

Beyond the Menu: How Inventive Dining Experience Drives Online Customer Engagement and E-WOM?

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Abstract

In the highly competitive restaurant industry of today, providing good meals alone is no longer sufficient. It's also necessary to provide incentive dining experiences that go beyond the food. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to investigate how incentive eating experiences which are characterized by service innovation, customer focus, e-promotion, and perceived value can increase online customer engagement and promote electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). It also seeks to evaluate how other factors—like customers' egoism, customer engagement, and demographics like gender, age and education influence their inclination for E-WOM.

This is quantitative research, including data collected via a web-based questionnaire from customers of cafés and restaurants. Data were examined to assess the correlations between the variables using statistical software called WarpPLS. The findings demonstrate the crucial role of service innovation, perceived value, and e-promotion in designing incentive eating experiences. These elements also have a major impact on online customer engagement, which in turn affects e-WOM.

By showing how well-designed an innovative eating experience may stimulate positive customer interaction and e-WOM, which in turn fosters consumer advocacy in the digital age, this research has the potential to influence practices within the restaurant business.

Keywords: Restaurant, E-WOM, Online Customer Engagement, Service Innovation, Perceived Value, Customer Orientation, E-Promotion, Incentive Dining Experience

1. Introduction

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has arisen as a result of customers utilizing the internet more often to research products or companies due to the development of consumer-generated media and internet technology (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Yang, 2017). Although word-of-mouth (WOM) communication was originally defined as consumer-to-consumer conversations about a product (Sen & Lerman, 2007), Yoo, Sanders, and Moon (2013) noted that e-WOM refers to the online sharing of product-related information among consumers, which is

presumed to be truthful and accurate. Therefore, e-WOM communication is different from conventional WOM in that it is produced and disseminated across a range of technological media (Yang, 2017).

On the other hand, in the current digital era with internet access, diners rely extensively on online discussions and remarks to help them choose restaurants and enhance their dining experience (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Moe & Zhang, 2008). Examples of these interactions include online reviews, websites, blogs, and feedback from social media. Therefore, a restaurant's ability to succeed now depends heavily on its e-WOM, since customers now view consumer-provided online information as trustworthy and credible when making decisions (Moe & Zhang, 2008; Hussain et al., 2018).

E-WOMs have the greatest impact on how consumers feel and what they decide to buy (Park & Jeon, 2018). Positive e-WOM also has an impact on consumers and can convince them to make a purchase because it is an unbiased, unpaid review from a prior client (Sa'ait, & Nazrin, 2016). It has been shown that the desire to disseminate e-WOM is a significant predictor of both customer loyalty and service quality (Siagian et al., 2022). Since product reviews are seen by 70% of customers as reliable and trustworthy sources for evaluating the quality of an item, most online businesses provide customers the chance to remark on and discuss their experiences with their products on the website of the seller (Hussain et al., 2018). According to Sierra-Cantalops et al. (2018), revenue managers may establish premium charges without impacting occupancy rates, and hotels that are adept at managing emotional interactions with guests and good electronic word-of-mouth can score highly in social media reputation rankings. Moreover,

research conducted by Smith et al. (2020) revealed that 90% of diners look up online evaluations before trying a new restaurant, underscoring the substantial influence of e-WOM on consumer choice.

Understanding what drives and inspires individuals to participate in e-WOM conversations and build a devoted online following is vital, even while more conventional elements like food quality and service are still significant (Verhoef et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2020). According to Yang (2017), e-WOM is an integrative process that is achieved on a platform with technological assistance, sparked by an occurrence or stimulus, and driven by a person's motivations. Accordingly, restaurants need to design their surroundings so that customers have a special, enjoyable, and unforgettable eating experience (Fernandes et al., 2015; Abdien, 219; Ahmed et al., 2020; Souki, et al., 2020). Managers' ability to restructure restaurants' current service processes to better meet customer needs and elicit positive e-WOM and increase repeat business may be enhanced by having a greater awareness of what drives customers to appreciate innovative services, quality, and image of the brand (Jeong & Jang, 2011; Lee et al., 2022).

Various studies have employed the Stimuli-Organism-Response (SOR) model as a conceptual framework to help understand the relationship between e-WOM and performance in restaurants (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). With the application of this S-O-R theory, Souki et al. (2020) were able to show the sequential connection between e-WOM, image, status, food quality, infrastructure, customer focus, ease of access, and the quality of service. The SOR model was also utilized by Reich-López et al. (2022), who stated that customers are expected to respond by recommending others

or by e-WOM intent when they perceive stimuli related to their physical surroundings, such as food taste and smell (Reich-López et al., 2022).

Despite the fact that many restaurants provide their customers excellent food and drinks, not all of them are driven to participate in e-WOM activity (Abdien, 2019). That being said, there is a deficiency in previous research that offers a deeper knowledge of e-WOM. This study intends to close that gap by examining the impact of a variety of factors, including e-promotion, perceived value, customer orientation, and service innovation. The study also intends to investigate the ways in which consumers' e-WOM behaviours are influenced by their age, gender, education, egoism, and behavioural engagement. Restaurants may better understand the dynamics of e-WOM and adjust their tactics to creatively and efficiently embrace e-WOM by exploring these additional factors and applying S-O-R theory. Through e-WOM, this all-encompassing strategy may assist restaurants in maintaining their competitiveness in the digital sphere and cultivating pleasing relationships with customers.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Online Customer Engagement

Customers' actions such as participating with "likes", commenting on, reviewing, blogging, recommending to other users, and uploading pictures, videos, or audio on social media are all considered forms of customer engagement (Bailey et al. 2021). Online Consumer engagement is divided into four levels by Verhoef et al. (2009); The first step in any engagement, such as writing a review or sharing something on social media, is participation (behavioral). (2) Cognitive engagement: buyers are actively considering

the goods or brand, analyzing their interaction, and (3) Emotional Sharing: When customers share their sentiments about a business, e-WOM material may be reinforced and (4) Relationship Building (Social): This is the ultimate level, where continued interaction facilitates a bond between the customer and the product/brand, which may result in favorable e-WOM and brand loyalty. In addition, Kanje et al. (2020) identified four categories of people in relation to consumer engagement: (1) opinion makers, or users who spend time in online communications more actively, sharing information, searching advice, and influencing others on social media; (2) opinion seekers, or users who search for information and advice only, rarely sharing their experiences on social media; (3) Pass-through behaviour: users who solely distribute material created by outside parties; (4) Observer: Users who do not actively seek out or share their knowledge on the internet, preferring instead to view the stuff that their connections post.

2.2 Service Innovation and Online Customer Engagement

According to Lee et al. (2022), service innovation is the adoption of new technology and procedures that can improve the level of the service provided as well as have an influence on how customers view and utilize a product or service. The hospitality and restaurant industries may enhance their quality and reputation via innovation (Ottenbacher & Gnoth, 2005; Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2007; Assaf et al, 2011). Customers who are more concerned about the environment nowadays are looking for unique goods and hotel ideas. It follows that in order to keep up with the key trends in hospitality services, businesses and travel destinations must continuously develop new service

offerings and come up with creative solutions (Grissmann et al., 2013; Abdien, 2019).

For businesses, innovation is essential and is seen as a potential means of gaining a sustained competitive advantage (Chattopadhyay & Shah, 2014). Furthermore, research on service innovation in the restaurant business by Lee et al. (2022) and Esposito et al. (2022) revealed that it had a number of positive effects on e-WOM and customer engagement. They said that incorporating digital technology into services improves consumers' perceptions of safety, adds new value, and cultivates satisfying experiences that consumers are inclined to post about the internet. Likewise, cutting-edge technology gives companies fresh, distinctive characteristics that increase consumer loyalty (Adnan, et al., 2021). Moreover, it is anticipated that as technology develops, organizations can employ IT in ever-more creative ways to boost operational effectiveness and improve the visitor experience (Ahmed et al., 2023). In conclusion, service innovation in dining establishments may be an effective means of stimulating customer interest on social media channels by creating a feeling of community around the restaurant (Cha et al., 2020). Consequently, we postulate that:

H1: Service innovation in restaurants has a positive impact on online customer engagement.

2.3 Customer Orientation and Online Customer Engagement

According to Deshpandé et al. (1993), customer orientation refers to a set of values that prioritize the needs of the customer in order to build a sustainable and profitable business. The idea of customer orientation is comprised of two dimensions: the requirements dimension pertains to the employee's perception of their ability to

satisfy customers' requests, and the enjoyment component measures how much the employee loves contact with customers (Brown et al., 2002). Furthermore, customer orientation entails gathering data on the needs of customers, disseminating that data throughout divisions, and addressing these demands at the corporate level (Sun & Zhang, 2021; Helal, 2022). Customer satisfaction and e-WOM are constantly attributed to customer-oriented enterprises due to their superior physical items and personnel performance (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Li, 2018).

Numerous research works have investigated the relationship between customer orientation and e-WOM. For example, Porras et al., (2021) added that attitude, customization, and extra role performance are important components for customer orientation of service employees and influence e-WOM. Singh et al., (2023) further elaborated on this by demonstrating that online offers, customer reviews, user-friendly websites, and virtual tours also significantly affect restaurant selection. Consequently, Verhoef et al. (2009) discovered that customer orientation has a favourable effect on customer trust and commitment, which are important factors that influence online engagement behaviours like positive reviews. Strong customer-oriented restaurants can build a favourable internet reputation and boost patronage (Cha et al., 2020). All these studies highlight how crucial client orientation is for e-WOM and consumer engagement. Therefore, we claim that:

H2: Customer orientation in restaurants has a positive impact on online customer engagement

2.4 Electronic Promotion and Online Customer Engagement

E-promotion is a type of marketing that makes use of the internet to draw in potential clients, tempt them to remain engaged with the

provided goods or services, and keep them from moving to rival brands (Siripipatthanakul et al., 2022). E-promotion is using internet marketing strategies to grow companies and boost sales. It is emphasized that word-of-mouth (WOM) may be an effective weapon for company growth, particularly when paired with digital marketing (Kim et al., 2024). The simplicity of searching, information from web content, product and service, as well as efficacy and speed, are crucial markers of e-promotion (Pidada, et al., 2021). Social media promotions are thought to be more successful since they may be carried out anywhere and at any time, as demonstrated by Infante and Rahayu's (2022) research. Additionally, they mentioned that maintaining a wider customer base and keeping in touch with clients and business partners may be achieved in part by being active on social media. Furthermore, e-promotion and increasing consumer engagement are related, as reported by Napawut et al. (2022) and Hidayanto et al. (2017). Liu et al. (2020) discovered that customers' engagement and brand loyalty were positively benefited by utilized gaming for promotions on social media. Social media engagement may be increased by effective e-promotions, which will improve the bond between the brand and its customers (Cha et al., 2020). Consequently, we posit:

H3: E-Promotion in restaurants has a positive impact on online customer engagement

2.5 Perceived Value and Online Customer Engagement

According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived value is the total evaluation made by the customer of the usefulness of a good or service based on their impressions of what they get and get. More specifically, López et al. (2022) define perceived value as a compromise between the consumer's readiness to pay for a product or service and the quality they anticipate. According to Soltani et al. (2020) and Um and Yoon (2021), perceived value is multidimensional

and can be categorized as conditional, emotional, or functional (hedonic).

Perceived value, according to Sekartaji and Pasaribu (2018) and Razak and Omar (2019), increases consumers' intentions to make more purchases and their online involvement, resulting in highly happy customers (Raji & Zainal, 2016; Jalilvand et al., 2017; Konuk, 2019; Mendonça da Costa Birchall et al., 2023). In restaurants, perceived value plays a crucial role in driving customer interaction, which includes social media posts and comments (Thielemann, Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2018; Amenuvor et al., 2019, Tuncer, Unusan, & Cobanoglu, 2021). Consumers who think a restaurant offers great value are more likely to post about their pleasant experience on Facebook because they are happy with the service and want to recommend it to others, serving as brand ambassadors (Adnan et al., 2021). As perceived value has an indirect impact on repurchase intention with WOM acting as a mediator, restaurants and coffee shops should provide the value that they have promised to customers. In this, customers must accept and experience that value (Bernarto et al., 2024). Consequently, we postulate that:

H4 Perceived Value in restaurants has a positive impact on online customer engagement

2.6 Online Customer Engagement and E-WOM

Customers feel more invested in a brand when they are more involved. As a result, individuals may turn into advocates who tell others about their good fortune and advice (Van den Heuvel et al., 2018). Moreover, when customers receive excellent service from a high-quality provider and are eager to spread the word about their pleasant experiences and recommendations, positive e-WOM is greatly increased (Li et al., 2020; Van den Heuvel et al., 2018). According to Sugar and Zeleznikow (2014), a company's brand ambassador might be a devoted consumer. Souki et al. (2022) have recently shown that the degree of participation influences the direction and/or intensity of the

association between e-WOM and memorable experiences of patrons of casual restaurants. As a result, restaurants may use their influence to build a solid online reputation through good e-WOM by knowing how consumer engagement acts as a mediator. favourable eating experiences generate more favourable e-WOM, which in turn influences the decisions of other prospective consumers to select a specific restaurant (Limwiry et al., 2023). Consequently, we postulate that:

H5: Online Customer engagement mediates the relationship between the incentive dining experience and e-WOM

2.7 Customer's Egoism

Serving the public good for personal gain is referred to as egoism (Cheung & Lee, 2012). Certain markers, such as professionalism, improving one's standing and reputation, receiving reciprocity from others, and winning awards, can be used to assess egoism (Wojnicki & Godes, 2008; Puspitasari et al., 2019). Thus, egoism influences e-WOM behaviour in a big way (Mishra & Satish, 2016). It is one viewpoint that explains why users participate in e-WOM on websites (Cheung & Lee, 2012). Customers are

influenced by this self-serving conduct to post online reviews of items based on their observations, assessments, and opinions (Mishra & Satish, 2016). Further research by Yang (2017) showed that customers' egoistic desires and restaurant satisfaction only encouraged e-WOM activities when they believed the review website would improve their performance in social interactions, learning, the workplace, and other areas.

According to Chu et al. (2019), egoism reflects the desire for both personal well-being and enjoyment as well as the need to be recognized by others in the online world. In the same way, people who share content on social media believe that doing so would improve their reputation in the workplace by increasing their own pleasure and well-being (Bilal et al., 2020). Hence, the link between the restaurant adoption of incentive dining experiences and e-WOM is expected to be moderated in this study by the individual's egoism. As a result, we assume that:

H6: Customer' egoism moderates the relationship between online customer engagement and e-WOM

The suggested research model (fig.1) is shown below, and the hypotheses have been created in light of the prior debate.

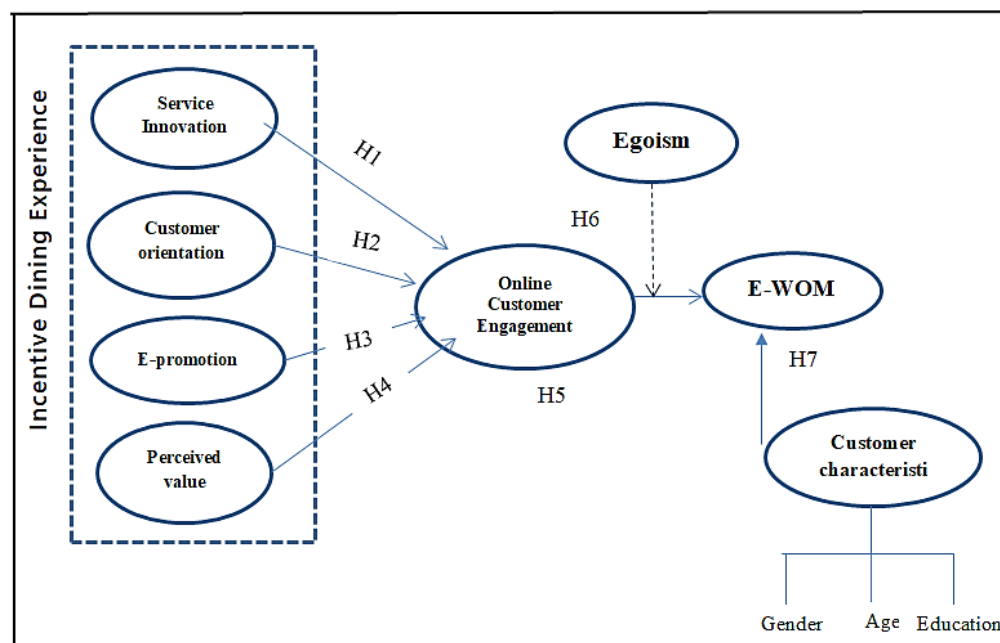


Figure. 1. Framework of the Study

3. Materials and Methods

This study modified scales for pertinent constructs from previous research in order to meet the restaurant sector. To assess service innovation, customer orientation, perceived value, e-promotion, customer engagement, egoism, and e-WOM, a total of seven constructs have been employed. Mahmoud et al. (2018) provided an adaptation of the nine items used to measure service innovation. Souki et al. (2020) created a 4-item test to determine customer orientation. The e-Promotion was measured using the three-item Napawut et al. (2022) scale. Three of Chen's (2012) questions were used to evaluate perceived value, and Dolan et al. (2016) and Correia et al. (2018) provided the five items used to measure customer engagement. Cheung and Lee (2012), Ha and Jang (2010), and Jeong and Jang (2011) created a 4-item measure of egoism. Serra Cantallops et al. (2018) and Line et al. (2020) scales were modified to include five items that were used to measure E-WOM. The questions are answered using a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. The last set of demographic variables includes gender, age, marital status, and degree of education.

The population of the study includes Egyptian restaurant customers, and a convenience sampling was used to get the required data from the respondents. After examining the

relationships between the variables, data processing was done. To ensure that everyone understands and completes the questionnaire correctly, we translated the English version of the survey into Arabic. Also, to ensure the validity of the instrument and, more precisely, its content, a pilot study including thirty-five surveys was conducted. Additionally, pilot testing was important for analysing the survey's translated Arabic version. Some of the survey's question phrasing and statements were changed in response to the pilot research to make it easier for participants to answer the questions clearly and effectively.

The final copy of survey was distributed by sharing the survey link on Facebook pages, stories or groups such as Kersh Keepers, or stories. We questioned them about their dining experiences at restaurants. They have no obligation to finish the survey if they don't. A total of 534 valid questionnaires were received. Table 1 shows that 61.4% of respondents were female and 38.6% of respondents were male. The largest percentage of respondents (73.0%) are between the ages of 18 and 24, which is followed by respondents who are between the ages of 25 and 34 (13.5%). In terms of marital status, 86.0% of responders are single. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents had postgraduate degrees or were graduates from college.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

	Frequency (n=534)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	328	61.4
Male	206	38.6
Age		
less than 17	10	1.9
18-24	390	73.0
25-34	72	13.5
35-44	24	4.5
45-50	16	3.0
Above 50	22	4.1
Education level		
high school	44	8.2
BSC	420	78.7
Post studies	70	13.1
Marital Status		
Single	459	86.0
Married	65	12.2
Divorced	7	1.3
widow	3	.6

4. Results

WarpPLS version 7.0 is the statistical approach utilized. According to Kock (2020), this approach was chosen because it facilitates the creation of extensive conceptual frameworks for multi-block analysis. Outlined in 4.1 and 4.2, respectively, is the quality of the outer and inner model.

4.1 Measurement Model

The present study adhered to the standards stated by Hair et al. (2021) for the purpose of identifying reflective constructs. Convergent

validity was assessed using the Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach's Alpha, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The Cronbach Alpha and CR values are shown in Table 2, both of which were over the suggested threshold of 0.7. Adequate convergent validity was indicated by AVE values more than 0.5 (range: 0.54–0.81) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, there was no common method bias or multicollinearity, and all variables had VIF values of less than 3.3, which is the optimal range (Kock & Lynn, 2012).

Table 2: Convergent Validity

Variables	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	VIF
Service innovation	0.913	0.892	0.540	2.916
Customer orientation	0.945	0.922	0.810	3.104
E-promotion	0.873	0.781	0.696	2.624
Perceived value	0.916	0.862	0.784	3.205
EWOM	0.950	0.933	0.791	2.942
Egoism	0.919	0.882	0.741	2.880
Customer behavioral engagement	0.904	0.866	0.654	2.990

*Note. AVE = Average Variance Extracted; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor.

An assessment was conducted on the discriminant validity of the main constructs of the study. As shown in Table 3, the square root of AVE for each construct was assessed

using correlations between the latent variables, indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3: discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Service innovation	(0.735)	0.680	0.542	0.650	0.632	0.569	0.681
2.Customer Orientation	0.680	(0.900)	0.573	0.729	0.540	0.584	0.558
3.E promotion	0.542	0.573	(0.834)	0.595	0.523	0.644	0.492
4.Perceived Value	0.650	0.729	0.595	(0.885)	0.577	0.657	0.653
5.EGOISM	0.632	0.540	0.523	0.577	(0.861)	0.673	0.711
6.Behavioral engagement	0.569	0.584	0.644	0.657	0.673	(0.809)	0.643
7.E-WOM	0.681	0.558	0.492	0.653	0.711	0.643	(0.889)

*Note. Values on the diagonal (bold) are square root of the average variance extracted

Additionally, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was employed to measure discriminant validity since it is thought to be a more trustworthy method (Jeon et al., 2019). To satisfy the HTMT criteria, each value must be equal to or below 0.85. Table 4 displays the discriminant values, which do not beyond the threshold value of

0.85. This indicates that there is no problem with multi-collinearity between the construct components and that the discriminant validity is good (Kock, 2020). In conclusion, this study's discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability all surpassed the criteria suggested by other studies that shown strong validity and reliability.

Table 4: HTMT Ratios of Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Service innovation							
Customer Orientation	0.750						
E promotion	0.652	0.675					
Perceived Value	0.741	0.820	0.725				
EGOISM	0.706	0.598	0.630	0.663			
Behavioral engagement	0.644	0.654	0.783	0.761	0.768		
E-WOM	0.741	0.602	0.577	0.729	0.785	0.715	

Note. HTMT: Heterotrait-Monotrait, Ratios are good if < 0.90 , best if < 0.85 .

4.2 The Structural Equation Model

The path coefficients (β) and p-values for the proposed relationships are shown in the inner model. Figure 2 illustrates the positive and significant correlations between customer engagement and service innovation ($\beta = 0.13$; $R^2 = 0.08$), e-promotion ($\beta = 0.32$; $R^2 =$

0.211), and perceived value ($\beta = 0.35$; $R^2 = 0.25$). Customer engagement ($p > 0.05$) does not significantly correlate with customer orientation ($\beta = 0.06$; $R^2 = 0.035$). therefore, H1, H3 and H4 are supported while H2 is not supported.

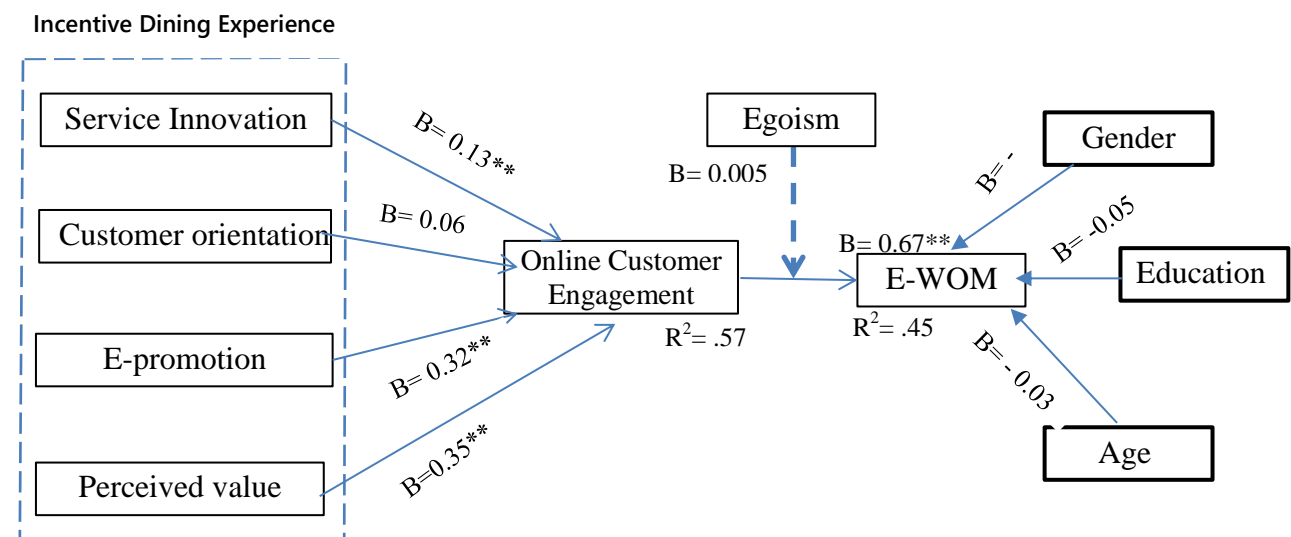


Fig. 2. The structure Equation Model

** Significance level where p-value < 0.01

The findings, when put into numerical form, show that the four incentive dining experience components under investigation account for 57% of customer engagement, which in turn explains 45% of consumers' E-WOM. The coefficients for latent variables were examined in order to assess the study model's predictive validity. For both dependent constructs (customer engagement: 0.571; E-WOM: 0.449), the computed cross-validated redundancy (Q-squared) values were above

zero, demonstrating the predictive validity of the model.

In order to determine the mediating function of online customer engagement in the relationship between the incentive eating experience and E-WOM, the indirect impacts were also evaluated. The findings of the mediation analysis are shown in Table 5 and Figure 3. The indirect effect's magnitude and the overall effect's connection are validated by the Variance Accounted for (VAF). The VAF

evaluates the mediation strength sequentially, with a range of 0% to 100%. According to Hair et al. (2016), values above 80% indicate full mediation, values between 20% and 80% suggest partial mediation, while values below

20% indicate no mediation force. Customer engagement partially mediates the relationship between incentive eating experience and E-WOM (27%). As a result, hypothesis H5 has a partial support.

Table 5: Mediation Analysis

Path	Significance			VAF	Outcome
	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect		
IDE ---CE---E-WOM	0.52	0.196	0.716	27%	Partial mediation

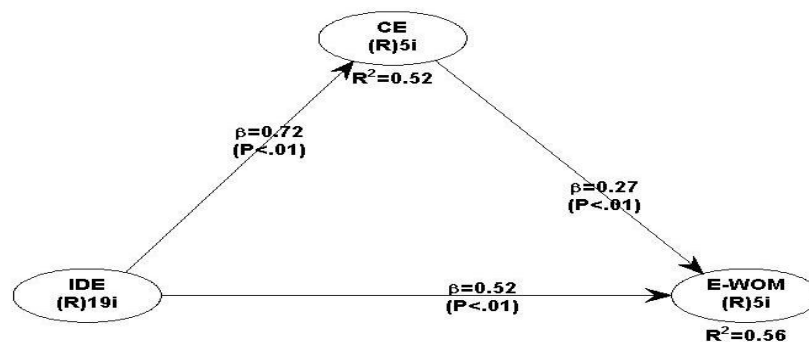


Fig. 3 The Mediation Analysis

Note: IDE refers to incentive dining experience, CE refers to consumer engagement

To find out if there is a stronger or weaker association between certain variables, the moderation effects were also examined using the two-stage technique. The differences in path coefficients were assessed using the formula put forward by Kock (2020). To investigate the likelihood of the moderating effect, an interaction construct was created by multiplying the moderator, egoism, by customer engagement as a predictor of E-WOM. Table 6 shows that the moderator's

influence on E-WOM did not yield significant projected standardized path coefficients ($\beta = 0.005$; $p = 0.456$). Since egoism did not affect the favorable association between customer engagement and E-WOM, H6 has not been proved (See Figure 4). In addition, regarding how the respondents' age, gender, and educational attainment affected the E-WOM, the SEM showed no significant variations amongst the respondents' categories. As a result, the hypothesis H7 is not supported.

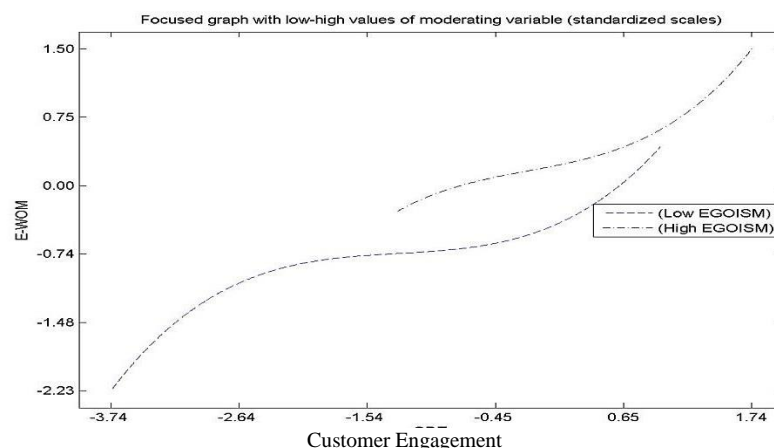


Fig 4. The Moderating effect of Egoism

5. Discussion

The restaurant and other dining establishments benefit greatly from satisfied customers and the e-WOM that follows. In order to help restaurants and cafes survive, this study looked at ways to design an incentive dining experience that may increase online customer interaction and then promote good e-WOM. *First*, through the creation of distinctive and memorable experiences, service innovation was proven to have a substantial influence on increasing online customer engagement (Abdien, 2019; Ahmed et al., 2020). This is in line with Verma and Verma (2018), who found that cutting edge service features like interactive menus, customized suggestions, or loyalty programs make patrons feel valued and appreciated and increase their level of engagement with the restaurant/café. It also aligns with the findings of Kumar and Pansari (2016), who discovered that when service innovation continuously surpasses customer expectations, trust and loyalty are developed. This encourages customers to actively interact with the brand by leaving reviews online, interacting on social media, or signing up for loyalty programs. Furthermore, the outcomes support the findings of Kim et al. (2021), who explained that providing distinctive and cutting-edge service components draws attention, raises brand recognition, and increases online consumer engagement.

Second, while the results did not demonstrate a statistically significant effect of customer orientation on customer engagement, these finding contrasts with other findings that suggested restaurants and cafes could greatly increase customer engagement and produce positive e-WOM by implementing a customer-centric approach (Verma & Verma, 2018). According to earlier studies, customer value is a reliable gauge of customer

happiness and increases customer participation, both of which raise perceived value (Mukerjee & Shaikh, 2019). Businesses that prioritize their consumers and cultivate strong customer connections stand to gain more from enhanced e-WOM involvement and good social interactions (Hussain, Song, and Niu, 2020).

Third, our study revealed that consumer behaviour in the restaurant and café industries is significantly and critically influenced by the perceived value. This is consistent with earlier findings by Zeithaml (1988), who discovered that high perceived value increases customer loyalty. Customer loyalty then translates into higher levels of consumer involvement, such as favourable reviews and social media interactions. Customers are more likely to actively interact with a restaurant or café and to engage in enthusiastic e-WOM behaviours, such as writing positive reviews, sharing images and videos online, and recommending the establishment to others, when they believe they are getting value for their money (Verma & Verma, 2018).

Fourth, the outcomes provided more evidence of the e-promotion's substantial impact on consumer involvement. It implies that restaurants and cafes may successfully interact with their consumers, foster a favourable online reputation, and eventually aid in their survival and prosperity in the digital era by carefully employing e-Promotion strategies. This is in line with earlier studies that discovered that successful e-Promotion tactics, like influencer partnerships, email campaigns, and social media marketing, can connect with particular customer segments and appeal to their interests, thereby raising brand awareness and engagement and building a feeling of community (Verhoef et al., 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The findings are also in line

with the findings of Kumar and Pansari (2016), Verma and Verma (2018), and Kim et al. (2021), who explained that interactive campaigns and rewarding customer engagement with points, discounts, and special benefits can cultivate customer relationships, promote loyalty, and motivate positive e-WOM dissemination. *Fifth*, the present study concludes that, in line with previous research (Kim, 2017; Souki et al., 2022; Chinelato, Oliveira, & Souki, 2023), restaurants should modify their marketing strategies and offer additional incentives during the dining experience to enhance E-WOM through customer engagement. This is because the research findings verified that the relationship between restaurant incentives and E-WOM was mediated by customer engagement.

Sixth, the data showed that the respondents' gender had no impact on e-WOM. This contradicts the findings of Lopez & Sicilia (2011), who found that women are more impacted by e-WOM than males are. It also contradicts the findings of Krishnapillai and Ying (2017), who discovered a substantial variation in the aspect of E-WOM between male and female visitors, with the latter group showing a greater predisposition towards E-WOM than the former. Furthermore, the data showed that the age of the respondents had no impact on e-WOM. This is consistent with the findings of López and Sicilia (2011), who found that age had no bearing on the impact of e-WOM. On the other hand, Hayes et al. (2015) pointed out that generation Y and subsequent generations were raised in a technologically advanced environment and were at ease with online connections, photo sharing, instant messaging, and sharing personal narratives on social media sites like Facebook. Hazar (2022) highlighted that Gen Y users were the most active in this regard,

posting many times a day and engaging with Facebook at a higher level.

In addition, the data indicated that the influence of education level had no bearing on e-WOM. However, other research (Cheung & Lee, 2011; López & Sicilia, 2011; Yayli & Bayram, 2012) discovered a connection between educational attainment and the propensity to participate in e-WOM debates. A person with a background in marketing education may be more skeptical of advertising claims included in e-WOM, according to Cheung and Lee (2011). In a similar vein, Yayli and Bayram (2012) claimed that people with greater levels of education would feel more at ease expressing themselves online, which could encourage them to write material, take part in forums, and give reviews. Conversely, López and Sicilia (2011) discovered that customers with lower educational attainment have higher e-WOM than those with higher educational achievement.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study support the notion that simply serving delicious meals is no longer adequate. It is also essential to offer incentive eating experiences that extend beyond the culinary offerings. Thus, businesses may concentrate their efforts on enhancing those features by understanding what factors influence customers to leave reviews online. However, the present study underscores the need for more research into the dynamic e-WOM context. Restaurants should always seek out new concepts and keep up with customer research in order to inspire their customers. The results, in particular, show how important it is to incorporate service innovation, perceived value and e-promotion when creating incentive dining experiences. These three components significantly influence online

customer engagement, which in turn influences digital age consumer advocacy and e-WOM.

In general, customers who believe a restaurant offers a greater value and a more enjoyable dining experience are more likely to spread e-WOM. Therefore, the research will be beneficial in supporting restaurants and other dining businesses by offering them useful implications on how to encourage prospective customers to spread positive-WOM. Our research urges managers to strive toward generating a good e-WOM which is a genuine and trustworthy marketing tactic. *First and foremost*, it is imperative to take into account service innovation in every facet of the restaurant by employing a blend of tactics that center around customer requirements, digital technologies, cooperation, and ongoing enhancement. In order to promote innovation at all levels of the restaurant, these tactics can be built around fostering a culture that values experimentation, risk-taking, and constant learning. They can also be based on increasing cross-functional teamwork and knowledge exchange.

Second, all restaurant employees must have a customer-focused mindset and place the needs of the customers first. This may be achieved through the adoption of a holistic approach that emphasizes high-quality service delivery, effective communication, and ongoing improvement of the customer experience. All of these tactics increase customer loyalty, provide businesses a competitive edge, and boost brand recognition. *Thirdly*, maintaining a focus on product quality, service excellence, and optimal pricing are critical tactics for attaining customers' "perceived value." *Fourth*, e-promotion tactics must be put into practice in order to improve the restaurant's reputation and exposure. These techniques

include making use of social media, email marketing, referral programs, online review platforms, website optimization, and partnerships with bloggers and influencers. *Last but not least*, restaurant management needs to keep an eye on and respond quickly to internet reviews in order to preserve a good reputation. This can be done by designating at least one person to handle this task.

7. Limitation and Future Research

This study has many limitations; it exclusively examines four factors that contribute to attracting customers and generating e-WOM. However, what inspires one person might not inspire another. The e-WOM incentives may vary depending on each individual's preferences, expectations, and emotional state during the dining experience. This can make it difficult to pinpoint the exact elements required to provide a genuine incentive experience for a big audience. Future research may benefit from looking into additional matters that were not included in this study. Moreover, collecting data using a convenience sample that was primarily composed of young individuals under the age of 25, and the sample size was not quite large are other limitations. Egoism was the sole relevant moderating construct in the investigation, although other relevant moderators may be included in future studies.

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