

THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY AND POSITIVE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION THROUGH ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH IN THE NEW STUDENT ADMISSIONS AT NURUL HIKMAH ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION SIDOARJO

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Abstract: Education plays an important role in forming quality human resources that are able to compete in the era of globalization. Nurul Hikmah Islamic Education Institution in Sidoarjo is one of the educational institutions that continues to strive to improve the quality of service in order to attract public interest, especially in the New Student Admissions (PPDB) process. This study aims to analyze the effect of Service Quality and Positive Emotional Experience on Customer Satisfaction, both directly and through Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) as a mediating variable. This study uses a quantitative approach with the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method based on Partial Least Square (PLS), involving 160 respondents who are guardians of students from the Playgroup, Kindergarten, and Elementary levels. The study results showed that Service Quality had a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction and eWOM. Meanwhile, Positive Emotional Experience had a significant effect on eWOM, but did not have a direct effect on Customer Satisfaction. eWOM was proven to have a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction and was able to be a mediating path between Service Quality and guardian satisfaction. These findings reinforce the importance of service quality and positive emotional experiences in shaping satisfaction and strengthening promotional strategies through social media

Keywords: *Service Quality, Positive Emotional Experience, Customer Satisfaction, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Education, New Student Admissions.*

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1. Introduction

Education is a vital foundation in developing high-quality and competitive human resources. In today's era of globalization, education not only serves as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a tool to shape character and develop the skills needed to face challenges in the workforce (Subroto et al., 2023). In the context of Indonesia, education plays a strategic role in promoting economic growth and social development. The advancement of science and technology today also significantly influences the education system in our country. Along with the rapid development in the 21st century, we realize that Indonesia is faced with various

opportunities (Fricticarani et al., 2023). Therefore, it is essential to pursue the highest level of education possible in order to save Indonesia from falling behind in this era.

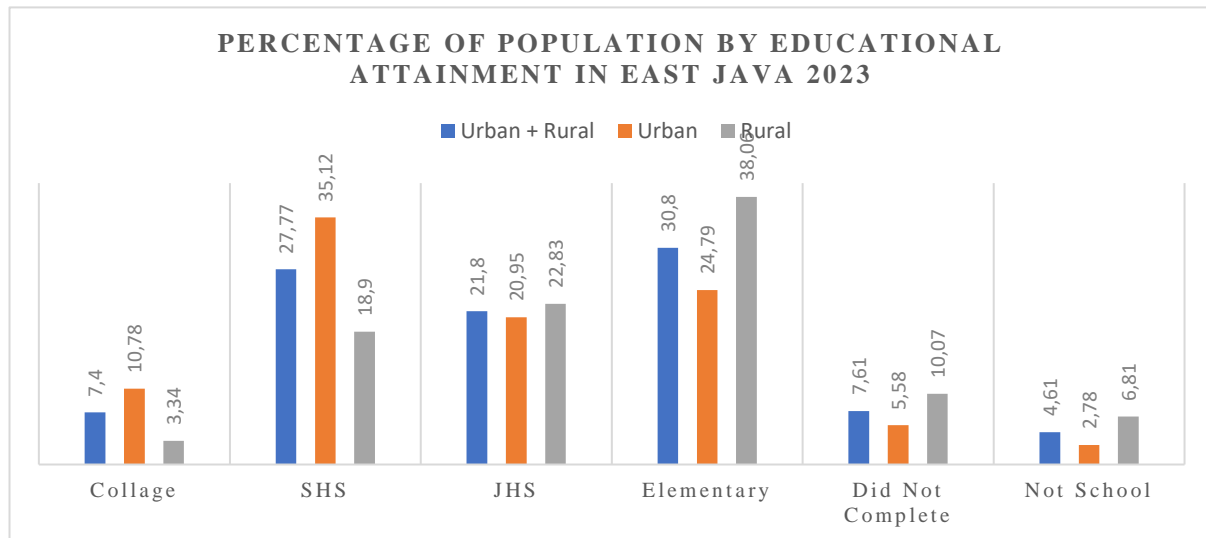


Figure 1. Percentage of Population by Educational Attainment in East Java in 2023

Based on the percentage chart above, it can be seen that many residents in East Java have not pursued education up to the university level. The highest percentage is elementary school graduates in rural areas, at around 38.06%. Moreover, approximately 6–10% have not completed elementary school or have never attended school at all. This is quite concerning, especially considering that East Java already has many public and private schools accessible to all children. Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution Sidoarjo is an Islamic educational institution located at Perum Natura Residences Cluster Winterland, Jalan Raya Siwalanpanji No. 36, Buduran, Sidoarjo. The institution aims to develop students' potential to become individuals with strong faith, noble character, and optimal achievement based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution Sidoarjo was established in 2013, beginning with the founding of a Kindergarten. In 2017, an Elementary School was established, followed by the opening of a Playgroup in 2021, due to high demand from parents. Below is the student enrollment data for Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution Sidoarjo for the 2024–2025 Academic Year.

Table 1. Overall Student Data of Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution Sidoarjo for the Year 2024 – 2025

NO.	CLASS	TOTAL STUDENTS
1.	Playgroup	54 Students
2.	Kindergarten	217 Students
3.	Elementary School	606 Students
TOTAL		877 Students

The characteristics of today's parents, particularly mothers, show a preference for being heard and having their opinions acknowledged by the school. Parents are likely to feel supported and at ease when the school delivers high-quality services. This presents a strategic

opportunity to attract prospective students and meet the enrollment targets for new admissions. An institution must be committed to continuously improving the quality of its services to consumers. Although Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo is an educational entity, it still requires the provision of excellent services to students' parents or guardians to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes. Parents expect their children to receive a quality education, while the school aims to attract more prospective students to support the welfare of its teachers. Therefore, the researcher has chosen this issue because enhancing services for parents or guardians requires an appropriate method to assess whether Service Quality and Positive Emotional Experience influence Customer Satisfaction through Electronic Word of Mouth in the context of new student admissions at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution. These factors are considered key contributors to the success of student admissions from year to year.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Marketing

According to Ariyanto et al., (2023:56), Marketing Management is a series of activities and systematic communication processes designed to deliver information about goods and services to others, while also creating value to help achieve organizational goals. These promotional activities include a series of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling processes in terms of pricing, distribution mapping, and other related activities. Marketing management is not merely about how to market a product, but also about how to develop a product idea, turn that idea into a market-ready product, differentiate the product, determine pricing, create a brand, identify the target market, promote it, and even manage the product's life cycle.

2.2. Consumer Behavior

According to Kotler & Keller, (2022:179), consumer behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants.

2.3. Service Quality

Providing quality service to parents when choosing a school is one of the key strategies to attract them to enroll at LPI Nurul Hikmah. This is because service quality represents an effort to fulfill consumer needs and desires, along with the accuracy of its delivery in meeting customer expectations (Monica & Marlius, 2023). Service quality refers to any activity or benefit provided by one party to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in ownership of anything (Sari & Marlius, 2023). Service quality involves the customer's perception of the service received and how well it meets or exceeds their expectations, with excellence being the main benchmark in evaluating service quality (Hidayat et al., 2024). The character of today's parents, especially mothers, tends to favor being heard and having their opinions acknowledged by the school. Parents will feel supported and comfortable when the school can provide the best quality of service. This presents an opportunity to attract prospective new students and achieve the enrollment target for new admissions. The indicators used for this independent variable, according to (Kotler & Keller, 2022: 284) Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Tangibles.

2.4. Positive Emotional Experience

Feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and relief are characteristics of a Positive Emotional Experience. These emotions are commonly experienced by individuals when they achieve something meaningful. Positive emotional experience is also a factor that can influence increased consumer satisfaction. According to Wijiyanto & Basiya, (2023), positive emotion refers to feelings such as happiness, love, affection, enjoyment, satisfaction, and alertness. Another definition by Maulina et al., (2023) states that positive emotion is an emotion that brings about positive feelings in the individual experiencing it. Consumers with positive emotions tend to show greater motivation to purchase a product or service because their feelings are not limited by their surroundings, and they feel more valued when making a purchase. Marketing strategies such as price discounts and promotions are among the factors related to product pricing, where price is one of the key determinants in influencing purchasing decisions (Salsabila & Andriana, 2024). The indicators used for this independent variable, according to A feeling of comfort, A feeling of satisfaction, A feeling of happiness, A desire to return again

2.5. Electronic Word of Mouth

Various segments of society today cannot be separated from gadgets, one of which involves the use of social media for various purposes (Sulistiyawan, Rahmi, et al., 2024). Social media has become one of the fastest mediums for marketing a product (Sulistiyawan, Suharyanto, et al., 2024). In relation to the current behavior of student guardians, they are more likely to receive educational information through social media or electronic media. In running business or institutional activities, product marketing can easily utilize social media, as it has become one of the most dominant activities among people in Indonesia (Winarti et al., 2023). Social media itself provides a platform for communication and sharing experiences with others, including reviewing products, a practice commonly known as Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) (Dalova et al., 2023). Positive reviews of a product or service on social media tend to influence viewers and encourage them to make a purchase. Conversely, negative reviews can shape consumer perceptions and negatively affect purchasing decisions (Marlinah et al., 2023). Therefore, when consumers trust the information about a product, they are more likely to commit to or believe in the information provided about the product they need (Pradana & Bantam, 2023). Companies can leverage E-WOM to increase consumer awareness, build trust, and drive their target market (Muslikh & Budiarti, 2024). The indicators used for this intervening variable, according to Positive reviews related to the product or brand, Recommendation of a specific product or brand, Frequently reading online reviews, Confidence in purchasing the product

2.6. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction can be measured when the factors desired by consumers are fulfilled. Customer satisfaction, often referred to as Customer Satisfaction, represents the achievement of a goal that helps determine the company's next strategic steps (Sinurat et al., 2024). This has a positive impact on institutions, as leveraging customer satisfaction can help expand the target market (Sulistiyawan, 2022). Customer satisfaction can also be described as the pleasure or disappointment a person feels after comparing the perceived performance or outcome of a product or service against their expectations (Reynaldi & Wuisan, 2023). Customer satisfaction can be assessed when customers have experienced enjoyment from the process they chose (Aprilia & Andarini, 2023). If consumers are dissatisfied, it can backfire on the company, as

even a single dissatisfied customer can influence others to avoid using the product (Fauziah et al., 2023). The indicators used for this dependent variable, according to Expectation alignment, Interest in revisiting, Willingness to recommend

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Approach

This research design is a systematic guideline developed to prevent deviations during the research process and to minimize errors, as explained by Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, (2019:14). This study employs a quantitative, non-experimental approach that is systematic, logical, and precise, using a correlational design. The aim is to analyze the relationship and influence between the independent variables (service quality and positive emotional experience) and the dependent variable (customer satisfaction), with electronic word of mouth serving as the mediating variable.

3.2. Population and Research Sample

Population is the general area that consists of subjects with specific quantity and characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied and from which conclusions will be drawn (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2019:126). Ferdinand, (2014:171) states that the population is a combination of all elements, such as events, things, or people, that share similar characteristics. The population in this study consists of all the parents of students at the Nurul Hikmah Islamic Education Institution in Sidoarjo, including units of Playgroup, Kindergarten, and Elementary School, totaling 879 parents.

According to (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2019:127) a sample is a part of the number of characteristics possessed by the population. Similarly, Ferdinand, (2014:171) states that a sample is a subset of the population consisting of some members of that population. The representative sample size depends on the number of indicators multiplied by 5 to 10 (Roscoe in Ferdinand, 2014:173). Therefore, the researcher chose a sample size of 160, calculated by multiplying the 16 indicators by 10. The researcher chose to multiply by 10 due to the large population and the fact that data collection can be conducted evenly. The sample for this research consists of parents whose children are still attending Playgroup, Kindergarten, and Elementary School, with a minimum of 160 respondents.

3.3. Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

The type of data used in this research is quantitative data, which refers to numerical data measured on an interval or ratio scale Priadana & Sunarsi, (2021: 145). The source of data is primary data, meaning data collected directly from respondents through the distribution of questionnaires Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, (2019:219). The data collection technique was carried out by distributing an online questionnaire via Google Forms to 160 respondents, consisting of parents of students at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo, covering the Playgroup, Kindergarten, and Elementary School levels.

The sampling technique used in this study is probability sampling. According to Agustianti et al., (2022:129), probability sampling is a technique that provides an equal opportunity for each element (member) of the population to be selected as part of the sample. The type of probability sampling used is Proportional Sampling, which means balanced sampling. In determining the sample, the researcher selects representatives from each group within the population, with the number of samples adjusted according to the number of subjects in each group Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, (2019:130).

The researcher establishes specific criteria as requirements for the population of all parents of students in the Nurul Hikmah Islamic Education Institution in Sidoarjo, including the Playgroup, Kindergarten, and Elementary School units, who can be selected as samples. The criteria are that the parents must have children who are already attending the Nurul Hikmah Islamic Education Institution in Sidoarjo, rather than prospective students who have not yet enrolled, and the parents must be familiar with the school.

3.4. Technique Analysis

This study uses SmartPLS software for data processing, as it employs a reflective model, which illustrates the relationship between latent variables and their indicators (Ghozali, 2018:7). Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of written statements answered by respondents. The analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with SmartPLS 3.0 to examine the relationships between latent variables (Sihombing et al., 2024). According to Ghozali & Latan, (2020:7) PLS-SEM analysis consists of two components: the outer model (measurement model), which shows how indicators represent latent variables, and the inner model (structural model), which reflects the relationships among latent constructs.

- According to Ghozali & Latan, (2020:67), the outer model (measurement model) illustrates the relationship between each indicator block and its latent variable. This model is used to test the construct validity and the reliability of the research instrument.
- The inner model (structural model) illustrates the relationships or the strength of the estimations between latent variables or constructs, which are developed based on the substance of the theory. (Ghozali & Latan, 2020:73)
- SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) is a statistical technique used to analyze the relationships between latent constructs and their indicators, the relationships between latent constructs, as well as measurement errors directly. SEM allows for the analysis of multiple dependent and independent variables simultaneously. (Ghozali & Latan, 2020).

4. Result and Discussion

Description of Research Object

Based on the results processed using SmartPLS 3.0, the indicators for testing the SEM results with PLS are examined by looking at the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model) results of the model being studied.

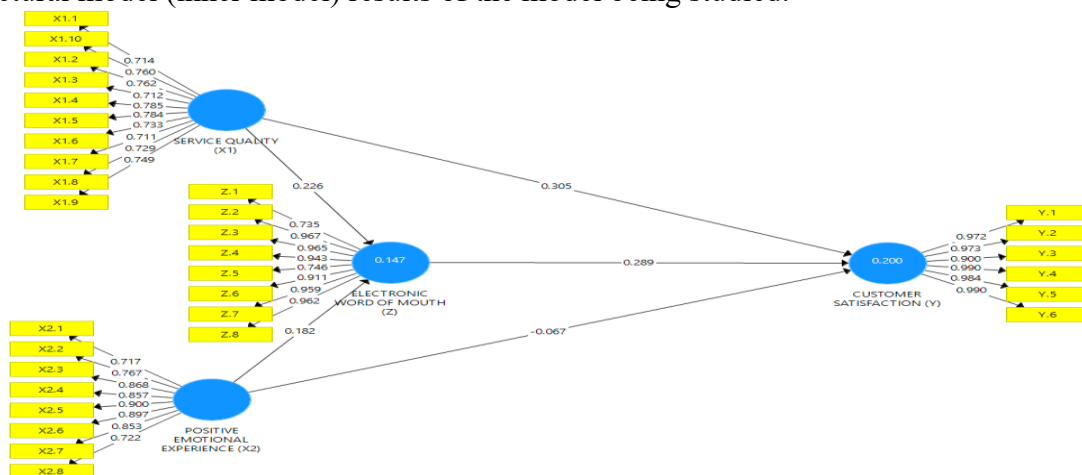


Figure 2. Path diagram with loading factor values

Convergent Validity

The convergent validity is measured through the outer loading values, where an indicator is considered valid if the outer loading value is ≥ 0.7 . If the outer loading value is ≤ 0.7 , the indicator is considered invalid. Based on the data above, all outer loading values indicate valid results

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assessment has become a widely accepted prerequisite for analyzing the relationships between latent variables. For variance-based structural equation modeling, such as partial least squares, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading checks are dominant approaches to evaluate discriminant validity. Discriminant validity refers to the degree of differentiation of an indicator in measuring a construct instrument.

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Discriminant Validity

	Customer Satisfaction (Y)	Electronic Word of Mouth (Z)	Positive Emotional Experience (X2)	Service Quality (X1)
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0,969			
Electronic Word Of Mouth (Z)	0,377	0,904		
Positive Emotional Experience (X2)	0,269	0,355	0,826	
Service Quality (X1)	0,359	0,365	0,765	0,744

Based on the results in the table, it shows that the loading values of each indicator item to its construct are greater than the cross-loading values. Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs or latent variables have good discriminant validity.

Composite Reliability

Table 3. Result of Composite Reliability

Variable	Composite Reliability	Rule of Thumb	Conclusion
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	0,989	0,6	Reliabel
E-Wom (Z)	0,972	0,6	Reliabel
Positive Emotional Experience (X2)	0,944	0,6	Reliabel
Service Quality (X1)	0,925	0,6	Reliabel

Based on Table 3, the composite reliability test results show values of ≥ 0.6 , indicating that all variables are considered reliable. The variable Customer Satisfaction as Y has a value of (0.989), Electronic Word of Mouth as Z has a value of (0.972), Positive Emotional Experience as X2 has a value of (0.944), and the variable Service Quality as X1 has a value of (0.925), all of which are above 0.6.

Path Coefficient

The results of the path coefficient analysis can be found in the image below.

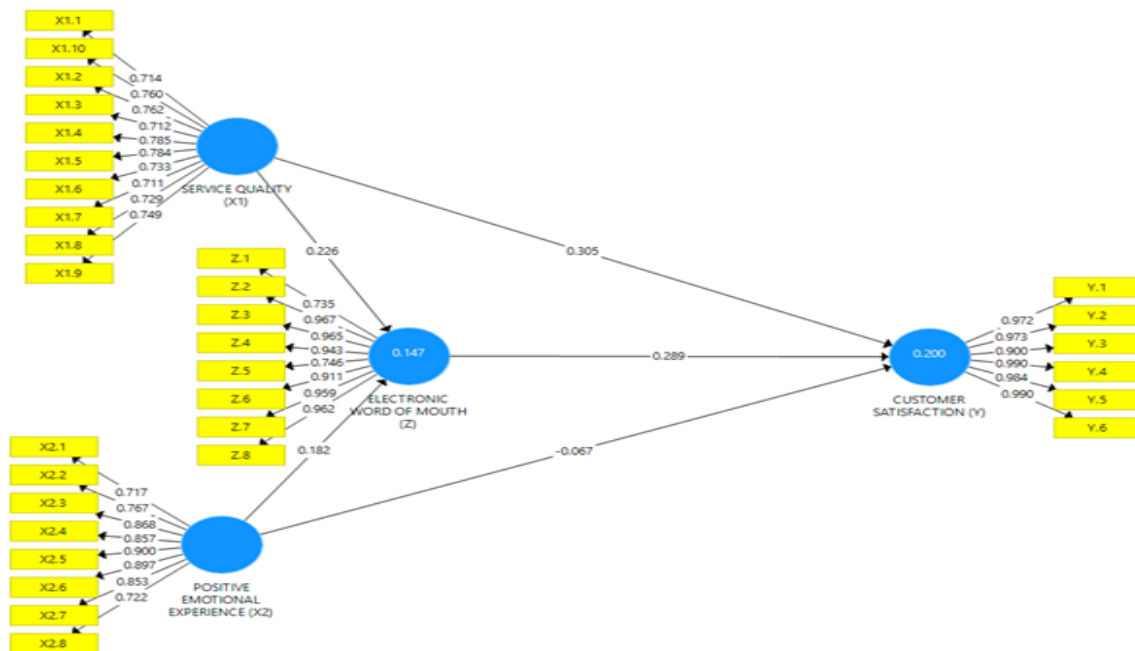


Figure 3. Result of Path Coefficient

The results of the inner model analysis show that the Service Quality variable has an effect on Customer Satisfaction of 0.305 or 30.5%. Positive Emotional Experience has an effect on Customer Satisfaction of -0.067 or 0%. Electronic Word of Mouth has an effect on Customer Satisfaction of 0.289 or 28.9%. Service Quality has an effect on Electronic Word of Mouth of 0.226 or 22.6%. Positive Emotional Experience has an effect on Electronic Word of Mouth of 0.182 or 18.2%.

Model Fit

Table 3. Result of Model Fit

	<i>Saturated Model</i>	<i>Estimated Model</i>
NFI	0,606	0,606

The NFI value ranges from 0 to 1 and is derived from the comparison between the hypothesized model and a certain independent model. The model has a good fit if the value approaches 1. Based on the table above, the NFI value is 0.606, which indicates that the model fit can be considered very good. (Ghozali & Latan, 2020)

R Square

The Inner Model (Inner relation, structural model, and substantive theory) illustrates the relationship between latent variables based on substantive theory. The R² values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 indicate that the model is "good," "moderate," and "weak," respectively.

Table 4. Result of R Square

Variabel	R Square
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	0,652
<i>Electronic Word of Mouth</i>	0,581

Bootstrapping

To examine the structural relationships between latent variables, hypothesis testing must be conducted on the path coefficients between variables by comparing the p-value with alpha (0.05) or the t-statistic (>1.96). The p-value and t-statistic are obtained from the SmartPLS output using the bootstrapping method.

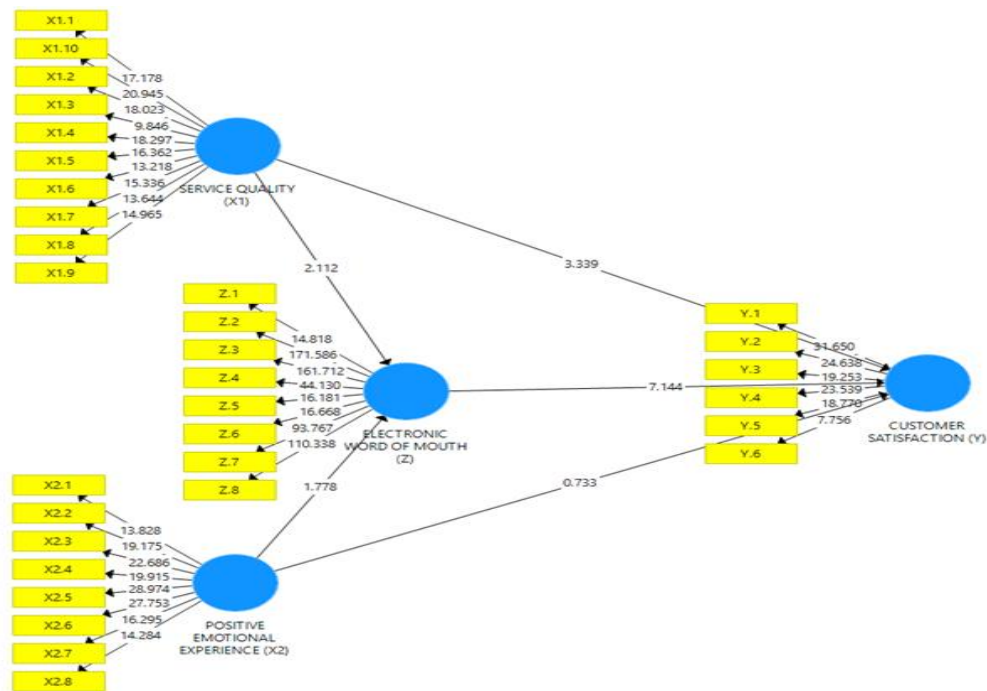


Figure 4. Result Bootstrapping

Based on the bootstrapping results, the direct and indirect effects estimation can be seen in the table below.

Table 5. Result T-statistic & P-Values

	<i>T-statistic</i>	<i>P Values</i>
<i>Electronic Word Of Mouth (Z) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)</i>	7,144	0,000
<i>Positive Emotional Experience (X2) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)</i>	0,733	0,464
<i>Positive Emotional Experience (X2) -> Electronic Word Of Mouth (Z)</i>	1,778	0,076
<i>Service Quality (X1) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)</i>	3,339	0,001
<i>Service Quality (X1) -> Electronic Word Of Mouth (Z)</i>	2,112	0,035
<i>Positive Emotional Experience (X2) -> Electronic Word Of Mouth (Z) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)</i>	1,683	0,093
<i>Service Quality (X1) -> Electronic Word Of Mouth (Z) -> Customer Satisfaction (Y)</i>	2,008	0,045

The results from the bootstrapping analysis can be stated as follows:

- The effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Customer Satisfaction is significant with a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$.
- The effect of Positive Emotional Experience on Customer Satisfaction is not significant with a p-value of $0.464 > 0.05$.

- c. The effect of Positive Emotional Experience on Electronic Word of Mouth is not significant with a p-value of $0.076 > 0.05$.
- d. The effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction is significant with a p-value of $0.001 < 0.05$.
- e. The effect of Service Quality on Electronic Word of Mouth is significant with a p-value of $0.035 < 0.05$.
- f. The effect of Positive Emotional Experience through Electronic Word of Mouth on Customer Satisfaction is not significant with a p-value of $0.093 > 0.05$.
- g. The effect of Service Quality through Electronic Word of Mouth on Customer Satisfaction is significant with a p-value of $0.045 < 0.05$.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted by examining the calculated path coefficient values in the inner model test. The hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic value is greater than 0,05 meaning that if the p-value for each hypothesis is higher than the 0,05, it is accepted or can be considered proven. Therefore, the acceptance criterion for the hypothesis H_a is that it is accepted if the p-value $< 0,05$.

Table 6. Results of Hypothesis Testing

No.	Hypothesis	P Values	t-statistic	Conclusion
1.	Service Quality has a direct effect on Electronic Word of Mouth in the student admission process at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo	0,035	2,112	Accepted
2.	Positive Emotional Experience does not have a direct influence Electronic Word of Mouth within the context of new student admissions at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo	0,076	1,778	Rejected
3.	Service Quality has a significant influence on Customer Satisfaction in the context of new student admissions at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo	0,001	3,339	Accepted
4.	Positive Emotional Experience does not have a direct influence on Customer Satisfaction in the context of new student admissions at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo	0,464	0,733	Rejected
5.	Electronic Word of Mouth has a significant influence on Customer Satisfaction in the context of new student admissions at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo	0,000	7,144	Accepted
6.	Service Quality is able to mediate the effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Customer Satisfaction in the context of new student admissions at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo	0,045	2,008	Accepted
7.	Positive Emotional Experience is can't mediate the effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Customer Satisfaction in the context of new student admissions at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo	0,093	1,683	Rejected

5. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis from the research conducted, the author concludes:

- a. The service quality provided by Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo has a significant impact on the perceptions and experiences of new students, which, in turn, motivates them to share positive experiences online.
- b. The results indicate that positive emotional experience does not have a significant impact on electronic word of mouth among parents at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Education Institution. Although positive feelings may arise from their interactions with the school, these emotions alone are not strong enough to encourage digital sharing or online recommendations.
- c. The service quality provided by Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo significantly affects the satisfaction level of parents involved in the new student admission process.
- d. The results indicate that positive emotional experience does not have a significant impact on electronic word of mouth among parents at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Education Institution. Although positive feelings may arise from their interactions with the school, these emotions alone are not strong enough to encourage digital sharing or online recommendations.
- e. When parents receive positive information through online reviews or testimonials, it forms higher expectations of the educational institution, which in turn enhances their satisfaction when they experience adequate service quality.
- f. This study shows that the service quality provided by Nurul Hikmah Islamic Educational Institution in Sidoarjo has a direct positive impact on the formation of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM).
- g. This study finds that positive emotional experience does not significantly influence customer satisfaction through electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) among parents of students at Nurul Hikmah Islamic Education Institution in Sidoarjo

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