

The Impact of Social Media Interaction on Emotional Engagement, Brand Relationship Quality, and Word of Mouth

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ABSTRACT : This study examines the influence of social media interaction on emotional engagement, brand relationship quality, and word of mouth (WOM) within the context of the SMALAND music concert in Samarinda, Indonesia. Drawing on Uses and Gratification Theory, the research investigates whether emotional engagement and brand relationship quality mediate the relationship between social media interaction and WOM. Data were collected through an online survey distributed to 105 concert attendees who followed the official Instagram account of SMALAND. Using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings reveal that social media interaction significantly enhances brand relationship quality and directly influences WOM. Emotional engagement, however, does not play a significant mediating role, while brand relationship quality demonstrates a strong mediating effect between social media interaction and WOM. These results highlight that effective social media strategies can build meaningful consumer–brand relationships that drive voluntary advocacy. The study contributes to the literature on digital engagement and event marketing by providing empirical evidence from a community-based concert setting in Indonesia. Practical implications suggest that event organizers should emphasize relationship-building strategies on social media to strengthen audience loyalty and maximize WOM outcomes.

KEYWORDS—*Social Media Interaction, Emotional Engagement, Brand Relationship Quality, Word of Mouth Event Marketing*

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a dominant channel for shaping consumer experiences, perceptions, and behaviors, particularly in the entertainment industry. In Indonesia, more than 167 million active social media users spend an average of over three hours daily engaging with platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, making these platforms essential for event promotion and audience engagement. Within this context, music concerts are increasingly relying on social media not only as a promotional tool but also as a medium to build meaningful relationships with their audiences.

Prior studies have established that social media interactivity enhances customer engagement, trust, and word of mouth (WOM) (1)(2). Emotional engagement has been identified as a driver of voluntary communication behaviors (3), while brand relationship quality is recognized as a mediator that strengthens consumer advocacy (4). However, research findings remain inconsistent. For instance, (5) found that network density as a form of social media interaction had no significant effect on WOM intentions, while (6) highlighted that user-to-user interaction exerts a stronger effect on WOM than user-to-media interaction. These inconsistencies indicate that not all dimensions of social media interaction automatically translate into WOM.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how social media interaction influences WOM through emotional engagement and brand relationship quality among attendees of the SMALAND music concert in Samarinda. This study contributes to the literature by addressing empirical gaps in event marketing research and by providing evidence from a local, youth-driven music festival. The findings are expected to enrich the understanding of digital engagement strategies in event management and to offer practical insights for organizers seeking to maximize audience loyalty and advocacy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Social media interaction has emerged as a critical factor in shaping consumer behavior, as it enables two-way communication between brands and audiences. Carr & Hayes, (2015) describe it as a dynamic channel that allows users to engage in real-time dialogue and self-presentation, while (8) emphasizes the importance of entertainment, information accessibility, consumer–brand interaction, and trust as its key dimensions. Prior studies suggest that such interactivity strengthens consumer involvement and loyalty, thereby fostering greater advocacy (1). Within the context of event marketing, social media interaction is particularly relevant, as it not only provides information but also creates opportunities for audiences to build connections with the brand behind an event. Accordingly, this study proposes that social media

interaction positively influences emotional engagement (**H1**) and brand relationship quality (**H2**), while also directly enhancing word of mouth (**H3**).

Emotional engagement refers to the affective response consumers experience when exposed to marketing stimuli, such as excitement, joy, and a sense of connection (9). In music events, immersive social media content often triggers enthusiasm and fosters deeper psychological bonds with the event brand (1) (10). Liu et al. (2021) further argue that heightened emotional intensity significantly drives e-WOM across platforms. Nevertheless, empirical findings are not entirely consistent; for instance, Anastasiei et al. (2023) demonstrated that certain forms of social media interactivity, such as network density, do not significantly influence WOM intentions. These mixed results suggest that emotions may not always translate directly into advocacy, but when they do, they strengthen the likelihood of voluntary communication. Based on this reasoning, it is hypothesized that emotional engagement exerts a positive influence on WOM (**H4**) and acts as a mediator between social media interaction and WOM (**H6**).

Another essential construct in understanding consumer advocacy is brand relationship quality (BRQ), which represents the strength of the emotional and psychological ties between consumers and brands. Fournier (1998) conceptualized BRQ as encompassing trust, commitment, and emotional closeness, while Francisco-Maffezzoli et al. (2014) and Kim et al. (2014) emphasized its role in sustaining loyalty. Empirical evidence confirms that BRQ significantly mediates the impact of customer experiences on WOM, as found in the hospitality and service sectors (4) (2). Within the digital sphere, consistent social media interactions are considered essential for building strong brand relationships that encourage voluntary recommendations. Thus, it is expected that BRQ has a positive effect on WOM (**H5**) and serves as a mediator between social media interaction and WOM (**H7**).

WOM itself is one of the most influential outcomes of consumer–brand interaction. Defined as voluntary communication about products, services, or experiences (14), WOM plays a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. In the digital age, WOM extends into electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), where consumers share recommendations through social platforms, reviews, and online communities (15). Due to its credibility and peer-driven nature, WOM is particularly effective in event marketing, where authentic audience experiences often determine the popularity and reputation of concerts and festivals.

Building on these theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, this study develops a framework linking social media interaction, emotional engagement, brand relationship quality, and WOM in the context of the SMALAND music concert. By integrating both direct and mediating effects, the model seeks to clarify the inconsistent findings in previous research and provide new insights into how social media engagement translates into audience advocacy in a community-based entertainment setting.

III. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using survey data to examine the relationships among social media interaction, emotional engagement, brand relationship quality, and word of mouth (WOM) in the context of the SMALAND music concert in Samarinda, Indonesia. The research design was based on Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is suitable for testing complex models with multiple mediators and relatively small sample sizes (16).

The target population consisted of attendees of the SMALAND concert, a youth-driven annual music festival organized by students in Samarinda. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling with two criteria: they must have attended at two most recent SMALAND concerts and followed the official Instagram account @Smaland.fest. Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire distributed via social media channels such as Instagram and WhatsApp. A total of 95 valid responses were obtained, which met the minimum requirement of five times the number of observed indicators ($19 \text{ indicators} \times 5 = 95$) as recommended by Hair et al. (2014).

Measurement instruments were adapted from prior studies to ensure validity and reliability. Social media interaction was measured using six items developed by Khatib, (2016), focusing on interactivity, trust, and ease of information exchange. Emotional engagement was assessed through five items reflecting enthusiasm, enjoyment, and connectedness (10) (1). Brand relationship quality was measured with five indicators covering trust, commitment, and identification with the brand event (12) (11). WOM was measured with three items capturing positive experience sharing, recommendations, and encouragement of others to attend (17). All constructs were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

Data analysis followed a two-step procedure using SmartPLS software. First, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure convergent and discriminant validity, as well as construct reliability through composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha. Second, the structural model was tested to assess path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), and the significance of relationships using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Mediation effects were evaluated following the guidelines of (16), distinguishing between full and partial mediation.

IV. RESULT

The study collected 105 valid responses from audiences of the SMALAND music concert, dominated by young adults aged 17–30 who actively followed the official Instagram account of the event. The descriptive analysis of the questionnaire showed that participants generally evaluated the constructs positively, with mean values consistently above 4.00 on a 5-point Likert scale and relatively low standard deviations, indicating homogeneity of responses. These results suggest that respondents perceived the social media campaigns of SMALAND as engaging, trustworthy, and effective in encouraging advocacy behaviors such as recommending the concert to friends or sharing content online.

Structural model testing further revealed varying levels of support for the hypotheses. As shown in Table 1, social media interaction significantly influenced emotional engagement (H1), brand relationship quality (H2), and word of mouth (H3). Brand relationship quality also had a significant effect on word of mouth (H5), and further acted as a significant mediator between social media interaction and word of mouth (H7). In contrast, emotional engagement did not show a significant effect on word of mouth (H4), nor did it serve as a mediator between social media interaction and word of mouth (H6).

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Original Sample	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Social Media Interaction → Emotional Engagement	0.846	10.470	0.000	Significant
H2	Social Media Interaction → Brand Relationship Quality	0.823	13.396	0.000	Significant
H3	Social Media Interaction → Word of Mouth	0.383	2.871	0.004	Significant
H4	Emotional Engagement → Word of Mouth	0.248	1.779	0.075	Not Significant
H5	Brand Relationship Quality → Word of Mouth	0.256	2.250	0.025	Significant
H6	Social Media Interaction → Emotional Engagement → Word of Mouth	0.210	1.763	0.078	Not Significant
H7	Social Media Interaction → Brand Relationship Quality → Word of Mouth	0.211	2.223	0.026	Significant

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings of this research highlight that social media interaction plays an essential role in shaping audience behavior during the SMALAND music concert in Samarinda. The analysis confirmed that social media interaction significantly affects emotional engagement, brand relationship quality, and word of mouth directly, while brand relationship quality also shows a significant influence on word of mouth and mediates the relationship between social media interaction and word of mouth. These results emphasize that building strong relational ties with the brand through social media can effectively encourage audiences to spread positive recommendations. However, emotional engagement did not demonstrate a significant impact on word of mouth and failed to act as a mediator, suggesting that emotional feelings of excitement or enjoyment alone are not sufficient to drive audience advocacy. This conclusion underlines that brand relationship quality provides a more consistent pathway to stimulate word-of-mouth behavior compared to emotional engagement.

Based on these results, future research is recommended to focus more specifically on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as the primary outcome variable, given its strategic importance in digital marketing and event promotion. Since emotional engagement did not significantly influence e-WOM in this study, scholars are encouraged to test alternative mediating or moderating variables, which may better capture the mechanisms that drive advocacy behavior. Furthermore, future studies are advised to actively search for and integrate alternative variables that can replace or complement emotional engagement, ensuring that the research framework remains adaptive to different contexts. Expanding the research across diverse event categories and audience demographics will also provide richer insights and improve the generalizability of the findings.

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