

SWOT Analysis of Electronic Word of Mouth Strategy in Enhancing Local Product Competitiveness: A Case Study of Mabello Indonesia

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital communication has made Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) a key factor in shaping consumer opinion and brand competitiveness, especially for local businesses in emerging markets. This study examines how Mabello Indonesia, a leading local cosmetic brand, leverages e-WOM strategies to enhance competitive positioning through a comprehensive SWOT analysis framework. The research is grounded in the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory and employs a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection involved in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and consumers, social media analytics, and sentiment analysis of user-generated content. Thematic analysis, utilizing a SWOT framework, identified Mabello's strengths in cultural authenticity, strategic influencer partnerships, and certified product legitimacy, which enhances trust and encourages adoption among consumers. Weaknesses include limited platform diversification, delayed responsiveness, and some operational inefficiencies. Opportunities arise from Indonesia's expanding digital landscape and increasing demand for locally certified products, while threats involve product imitation, market saturation, and challenges to digital reputation. Theoretically, this study advances the field by combining the SWOT and DOI approaches to create a model for understanding e-WOM as a communication strategy. Practically, it provides actionable strategies for MSMEs, including multi-platform optimization and proactive reputation management, to sustain competitiveness in digital markets.

Keywords: Electronic Word of Mouth, SWOT analysis, Diffusion of Innovations, Digital Communication, MSMEs, local competitiveness

INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation has fundamentally altered the landscape of marketing communication, with Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) emerging as a critical determinant of brand success in contemporary business environments. Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, e-WOM utilizes digital platforms to disseminate and amplify consumer experiences and opinions, offering a wider reach and greater impact while providing brands with new opportunities to interact directly with their audiences [1]. The rapid growth of the internet and social media has positioned e-WOM as a cornerstone of modern marketing, transforming consumer-brand relationships through user-generated content, online reviews, and digital recommendations [2], [3]. This shift highlights the need for businesses to strategically integrate e-WOM into their marketing strategies to remain competitive and relevant. Recent studies also emphasize that the effectiveness of e-WOM is not solely determined by its reach, but also by the quality of content marketing strategies, where relevant and interactive content significantly amplifies consumer engagement and message dissemination [4].

Building on this digital shift, e-WOM no longer requires face-to-face interactions; instead, it occurs through virtual engagements across diverse platforms. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates its significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions, brand image, and brand attitude [5], [6], [7]. From a communication perspective, e-WOM represents not only a marketing instrument but also a complex process of message production, dissemination, and interpretation in digital spaces, shaping perceptions, credibility, and audience engagement. Supporting this, a bibliometric analysis from 1998 to 2019 highlights e-WOM as one of the most influential resources for information transmission, particularly in consumer purchase decisions [8]. Digital technologies have further empowered consumers to become more creative in customizing and disseminating information through formats such as online reviews, social media posts, and video testimonials [9].

Within this global landscape, Indonesia presents a particularly compelling case for examining the effectiveness of e-WOM. With 221.56 million internet users as of 2024, representing a 2.67% increase

from the previous period, and 139 million active social media users, equivalent to 49.9% of the total population [10], Indonesia has established itself as a digitally mature market. This extensive digital penetration not only creates significant opportunities for local brands to compete with multinational corporations but also fosters a consumer environment where purchasing decisions are increasingly shaped by online reviews, social media interactions, and digital communities. Consequently, Indonesia provides a fertile context for analyzing how e-WOM can be strategically implemented as part of digital communication practices to strengthen the competitiveness of local products.

Within this context, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly in emerging markets, face both significant opportunities and formidable challenges related to e-WOM. The democratization of digital communication allows local brands to leverage authentic consumer advocacy and community engagement, enabling them to compete with well-established players. On the other hand, MSMEs often face structural constraints, such as limited distribution channels, underutilization of online marketplaces, inadequate business management capabilities, and a lack of a strong brand identity [11]. The Indonesian cosmetics industry exemplifies this tension, as local brands must navigate intense competition from national and international players while adapting to rapidly shifting consumer preferences [12]. From a communication studies perspective, these dynamics underscore the crucial importance of strategic message design, audience targeting, and media selection in shaping consumer trust and loyalty.

A concrete illustration of these dynamics is Mabello Indonesia. Established in 2014 as a local cosmetic brand from South Sulawesi, Mabello derives its name from the Bugis word meaning “to beautify,” symbolizing its effort to build authentic cultural resonance with consumers. The brand maintains an active presence on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and major e-commerce platforms, including Tokopedia, Bukalapak, and Shopee, supported by strategic collaborations with influencers. This digital presence highlights both the opportunities and challenges faced by local brands in utilizing e-WOM to build brand awareness, credibility, and consumer preference in a highly competitive market. Mabello’s experience, therefore, illustrates the urgent need for a systematic framework to evaluate and optimize e-WOM strategies as part of a broader communication strategy.

Despite the extensive literature on e-WOM and SWOT in marketing contexts, few studies systematically combine these frameworks to analyze the competitiveness of local MSMEs. Previous research has primarily examined e-WOM’s influence on consumer behavior [5] or the application of SWOT in general marketing strategies [13][14]. However, limited research explores how e-WOM strategies can be optimized through SWOT analysis within the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) perspective, particularly for Indonesian MSMEs. Furthermore, existing studies on MSMEs’ digital marketing strategies in Indonesia remain general [11], [15], without specifically addressing how e-WOM can be optimized through SWOT analysis. This study seeks to fill this critical gap by providing a comprehensive SWOT-based analysis of e-WOM strategies in the case of Mabello Indonesia. By systematically identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and interpreting them through the lens of DOI theory, this research aims to contribute both theoretically through the integration of e-WOM, SWOT, and DOI frameworks within communication studies and practically, by offering actionable insights for local MSMEs to enhance their competitiveness in the digital marketplace. This integrated approach offers a novel perspective on understanding the dynamics of e-WOM adoption and diffusion for local products, providing a more robust framework for strategic decision-making.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the implementation of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) strategies by Mabello Indonesia in strengthening the competitiveness of local products. The research design was guided by the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory [16], which provided a framework for understanding how information about Mabello is communicated, adopted, and disseminated within digital consumer networks. In this study, particular attention was given to the role of innovation characteristics (relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability) and their relevance to e-WOM practices.

Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with eight purposively selected participants, including four internal staff directly involved in marketing activities and four consumers who actively engaged with the brand on social media or e-commerce platforms. This purposive sampling strategy ensured rich insights from stakeholders with direct experience of Mabello’s e-WOM practices. To complement the interviews, secondary data were incorporated, including social media analytics and

consumer-generated content from YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. In addition, a qualitative sentiment analysis was conducted by purposively sampling 100 consumer comments from each platform during the observation period (October 2024 – February 2025), enabling the study to capture variations in consumer perceptions of Mabello’s e-WOM activities.

All data were analyzed using thematic analysis [17], where codes were systematically developed and clustered into themes aligned with the SWOT framework (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). Research credibility was reinforced through triangulation of multiple data sources (interviews, social media analytics, consumer-generated content) and member checking with participants. This methodological design provides a comprehensive and contextually grounded examination of how micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), such as Mabello, can strategically leverage e-WOM to enhance local product competitiveness in the digital marketplace.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a SWOT analysis of Mabello Indonesia’s Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) strategy, supported by the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, to offer actionable insights for enhancing local product competitiveness in the digital marketplace.

Overview of Mabello’s Digital Presence and e-WOM Landscape

This subsection provides a quantitative overview of Mabello Indonesia’s digital footprint and the general sentiment surrounding its e-WOM activities across multiple social media platforms. The overview relies on social media analytics and online consumer reviews. The data collection period spans from October 2024 to February 2025, offering a comprehensive five-month perspective on user engagement and sentiment trends.

Mabello Indonesia maintains a strong and active digital presence across major platforms, including TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. As shown in Table 1, TikTok emerged as the primary driver of e-WOM generation, alone accumulating over 22 million views during the observation period. Sentiment analysis indicates that consumer perception was predominantly positive across platforms, notably on Instagram (72% positive), where strategic influencer collaborations played a decisive role in enhancing brand credibility and trust. On YouTube, Mabello’s content is predominantly composed of repurposed TikTok short videos, resulting in limited originality and minimal organic interaction from audiences. Similarly, the brand’s official Facebook page has remained inactive since 2023; however, product-related discussions and promotions continue to circulate through resellers’ personal accounts, thereby sustaining brand visibility within community-based networks. These findings underscore the critical importance of multi-platform optimization for sustaining digital competitiveness, which aligns with broader observations in e-WOM research that digital communities are central to message dissemination and brand reinforcement [2].

Table 1. Social Media Engagement Metrics and e-WOM Distribution of Mabello Indonesia (October 2024-February 2025)

Platform	Posts	Likes	Comments	Shares	Total views	Sentiment (+/-/neutral)	Notes
TikTok @mabelloindonesia (453,1k followers)	407	108.9K	6.5K	6.5K	22.033K	59% positif, 20% neutral, 21% negatif	Highest engagement, primary driver of e-WOM
Instagram @mabelloofficialpage (122,8k followers)	527	99.4K	19.8K	7.8K	5.515K	72% positif, 19% neutral, 9% negatif	Strong branding, influencer collaborations
YouTube @mabelloindonesia936 (27,9k subscribers)	277	1.7K	126	N/A	128K	54% positif, 29% negatif	Ads-focused, low organic engagement

						neutral, 17% negatif	
Facebook @mabello.id (1k followers)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Inactive since 2023, visibility maintained via resellers

Source: Authors' analysis based on social media analytics tools (2025)

Analysis of Mabello's e-WOM Strategy

In-depth interviews with Mabello staff and consumers, along with online consumer reviews, show the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Mabello Indonesia's electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) strategy.

• Strengths

Mabello Mabello Indonesia demonstrates significant strengths in leveraging e-WOM to enhance the competitiveness of its local products. Its active presence across TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and e-commerce platforms (Tokopedia, Bukalapak, and Shopee) enables the brand to reach diverse consumer segments. This broad visibility directly strengthens the *observability* dimension of the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, as consumers can readily witness product benefits through reviews, short videos, and testimonials from various sources. Interactive strategies, including giveaways, cashback programs, mini gifts, and weekly Q&A sessions, reduce adoption barriers and enhance *trialability*, offering consumers accessible opportunities to experience the products.

Collaborations with local influencers such as Anggu Batari, Indah Permata Sari, Fujianti Utami Putri, and Sischa Khol function as opinion leaders who accelerate adoption during the *persuasion* stage, shaping consumer attitudes and reinforcing credibility. Furthermore, peer-to-peer reviews and user-generated content further strengthen persuasion and decision-making processes, as they are often perceived as more authentic than traditional advertising.

Mabello's use of cultural heritage, reflected in its brand name, which is derived from the Bugis language, and the incorporation of traditional ingredients such as Bedda Lotong, illustrates a strong *compatibility* with consumer values that emphasize authenticity and local identity. At the same time, certification from the Indonesian Food and Drug Authority (BPOM) and halal labeling enhance the brand's *relative advantage* compared to uncertified competitors, ensuring safety and legitimacy in a market increasingly cautious of counterfeit products. Finally, Mabello's responsiveness to consumer feedback reinforces the *confirmation* stage of DOI, as satisfied consumers reaffirm their product choices and generate positive e-WOM, amplifying organic reach and brand advocacy.

These competitive assets align with previous findings [18], [19], [20], which emphasize the importance of influencer credibility and authenticity as critical drivers of consumer trust in e-WOM. Nevertheless, Mabello's reliance on a limited set of platforms suggests both a strategic advantage and a potential vulnerability when compared with MSMEs in more mature markets that pursue broader multi-platform approaches.

• Weaknesses

Despite its strengths, Mabello faces several operational and communication challenges that hinder the optimization of its e-WOM strategy. The inactivity of its official Facebook page since 2023 reduces opportunities to reach certain consumer segments that still rely on the platform, thereby limiting *communication channels* in the early *knowledge* stage of DOI. Similarly, YouTube content is dominated by reposted TikTok videos, reflecting a lack of innovation and weakening the *observability* dimension, since consumers have fewer opportunities to view diverse product applications in authentic contexts.

Delayed responses to consumer reviews, particularly outside working hours or during shift changes, create barriers during the *persuasion* stage, where timely interactions are crucial in influencing purchase decisions. Moreover, the absence of a systematic e-WOM monitoring system complicates the brand's ability to anticipate trends and respond proactively, thereby increasing the perceived *complexity* of adoption for potential consumers who might encounter unresolved issues. Operational issues, such as damaged packaging or delivery delays caused by third-party logistics, also undermine consumer opinion during the *confirmation* stage, discouraging repeat purchases and weakening positive advocacy. These

findings align with earlier research that highlights the risks associated with negative e-WOM when consumer complaints remain unresolved [8].

- **Opportunities**

Indonesia's rapidly expanding digital ecosystem, with over 221 million internet users and 139 million active social media users [10], offers strong opportunities for Mabello to enhance its e-WOM strategy. Although Mabello's official Facebook page has remained inactive since 2023, resellers continue to promote products through personal accounts, creating avenues for community-based marketing and peer-to-peer diffusion that strengthen the *communication channels* in DOI. Collaborations with micro-influencers enable faster information dissemination, particularly at the *knowledge* and *persuasion* stages, where consumer opinions and trusted recommendations play a decisive role in shaping perceptions. Shifting consumer preferences toward sustainable, certified, and culturally authentic products provides a *relative advantage* for Mabello, whose halal-certified and BPOM-approved products align with these values. Increasing consumer concern about counterfeit cosmetics further strengthens Mabello's I at the *decision* stage of DOI.

Trends in short-form video content and authentic storytelling improve *observability*, enabling consumers to witness product benefits in real contexts and fostering a sense of transparency. Collaborations with micro-influencers also open new pathways for *persuasion*, as trusted recommendations can scale organically through their engaged communities. Additionally, government programs supporting MSME digitalization simplify *adoption complexity* by equipping businesses with digital marketing skills and resources. These opportunities align with recent findings that e-WOM on Instagram enhances purchase intention for local cosmetics when it is aligned with authenticity [5] and that digitalization policies contribute to MSMEs' competitiveness [11].

- **Threats**

Mabello faces intense competitive pressure from brands imitating its signature "black scrub," which threatens its unique identity and creates consumer confusion during the *persuasion* and *decision* stages. This imitation trend risks diminishing Mabello's *relative advantage*, as consumers may struggle to differentiate between authentic and counterfeit products, potentially leading to brand dilution. Moreover, Mabello remains vulnerable to digital reputation crises, where viral misinformation or negative reviews can spread rapidly, eroding consumer trust in the *confirmation stage*. Such crises can quickly undo years of brand-building efforts. Operational challenges, including delayed responses and delivery issues by third parties, also damaged the Mabello consumer experience, further undermining trust during the *confirmation* process by failing to meet expectations. Finally, an oversaturated skincare market amplifies *adoption complexity*, as consumers face difficulties evaluating numerous similar alternatives, making it harder for Mabello to stand out. These threats highlight the urgent need for Mabello to adopt proactive digital risk mitigation and robust reputation monitoring systems to safeguard consumer confidence and sustain its competitive edge.

These threats are consistent with research emphasizing the volatility of digital reputation in e-WOM ecosystems [8] and the role of misinformation in shaping consumer purchase decisions [9]. Without proactive reputation monitoring and brand differentiation strategies, Mabello's long-term competitiveness may be compromised.

1. **Strategic Implications**

The integration of SWOT and Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) highlights several strategic directions for optimizing Mabello's e-WOM practices. First, to reinforce its strengths, Mabello should maintain and expand influencer collaborations while diversifying into micro-influencers to reach niche audiences. Emphasizing cultural storytelling and product certifications can further consolidate compatibility and relative advantage in consumer perceptions. Second, weaknesses such as platform underutilization, delayed responsiveness, and operational inefficiencies need to be addressed through systematic monitoring and real-time engagement mechanisms. Improving Facebook and YouTube content with authentic storytelling and strengthening logistics partnerships would enhance observability and confirmation stages of adoption. Third, the opportunities presented by Indonesia's rapidly expanding digital ecosystem and consumer demand for certified local products should be leveraged through scalable video-based campaigns, certification-driven branding, and active participation in government MSME digitalization programs. Finally, threats from imitation, digital reputation risks, and operational disruptions necessitate proactive measures, such as brand differentiation strategies, reputation monitoring systems, misinformation early-warning mechanisms, and supply chain diversification.

These strategic implications are consistent with recent studies showing that structured e-WOM management is essential for sustaining consumer trust in competitive markets [2]. By institutionalizing monitoring and diversifying engagement strategies, Mabello and similar MSMEs can transform e-WOM from a reactive communication tool into a proactive strategy for sustainable competitiveness. Previous research has also highlighted that digital reputation is highly vulnerable to rapidly spreading negative e-WOM [8], [3]. Therefore, effective management of customer feedback is crucial to mitigate risks and sustain brand trust and purchase intentions.

Overall, the SWOT analysis interpreted through the lens of DOI theory provides a comprehensive understanding of how Mabello's e-WOM practices influence consumer adoption in the digital marketplace. The findings highlight that Mabello's visibility, influencer collaborations, and cultural authenticity reinforce key DOI dimensions: observability, persuasion, compatibility, and confirmation, thereby enhancing consumer trust and loyalty. Conversely, weaknesses such as platform underutilization and delayed responsiveness, alongside threats from imitation and digital reputation risks, highlight the critical need for systematic monitoring and proactive reputation management.

These insights extend the theoretical integration of SWOT and DOI within communication studies and provide practical guidance for MSMEs in emerging markets, illustrating how e-WOM can evolve from fragmented promotional activities into a strategic tool for sustainable competitiveness. This synthesis lays the groundwork for the conclusion, which consolidates the study's main contributions and suggests directions for future research.

Nevertheless, this study is subject to several limitations. The focus on a single case study (Mabello Indonesia) restricts the generalizability of the findings, and the purposive sampling of 100 consumer comments per platform may not fully capture the breadth of consumer perceptions. In addition, reliance on self-reported data from interviews introduces the possibility of selective or socially desirable responses. Future research could address these issues by conducting comparative studies across industries, employing mixed-method designs that combine qualitative and large-scale quantitative analyses, and examining longitudinal dynamics of e-WOM effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the strategic use of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) significantly enhances the competitiveness of local products by amplifying consumer trust, cultural authenticity, and brand visibility. Through a comprehensive SWOT analysis interpreted via the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory, Mabello Indonesia exemplifies how effective e-WOM strategies, particularly influencer collaborations, cultural resonant narratives, and consumer-generated content, are instrumental in strengthening its market positioning within the highly competitive cosmetics industry. The findings highlight that Mabello's visibility, influencer partnerships, and cultural authenticity effectively reinforce key DOI dimensions such as observability, persuasion, compatibility, and confirmation, thereby fostering enhanced consumer trust and loyalty.

The research contributes theoretically by integrating the SWOT and Diffusion of Innovations frameworks to provide a nuanced understanding of e-WOM strategies within communication studies. Practically, it furnishes actionable recommendations for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) aiming to optimize their digital engagement. For practitioners, the insights underscore the critical importance of enhancing monitoring systems, diversifying content strategies, and implementing proactive reputation management to sustain consumer loyalty and protect brand credibility in the evolving digital landscape. This synthesis ultimately illustrates how e-WOM can evolve from fragmented promotional activities into a strategic tool for sustainable competitiveness.

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