

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING, GAMIFICATION, AND E-WOM ON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AT KFC IN SURABAYA

Chelsea Jeffriani Gunawan¹, Valencia Vanessa Timisela², J.E Sutanto³

Ciputra University, School of Tourism, Indonesia

Email: cjeffriani@student.ciputra.ac.id, vvanessa@student.ciputra.ac.id, je.sutanto@ciputra.ac.id

Abstract: This study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing, gamification, and E-WoM on customer engagement. The population in this study is KFC customers in Surabaya. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, with a total sample of 194 respondents. Data were analysed using the SPSS version 26 program. The results indicate that all the studied factors significantly influence customer engagement. In addition, this study supports the achievement of SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by demonstrating how the adoption of digital marketing strategies and technology based innovations, such as social media marketing, gamification, and E-WoM, can enhance industrial competitiveness and strengthen sustainable business performance within the food and beverage sector, especially fast food.

Keywords: *social media marketing, gamification, E-WoM, customer engagement*

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1. Introduction

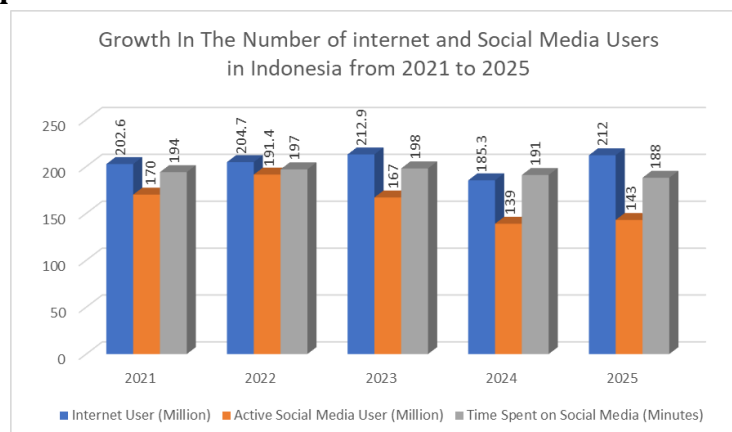


Figure 1. Growth in the Number of Internet and Social Media Users in Indonesia from 2021 to 2025
Source: Data processed from We Are Social

According to the research findings of Ramadan et al. (2021), the food and beverage industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth alongside the increase of the national economy. More businesses have entered the market as a result of this growth, especially in the fast food industry, which has led to more intense competition among industry participants. Furthermore, the research findings of Tasya Zhafira et al., (2023) emphasize that in responding

to such competitive pressures, businesses are not only required to offer competitive quality and prices but also be able to create long-term relationships with customers through customer engagement that emphasizes emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement with the brand. This effort is further supported by the utilization of the internet and social media, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, which shows a relatively stable trend in internet and social media usage from year to year (Aryawan & Valdez, 2024). The significant role of the internet and social media further strengthens the implementation of social media marketing, gamification in restaurant applications, and E-WoM as strategic tools to enhance customer engagement.

According to Erwin et al., (2023), the expansion of Indonesia’s restaurant business is characterized by a rise in the number of restaurants, which has led to more intense competition. This situation highlights the culinary industry's significant market potential while also necessitating the use of more creative and flexible marketing strategies by industry participants in an attempt to retain customer loyalty in the face of a wide variety of options. This is in line with Ni Made Purnami et al., (2025) finding that a variety of relationship and experimental aspects, such as customer engagement and digital connection, have an impact on customer loyalty in the restaurant industry.

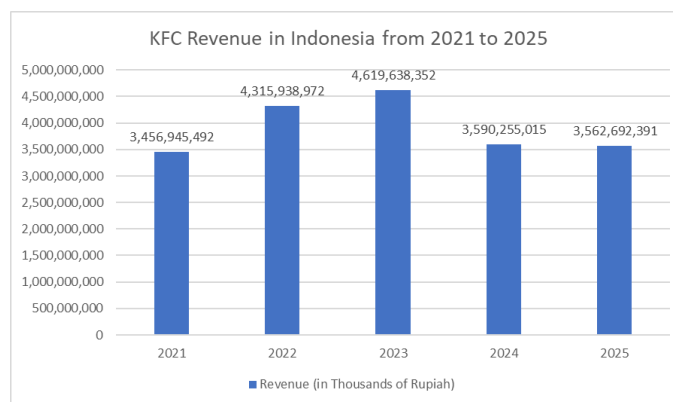


Figure 2. KFC Revenue in Indonesia from 2021 to 2025

Source: Data processed from Financial Report PT Fast Food Indonesia Tbk

More specifically, as illustrated in Figure 1.2, KFC has experienced a decline in revenue in recent years, indicating challenges in maintaining performance and customer engagement, as well as the need to evaluate its marketing strategies. Therefore, this research study analyzes the impact of social media marketing, gamification, and E-WoM on customer engagement at KFC restaurants in Surabaya City. By identifying important performances characteristics, this study offers KFC practical insights to improve its digital strategies and increase customer engagement. In terms of academics, it enhances the body of knowledge already available on social media marketing, gamification, and electronic word of mouth in the fast food industry, particularly KFC in Surabaya.

2. Literature Review

Prior to undertaking this study, several previous studies relevant to the research topic were reviewed to establish a strong theoretical foundation for explaining the relationships among the examined variables. Research conducted by None Alya Rahmania et al., (2025) demonstrates that customer engagement is positively impacted by social media marketing. In line with these findings, the present study employs social media marketing and customer engagement as key

research variables. Furthermore, a study by Octavian and Sari, (2021) reveals that E-WoM positively influences customer engagement. Accordingly, this research study also employs E-WoM as a key research variable. Research conducted by Sarhan (2024) indicates that customer engagement is positively impacted by gamification, while simultaneously strengthening brand loyalty. In line with these findings, this study also employs gamification as a key research variable.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Population and Sample

This research study targets restaurant customers who use social media regularly and have used the restaurant apps at least once as its population. According to Kezia Kezia et al., (2023), multivariate analysis requires a 10:1 ratio of participants to analyzed variables, ensuring the statistical power necessary for accurate analysis. This study includes 18 indicators, therefore, based on the ten times rule, the minimum required sample is 180 respondents. Furthermore, this study employs purposive sampling, which is categorized as one of the non probability sampling techniques. According to Thomas (2022), purposive sampling is the sampling strategy used, which chooses participants according to particular goals associated with the study questions.

Variable	Indicator	Item Questionnaire
Social Media Marketing	Context	The communicative language style used in the content messages posted on social media platforms makes them easily understandable.
	Communication	Fast food restaurants demonstrate a high level of responsiveness and promptness in responding to questions and comments submitted through social media.
	Collaboration	Fast food restaurants regularly use social media to build engaging campaigns that attract customer participation.
	Connection	Fast food restaurants effectively use social media to build strong relationships with their customer.
Gamification	Social Interaction	Gamification systems promote social interaction by allowing users to collaborate, compete, and share their accomplishments.
	Sense of Control	The system provides flexibility in controlling the gamification process without external intervention.
	Goals	The gamification system has the ability to automatically access and track the goals defined in the application.
	Progress Tracking	The gamification system has the ability to automatically access and monitor the app's tracking feature.
	Reward	The gamification system gives out rewards automatically for verified milestones, making the experience more exciting.

	Prompts	Notification and reminders are designed to keep users consistently engage.
Electronic Word of Mouth	Intensity	Comments about this fast food restaurant appear quite frequently on social media.
	Valence of Opinion	The majority of online comments express satisfaction with the product.
	Content	The information offered in the review provides a full overview of the products features.
Customer Engagement	Enthusiasm	Showing a strong interest in all of the information and content that the fast food restaurant uploads.
	Attention	The fast food restaurant is able to maintain long term attention.
	Absorption	The experience of using these products and services creates deep engagement.
	Interaction	Every interaction with the fast food restaurant is dynamic and responsive.
	Identification	Individual values and fundamentals principles followed by the fast food restaurant are clear

3.2. Validity and Reliability Test

Validity Test

According to Jonatan and Hamidy (2021), validity testing aims to evaluate the extent to which questionnaire items measure the intended construct. In this study, validity was evaluated using the Pearson correlation approach. If the significance value (p-value) is <0.05 and the Pearson correlation coefficient is >0.50 , the item is considered valid.

Reliability Test

Research conducted by Sutanto et al. (2023) confirms the internal consistency of an instrument. It guarantees that the measures continue to be consistent and offer trustworthy data throughout time. This study employed Cronbach's alpha to measure reliability. If the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is >0.6 , it is considered reliable.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Data Analysis

Validity and reliability were established through a pilot study of 30 individuals. The social media marketing variable (X1) was measured using four items, the gamification variable (X2) was measured using six items, and the E-WoM variable (X3) was measured using three items. In addition, the customer engagement variable (Y) was measured using five statement items. The research instrument was verified to be both valid and reliable, as all measurement items met the criteria (sig. < 0.05) and produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient > 0.6 . In addition, the Cronbach's alpha if item deleted values were consistently lower than the total Cronbach's

alpha coefficient, indicating that each item demonstrated a strong correlation with the remaining items.

Hypothesis testing (data pilot test)
Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Pearson Correlation	Significance	Remarks
Social Media Marketing (X1)	X1.1	0.829	0.000	Valid
	X1.2	0.846		
	X1.3	0.789		
	X1.4	0.823		
Gamification (X2)	X2.1	0.749		
	X2.2	0.759		
	X2.3	0.771		
	X2.4	0.790		
	X2.5	0.797		
	X2.6	0.861		
E-WoM (X3)	X3.1	0.880		
	X3.2	0.905		
	X3.3	0.856		
Customer Engagement (Y1)	Y1.1	0.889		
	Y1.2	0.884		
	Y1.3	0.886		
	Y1.4	0.859		
	Y1.5	0.815		

Source: Processed Data SPSS (2026)

All indicators for social media marketing (X1), gamification (X2), E-WoM (X3), and customer engagement (Y) are valid. Their significance values (0.000) consistently outperformed the 0.05 requirement, verifying that these variables are suitable and statistically significant for the study.

Reliability Test

Variables	Indicator	Cronbach's Alpha Overall	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Remarks
Social Media Marketing (X1)	X1.1	.840	0.795	Reliable
	X1.2		0.779	
	X1.3		0.813	
	X1.4		0.799	
Gamification (X2)	X2.1	.878	0.865	
	X2.2		0.865	
	X2.3		0.861	
	X2.4		0.855	
	X2.5		0.854	
	X2.6		0.839	
E-WoM (X3)	X3.1	.855	0.806	
	X3.2		0.748	
	X3.3		0.833	
Customer Engagement (Y1)	Y1.1	.917	0.892	
	Y1.2		0.894	
	Y1.3		0.893	
	Y1.4		0.900	
	Y1.5		0.913	

Sources: Processed Data SPSS (2026)

As presented in the table above, the social media marketing variable (X1) achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.840, gamification (X2) obtained 0.878, E-WoM (X3) recorded 0.855, and customer engagement (Y) demonstrated 0.915. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha if item deleted values were lower than the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficients, indicating that each item was well correlated with the remaining items and contributed positively to the internal consistency of the research instrument.

Result of t-Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
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		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.637	0.698		2.345	0.020
	Social Media Marketing	0.124	0.051	0.099	2.446	0.015
	Gamification	0.160	0.047	0.185	3.378	0.001
	E-WoM	1.089	0.080	0.688	13.653	0.000

Sources: Processed Data SPSS (2026)

The partial test (t-test) obtained in Table 3 indicates that the significance values for social media marketing, gamification, and E-WoM are less than 0.05, indicating that the variables of social media marketing, gamification, and E-WoM significantly influence customer engagement (H1, H2, and H3 are accepted). E-WoM identified as the main positive and significant influence of customer engagement, which supports H4. Its peak t-statistic and leading standardized coefficient, which show a greater influence than the other two independent variables, point out its dominance.

Result of the F-Test

Model		Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3080.385	3	1027.795	264.231	0.000 ^b
	Residual	739.053	190	3.890		
	Total	3822.438	193			
a. Dependent Variable: Customer Engagement						
b. Predictors : (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Gamification, E-WoM.						

Sources: Processed Data SPSS (2026)

With a significance value of 0.000, lower than the required 0.05. The F-test results are therefore statistically valid. This indicates that social media marketing, gamification, and E-WoM are significant indicators of customer engagement. The evidence strongly supports the conclusion that these variables significantly influence engagement levels.

Determination Result

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjust R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.898 ^a	0.807	0.804	1.972
a. Predictors : (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Gamification, E-WoM.				

b. Dependent Variable: Customer Engagement

Sources: Processed Data SPSS (2026)

As presented in the table above, there is a very strong correlation ($R = 0.898$) between the factor analyzed. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.807$) reveals that 80.7% of the variability in customer engagement is driven by social media marketing, Gamification, and E-WoM. The remaining 19.3% of the variance is due to external variables that were not included in this research study.

4.2. Discussion

In line with the findings published by Alfira Arifin, (2023) and Tri & Salsabilla Salu, (2023), the results of this study show that marketing through social media (X1) has a favorable and significant impact on the engagement of customers (Y). Furthermore, gamification (X2) significantly enhances customer engagement (Y), supporting previous studies by Sarhan (2024) and Marcellino Paskah Nichora & Merry Citra Sondari (2023). The third hypothesis is also supported, indicating that the intensity of E-WoM (X3) positively and significantly influences customer engagement (Y), in line with the findings of Octavian and Sari (2021). E-WoM (X3), one of the independent variables examined, has the greatest impact on customer engagement, supporting the fourth hypothesis and emphasizing the significance of customer driven digital communication.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions can be made as a result of the study's findings and analysis:

1. Social Media Marketing has a significant effect on Customer Engagement.
2. Gamification has a significant effect on Customer Engagement.
3. E-WoM has a significant effect on Customer Engagement.
4. Among the three variables examined, E-WoM is identified as the most dominant factor influencing Customer Engagement.

Considering that E-WoM has the strongest influence on customer engagement, restaurants should prioritise strategies to stimulate positive customer reviews. Gamification should be continuously updated to maintain customers excitement, to maintain long term engagement. In addition, social media should be used strategically to produce interactive, relevant, and consistent information, thereby establishing customer relationships and driving active engagement. It is recommended that future studies look at other factors including customer satisfaction, brand image, and customer loyalty that might affect customer engagement. Additionally, in order to gain more comprehensive research findings, future studies may broaden the scope to include additional fast food restaurants or different cities.

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