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Social-Emotional Value and Coffee Milk eWOM: Mediation of Satisfaction and Engagement

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of perceived social-emotional value on electronic word-of-mouth among Indonesian coffee milk consumers, specifically examining the mediating roles of customer satisfaction and customer engagement. Method: A quantitative study using a causal-explanatory design was conducted. Data were collected via an online survey from 200 purposively sampled respondents who are active on social media. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling with SmartPLS 4.0. Findings: The results demonstrate that Perceived Social-Emotional Value significantly influences both Customer Satisfaction (β = 0.878) and Customer Engagement (β = 0.897). Crucially, while both mediators positively drive eWOM, Customer Engagement exerts a much stronger influence (β = 0.564) compared to Customer Satisfaction (β = 0.293). The analysis confirms that social-emotional value indirectly fosters eWOM through both pathways, with engagement serving as the dominant behavioral driver. Implications: Theoretically, this research specifies the role of non-functional value in driving eWOM. Practically, findings guide managers to focus on creating shared social and emotional experiences to foster positive digital advocacy.

Keywords: Coffee Milk, Customer Engagement, Customer Satisfaction, eWOM, Perceived Social-Emotional Value.

1. Introduction

The coffee consumption landscape in Indonesia has undergone a fundamental transformation, shifting from a functional caffeine necessity to a symbol of modern urban lifestyle [1]. Data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) indicates a consistent rise in domestic coffee consumption, reaching approximately 4.78 million bags. This surge is primarily driven by the coffee milk (kopi susu) phenomenon ready-to-drink coffee blended with milk and palm sugar popularized by grab-and-go chains like Janji Jiwa and Kopi Kenangan. These brands have successfully positioned coffee as a social currency for the younger generation.

In this hyper-competitive digital landscape, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a critical driver of competitiveness. Unlike traditional advertising, eWOM refers to consumer-generated content shared on digital platforms, which is perceived as more credible [2] [3]. However, the drivers of eWOM in the context of lifestyle products are complex. Previous literature presents inconsistent findings; some studies suggest that Perceived Value does not always directly trigger eWOM but requires psychological mediators [4] [5]. Furthermore, existing research often emphasizes functional value, overlooking the Social-Emotional Value the feeling of social acceptance and emotional comfort which is arguably the primary driver for Gen Z and Millennial consumers.

This research aims to bridge this gap by modeling the pathway from Perceived Social-Emotional Value (PSV) to eWOM, mediated by two distinct constructs: Customer Satisfaction (CS) and Customer Engagement (CE). By separating satisfaction (a retrospective evaluation) from engagement (an active psychological state), this study provides a more nuanced understanding of what truly drives viral marketing in the Indonesian coffee industry.

Perceived value is the consumer's overall assessment of utility. In modern consumption, value extends to Social Value (status enhancement) and Emotional Value (feeling happy/comfort) [6] [7]. H1: Perceived Social-Emotional Value has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction. H2: Perceived Social-Emotional Value has a positive and significant effect on Customer Engagement. Customer Satisfaction is a psychological state resulting from confirming expectations [8]. Customer Engagement involves active cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment [9]. H3: Customer Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on eWOM. H4: Customer Engagement has a positive and significant effect on eWOM. The study proposes that social-emotional value does not automatically generate eWOM. Instead, it must first be translated into an internal state of satisfaction or an active state of engagement. H5: Perceived Social-Emotional Value influences eWOM mediated by Customer Satisfaction. H6: Perceived Social-Emotional Value influences eWOM mediated by Customer Engagement.

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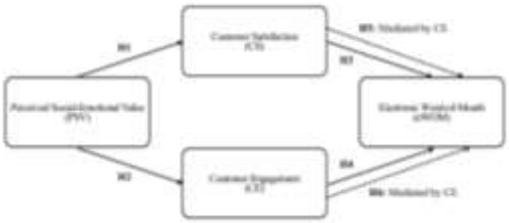

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

2. Research Method

This quantitative study employs a causal-explanatory design. The population comprises Indonesian coffee milk consumers active on social media. A purposive sampling technique was used with the criteria: (1) Purchased coffee milk in the last 3 months, (2) Active social media user. The sample size was 200 respondents, meeting [10] guidelines. Data collection was conducted online (Nov-Dec 2025). The variables were measured using indicators adapted from previous literature (See Table 1). Perceived Social-Emotional Value (PSV): 6 items. Customer Satisfaction (CS): 4 items. Customer Engagement (CE): 6 items. eWOM: 4 items. Next Research Variales on Table 1.

Table 1. Research Variales

Variable	Indicator Code	Indicator Description
Perceived SEV	PSV1 - PSV3	Social Value (Social acceptance, good impression, social approval)
	PSV4 - PSV6	Emotional Value (Happiness, comfort, enjoyment)
Satisfaction	CS1 - CS2	Cognitive Satisfaction (Needs fulfillment, wise choice)
	CS3 - CS4	Affective Satisfaction (Happiness with decision, overall satisfaction)
Engagement	CE1 - CE2	Cognitive Engagement (Interest, attention)
	CE3 - CE4	Emotional Engagement (Pride, enthusiasm)
	CE5 - CE6	Behavioral Engagement (Interaction, energy spent)
eWOM	EWOM1 - EWOM4	Positive discussion, recommendation, encouragement, sharing

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 software. This method is suitable for predicting key target constructs and explaining variance (R^2).

3. Result and Discussion

The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 2. The data shows a diverse consumer base, dominated by females (56%) and the productive age group (36-55 years and 22-35 years). Next Respondent Characteristics on Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	112	56
	Male	88	44
Age	19-21 years	32	16
	22-35 years	80	40
	36-55 years	88	44
Domicile	Bandung	89	44.5
	Tangerang	35	17.5
	Jakarta	29	14.5
	Others (Bekasi, Bogor)	47	23.5
Occupation	Entrepreneur	64	32
	Private Employee	61	30.5
	Housewives	25	12.5
	Others	50	25

The demographic characteristics of the 200 respondents indicate that females constituted the majority of participants, with 112 respondents (56%), while males accounted for 88 respondents (44%). In terms of age, the largest group was respondents aged 36–55 years, comprising 88 respondents (44%), followed by those aged 22–35 years with 80 respondents (40%), and those aged 19–21 years with 32 respondents (16%). Regarding domicile, most respondents lived in Bandung, with 89 respondents (44.5%), followed by other areas, namely Bekasi and Bogor, with 47 respondents (23.5%), Tangerang with 35 respondents (17.5%), and Jakarta with 29 respondents (14.5%). In terms of occupation, entrepreneurs represented the largest proportion, totaling 64 respondents (32%), followed by private employees with 61 respondents (30.5%), respondents in other occupations with 50 respondents (25%), and housewives with 25 respondents (12.5%). Overall, the respondent profile shows a relatively diverse composition in terms of gender, age, domicile, and occupation, providing a broad demographic representation of the study participants. The measurement model was assessed for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. Convergent Validity: Table 3 shows that all outer loadings exceeded the threshold of 0.70 (range: 0.714 - 0.843), indicating valid indicators.

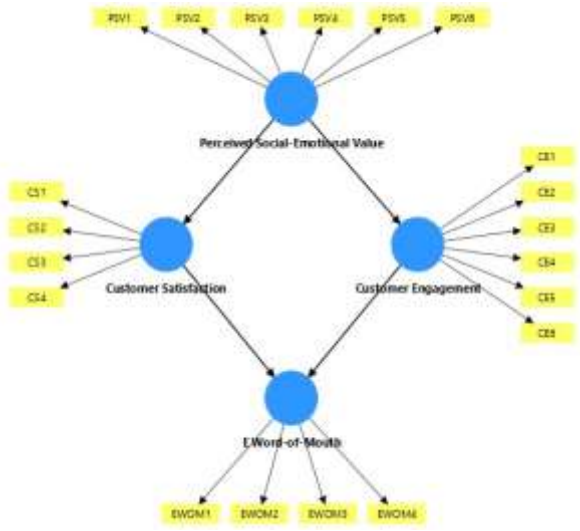

Figure 2. Outer Model Test Output from SmartPLS

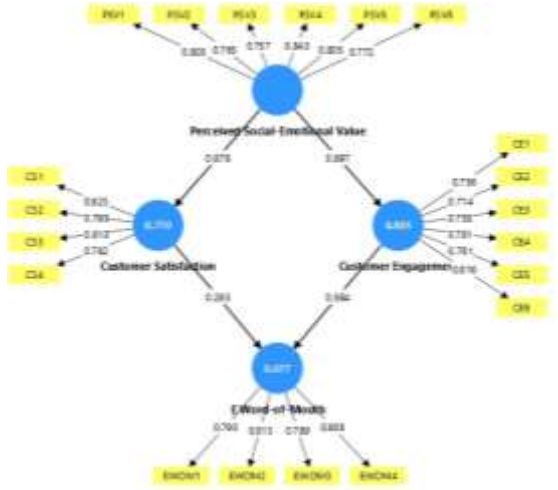

Figure 3. Convergent Validity Test Output showing factor loadings

The measurement model was assessed for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. Convergent Validity: As shown in Table 3, all outer loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (ranging from 0.714 to 0.843), indicating that the indicators are valid measures of their respective constructs. Next Convergent Validity Test Result (Outer Loadings) on Table 3.

Table 3. Convergent Validity Test Result (Outer Loadings)

Item	Customer Engagement	Customer Satisfaction	E-WOM	Perceived SEV
CE1	0.756			
CE2	0.714			
CE3	0.758			
CE4	0.781			
CE5	0.761			
CE6	0.816			
CS1		0.823		
CS2		0.798		
CS3		0.810		
CS4		0.782		
EWOM1			0.790	
EWOM2			0.813	
EWOM3			0.789	
EWOM4			0.808	
PSV1				0.803
PSV2				0.765
PSV3				0.757
PSV4				0.843
PSV5				0.805
PSV6				0.772

Discriminant Validity: Using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 4), the square root of AVE (bold diagonal) for each construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs, confirming distinctiveness. Next Discriminant Validity Test Result on Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test Result

Construct	Customer Engagement	Customer Satisfaction	eWOM	Perceived Social Emotional Value
Customer Engagement	0.765			
Customer Satisfaction	0.822	0.803		
eWOM	0.806	0.757	0.800	
Perceived Social Emotional Value	0.897	0.878	0.805	0.791

Reliability Table 5 shows that all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, indicating high internal consistency.

Table 5. Reliability Test Result

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Customer Engagement	0.858	0.860
Customer Satisfaction	0.817	0.818
E Word-of-Mouth	0.813	0.817
Perceived Social-Emotional Value	0.880	0.881

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model) on Figure 4.

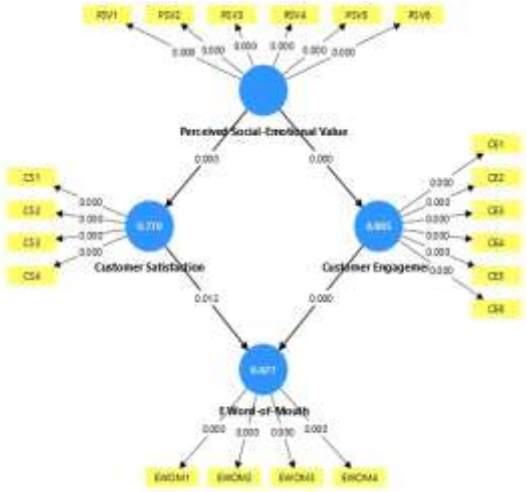

Figure 4. Inner Model Testing showing path coefficients and t-values

The predictive power of the model is substantial. As shown in Table 6, the model explains 80.5% of the variance in Customer Engagement and 67.7% of the variance in eWOM. Next R-Square (R2) Test Result on Table 6.

Table 6. R-Square (R^2) Test Result

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Customer Engagement	0.805	0.803
Customer Satisfaction	0.770	0.768
E Word-of-Mouth	0.677	0.670

Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. The results for direct effects are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Result (Direct Effects)

Hypothesis	Path	Coeff. (β)	T-Stats	P-Value	Result
H1	PSV → Satisfaction	0.878	20.344	0	Accepted
H2	PSV → Engagement	0.897	24.534	0	Accepted
H3	Satisfaction → eWOM	0.293	2.521	0.012	Accepted
H4	Engagement → eWOM	0.564	5.719	0	Accepted

The first hypothesis examines the effect of Perceived Social-Emotional Value on Customer Satisfaction. The results show a very strong positive relationship, with a path coefficient of β = 0.878. This finding confirms that consumers who perceive coffee milk consumption

as providing greater social and emotional value tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction. Therefore, H1 is supported. This result indicates that customer satisfaction in the Indonesian coffee milk market is not merely determined by functional attributes such as taste, price, product quality, or convenience [11] [12]. Consumers may also evaluate their experience based on the social and emotional meanings associated with the product. In this context, coffee milk can provide feelings of comfort, happiness, social acceptance, belonging, and self-expression [13] [14]. When consumers feel that a coffee brand fits their lifestyle and enables them to participate in a socially recognizable consumption culture, the consumption experience becomes more meaningful, consequently increasing satisfaction [15]. The indirect effects (mediation analysis) are presented in Table 8. Both mediation paths are significant.

The second hypothesis examines whether Perceived Social-Emotional Value influences Customer Engagement. The findings demonstrate a very strong positive effect, with a path coefficient of β = 0.897. Thus, H2 is supported. Among the relationships examined in this study, this coefficient represents one of the strongest relationships, indicating that social-emotional value is particularly important in transforming consumers from passive buyers into actively engaged customers [16]. Customer Engagement differs from satisfaction because engagement represents an active psychological state involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in a brand [17] [18]. A satisfied consumer may simply feel that a product has fulfilled expectations, whereas an engaged consumer is more likely to think about the brand, interact with it, follow its activities, discuss it with others, or voluntarily participate in brand-related activities [19].

The third hypothesis proposes that Customer Satisfaction positively influences electronic word-of-mouth. The results support H3, with a path coefficient of β = 0.293. Although the effect is positive, its magnitude is considerably lower than the effect of Customer Engagement on eWOM. This finding suggests that satisfied consumers are more likely to share positive experiences, but satisfaction alone may not be sufficient to generate strong advocacy or extensive digital communication. The result can be explained by the nature of satisfaction as a retrospective evaluation of a consumption experience. When consumers feel that their expectations have been fulfilled, they may develop positive attitudes toward the brand and become willing to communicate favorable experiences. Explains customer satisfaction as a psychological state that emerges when consumer expectations are appropriately confirmed. In the context of coffee milk, consumers who are satisfied with the taste, service, atmosphere, convenience, or overall experience may subsequently recommend the brand or provide positive reviews online [20].

The fourth hypothesis examines the effect of Customer Engagement on eWOM. The results show a positive relationship with a coefficient of β = 0.564, supporting H4. Importantly, the magnitude of this coefficient is almost twice that of Customer Satisfaction on eWOM (β = 0.293). This constitutes one of the most important findings of the study because it demonstrates that actively engaged consumers are considerably more influential in generating eWOM than consumers who are merely satisfied. The stronger effect of CE can be understood from the conceptual distinction between satisfaction and engagement. Satisfaction primarily reflects an evaluation of whether a consumption experience meets or exceeds expectations, while engagement involves active cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in the brand [11]. Engaged consumers are therefore more likely to interact with brands, consume brand-related content, participate in online conversations, create user-generated content, provide recommendations, and share experiences with their social networks. Next Indirect Effect Result (Mediation) on Table 8.

Table 8. Indirect Effect Result (Mediation)

Path	Coeff. (β)	T-Stats	P-Value	Result
PSV → Satisfaction → eWOM	0.257	2.454	0.014	Significant
PSV → Engagement → eWOM	0.506	5.362	0	Significant

The findings of this study provide deep empirical insights into the coffee milk market in Indonesia. The Primacy of Social-Emotional Value: The high coefficients for H1 (β = 0.878) and H2 (β = 0.897) confirm that social-emotional value is a massive driver. Consumers derive immense satisfaction and engagement from the *feelings* evoked by the brand (social acceptance, comfort), supporting the Theory of Consumption Values. From a managerial perspective, this finding indicates that coffee brands must continue to ensure that their social-emotional positioning is supported by an actual satisfying experience. Emotional branding that promises comfort, belonging, or social recognition will not generate sustainable eWOM if the actual product and service experience fails to meet consumer expectations. Therefore, brands need to maintain product quality, service consistency, convenience, and overall customer experience while simultaneously strengthening the emotional and social meanings attached to the brand.

Engagement vs. Satisfaction: A critical finding is that while Satisfaction influences eWOM (β = 0.293), Customer Engagement's impact is nearly double (β = 0.564). This suggests that "Engaged" customers who actively interact and feel attached are the true drivers of advocacy compared to merely "Satisfied" customers. This finding is particularly significant in the Indonesian coffee milk market, where brands operate within a highly social and digital consumption environment. Coffee consumption can become a form of identity expression, social participation, and emotional experience. Consequently, brands that successfully generate social-emotional value can create consumers who are not simply buyers but also active participants

in brand communication. Such consumers can become organic advocates who amplify brand messages through reviews, recommendations, social media posts, comments, and other forms of eWOM.

Mediation Pathways: PSV triggers eWOM primarily through the Engagement pathway (0.506) rather than the Satisfaction pathway (0.257). Strategies focused solely on satisfaction are insufficient for viral growth; brands must build engagement. Theoretically, these findings extend the Theory of Consumption Values by demonstrating that social and emotional value are not merely supplementary dimensions of consumer value but can become powerful antecedents of satisfaction, engagement, and eWOM in lifestyle-oriented consumption. The findings also reinforce the distinction between satisfaction as a relatively passive evaluative state and engagement as a more active psychological and behavioral state. This distinction is particularly important in digital marketing research because eWOM requires consumers to move beyond evaluation toward communication and participation.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that Perceived Social-Emotional Value plays a central role in the coffee milk marketing ecosystem. It acts as the fuel that powers both Customer Satisfaction and Customer Engagement. However, regarding the outcome of eWOM, Customer Engagement emerges as the dominant driver. Managerial Implications: Emotional Branding: Marketing narratives should highlight how the brand facilitates social connection (nongkrong culture) and emotional relief, rather than just product features. Foster Active Participation: To drive eWOM, brands must facilitate engagement through interactive social media campaigns and user-generated content challenges. Community Over Transaction: Brands should focus on building communities (e.g., loyal fan groups) to transform passive satisfied customers into active engaged advocates. Limitations: This study is limited to digital-savvy consumers in Indonesia. Future research could explore moderating variables such as generational cohorts.

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