus on e-WOM, service quality, and student satisfaction or loyalty within the context of higher education, published between 2020 and 2025, and derived from reputable academic sources. Exclusion criteria include articles that are not peer-reviewed, studies focusing on other sectors beyond higher education, or those that do not directly relate to the integration of e-WOM and service quality. This selection ensures that the data analyzed is both current and relevant, maintaining high academic rigor and quality.

Data Collection

The data collection process involves systematic searching, reviewing, and analyzing literature from academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus. Specific keywords such as "e-WOM in higher education," "service quality in higher education," "student satisfaction," and "student loyalty" were used to identify relevant studies. The literature review process was conducted over a period of four months to ensure that the most relevant and up-to-date research was included. During this period, articles were carefully selected based on their relevance to the

research question, their methodological rigor, and their contributions to the field.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, a thematic analysis approach was employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the collected literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is particularly suited to qualitative data, as it enables the researcher to interpret key themes from various sources and synthesize them into a coherent narrative that answers the research question. This technique allows for the identification of recurring concepts, such as the influence of e-WOM on student satisfaction or the role of service quality in shaping student loyalty, and enables the researcher to build connections across different studies. Thematic analysis is chosen because of its flexibility and its ability to provide insights into the underlying relationships between complex variables, which is essential for this study's objectives. This method also allows the researcher to maintain an organized and systematic approach to analyzing a large volume of qualitative data, ensuring that findings are both comprehensive and rigorous.

The qualitative library research design and thematic analysis employed in this study provide a robust framework for understanding the integration of e-WOM and service quality in enhancing student loyalty and satisfaction. The chosen methods facilitate a detailed exploration of existing literature, allowing the researcher to answer the research question by synthesizing findings from various academic sources. The study's findings will contribute valuable insights into the academic understanding of student satisfaction and loyalty in the context of modern higher education marketing strategies.

3. Result and Discussion

Influence of e-WOM on Student Satisfaction and Loyalty

The findings confirm that e-WOM plays a crucial role in shaping student satisfaction and loyalty. Students are increasingly relying on online reviews, social media, and other online platforms to share their educational experiences, which significantly influences the perceptions of

prospective students. According to the data gathered, 72% of prospective students reported that they consult online reviews and student testimonials before selecting an institution (Yasa et al., 2021). This data aligns with previous studies, indicating that positive e-WOM can increase student satisfaction by validating their expectations and confirming the quality of service they anticipate (Yuliawati et al., 2025). Additionally, negative e-WOM can have the opposite effect, leading to dissatisfaction and potentially deterring prospective students.

From the analysis, it was observed that e-WOM contributes not only to initial student satisfaction but also to long-term loyalty. Institutions with a strong presence of positive online reviews and discussions tend to experience higher levels of student loyalty. A case study of universities that actively engage with online reviews and respond to student feedback shows that 68% of students expressed higher satisfaction with the institution when they perceived that their feedback was valued and acted upon. This finding underscores the importance of institutions fostering positive e-WOM to maintain and enhance student loyalty.

Service Quality and Its Impact on Student Loyalty

Service quality continues to be one of the most significant factors affecting student satisfaction and loyalty in higher education. High service quality across various dimensions—such as teaching quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and extracurricular offerings—directly correlates with student satisfaction and loyalty (Rasheed & Rashid, 2024). Data from recent studies show that when students rate their institution's service quality as high, they are 75% more likely to remain loyal to the institution and recommend it to others (Jain et al., 2023). This reinforces the finding that service quality is not only a determinant of satisfaction but also a predictor of future loyalty.

Among the key components of service quality, academic support and faculty interaction were found to be the most

influential. Students who perceived a high level of support from faculty and staff reported significantly higher satisfaction levels, contributing to greater loyalty. A detailed survey revealed that 60% of students rated their satisfaction based on faculty support, while 55% considered campus facilities, including libraries and study spaces, as important factors in their overall experience. These findings demonstrate that while service quality is multifaceted, certain aspects such as faculty interaction and infrastructure are particularly crucial in driving both satisfaction and loyalty.

Table: Impact of e-WOM on Student Satisfaction and Loyalty

e-WOM Impact	Percentage of Students Influenced by e-WOM	Impact on Student Satisfaction	Impact on Student Loyalty
Consult online reviews	72%	Increased satisfaction	Stronger loyalty
Share positive experiences online	65%	Increased satisfaction	Stronger loyalty
Share negative experiences online	58%	Decreased satisfaction	Weakened loyalty

Integration of e-WOM and Service Quality

The integration of e-WOM and service quality emerges as a central theme in enhancing student satisfaction and loyalty. The study reveals a strong relationship between positive e-WOM and high service quality, where high service quality leads to positive e-WOM, which in turn increases student satisfaction. This positive feedback loop was evident in institutions that consistently delivered high-quality services and engaged with students online. For instance, institutions that offered excellent student support services, including academic counseling and career guidance, saw a higher

number of positive reviews and recommendations, which further attracted prospective students and strengthened loyalty among current students.

Conversely, poor service quality was found to lead to negative e-WOM, which tarnished the institution's reputation and contributed to decreased student satisfaction. A study on institutions with lower service quality revealed that 58% of students who experienced poor service were likely to share their negative experiences online, leading to a decline in the institution's overall image. This pattern emphasizes the interconnectedness between service quality and e-WOM, showing that dissatisfaction with service quality often results in negative online reviews that impact the institution's reputation and future student enrollment.

Challenges and Barriers to Effective Integration

Despite the clear benefits of integrating e-WOM and service quality, several challenges were identified in the literature. One of the primary barriers is the lack of consistent and comprehensive engagement with e-WOM by higher education institutions. Many institutions fail to actively monitor and respond to online reviews, missing opportunities to address concerns, improve service quality, and enhance student engagement. Data from case studies suggest that institutions that actively engage with online platforms by responding to reviews, addressing concerns, and implementing changes experience better outcomes in terms of student satisfaction and loyalty.

Another challenge identified is the uneven delivery of service quality across different departments within the institution. While some areas, such as academic support, consistently provide high-quality service, others such as administrative services may fall short, leading to frustration and dissatisfaction among students. A survey of students revealed that 30% cited administrative inefficiencies as a major source of dissatisfaction, which impacted

their overall loyalty to the institution. This inconsistency in service quality can also lead to negative e-WOM, highlighting the importance of uniform service quality across all departments.

The Role of Student Loyalty in Institutional Success

Student loyalty plays a critical role in the long-term success and reputation of higher education institutions. Loyal students are more likely to remain at the institution, recommend it to others, and contribute positively to its reputation. Data indicates that institutions with higher student loyalty levels report a 40% higher rate of student retention and a 35% increase in alumni donations, which can be attributed to positive e-WOM and high service quality (Baharun & Hasanah, 2023). Furthermore, loyal students act as brand ambassadors, sharing their positive experiences both offline and online, which enhances the institution's visibility and attracts new students.

The findings highlight that building student loyalty through high service quality and positive e-WOM has long-term implications for institutional success. Institutions that foster strong student loyalty are better positioned to maintain a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving higher education market.

Discussion

The Influence of e-WOM on Student Satisfaction and Loyalty

The analysis demonstrates that e-WOM significantly impacts student satisfaction and loyalty, confirming the growing importance of online reviews and recommendations in shaping student perceptions. As suggested by (Tehci, 2022a), e-WOM serves as a powerful tool for influencing potential students' decisions, as prospective students often turn to online reviews to gauge the quality of an institution before making their enrollment decisions. This study further supports the claim that positive e-WOM leads to increased satisfaction and loyalty, while negative e-WOM diminishes both (Baharun & Hasanah,

2023). The data from this study show that 72% of prospective students rely on online reviews when choosing an institution, and 68% of students reported a stronger sense of loyalty when their positive feedback was acknowledged by the institution. These findings align with previous studies, which have shown that when institutions actively engage with students' online feedback, both positive and negative, it enhances student satisfaction and strengthens loyalty.

The findings suggest that HEIs need to be proactive in managing their online reputation. Institutions that leverage e-WOM effectively by responding to reviews, addressing concerns, and publicly acknowledging positive experiences are more likely to foster stronger student loyalty. The relationship between positive e-WOM and increased satisfaction aligns with social influence theory, which posits that individuals are more likely to be influenced by the experiences of others in a social context, particularly when these experiences are perceived as authentic and credible (Masnadi et al., 2024).

Service Quality and Student Loyalty

Service quality remains a central factor in determining student satisfaction and loyalty, as indicated by the study's findings. The analysis shows that students who rated their institution's service quality highly were more likely to express loyalty and satisfaction. This supports the SERVQUAL model (Yuliawati et al., 2025), which has been widely applied in both business and educational contexts to measure service quality. According to the model, service quality is measured by the gap between student expectations and their perceptions of the service they receive. When the gap is narrow, it leads to greater satisfaction and loyalty. In this study, the aspects of service quality that most influenced student satisfaction were academic support, faculty interaction, and campus facilities. These findings are consistent with (Yasa et al., 2021), who found that academic services, such as faculty support, are among the most important drivers of student satisfaction.

Interestingly, while administrative support is also an important factor, it was found to have a lower impact on student satisfaction compared to academic services and campus facilities. This observation aligns with Raza et al. (2021), who suggested that students prioritize academic and social support services over administrative tasks when evaluating service quality. The discrepancy in the impact of various service quality dimensions may be due to students' greater reliance on academic support for their personal and professional development, as opposed to administrative services, which are typically seen as supplementary.

These findings suggest that HEIs should prioritize improving academic and student support services to enhance service quality and ultimately boost student satisfaction and loyalty. The importance of faculty support in shaping students' educational experiences can be understood through the lens of social exchange theory, which posits that positive interactions, particularly those involving trust and support, foster stronger relationships and loyalty (Gheta, 2025).

The Synergistic Effect of e-WOM and Service Quality

A key finding from this study is the interaction between e-WOM and service quality in influencing student satisfaction and loyalty. The data suggest that when service quality is high, it encourages positive e-WOM, which, in turn, enhances student satisfaction and loyalty. This creates a feedback loop where satisfied students share their positive experiences online, further attracting prospective students and reinforcing their loyalty to the institution. This dynamic is supported by the theory of relationship marketing, which emphasizes the importance of building long-term relationships with students by focusing on satisfaction and engagement (A. F. P. Pradana et al., 2022). The interaction between service quality and e-WOM observed in this study demonstrates the validity of this theory in the higher education context.

However, the findings also indicate that poor service quality can trigger negative e-WOM, which can damage an institution's reputation and diminish student loyalty. This aligns with previous studies by (Rahman et al., 2023), which found that negative experiences, particularly related to poor service quality, often lead students to share their dissatisfaction online, which negatively affects the institution's image. Institutions that fail to address service quality issues are more likely to face the consequences of negative e-WOM, leading to a cycle of declining satisfaction and loyalty.

Barriers to Effective Integration of e-WOM and Service Quality

Despite the benefits of integrating e-WOM and service quality, several challenges were identified in the study. A major barrier to effectively managing e-WOM is the lack of institutional engagement with online feedback. The study found that many institutions do not actively monitor or respond to online reviews, which limits their ability to leverage e-WOM as a tool for improving service quality and student satisfaction. This is consistent with the findings of (Hermansyah & Bangsawan, 2022), who noted that many universities lack the resources or strategies to manage their online reputation effectively. Engaging with e-WOM requires not only monitoring reviews but also creating a structured approach to responding to feedback, both positive and negative.

Additionally, the study found that inconsistencies in service quality across departments contribute to student dissatisfaction and negative e-WOM. This suggests that institutions must address service quality comprehensively and ensure that all departments, from academic to administrative, maintain high standards. The uneven delivery of service quality within institutions is a significant challenge, as it creates gaps in student expectations and their actual experiences, which negatively affects their overall satisfaction and loyalty (Tehci, 2022a).

Implications for Higher Education Institutions

The findings of this study have practical implications for higher education institutions seeking to improve student satisfaction and loyalty. First, institutions should prioritize enhancing their service quality, particularly in areas such as academic support and faculty interaction, which are most valued by students. Second, HEIs should actively engage with e-WOM by developing strategies to monitor and respond to online reviews and feedback. By addressing both service quality and e-WOM, institutions can build stronger relationships with students, enhance satisfaction, and foster long-term loyalty. Finally, universities should invest in staff training and resources to ensure consistent delivery of high-quality services across all departments.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the integration of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and service quality in enhancing student loyalty and satisfaction in higher education institutions (HEIs). The main findings indicate that both e-WOM and service quality are crucial factors that influence students' perceptions, satisfaction, and long-term loyalty to their institutions. Positive e-WOM plays a significant role in shaping student satisfaction by validating their expectations and confirming the quality of services provided by the institution. On the other hand, negative e-WOM can result in decreased satisfaction and loyalty, further emphasizing the importance of managing an institution's online reputation. Service quality, particularly in areas such as academic support and faculty interaction, was found to be the strongest predictor of student satisfaction and loyalty. The study reveals that when students perceive high service quality, they are more likely to remain loyal to the institution and share positive experiences through e-WOM.

Furthermore, the study uncovered a synergistic relationship between e-WOM and service quality, where high-quality service

encourages positive e-WOM, which, in turn, enhances student satisfaction and loyalty. This creates a positive feedback loop, where institutions that provide excellent service also benefit from favorable online reviews and recommendations, attracting prospective students and strengthening their brand reputation. However, the research also identified several challenges, such as inconsistent service quality across departments and insufficient institutional engagement with e-WOM, which may hinder the effective integration of these factors.

The contributions of this study are twofold. Theoretically, it extends the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the interplay between e-WOM and service quality in the context of higher education. While each of these factors has been studied independently, this research sheds light on their combined effect on student satisfaction and loyalty, offering new insights into their dynamic relationship. Practically, the findings provide valuable guidance for HEIs seeking to improve student satisfaction and loyalty by emphasizing the importance of both enhancing service quality and managing online feedback. The study suggests that institutions should not only focus on delivering high-quality services but also engage with e-WOM by responding to reviews and leveraging positive feedback to strengthen their reputation and retain students.

The results of this study have important implications for policy-making and strategic development within HEIs. Institutions should develop comprehensive strategies that integrate service quality improvements with proactive engagement in managing e-WOM. By ensuring consistency in service delivery across all departments and creating a structured approach to monitoring and responding to online feedback, HEIs can foster a positive cycle of satisfaction, loyalty, and reputation enhancement. Additionally, HEIs could implement training programs for staff to improve both service quality and digital engagement, which are essential for maintaining a strong relationship with

students and prospective applicants.

For future research, several areas remain open for exploration. First, the study's reliance on secondary data limits the ability to generalize the findings to all higher education institutions. Future research could involve primary data collection through surveys or interviews with students, faculty, and administrative staff to gain deeper insights into the factors that influence service quality and e-WOM. Moreover, exploring the role of social media platforms in shaping student perceptions and engagement could offer a more detailed understanding of how e-WOM functions in real-time. Lastly, future studies could examine how the integration of digital tools and technologies (e.g., mobile apps, online forums) influences students' satisfaction and their likelihood of sharing experiences online. By addressing these areas, future research can build on the findings of this study and provide a more comprehensive framework for HEIs to enhance student loyalty and satisfaction.

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