

**THE INFLUENCE OF E-WORD OF MOUTH AND E-SERVICE QUALITY ON  
CUSTOMER LOYALTY MEDIATED BY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION (STUDY ON  
RAKAN RAJA TOUR & TRAVEL)**

**\* Raja Mulkan Azhari, Muhammad Adam and Mahdani**  
Management Department, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to examine the e-word of mouth (e-wom) and e-service quality (e-servqual) influence on customer loyalty which is mediated by customer satisfaction. The population in this research was all customers at Rakan Raja Tour & Travel whose addresses in Lhokseumawe City and Aceh Besar District, Indonesia. Because the population was infinite, the sample in this study was determined using the number of research indicators times 5 to obtain a sample size of  $22 \times 5 = 110$  respondents. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to all research respondents. Data was measured using a Likert scale and analyzed using the SEM-AMOS model. The results show that the descriptive hypothesis testing proves that e-wom, e-servqual, satisfaction, and loyalty are good; the direct hypothesis testing shows that e-wom significantly influences satisfaction, e-wom does not significantly influence loyalty, e-servqual significantly influences satisfaction, e-servqual significantly influences loyalty, and satisfaction does not significantly influence loyalty; and the indirect hypothesis testing proves that satisfaction mediates (full mediation) e-wom on customer loyalty, and satisfaction mediates (partial mediation) e-servqual on customer loyalty. All these findings prove that the model of strengthening customer loyalty is a function of increasing and strengthening e-WOM, e-servqual, and customer satisfaction.

**Keywords:** E-word Of Mouth, E-service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The current state of the business market is expanding worldwide, supported by technological advances. Apart from these advances, companies also face increasingly fierce competition between companies. Due to increasing competition, more and more companies are dealing in products and services. Business competition requires strategic efforts that can be used as appropriate behavior in all situations and all businesses must be able to develop mature steps to survive, continue to grow, and add value to the company. Competition is getting tougher in terms of providing the best service because many companies are competing to provide the best service to their customers.

Feelings of loyalty to customers are not formed in a short time. This of course has an impact on service units that need to provide the best service to their customers. In general, companies with service units that can optimally identify customer needs and wants win in today's service business. Many factors influence customer loyalty, one of which is customer satisfaction. Satisfaction can be understood as a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment from a comparison between his impression of the performance (results) of a product and his expectations. Customer satisfaction will also not be separated from service quality. Service quality can be determined by comparing

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customer perceptions of the service they receive or what the customer gets with the expected service. If the service received or perceived is one of the expected services, then the perceived quality of the service is good. In the digital era, online platforms have significantly increased customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and indirectly influenced the economic growth of society. This phenomenon provides potential opportunities to develop and utilize all industrial sectors in marketing products and services (Adam, Ibrahim, Ikramuddin, & Syahputra, 2020).

(Kotler & Keller, 2018) express electronic word of mouth (e-wom) refers to the process by which consumers share their opinions, reviews, and experiences about products or services through digital platforms such as social media, websites, online forums, and product reviews. In the digital era, e-WOM has become an important tool in marketing strategy. Customers are often more likely to trust recommendations from friends, family, or even online reviews than direct marketing messages from a company. Therefore, companies need to monitor and respond to e-wom wisely, both to strengthen a positive reputation and overcome problems or criticism that arise. Customer relationships can be strengthened by the pressure of information technology to satisfy consumers. The scope includes the need for integrated quality control worldwide to more proactively meet business needs with customers. By maximizing the influence of e-wom on customer satisfaction, companies must be able to improve service quality and product/service perfection through the use of efficient methods, one of which is the use of e-wom. This is due to technological advances that influence the way of doing business digitally. Customer satisfaction plays a very important role in the success of a company to survive, be able to compete, and create great loyalty value in the eyes of customers.

Consumer reviews will influence consumer loyalty, and various considerations in customer evaluation such as service factors, satisfaction, and quality factors. Good service at the company will bring satisfaction to the customers themselves, as well as the quality of the products the company provides to customers brings many benefits in every transaction activity, thus having a positive impact on customers. In the long term, customer satisfaction can be used as the main goal for planning a company's service strategy. Therefore, a company must maintain customer satisfaction. Because making customer reviews about a company is not easy, because the occurrence of e-wom cannot be separated from the consumer's experience of the product or service consumed. According to (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012), The information contained in e-wom becomes a reference for consumers in evaluating products or brands.

## **2. LITERATURE**

### **Customer loyalty**

Customer Loyalty in this article will often be called just loyalty. According to (Griffin, 2003) Loyal customers cannot be obtained directly, but rather through stages starting from looking for customers who have potential to getting customers who can be invited to work together. Customer loyalty is a customer attitude that takes the form of loyalty to the company by being willing to make continuous purchases (Rezvani, Gilaninia, Mousavian, & Branch, 2011). (Lombard & Plessis, 2011) reveals the relationship between relationship marketing and customer loyalty. It was explained that the goals based on relationship marketing aim to stabilize and maintain long-term interactions with consumers. Companies realize that it is more profitable if they can keep and satisfy comparable customers rather than looking for new customers. Revealing that to make relationship marketing work, marketers are required to set up a customer-based

management system that focuses on the lifetime value received by customers, retaining customers, and customer-relationship activities over time.

(Griffin, 1998) reveals customer loyalty plays an important role in a company, and maintaining sustainability means improving financial performance and maintaining company profitability. Customer loyalty is the attitude that customers have in the form of loyalty to the company by being willing to make repeat purchases (Rezvani et al., 2011). According to (Sochenda, 2021) Customer loyalty is a form of strong and deep commitment to making repeat purchases and being willing to serve as a reference for other customers in the future. Loyal or loyal customers on the other hand are those who reuse the same business, inform other potential customers through word of mouth, and act as a deterrent to competitors' attacks. Therefore, the success of a company depends on the loyalty of its customers. According to (Fornell, 2013) Customer loyalty is a customer's willingness to make long-term purchases from a company, using a product or service repeatedly and voluntarily recommending it to friends and other companies.

### **Customer satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction in this article will often be referred to simply as satisfaction. After a customer purchases a product or service, the customer reviews the product or service to assess whether the product or service meets the customer's expectations (Adji & Semuel, 2014). If products and services meet customer desires, customers will feel satisfied. Meeting customer needs is the hope of all business people. Factors that influence customer perceptions and desires when purchasing a good or service are the customer's needs when purchasing the good or service, previous experience of consuming the good or service, and the experience of other customers who purchased the good or service (Umar, 2003). Customers who are satisfied with the value offered by a product or service are more likely to remain loyal customers.

According to (Fornell, 2013) customer satisfaction greatly influences the level of success and failure in marketing activities evaluated by customers. Customer satisfaction is the main object that will be evaluated by customers. This will have a direct effect where customers will maintain their loyalty and remain in touch with a company. This will show customer satisfaction. (Lovelock, 2011) explains that satisfaction is an emotional state and the reaction after making a purchase, can be anger, dissatisfaction, irritation, neutrality, or joy. Given the direct relationship to customer loyalty, market share, as well as profits, it is not surprising that companies are obsessed with customer satisfaction. A person feels satisfied if his emotions meet or exceed expectations.

### **e-Word of Mouth**

Easily accessible information can significantly influence consumption decisions (Adam, Ibrahim, Putra, & Yunus, 2023). Word of Mouth (wom) is a process that promotes information between individuals and plays an important role in customer service decisions (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009). Apart from that, the research also states that WOM consists of customers in commercial situations sharing attitudes, comments, or responses to companies, products/services with other people. Based on (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012), wom can have a very strong impact on the form of products that will be marketed. Wom features based on social networks and trust are those who rely on family, friends, and other people in their social networks. People are more interested in the opinions of people outside of social networks such as online reviews (Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008). This form is called online wom (o-wom) or electronic

wom (e-wom).

According to (Ibrahim et al., 2022) there is a need for management to control the use of public networking sites within the organization (e.g. Facebook, Instagram) and should promote internal social networking platforms (which will increase connectivity among company employees and increase work efficiency). Social media can be used to build strong relationships between companies and followers on social media platforms. Responding to comments, and questions, and paying attention to customer concerns will help create a positive experience for the company. Every consumer who consumes the product will review the product independently, but that is their own opinion and cannot be refuted. If consumers are satisfied or dissatisfied with the consumption of the product, they will provide feedback and share the product with other people who have the same social media account, email, blog, or website they created previously (Fitayani, 2018).

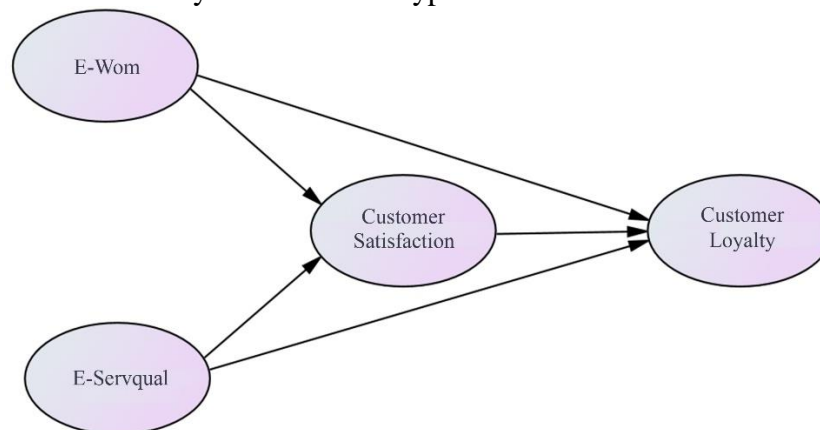
The use of wom and e-wom can be differentiated in their implementation, wom is usually done traditionally or directly and the internet media is not online. e-wom is carried out digitally, usually via the internet, social media, and others. In the modern era, the Internet has an important role in the world of marketing that can communicate or influence its users (Litvin W, Ronald E, & Bing, 2017). It is better to review blogs or people using websites, this drives significant buyer interest. The results of the analysis carried out by (Soebiagdo & Ruliana, 2017) show that consumers and consumer purchasing interests have a major impact on e-wom and consumer purchasing interests.

### **e-Service Quality**

(Zeithaml, 2013) explains that e-service quality (e-servqual) is all transactions that occur between consumers and websites, where the website must provide comfort and effectiveness in shopping, buying, and delivering products to consumers. In e-service, consumers not only evaluate the sub-processes of each online visit but also all the processes they go through when obtaining overall service quality. E-servqual is a new version of service quality (servqual). E-servqual was also developed to evaluate a service provided on the Internet network. E-servqual can also be explained as an extension of a site's capabilities to facilitate shopping, purchasing, and distribution activities effectively and efficiently.

### **Model and Hypothesis**

The author formulates the study model and its hypotheses as follows.



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**Figure 1. Research Framework**

- H1: E-wom, E-servqual, Satisfaction, and Loyalty to Rakan Raja Tour & Travel are good  
H2: E- wom significantly influences the satisfaction to Rakan Raja Tour & Travel  
H3: E- wom significantly influences the Loyalty to Rakan Raja Tour & Travel  
H4: E-servqual significantly influences the satisfaction to Raja Tour & Travel  
H5: E-servqual significantly influences the Loyalty to Rakan Raja Tour & Travel  
H6: Satisfaction significantly influences the Loyalty to Rakan Raja Tour & Travel  
H7: E- wom significantly influences Loyalty to Rakan Raja Tour & Travel through Satisfaction  
H8: E-servqual significantly influences the Loyalty to Rakan Raja Tour & Travel through Satisfaction.

### **3. METHOD**

This study took place in Rakan Raja Tour & Travel at two places, namely Lhokseumawe City and Aceh Besar district. The population in this research was all customers of Rakan Raja Tour & Travel. According to (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016) the sample size should be 100 or even larger. As a general rule, the minimum sample size is at least five times larger than the number of question items to be analyzed, and the sample size will be more acceptable if it has a ratio of 5:1. In this study there were 22 question items, so the minimum sample size required was  $22 \times 5 = 110$  respondents.

Research data was collected by distributing questionnaires consisting of question items that were distributed directly to all research respondents which were measured using a Likert scale. To find out the results of direct hypothesis analysis, the data was analyzed using SEM-AMOS. To find out the results of indirect hypothesis analysis, the data was analyzed using a Sobel calculator. In this research, researchers built constructs for each variable, namely:

1. To measure customer loyalty variables using indicators as stated by (Setiyawati, 2009) namely (a) recommending to others, (b) searching for information, (c) using other services offered, (d) customer comfort level, (e) not being influenced by offers from competitors.
2. To measure customer satisfaction variables using indicators as stated by (Kotler & Keller, 2018) namely (a) The quality provided is following what was promised., (b) Good service and satisfaction for customers, (c) Conformity to expectations, (d) Interest in returning, (e) Willingness to Recommend
3. To measure the e-wom variable using indicators as stated by (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012) namely (a) Reading online product reviews from other consumers, (b) Making sure to buy the right product/brand, (c) Looking for guidance in online product reviews, (d) Gathering information from online product reviews, (e) Feeling worried about decisions taken, (f) Confidence in purchasing certain products/brands.
4. To measure electronic service quality variables using indicators as stated by (Veryani & Andarini, 2022) namely (a) Reliability, (b) Responsiveness, (c) Privacy/security, (d) Information quality/benefits, (e) Ease of use/usability, (f) Web Design.

### **4. RESULT**

#### **Descriptive Hypothesis Testing (H1)**

Descriptive hypothesis testing in this research for e-wom, e-servqual, customer loyalty, and

customer satisfaction used a one-sample test with a cut-off value of 3.41

Table 1. Descriptive Testing

Variable	Mean	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)
Customer loyalty	3.89	110	0.000
Customer satisfaction	3.85	110	0.000
e-WOM	3.74	110	0.000
e-servqual	3.80	110	0.000

Source: Processed Data (2023)

The table above shows that all variables have obtained a mean value greater than 3.41 and a sig value. (2-tailed) all variables are  $0.000 < 0.05$ . These results explain that all the variables in this study have worked well at Rakan Raja Tour & Travel where these results show that H1 is accepted where Ha1 is accepted.

Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing (H2 to H6)

The SEM processing results are as follows

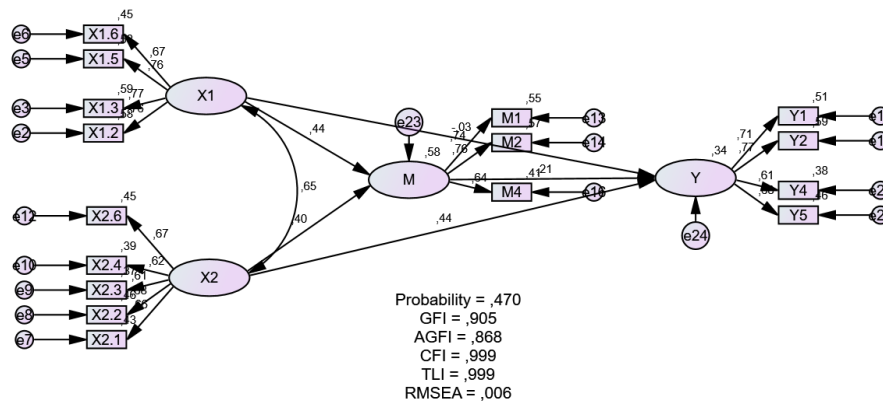


Figure 2. Structural Model Test Result

To see whether there is an influence on the results above, the results are presented in more detail in the following table.

Table 2. Regression Results

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Satisfaction	<--- E-wom	0.405	0.138	2.929	0.003
Satisfaction	<--- E-servqual	0.389	0.153	2.544	0.011
Loyalty	<--- E-wom	-0.031	0.172	-0.178	0.859
Loyalty	<--- E-servqual	0.447	0.198	2.256	0.024
Loyalty	<--- Satisfaction	0.215	0.213	1.009	0.313

Source: Processed Data (2023)

Table 2 above, apart from explaining the output of the Structural test, also explains the direct

effects. For the e-wom hypothesis, satisfaction and loyalty are significant. These results prove that hypothesis 2 is accepted, but prove that hypothesis 3 is not accepted, where:

H2 (accepted): E-wom significantly influences the satisfaction of Rakan Raja Tour & Travel

H3 (rejected): E-wom does not significantly influence the Loyalty of Rakan Raja Tour & Travel

The output from the structural model equation also explains the direct effect of e-servqual influence on satisfaction and loyalty. The results prove that hypotheses 4 and 5 are accepted in this study where:

H4 (accepted): E-servqual turns out to significantly influence the satisfaction of Rakan Raja Tour & Travel

H5 (accepted): E-servqual turns out to significantly influence the Loyalty of Rakan Raja Tour & Travel

Furthermore, the results of the analysis show that there is no effect of satisfaction on loyalty so hypothesis 6 of this research is rejected. Thus these results do not prove hypothesis 6 of this study where:

H6 (rejected): satisfaction does not significantly influence the loyalty of Rakan Raja Tour & Travel

**Indirect Effect Hypothesis (H7 and H8)**

Testing the E-wom on Loyalty through Satisfaction

To see the significance of satisfaction as a mediator on the e-WOM influence on loyalty, the test used the Sobel calculator, by involving the unstandardized values and standard error in the formula, as in the following image.

Input:		Test statistic:	Std. Error:	p-value:
a	0.315	Sobel test: 2.70940216	0.04731856	0.00674046
b	0.407	Aroian test: 2.66453583	0.04811532	0.00770947
s <sub>a</sub>	0.080	Goodman test: 2.756614	0.04650814	0.00584033
s <sub>b</sub>	0.109	Reset all	Calculate	

**Figure 3.** Mediation Effect of Hypothesis 7

Testing H7 shows the e-wom indirect influence on loyalty through satisfaction provides the statistical value of 2.709 > 1.96 and p 0.006 < 0.05. This proves the indirect effect is significant, so Ha7 is accepted. Based on the calculation for path C', a chart for all paths A, B, C, and C' is figured below.



**Figure 4. Hypothesis 7 Model Chart**

The image above explains that the e-wom variable significantly influences satisfaction and satisfaction does not influence loyalty, by seeing the coefficient of path A has  $\beta = 0.545$  and  $p\ 0.003 < 0.05$ , and path B has  $\beta = 0.378$  and  $p\ 0.313 > 0.000$ , while e-wom does not significantly influences loyalty and indirectly the satisfaction can mediate the e-wom influence on loyalty, by seeing the path C has  $\beta = 0.353$  and  $p\ 0.859 > 0.05$  and C' has  $\beta = 0.206$  ( $0.545 \times 0.378$ ) and  $p\ 0.006 < 0.05$ . These values reveal that paths A and C' are significant, but B and C are not significant. This is referred to as full mediation. In other words, the e-wom can only influence loyalty significantly through satisfaction, while directly can't. The magnitude of the satisfaction mediation effect is 0.206 or 20.6%.

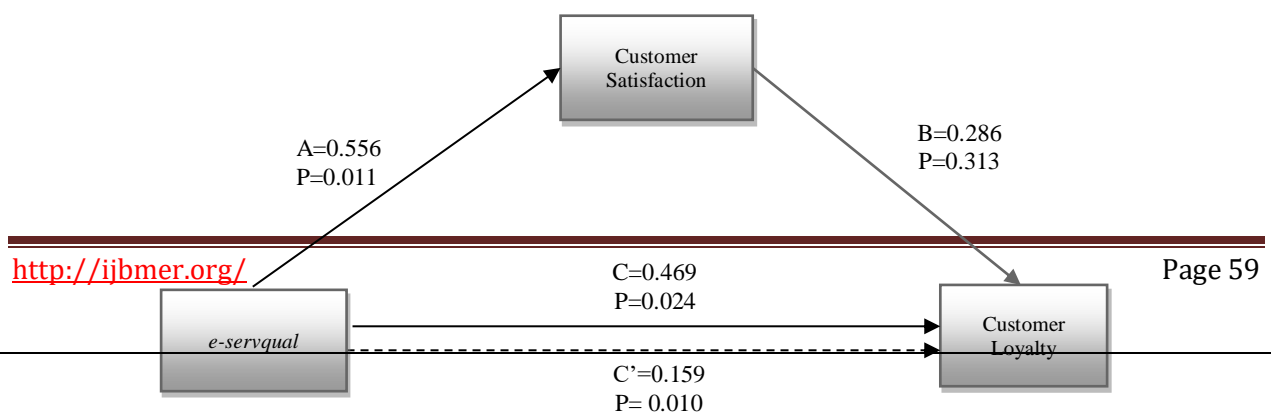
Testing the E-servqual on Loyalty through Satisfaction

To find out the significance of satisfaction as a mediator on the e-servqual influence on loyalty, the test used the Sobel calculator, by involving the unstandardized values and standard error in the formula, as in the following image.

Input:		Test statistic:	Std. Error:	p-value:
a	0.401	Sobel test: 2.54965268	0.04844111	0.01078303
b	0.308	Aroian test: 2.51713898	0.04906682	0.01183121
s <sub>a</sub>	0.073	Goodman test: 2.58345977	0.04780721	0.00978149
s <sub>b</sub>	0.107	Reset all	Calculate	

**Figure 5. Mediation Effect of Hypothesis 8**

Testing the mediation hypothesis of H8 as seen in the picture above shows the e-servqual indirect influence on loyalty through satisfaction provides a statistical value of 2,549 > 1.96 and  $p\ 0.010 < 0.05$ . So this proves the indirect effect is significant, or that Ha8 is accepted. Based on the calculation for path C', a chart for all paths A, B, C, and C' to test the e-servqual indirect effect on loyalty through satisfaction is figured below.





**Figure 6.** Hypothesis 8 Model Chart

The image above explains that directly the e-servqual variable significantly influences satisfaction but satisfaction does not significantly influence loyalty, by looking at the coefficient of path A has  $\beta = 0.556$  and  $p\ 0.011 < 0.05$ , and Path B has  $\beta = 0.286$  and  $p\ 0.313 > 0.05$ . Meanwhile, e-servqual significantly influences loyalty, and indirectly the satisfaction can mediate significantly the e-servqual influence on loyalty by looking at the path C has  $\beta = 0.469$  and  $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$  and C' has  $\beta = 0.159$  ( $0.556 \times 0.286$ ) and  $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$ . This value shows that paths A, C, and C' are significant but B is not significant. These results are referred to as partial mediation. In other words, the e-servqual can influence significantly loyalty directly, or through satisfaction as a mediation. The magnitude is 0.159 or 15.9%

## 5. DISCUSSION

### H2: E-wom on Satisfaction

Based on the research results, it is known that e-WOM significantly influences satisfaction, which can be seen from the CR of  $2.929 > 1.96$  and a probability value of  $0.003 < 0.05$ . The results of this research indicate that e-wom is something that can determine the satisfaction of Rakan Raja Tour & Travel, which means that these results show that the better e-wom for Rakan Raja Tour & Travel customers affects increasing the customer satisfaction of Rakan Raja Tour & Travel. These results are in line with (Itasari, Hastuti, & Supriyadi, 2020).

### H3: E-wom on Loyalty

The results show that the e-wom does not significantly influence satisfaction, which can be seen from the CR of  $-0.178 < 1.96$  and a probability of  $0.859 > 0.05$ . These results indicate that e-WOM is not an important factor in creating Rakan Raja Tour & Travel customer loyalty. These results are in line with the research results of (Ahmudin & Ranto, 2023).

### H4: E-servqual on Satisfaction

Based on the research results, it is known that e-servqual significantly influences customer satisfaction, which can be seen from the CR of  $2.544 > 1.96$  and a probability of  $0.011 < 0.05$ . These results explain that e-servqual is good and can be a factor in creating satisfaction. These results are not in line with the research of (Nurani, 2017); (Rijaya, Adam, & Mukhlis, 2023); (Itasari et al., 2020); (Tammubua & Surapto, 2021); (Nurdia, Utami, & Halimatussakdiah, 2023).

### H5: E-servqual on Loyalty

The results show that e-servqual significantly influences loyalty, which can be seen from the CR of  $2.256 > 1.96$  and a probability value of  $0.024 < 0.05$ . This result is in line with the previous ones which stated that service quality significantly influences loyalty as done by (Nurani,

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2017); (Irwanto & Gayatri, 2020); (Tammubua & Surapto, 2021); (Nurdia et al., 2023).

#### **H6: Satisfaction with Loyalty**

The test results do not prove that satisfaction can affect loyalty which can be seen on CR of  $1.009 < 1.96$ , a significance or probability value of  $0.313 > 0.05$ . The results of this research are not in line with studies such as those conducted by (Nurani, 2017); (Adam et al., 2020); (Tammubua & Surapto, 2021); (Albani & Hafasnuddin, 2022); (Nurdia et al., 2023).

#### **H7: E-wom on Loyalty through Satisfaction**

The result of the mediation test shows that satisfaction fully mediates the e-WOM influence on loyalty. It is known that e-WOM does not significantly influence loyalty, which can be seen from the statistic value of 2.709 and the probability value of  $0.006 < 0.05$ . Full means the e-wom can only influence loyalty significantly through satisfaction, while directly can't. This result is in line with (Paludi, 2022) which states that e-WOM does not directly influence satisfaction, but e-WOM indirectly influences satisfaction through other variables.

#### **H8: E-servqual on Loyalty through Satisfaction**

The result of the mediation test shows satisfaction partially mediates e-servqual influence on loyalty which can be seen from a statistic value of 2.549 and a significance of  $0.010 < 0.05$ . Partial means the e-servqual can influence significantly the loyalty directly, or through satisfaction as a mediation. These results are in line with previous studies which stated that satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and loyalty as done by (Nurani, 2017); (Tammubua & Surapto, 2021); (Albani & Hafasnuddin, 2022); (Nurdia et al., 2023).

### **6. CONCLUSION**

The results of descriptive hypothesis testing prove that e-wom, e-servqual, satisfaction, and loyalty are good. The results of direct hypothesis testing show that e-wom significantly influences satisfaction (H2), e-wom does not significantly influence loyalty (H3), e-servqual significantly influences satisfaction (H4), e-servqual significantly influences loyalty (H5), and satisfaction does not significantly influence loyalty (H6). The results of indirect hypothesis testing prove that satisfaction mediates (full mediation) e-wom on loyalty (H7), and satisfaction mediates (partial mediation) e-servqual on loyalty (H8). All these findings prove that the model of strengthening customer loyalty is a function of increasing and strengthening e-wom, e-servqual, and customer satisfaction. These findings are premises that can be used as a further academic theory developer. The limitation of this study is the model form which accommodates only 4 variables. Future researchers can also use these findings by adding other variables to the model. Practically, the model proven in this study can be utilized by practitioners, especially management at Rakan Raja Tour & Travel, to restructure their management strategies to achieve the expected customer loyalty.

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