



The Role of Experiential Marketing and Digital Marketing on Brand Loyalty with Electronic Word Of Mouth as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract

Healthcare services play an important role in ensuring the community's welfare, with hospitals and clinics striving to provide high-quality and professional medical services. Amidst increasing competition in the healthcare sector, especially in specialized hospitals, brand loyalty is crucial to maintaining a strong patient base. This research examines the role of experiential marketing and digital marketing in shaping brand loyalty, with electronic word of mouth (eWOM) as a mediating variable. This research uses a quantitative methodology using a structured questionnaire distributed to 180 patients from a specialized heart hospital in West Java, Indonesia. The collected data was analyzed using SmartPLS 4 software to evaluate the relationship between the variables under research. The findings confirm that experiential and digital marketing significantly influence eWOM and brand loyalty. In addition, eWOM plays an important mediating role, increasing the impact of marketing strategies on patient loyalty. The results show that a positive patient experience greatly enhances eWOM, which fosters stronger brand loyalty when combined with effective digital marketing. These findings have significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature on healthcare marketing by highlighting the interaction between experience-based marketing, digital marketing, eWOM, and brand loyalty. Practically, these insights can help hospital management refine their marketing strategies to increase patient loyalty through improved service quality and digital engagement. Policymakers can also leverage these insights to develop regulations that support a modern and adaptive healthcare marketing approach.

Keywords: Brand Loyalty, Digital Marketing, Electronic Word Of Mouth, Experiential Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Medical services are integral to all services in hospitals or clinics (Isa et al., 2020). The services provided must meet the needs and demands of the community for professional health services. Nursing always tries to carry out service activities in a measured and directed manner so that it is expected in terms of curative but also promotive, preventive, and rehabilitative, with or without collaborating with other fields and sections to create a complete health service.

Professionalism in providing care, both medical and nursing, aims to ensure the quality of services provided to the community. It is based on an understanding of the existence of a specific scientific basis and becomes the basis for nursing practice. The ability of nursing personnel to

carry out these nursing practices is accompanied by the application of these nursing practices to human welfare (Mulyadi & Hannan, 2015).

In Indonesia, regulations governing healthcare have been established through various regulations, such as Law No. 44 of 2009 on Hospitals and Law No. 17 of 2023 on Health (Japar et al., 2024). However, challenges in healthcare remain, especially in ensuring affordability and quality of medical services. Based on West Java BPS data in 2019, there were 281 general and 64 specialized hospitals, indicating intense competition in the healthcare industry. In Cirebon Regency alone, there are 20 public and private hospitals, including Hasna Medika Cirebon Heart Hospital, the first specialized heart hospital in the CIAYUMAJAKUNING region.

Brand loyalty has been a widely studied topic in marketing, including in the healthcare sector. Brand loyalty is believed to play an important role in encouraging consumers to return to make choices on products that are their preference (Ashley et al., 2016; Bastian, 2014; Curatman et al., 2022; Illahi & Andarini, 2022; Lim & Lee, 2015; Putra & Sulistyawati, 2019; Sandy Zhang et al., 2014; Samuel & Putra, 2018; Sun et al., 2013). Defined as a consumer's commitment to buy products from the same brand consistently, it can also be interpreted as a consumer's willingness to continue buying products from a particular brand (Bastian, 2014; Curatman et al., 2019; Illahi & Andarini, 2022; Mutum et al., 2014); brand loyalty is predicted to be able to influence consumer choice of a brand (Bastian, 2014), as well as the possibility of these consumers recommending the brand to their colleagues and networks (Curatman et al., 2022; Lahindah & Sanjaya, 2023; Sayudin et al., 2023; Siahaan et al., 2023). In essence, brand loyalty is believed to be able to retain customers and become the most effective marketing medium in increasing the brand of a product both directly and indirectly.

Previous research shows that several variables predict brand loyalty. For example, experiential marketing can predict brand loyalty (Adha et al., 2023; Prajapati & Goswami, 2023; Tiwik Setyawati & Sri Darma, 2018). Furthermore, customer loyalty is also influenced by experience, service, and impact felt by customers (Zhao & Zhang, 2009; Palanisamy & Ravi, 2019). The variables influencing brand loyalty are brand experience, brand image, satisfaction, and trust (Putra & Sulistyawati, 2019; Siahaan et al., 2023). Consumers or service customers can reorder a product or service with these variables. Of the existing research, quantitative research that discusses the role of experiential and digital marketing in predicting brand loyalty with electronic word of mouth as a mediating variable in the context of hospital patients has not been widely conducted.

In the digital era, experiential and digital marketing strategies are becoming increasingly important in building patient loyalty (Januardani et al., 2023). Hasna Medika Cirebon Heart Hospital, as a specialized cardiac health service institution, faces challenges in increasing competitiveness and maintaining patient loyalty amid increasingly fierce competition in the health industry. Therefore, this research becomes relevant to understanding how experiential and digital marketing contributes to shaping brand loyalty with e-WOM as a mediating variable.

This research offers an academic contribution by analyzing the role of experiential and digital marketing in shaping hospital patients' brand loyalty mediated by e-WOM. This research fills a gap in the previous literature that has not extensively addressed the interrelationship between these variables in healthcare, particularly cardiac hospitals.

Based on the above background, this research aims to analyze the effect of experiential and digital marketing on hospital patient brand loyalty and determine the role of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as a mediating variable in the relationship between experiential and digital marketing and hospital patient brand loyalty. The results of this research are expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits, including adding insight into health services marketing literature related to brand loyalty and experiential and digital marketing strategies, providing recommendations for hospital management in developing more effective marketing strategies to increase patient loyalty, and providing insight for policymakers in the health sector in designing regulations related to health service marketing that are more adaptive to digital developments.

METHOD

This research uses quantitative methodology with structured questionnaires to capture information about the role of experiential marketing and digital marketing in predicting Brand Loyalty with electronic word of mouth as a mediating variable. This quantitative method is taken into consideration due to objectivity and generalization. Quantitative research is often considered more objective because it uses numerical and statistical data. The questionnaire was distributed in September 2024 to patients of one of the heart hospitals in West Java, Indonesia. The questionnaire was filled in by respondents directly with the researcher or via a web-based survey. The researcher provided brief information about this research at the beginning of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was in Indonesian and distributed to patients less than 60 years old. There were 180 respondents, assuming this number was representative enough to justify the final findings. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4 software.

The selection of patients from one of the heart hospitals in West Java is because this hospital is considered relevant to current topics and trends related to competition in the service world. The hospital has an easily accessible geographical location and the availability of adequate resources, both human resources, facilities, and infrastructure. Sampling in this research uses non-probability sampling, which is a sampling technique where not all members of the population in the same population have the opportunity to be selected as samples (Astari & Pramudana, 2016; Fransisca Andreani, 2007; Khouja et al., 2011; Zhou et al., 2019). The framework of this research is:

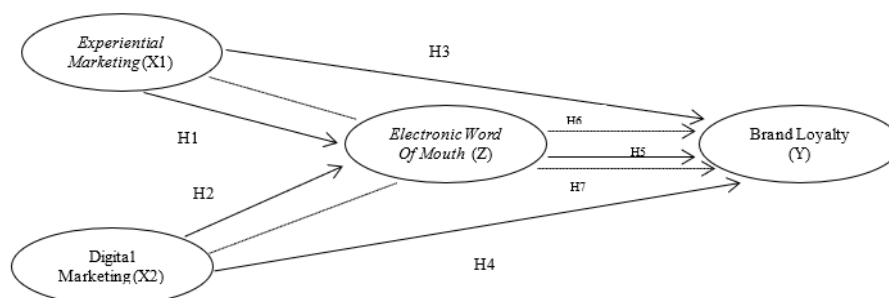


Figure 1. Framework of Thought

From the picture in the Thinking Framework model as in Figure above and based on the research review, the hypothesis in this research can be formulated as follows:

- H1 : Experiential Marketing is predicted to be positively related to Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM)
- H2 : Digital Marketing is expected to be positively related to Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM)
- H3 : Experiential marketing is predicted to be positively related to Brand Loyalty.
- H4 : Digital marketing is expected to be positively related to Brand Loyalty
- H5 : Electronic Word Of Mouth (EWOM) is predicted to be positively related to Brand Loyalty.
- H6 : Electronic Word Of Mouth (EWOM) is thought to mediate the relationship between experiential marketing and Brand Loyalty.
- H7 : Electronic Word Of Mouth (EWOM) is thought to mediate the relationship between digital marketing and Brand Loyalty.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to analyze the role of experiential marketing and digital marketing in predicting brand loyalty with electronic word of mouth as a mediating variable. Based on the results of data analysis obtained from 180 respondents through a web-based survey and data processing using SmartPLS 4 software, the demographic data of respondents is generated as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics (N = 180 Respondents)

Variables	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	113	62,8 %
Female	67	37,2 %
Age		
< 20 years	5	2,8%
20 - 30 years	30	16,6%
31 - 40 years	35	19,4%
41 - 50 years	75	41,6%

Variables	Frequency	%
51 - 60 years	35	19,4%
Type of Health Insurer		
Company	4	2,2%
Private (Public)	6	3,3%
BPJS Health	165	91,7%
Insurance	5	2,8%
More	0	0%
Length of time as a heart hospital patient		
<1 year	20	11,1%
1 - 3 years	40	22,2%
4 - 6 years	96	53,3%
7 - 10 years	21	11,6%
>10 years	3	1,7%

Source: Authors work (2024)

Most respondents were male, 113 people (62.8%), and female, 67 people (37.2%). In terms of age, the largest group of respondents was 41-50 years old (75 people or 41.6%), while the smallest group was <20 years old, with as many as five respondents (2.8%). In terms of health guarantor, it can be seen that the most significant number of respondents were from the BPJS Health guarantor (165 respondents or 91.7%), while the rest (8.3%) were a mixture of various sources of medical expenses. Meanwhile, regarding the length of time being a patient at the heart hospital, most patients had experienced treatment for 4-6 years (96 respondents or 53.3%). The least was the length of treatment of more than 10 years as many as three respondents (1.7%).

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

Validity Test

Convergent validity and discriminant validity are components of validity measurements. Convergent Validity analysis is determined using the loading factor parameter and the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value.

a. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is the correlation between indicator scores and construct scores. The convergent validity value is a loading factor on the latent variable with its indicator. It is expected to have a value of > 0.7 and AVE > 0.5. The figure below is an image of the results of the factor loading test in the SmartPLS application.

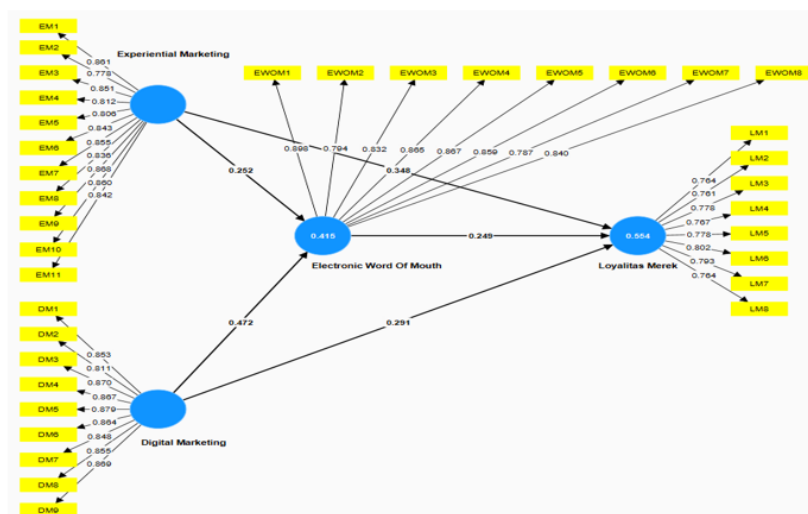


Figure 2. Loading Factor Test Results

Source: Authors work (2024)

Another validity tool is AVE (Average Variance Extracted). The AVE value must be > 0.5 .

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Value

Variables	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Digital Marketing	0,736
Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,712
Experiential Marketing	0,702
Brand Loyalty	0,602

Source: Authors work (2024)

The table above shows that all AVE values of each variable are > 0.5 . Thus, the loading factor and AVE values have met the Convergent Validity requirements.

b. Discriminant Validity

Several tests are carried out in discriminant validity by examining the value of larger formal and cross-loadings.

Fornel Larcker

The Fornel Larcker criterium value and AVE value of each indicator from the brilliant pls output results are as follows:

Table 3. Fornel Larcker value

Variables	Digital Marketing	Electronic Word Of Mouth	Experiential Marketing
Digital Marketing	0,858		
Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,609	0,844	
Experiential Marketing	0,543	0,508	0,838
Brand Loyalty	0,631	0,603	0,632

Source: Authors work (2024)

The characteristic validity test through the Fornell-Larcker criterion table has the value of the first variable, which must be more significant in the construct of each variable, as shown in the table above. The Digital Marketing variable has a value of 0.858 more significant than the other variable constructs, the Electronic Word Of Mouth variable has a value of 0.844 more significant than the other variable constructs, and the Experiential marketing variable has a value of 0.838 more significant than the other variable constructs. So, all variable constructs are valid and have met the requirements of the discriminant validity test.

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

The HTMT ratio must be smaller than 1 to meet the requirements of discriminant validity.

Table 4. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Variables	Digital Marketing	Electronic Word Of Mouth	Experiential Marketing
Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,639		
Experiential Marketing	0,566	0,530	
Brand Loyalty	0,674	0,645	0,673

Variables	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
Electronic Word Of Mouth↔ Digital Marketing	0,639
Experiential Marketing↔ Digital Marketing	0,566
Experiential Marketing↔ Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,530
Brand Loyalty↔ Digital Marketing	0,674
Brand Loyalty↔ Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,645
Brand Loyalty↔ Experiential Marketing	0,673

The table above shows that all variables have an HTMT value below 1. So, it can be concluded that the variable passes the HTMT test stage.

Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha

The following table below shows the Cronbach's alpha value as follows:

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's alpha
Digital Marketing	0,955
Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,942
Experiential Marketing	0,957
Brand Loyalty	0,906

Source: Authors work (2024)

From the table above, it can be seen that all indicators in each variable have met the reliability test requirements, namely the Cronbach's alpha value > 0.6.

Composite Reliability

Composite reliability tests the reliability value of the variables' indicators. If the composite reliability value is > 0.7, the variable can be declared fulfilled. The data is as follows.

Table 6. Composite Reliability Value

Variables	Composite reliability (rho_a)
Digital Marketing	0,955
Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,943
Experiential Marketing	0,959
Brand Loyalty	0,907

Source: Authors work (2024)

All variables have a composite reliability value of > 0.7 based on the table above. Thus, it can be concluded that all variables in this research are declared to meet the requirements so that this research can be continued at the inner model testing stage.

Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

Goodness of Fit Test

a) R-Square

Table 7. R-Square value

Variables	R-square
Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,415
Brand Loyalty	0,554

Source: Authors work (2024)

Based on Table 7 above, it can be seen that the R-Square value of the Electronic word-of-mouth variable is 0.415, so this value is a sign that the Experiential Marketing variable, Digital Marketing variable, and Brand Loyalty variable affect the Electronic word-of-mouth variable by 41.5%. Other variables influence the remaining 58.5%, and the R-Square value of the Brand Loyalty Variable is 0.554, so this value is a sign that the Experiential Marketing variable, Digital Marketing variable, and Electronic Word Of Mouth variable affect the Brand Loyalty variable by 55.4%. Other variables influence the remaining 44.6%.

b) F-Square

Ghozali (2021: 73-74) states that effect size (f^2) determines the model's inverse. The f^2 value consists of 0.02 (weak), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.35 (strong).

Table 8. F-Square Value

Variables	Electronic Word Of Mouth	Brand Loyalty
Digital Marketing	0,268	0,105
Experiential Marketing	0,077	0,177
Electronic Word Of Mouth		0,081

Source: Authors work (2024)

Based on the table above, the Digital Marketing variable influences the Electronic word-of-mouth variable of 0.268 (moderate) and the brand loyalty variable of 0.105 (weak). The Experiential Marketing variables influence the Electronic Word-of-Mouth Variable of 0.077 (weak) and the Brand Loyalty Variable of 0.177 (moderate). The electronic word-of-mouth variable influences brand loyalty by 0.081 (weak).

c) Q2 Predictive Relevance

Evaluation of the PLS model is also carried out with Q2 Predictive Relevance. This can be seen in the table below:

Table 9. Construct Crossvalidated Redundancy Value

Variables	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,289
Brand Loyalty	0,323

Source: Authors work (2024)

Based on the data processing results, the predictive relevance value of the electronic word-of-mouth variable is $0.289 > 0$, and the brand loyalty variable is $0.323 > 0$. So, it is stated that the data diversity the research model can explain is 28.9% and 32.3%. Other factors outside this research explain the remaining 71.1% and 67.7%. Therefore, this research shows the good qualities of Fit.

d) Model Fit

It is a value that shows how good the model under research is. This value determines the accumulative percentage that shows the model's value. The following are the research model's Model Fit results.

Table 10. Model Fit

Data	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0,064	0,064
d_ULS	2,740	2,740
d_G	1,584	1,584
Chi-square	1410,433	1410,433
NFI	0,784	0,784

Source: Authors work (2024)

The NFI value in the table above shows a Saturated Model value of 0.064, which indicates a 64% gross model fit, and an Estimated Model of 0.064, which indicates a 64% estimated model fit. The results conclude that the model is 65% fit for the research model.

Hypothesis Test

Table 11. Hypothesis Test Results

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Digital Marketing -> Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,472	0,475	0,108	4,361	0,000
Digital Marketing -> Brand Loyalty	0,291	0,289	0,093	3,130	0,002
Electronic Word Of Mouth -> Brand Loyalty	0,249	0,256	0,078	3,198	0,001
Experiential Marketing -> Electronic Word Of Mouth	0,252	0,253	0,098	2,561	0,010
Experiential Marketing -> Brand Loyalty	0,348	0,349	0,079	4,399	0,000

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Digital Marketing -> Electronic Word Of Mouth -> Brand Loyalty	0,118	0,123	0,053	2,239	0,025
Experiential Marketing -> Electronic Word Of Mouth -> Brand Loyalty	0,063	0,063	0,030	2,123	0,034

Source: Authors work (2024)

The criteria for accepting the hypothesis is if the T-statistic is more than 1.96 and the P-value is less than 0.05. H_a is accepted, and H_o is rejected, and vice versa, while the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

1) First Hypothesis Test

Research Results:

Digital Marketing variables have a significant positive effect on Electronic word-of-mouth variables. Seen from the regression coefficient value of 0.472. The data management results show a T-Statistic value of 4.361, more significant than the T-Table value of 1.96, with a P-value of 0.000 smaller than 0.05. Therefore, the Digital Marketing Variable positively and significantly affects the electronic word-of-mouth. This proves that strong digital marketing will form an extraordinary electronic word-of-mouth pattern among the public; according to (Abdul Rauf, 2016), digital marketing is an extraordinary connection between producers and consumers, and this will have an impact on eWOM (Purba & Paramita, 2021).

2) Second Hypothesis Test

Research Results:

Digital Marketing variables have a significant positive effect on Brand Loyalty Variables. It can be seen from the regression coefficient value of 0.291. Moreover, from the results of data management, there is a T-Statistic value of 3.130, more significant than the T-Table value of 1.96 with a P-value of 0.002, more diminutive than 0.05; therefore, the Digital Marketing Variable has a Positive and Significant Effect on the Brand Loyalty Variable. Strong digital marketing will increase brand awareness and brand loyalty to the company by repeatedly using products or services. According to (Siahaan et al., 2023), brand associations are used to grow or communicate with others to construct automatic brand connections.

3) Third Hypothesis Test

Research Results:

The Electronic word-of-mouth variable has a significant positive effect on the Brand Loyalty variable. It can be seen from the regression coefficient value of 0.249. Moreover, from the results of data management, there is a T-Statistic value of 3.198 greater than the T-Table value of 1.96 with a P-value of 0.001 smaller than 0.05; therefore, the Electronic word-of Mouth Variable has a Positive and Significant Effect on the Brand Loyalty Variable. EWOM is the easiest way for potential customers to see the level of satisfaction, which in turn will increase the company's brand loyalty (Dumat et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2019; Hawkins & Vel, 2013).

4) Fourth Hypothesis Test

Research Results:

Experiential Marketing variables have a significant positive effect on Electronic word-of-mouth variables. It can be seen from the regression coefficient value of 0.252. The data management results show a T-Statistic value of 2.561, more significant than the T-Table value of 1.96, with a P-value of 0.010, more diminutive than 0.05. Therefore, the Experiential Marketing Variable positively and significantly affects the electronic word-of-mouth. Experiential marketing is the most powerful way to see, feel, and enjoy the product honestly. This will increase reviews on social media or the expansion of consumer eWOM to the company.

5) Fifth Hypothesis Test

Research Results:

Experiential Marketing variables have a significant positive effect on Brand Loyalty Variables. It can be seen from the regression coefficient value of 0.348. The data management results show a T-Statistic value of 4.399, more significant than the T-Table value of 1.96, with a P-value of 0.000 smaller than 0.05. Therefore, the Experiential Marketing Variable has a Positive and Significant Effect on the Brand Loyalty Variable. Experiential marketing that increases consumers will strengthen brand loyalty; this is related to significant experiences and previous consumer reviews on social media.

6) Sixth Hypothesis Test

Research Results:

Electronic Word Of Mouth Variables Mediate the Influence of Digital Marketing Variables on Brand Loyalty Variables. As seen from the regression coefficient value of 0.118 and the results of data management, there is a T-Statistic value of 2.239 more significant than the T-Table value of 1.96 with a P-value of 0.025 smaller than 0.05; therefore, the Electronic Word Of Mouth Variable Mediates the influence of Digital Marketing Variables on Brand Loyalty Variables. As a simple analogy, if consumers or customers are comfortable with our services, eWOM mediates digital marketing on brand loyalty.

7) Seventh Hypothesis Test

Research Results:

Electronic Word Of Mouth Variables Mediate the Influence of Experiential Marketing Variables on Brand Loyalty Variables. Seen from the regression coefficient value of 0.063. Moreover, from the data management results, a T-Statistic value of 2.123 is more significant than the T-Table value of 1.96, with a P-value of 0.034, more diminutive than 0.05. Therefore, the electronic word-of-mouth variable mediates the influence of experiential marketing variables on brand loyalty variables. The experiences of other people or previous consumers can be used as an alternative to the perception of experiential marketing. New consumers who experience services for the first time will be influenced by eWOM, which ultimately leads to brand loyalty.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research confirms that all hypotheses proposed are statistically significant and accepted. These findings show that experiential and digital marketing positively influence electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and brand loyalty. In addition, eWOM acts as an important mediator in strengthening the relationship between marketing strategy and brand loyalty. This research highlights that a patient's positive experience during treatment significantly increases eWOM, which fosters stronger brand loyalty when combined with effective digital marketing. In the highly competitive healthcare sector, marketing strategies are vital in attracting and retaining customers. A strong digital presence and superior service quality contribute to long-term brand trust and loyalty.

For future research, exploring the impact of other moderating variables, such as patient demographics, service differentiation, and hospital reputation, on brand loyalty will provide deeper insights. In addition, integrating a qualitative approach can enrich the understanding of consumer perceptions and emotional responses to hospital services. Further research can also examine the role of emerging technologies, such as AI-based customer engagement and telemedicine, in improving the effectiveness of experiential marketing and eWOM in the healthcare industry.

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