

The Role of Word of Mouth and Digital Media in Increasing Promotion Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study analyzes the role of Word of Mouth (WoM) and digital media in enhancing promotional effectiveness at PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera in a B2B industrial service context.

Research Method: A qualitative descriptive case study was conducted using purposive sampling. Data were collected through interviews with management and business partners, direct observation, and company documentation. Data analysis applied data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing with source triangulation.

Results and Discussion: Findings show that WoM is crucial in maintaining trust, loyalty, and demand stability, but its impact is limited to existing networks. Digital media is utilized but not strategically managed, resulting in limited contribution to market expansion. Lack of integration between WoM and digital media leads to defensive promotional practices.

Implications: Companies should integrate WoM and digital media to improve promotional effectiveness and competitiveness. Future research may apply quantitative or mixed methods.

Originality: This study highlights the integration gap between WoM and digital media in B2B industrial services.

Keywords: word of mouth; digital media; promotional effectiveness; B2B marketing; industrial services.

1. Introduction

Changes in the global business environment, driven by digitalization and intensifying competition, require companies to adopt more adaptive and effective promotional strategies. The Digital 2024 Global Overview report indicates that over 66% of the global population is connected to the internet, and more than 60% of initial business decisions are influenced by digital information obtained through online platforms and professional recommendations (We Are Social, 2024). This demonstrates that promotional activities are no longer unidirectional but increasingly shaped by interaction, trust, and information credibility within digital ecosystems. In this context, Word of Mouth (WoM) remains one of the most influential forms of marketing communication, as 88% of consumers trust peer and business partner recommendations more than formal advertising (Nielsen, 2021). However, reliance on conventional WoM alone limits market reach, particularly in Business-to-Business (B2B) industrial service sectors characterized by narrow, relational, and highly competitive markets. Therefore, WoM must be



strengthened by integrating with digital media to ensure that promotional communication becomes more systematic, traceable, and scalable.

Digital media, such as corporate websites and business social platforms, serve as strategic tools to enhance visibility, strengthen corporate image, and expand access to customer information (Wardhana, 2024). In industrial service contexts, particularly energy-related supply chain services, promotional effectiveness is critical because purchasing decisions depend not only on price but also on trust, reputation, and long-term relational stability. Sharabati *et al.*, (2024) emphasize that promotional effectiveness in the digital era is determined by the integration of interpersonal communication (WoM) and technology-based communication. Accordingly, promotional effectiveness in industrial service firms depends on the synergy between relational and digital communication systems; however, this integration is often not implemented optimally, resulting in limited market expansion and inconsistent promotional outcomes. From a B2B perspective, WoM and electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) play a crucial role in shaping purchasing decisions by relying on experiential credibility and peer recommendations. At the same time, eWOM further extends informational reach and influence in digital environments (Baker *et al.*, 2016).

Previous studies confirm the importance of WoM/eWOM in influencing promotional effectiveness across various sectors, including retail, tourism, and service industries (Abidin *et al.*, 2024; Baker *et al.*, 2016; Putra & Sukaris, 2022; Rahayu & Sukaris, 2024; Rosario *et al.*, 2020; Sukaris *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, digital media has been widely recognized as a key enabler of effective business communication. Digital platforms such as websites, WhatsApp Business, and social media not only function as communication channels but also as interaction spaces that foster engagement, trust, and perceived service quality (Anissafaroh & Sukaris, 2025; Pradana *et al.*, 2024; Siregar, 2024; Sukaris & Kirono, 2025; Taufiqurrahman *et al.*, 2023). The effectiveness of digital marketing is driven by message accessibility, relevance, and consistency, which ultimately influence behavioral intention (Sharabati *et al.*, 2024).

In the B2B industrial service context, studies show that content strategy and message source significantly influence engagement in digital channels. For instance, employee-generated content tends to produce higher engagement than firm-generated content due to stronger perceived authenticity and trust (Balaji *et al.*, 2023). This highlights that both relational and digital communication mechanisms play important roles in shaping business interactions. Although WoM/eWOM and digital media have been extensively studied, existing literature remains predominantly focused on Business-to-Consumer (B2C) contexts such as retail and tourism. As a result, limited attention has been given to their combined role in Business-to-Business (B2B) industrial service settings, where decision-making processes are more rational, high-risk, and dependent on long-term relational trust. Furthermore, most studies tend to treat digital media as the primary communication channel while underexploring the complementary role of conventional WoM as a relational trust-building mechanism. This indicates a theoretical gap in understanding how WoM and digital media interact within an integrated promotional system, particularly for industrial service firms operating in niche, relationship-based markets.

This gap is evident in the case of PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera, where promotional activities still rely heavily on conventional WoM, while the use of digital media remains limited. Although the company has established a relatively stable customer base, its promotional reach and market expansion potential remain suboptimal due to weak digital integration. This condition highlights the need for a more integrated promotional approach that combines relational trust with digital communication systems. From an academic perspective, this gap reflects the limited empirical exploration of integrated

promotional strategies in B2B energy-related service industries, particularly those combining WoM and digital media as complementary mechanisms.

Based on the identified gap, this study addresses the following research problem: how, and to what extent, do Word of Mouth and digital media contribute to the effectiveness of promotional activities at PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera? The objective of this study is to analyze the roles of Word of Mouth (WoM) and digital media, individually and in interaction, in shaping promotional effectiveness in a B2B industrial service context. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated analytical perspective, which simultaneously examines relational communication (WoM) and technology-based communication (digital media) in an energy-sector industrial service company. This integrated approach extends previous studies that predominantly analyze WoM and digital media separately, particularly within B2C contexts, thereby contributing a more contextualized understanding of promotional effectiveness in B2B environments.

This article is organized into several sections. The first section provides the introduction and background of the research. The second section discusses the literature review and hypothesis development. The third section explains the research methods used. The fourth section presents the research results and discussion, while the final section contains conclusions, implications, and suggestions for further research.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Promotion Effectiveness

Promotional effectiveness is the degree to which a company's promotional activities achieve their stated marketing communication objectives, such as increasing market awareness, attracting customer interest, building positive perceptions, and encouraging purchases or business partnerships. From a modern marketing perspective, promotional effectiveness is measured not only by increased sales but also by a promotion's ability to build customer relationships, expand market reach, and strengthen the brand's position in consumers' minds (Mahrakani *et al.*, 2021). Effective promotion demonstrates that the company's message is received, understood, and believed, significantly influencing the behavior of the target market.

Theoretically, promotional effectiveness is rooted in the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which emphasizes coordinating multiple marketing communication channels to deliver a consistent, mutually reinforcing message. According to the IMC approach, promotional effectiveness increases when a company integrates various communication tools, both personal and digital, to create a cohesive communication experience for customers (Ismaeel *et al.*, 2025). In this framework, promotional effectiveness is determined not only by exposure but also by the consistency, credibility, and integration of messages across communication channels.

In the context of modern business, promotional effectiveness is influenced by several key indicators, including promotional reach, message delivery quality, ability to attract the target market's attention, customer response to promotions, and promotional conversions into purchases or business collaborations. Research by Sophia *et al.*, (2024) shows that promotional effectiveness is strongly influenced by message clarity, visual appeal, brand image consistency, and the suitability of promotional media for the target market's characteristics. These indicators collectively represent the extent to which promotional communication can translate into measurable behavioral responses in the target market.



Furthermore, the development of digital technology has shifted the paradigm of promotional effectiveness from a one-way communication model to interactive and participatory communication. Promotion no longer relies solely on formal advertising but also on customer interaction through digital media and user-to-user recommendations (eWOM). Mubarak *et al.*, (2025) emphasized that the effectiveness of promotions today is greatly influenced by the credibility of the information source and the level of audience trust in the message, making relationship-based promotions and customer experience increasingly important. This indicates that promotional effectiveness is increasingly determined by trust-based communication rather than promotional intensity alone.

In the context of Business-to-Business (B2B) companies, promotional effectiveness has more complex characteristics than in consumer markets. Purchasing decisions or business partnerships in the B2B sector generally involve rational considerations, risk evaluations, and long-term relationships. Therefore, promotional effectiveness is heavily influenced by the company's reputation, communication quality, and the credibility of the information conveyed. Thus, industrial service companies require promotional strategies that not only inform but also build trust, reduce perceived risk, and strengthen long-term relational stability. Based on the theoretical discussion above, promotional effectiveness in B2B industrial services is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct influenced by communication integration, message credibility, and relational trust mechanisms.

2.2 Word of Mouth (WoM)

Word of Mouth (WoM) is a form of informal communication between individuals regarding experiences, perceptions, or assessments of a product, service, or company, delivered directly or through digital media. In the context of modern marketing, WoM is considered one of the most credible promotional channels because the messages it conveys come from users' real experiences rather than directly from the company. The high level of trust in interpersonal recommendations makes WoM more persuasive than conventional advertising, especially in high-risk purchase situations that involve rational considerations. The findings of Donthu *et al.*, (2021) show that WoM/eWOM is a key determinant of consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions across various business contexts. In B2B environments, this credibility becomes even more critical due to the reliance on professional networks and long-term inter-organizational relationships.

Theoretically, Word of Mouth is rooted in Social Communication Theory, which holds that individuals tend to trust information more when it comes from parties who are considered neutral, have direct experience, and are part of a trusted social network. In the Business-to-Business (B2B) context, Word of Mouth has a stronger influence because business cooperation decisions are generally based on trust, reputation, and referential experience of other business partners. Thus, Word of Mouth functions not only as a promotional communication tool but also as a mechanism for establishing a company's legitimacy and credibility in the industrial market. This positions WoM as a relational asset rather than merely a communication channel.

Recent empirical research shows that Word of Mouth significantly influences trust, loyalty, and purchase intention. Prahiawan *et al.*, (2021) found that e-WoM positively influences trust and repurchase intention, especially when customers have a satisfactory service experience. Similarly, Bawafi *et al.*, found that Word of Mouth positively contributes to repurchase intention by increasing customer trust in the service provider.



Furthermore, the development of digitalization has expanded the concept of WoM into electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), namely the dissemination of opinions and recommendations through digital platforms. Liu *et al.*, (2024) emphasized that eWOM 2.0 has evolved into a strategic form of marketing communication that influences not only awareness but also engagement and conversion across various market contexts. Furthermore, they found that eWOM effectiveness is strongly influenced by information credibility, usefulness, and the level of information adoption by the audience (Ngo *et al.*, 2024). In this study, WoM is conceptualized as interpersonal, relationship-based communication, while eWOM refers to digitally mediated peer communication.

In the context of this research, Word of Mouth is understood as the process of spreading information, recommendations, and positive experiences between business partners that influence perception and cooperation decisions. The existence of WoM is very important given the characteristics of the company's business, which operates in the industrial services sector, has a limited market, and relies on long-term relationships. Therefore, WoM is positioned as a strategic variable that influences the effectiveness of promotion by building trust, strengthening reputation, and encouraging cooperation. Accordingly, WoM plays a central role in shaping relational trust and reinforcing promotional outcomes in B2B industrial service environments.

2.3 Digital Media

Digital media is a set of internet-based platforms used by companies to convey information, build interactions, and distribute promotional messages to target markets quickly, broadly, and interactively. In the context of modern marketing, digital media is no longer viewed simply as an additional communication channel but as a strategic instrument for building customer awareness, engagement, trust, and conversion. The development of business digitalization has made digital media an integral part of a company's marketing strategy due to their ability to reach a wider audience at relatively low cost compared to conventional promotional media (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). In this sense, digital media functions as both a communication infrastructure and a strategic marketing enabler within digital ecosystems.

Theoretically, the use of digital media in marketing can be explained by Technology Acceptance Theory and Integrated Marketing Communication Theory, which emphasize that the effectiveness of digital media depends on the extent to which the organization accepts the technology, uses it consistently, and integrates it into its overall communication strategy. Research by Saniah *et al.*, (2025) shows that digital media enable companies to build two-way communication that is more personal, measurable, and responsive than traditional promotional media, as demonstrated in studies on digital marketing communication in MSMEs that emphasize the importance of interactive communication styles. These theoretical perspectives highlight that the effectiveness of digital media is determined not only by the availability of technology but also by organizational readiness, adoption behavior, and strategic integration.

In business practice, digital media includes company websites, social media, email marketing, business instant messaging platforms, search engine marketing, and various other digital channels used to support promotional activities. Research by Sharabati *et al.*, (2024) shows that effective use of digital marketing positively impacts business performance by increasing customer engagement and market reach. These findings confirm that digital media plays a crucial role in expanding market reach and



increasing the effectiveness of marketing communications. However, its effectiveness depends on how consistently and strategically these platforms are managed rather than their mere existence.

Furthermore, Balaji *et al.*, (2023), in a B2B context, demonstrated that the effectiveness of digital media is determined not only by the presence of a digital platform but also by the quality of the content, the source of the message, and the credibility of the information conveyed. Authentic, relevant, and informative digital messages have been shown to significantly increase customer engagement. This indicates that in B2B environments, digital media effectiveness is strongly mediated by perceived trustworthiness and content authenticity rather than simple exposure. This demonstrates that digital media must be managed strategically, rather than simply existing as a passive information channel.

However, various studies have also found that many organizations have not been able to optimize digital media due to limited digital competency, a lack of content strategy, and poor integration between communication channels. Studies on digital marketing adoption indicate that the success of digital media use is strongly influenced by an organization's technological readiness, human resource capabilities, and its orientation toward marketing innovation (May *et al.*, 2025). These limitations explain why digital transformation does not automatically lead to improved promotional effectiveness without supporting organizational capability.

3. Research Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case-study nuance, aiming to gain a deep understanding of the role of word of mouth and digital media in increasing promotional effectiveness at PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on the process, actual conditions, and context of the company's promotions, rather than on quantitative hypothesis testing. The case study design is appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of organizational phenomena within their real-life business context, particularly in industrial service marketing practices.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with informants selected based on their direct involvement and relevance to the company's promotional activities. Research informants included company leaders, staff involved in marketing activities, and business partners or customers who use stockpile rental and coal supply services. A total of 12 informants were involved in this study, consisting of 4 internal informants (company management and marketing staff) and 8 external informants (business partners and service users). Informants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) direct involvement in promotional or business communication activities, (2) minimum cooperation experience with the company of at least 1 year, and (3) willingness to participate in in-depth interviews. This selection of informants was intended to obtain comprehensive data from both the company's internal perspective and the service user's perspective.

Data collection was conducted through several techniques, namely:

- Direct observation, by observing promotional activities, marketing work systems, and the use of promotional media during the internship. The observation process was conducted over 3 months, focusing on promotional interactions, customer communication flow, and the use of both conventional and digital promotional channels.
- Semi-structured interviews, conducted with company leaders and work partners to gather information about the effectiveness of Word of Mouth, the use of digital media, and obstacles

faced in promotions. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was conducted face-to-face, with participants' consent to recording and transcription.

- Documentation, in the form of internal company data, promotional archives, flyer content, website profiles, and records of marketing activities relevant to the research focus. Document analysis included sales reports, promotional materials (flyers and digital content), company website structure, WhatsApp Business communication records, and partnership documentation related to service transactions.

This combination of techniques was used to increase the depth and validity of the data. Method triangulation was applied by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure data consistency and credibility across sources.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative descriptive analysis, through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed to identify patterns, gaps, and the role of word of mouth and digital media in the effectiveness of company promotions. The analysis followed a systematic coding process consisting of open coding (identifying initial concepts), axial coding (grouping categories), and selective coding (identifying core themes related to WoM, digital media, and promotional effectiveness).

To enhance analytical rigor, member checking was conducted by confirming preliminary interpretations with selected key informants to ensure accuracy and reduce researcher bias. Ethical considerations were applied in this study by ensuring informed consent from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the research objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing informants' identities with coded labels (e.g., I1, I2, I3) to protect participants' privacy.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Analysis Results

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation during the internship at PT. At Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera, several key findings were obtained that illustrate how and to what extent Word of Mouth (WoM) and digital media contribute to the effectiveness of company promotions. A source triangulation process was also conducted by comparing the results of field observations, interviews with leaders and partners, and internal company documentation. The comparison results demonstrated consistency of information across sources; thus, the research findings are considered valid and reliable. The research results are presented below.

4.1.1 The Role of Word of Mouth in Promotion Effectiveness

The research results show that Word of Mouth (WoM) is the main promotional strategy implemented by PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera plays a significant role in supporting the effectiveness of the company's promotions. WoM occurs naturally through recommendations from business partners, existing customers, and previously established networks. In the context of industrial service companies, particularly those providing stockpile rental and coal supply services, WoM is a highly trusted means of communication because it is grounded in real experiences and professional relationships among business actors.



Field findings indicate that Word of Mouth (WoM) contributes significantly to building and maintaining trust with business partners. Recommendations from existing customers have proven effective in convincing potential customers about the company's service quality, delivery timeliness, and operational consistency. The impact of WoM is evident in the high rate of repeat orders and stable service demand, particularly from business partners with whom they have collaborated for some time. Thus, WoM serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a mechanism for maintaining long-term business relationships. However, the effectiveness of Word of Mouth (WoM) remains limited because it relies on the scope of existing relationship networks. WoM tends to circulate within the same business community, limiting its ability to reach new markets. This slows the growth of new customers and prevents company promotions from reaching broader market segments. Furthermore, WoM that is not supported by digital documentation and official promotional content may miss opportunities to strengthen the company's credibility with prospective customers. Therefore, while Word of Mouth has proven effective in maintaining loyalty and stable demand, its role in enhancing overall promotional effectiveness still needs to be strengthened through integration with digital media.

4.1.2 The Role of Digital Media in Supporting Promotion

The research results show that PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera has used digital media to support promotions and customer communication, but its use remains basic and has not been strategically managed. The company's digital media include the company website and WhatsApp application, which, in principle, have great potential to increase visibility, expand market reach, and strengthen the company's professional image in the eyes of potential customers.

The company website serves as the primary information medium, containing the company's profile, services, and business activities. However, field findings indicate that the website remains static and relies on a domain forwarding system, limiting the company's ability to manage its content independently. As a result, the information presented is not regularly updated and cannot comprehensively showcase the company's competitive advantages. This situation diminishes the website's role as an active promotional tool. In addition to websites, companies also utilize WhatsApp as a communication and promotional tool. However, WhatsApp usage is often mixed with personal accounts, hampering the effectiveness of service and promotions. Responses to customer messages are slow and unstructured, and the company's business identity lacks a professional appearance. This impacts the digital medium's ability to build initial trust and expand promotional reach to a wider market. Overall, digital media at PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera has not been optimally utilized as a strategic promotional tool. Digital media functions more as a supporting communication tool, rather than as a primary tool for attracting new customers.

4.1.3 Integration of Word of Mouth and Digital Media

The results of the study indicate that the integration between Word of Mouth (WoM) and digital media at PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera has not been built systematically or planned. WoM still occurs naturally as a result of business partners' satisfaction with the company's services, particularly in supply accuracy, service quality, and operational consistency. The company's digital media has not yet served to document, package, and distribute Word of Mouth messages more widely. Customer testimonials,

collaboration experiences, and successful company services have not been consolidated into consistent, structured digital promotional content.

As a result, the potential for Word of Mouth to reach new customers beyond the existing business network is limited. This situation indicates a separation between relationship-based and technology-based promotion, even though both have the potential to complement each other. The integration of Word of Mouth and digital media should enable companies to strengthen promotional credibility by combining interpersonal trust with digital visibility. Word of Mouth can serve as a source of authentic, trusted content, while digital media can expand the reach and frequency of promotional messages. However, without clear planning and management, this integration is not optimal, and company promotions tend to be sporadic and poorly measured.

4.1.4 Impact on Promotion Effectiveness

The research results show the effectiveness of PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera's current promotions are more oriented towards customer retention than attracting new ones. The promotional strategy implemented has proven effective in maintaining business partner loyalty and ensuring sustainable collaboration, particularly through word-of-mouth that develops naturally from customer satisfaction. However, the effectiveness of these promotions has not fully impacted market expansion. A heavy reliance on Word of Mouth has limited the reach of promotions to existing business relationships. Meanwhile, digital media, which should serve to expand the market and increase company visibility, has not made a significant contribution.

The impact of this situation is that promotional efforts become defensive, serving more to maintain the company's position in the existing market than to build competitive advantages that drive growth. While existing promotional strategies are quite effective in the short term, companies risk stagnation in long-term growth if they do not adapt to technological developments and evolving business communication patterns. The findings of this study indicate that promotional effectiveness can be enhanced when companies manage Word of Mouth and digital media in an integrated and strategic manner. This integration allows companies to maintain the relational strength of Word of Mouth while utilizing digital media to expand market reach, enhance their professional image, and encourage new customer acquisition. Thus, promotional effectiveness is oriented not only toward loyalty but also toward sustainable company growth and competitiveness.

The Research Findings Analysis Matrix is simplified as follows:

Stage 1. Data Reduction

Focus of Analysis	Main Field Data	Reduction / Summary
Word of Mouth (WoM)	Business partner recommendations, repeat orders, and long-standing relationships	WoM is a major promotional strategy based on trust and satisfaction.
Media Digital	Static website, domain forwarding, WhatsApp personal account	Digital media has not been managed professionally and strategically
Promotion Integration	WoM is natural; digital does not support WoM	There is no integration of WoM and digital media
Promotion Effectiveness	Stability of existing customers, minimal new customers	Effective promotions retain customers, but weak market expansion

Stage 2. Data Presentation

Aspects of Findings	Word of Mouth	Media Digital	WoM–Digital Integration
Main functions	Building trust & loyalty	Basic information & communication facilities	Not awake yet
Contribution to promotion	High on repeat orders	Low on new customer acquisition	Potential but not yet utilized
Market reach	Limited to old relationships	Still narrow and not optimal	Not expanding the market network
Impact on image	Positive image in partner circle	Less professional & less visible	The image has not been digitally enhanced

Stage 3. Drawing Conclusions

Problem Formulation	Core Findings	Analytical Conclusion
What is the role of WoM?	Dominant and effective WoM	WoM effectively maintains loyalty and demand stability
What is the role of digital media?	Digital media is not yet optimal.	Digital media has not contributed significantly to the effectiveness of promotion.
How is the integration?	Not integrated	Lack of integration limits market expansion
Impact on promotion effectiveness	Focus on old customers	Promotion effectiveness is defensive, not yet expansive

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 The Role of Word of Mouth in Promotion Effectiveness

Research findings indicate that Word of Mouth (WoM) plays a dominant role in supporting the promotional effectiveness of PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera, particularly in maintaining business relationships and partner loyalty. This finding is interpreted as the result of a relationship-based communication mechanism in which trust is constructed through repeated interactions and shared operational experience in B2B service transactions. These results align with marketing communication theory, which posits that WoM is a form of promotion with high credibility because it is based on the direct experiences of service users (Mighfar *et al.*, 2020; Putra & Sukaris, 2022; Sukaris *et al.*, 2020). In the Business-to-Business (B2B) context, WoM becomes increasingly important because collaboration decisions are generally rational, high-risk, and highly dependent on the service provider's trust and reputation.

Previous research has shown that Word of Mouth (WoM) significantly contributes to the formation of trust and repurchase intentions, particularly in the service sector, which emphasizes long-term relationships (Rosario *et al.*, 2020). In this study, this mechanism manifests as repeated collaboration patterns and continued reliance on existing partners rather than expansion into new customers. Field findings support this argument, as recommendations from business partners have proven effective in maintaining stable demand for stockpile rental and coal supply services. Thus, Word of Mouth (WoM) serves not only as an informal promotional tool but also as a relational mechanism that strengthens business ties. However, consistent with findings from Baker *et al.*, (2016), the effectiveness of WoM tends to be limited without a broader communication strategy. The limitation identified in this case is not related to trust formation but rather to the spatial restriction on information diffusion, where WoM circulation remains confined to established industrial networks. WoM that



circulates only within the same circle of relationships can limit market expansion and the acquisition of new customers. This suggests that although WoM is effective in enhancing internal promotions, its role still needs to be expanded to better support more strategic, growth-oriented promotional objectives.

4.2.2 The Role of Digital Media in Supporting Promotion

Digital media is considered a strategic tool for expanding promotional reach, increasing company visibility, and fostering two-way interactions with customers (Abidin *et al.*, 2024; Sharabati *et al.*, 2024; Sukaris & Kirono, 2025; Taufiqurrahman *et al.*, 2023). From a functional perspective, digital media operates as an infrastructure of visibility and interaction that should convert relational capital into market exposure. However, research findings indicate that digital media play a role in supporting PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera's promotion is still not optimal. The digital media used, such as websites and WhatsApp, function more as basic communication tools than as strategic promotional tools.

These findings align with research by Taufiqurrahman *et al.*, (2023) and Sharabati *et al.*, (2024), which states that digital marketing effectiveness is largely determined by content management, message consistency, and the professionalism of digital channels. In the observed case, the absence of structured content governance reduces digital media from a strategic marketing instrument to an operational communication tool. Static websites and limited content management hinder digital media's ability to build a professional image and a competitive advantage for a company. However, in a B2B context, digital media often serves as the initial point of contact for potential customers before engaging in further communication. Furthermore, the use of digital communication media that are not separate from personal accounts indicates low organizational readiness to manage digital promotions in a structured manner. This supports the findings of Balaji *et al.*, (2023) that managing message sources and digital identities significantly influences levels of audience trust and engagement. Thus, digital media at PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera has not made a significant contribution to increasing promotional effectiveness because it has not been managed as part of an integrated marketing strategy.

4.2.3 Integration of Word of Mouth and Digital Media

The research results show that word of mouth and digital media at PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera continues to operate independently and has not been strategically integrated. This separation indicates the absence of a unified communication architecture linking relational marketing outputs (WoM) to digital dissemination channels. Word of mouth develops naturally based on partner satisfaction, while digital media has not been used to strengthen and expand the word-of-mouth message. This condition indicates a gap between the company's promotional practices and modern marketing concepts that emphasize the integration of communication channels.

Marketing literature suggests that integrating Word of Mouth (WOM) with digital media, particularly through electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), can expand the reach of promotional messages without diminishing interpersonal trust. Abidin *et al.*, (2024); Baker *et al.*, (2016); Rosario *et al.*, (2020); Siregar (2024) assert that content based on real customer experiences, presented through digital media, has greater persuasive power than company promotional messages alone.

Research findings indicate that this potential remains untapped. Partner testimonials, service success stories, and collaborative experiences have not been packaged as structured digital content. As a result, Word of Mouth (WoM) only impacts a limited network of relationships and does not contribute

optimally to new customer acquisition. This reinforces the research gap that the integration of Word of Mouth (WoM) and digital media is still rarely implemented in industrial service companies. Thus, integrating Word of Mouth (WoM) and digital media is a strategic key to increasing promotional effectiveness. Digital media can serve as a credibility enhancer for Word of Mouth (WoM), while Word of Mouth (WoM) provides authentic content that increases trust among digital audiences. The interaction between the two mechanisms should be understood as a complementary system in which relational trust is amplified through digital scalability.

4.2.4 Impact on Promotion Effectiveness

The research findings indicate that PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera's current promotional effectiveness is defensive, focusing more on customer retention than attracting new ones. Word of mouth significantly contributes to partner loyalty and demand stability, but has not had a significant impact on market expansion. Meanwhile, digital media has not yet served as an optimal driver of promotional growth.

These findings align with Grewal *et al.*, (2022) observation that B2B companies often fall into a pattern of relational promotion that is strong internally but weak in market expansion if not supported by a digital communication strategy. The current condition reflects a structural imbalance between relational capital accumulation (WoM) and its conversion into market expansion capability. Without adaptive promotional integration, companies may experience stagnation in growth despite a loyal customer base. Previous research has shown that promotional effectiveness increases significantly when companies combine the power of word-of-mouth (WoM) with the reach and visibility of digital media (Rosario *et al.*, 2020). The findings of this study confirm that the lack of such integration limits the overall impact of promotions. Thus, the primary impact of the current promotional environment is the company's limited ability to grow and expand market share. Increased promotional effectiveness can only be achieved if word of mouth and digital media are managed in an integrated and strategic manner, so that promotions not only maintain loyalty but also drive sustainable growth and competitiveness.

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted to analyze how Word of Mouth (WoM) and digital media contribute to the effectiveness of promotional activities at PT. Gresik Anugrah Sejahtera, particularly in B2B industrial services, including stockpile rental and coal supply. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design. Data were collected through purposive sampling involving company leaders, marketing-related staff, and business partners, using interviews, observation, documentation, and triangulation techniques. The findings indicate that promotional effectiveness is primarily driven by WoM-based relational communication, which supports trust formation and demand stability. In contrast, digital media remains underutilized, serving only as a basic communication tool rather than a strategic promotional instrument. In addition, the integration between WoM and digital media has not been systematically implemented, resulting in a promotional pattern that is more defensive and limited to existing business networks.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on integrated marketing communication by demonstrating that, in B2B industrial service contexts, promotional effectiveness is not determined solely by the presence of WoM or digital media individually, but by the extent to which



both are integrated into a unified communication strategy. In practice, the findings highlight that WoM functions as a trust-building mechanism, while digital media serves as a potential expansion channel that remains underdeveloped within the observed company. Managerially, the study suggests that companies should formalize WoM as a strategic asset by documenting customer experiences and systematically transforming them into digital content to enhance visibility and market reach. The originality of this study lies in its empirical focus on the gap between relational promotion (WoM) and digital communication practices in a B2B industrial service setting, a gap that has been relatively underexplored in previous studies.

This study has several limitations. First, as a qualitative case study, the findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized to all industrial service companies. Second, the study does not provide quantitative measures of promotional effectiveness indicators such as market reach, response rate, or conversion rate, limiting the ability to assess the magnitude of relationships between variables. Third, the study relies on a limited set of informants, which may not fully capture all perspectives within the organization and its business partners. Future research is recommended to employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to more precisely measure the strength and influence of WoM and digital media on promotional effectiveness. In addition, expanding the research scope to other industrial service sectors is suggested to improve the external validity and generalizability of the findings, particularly in understanding how integrated promotional strategies operate across different B2B contexts.

Statement of Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT to assist in improving clarity and readability of the text. The author reviewed and edited the output and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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