

E-WOM as a Digital Public Relations Strategy in Building Organizational Reputation

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ABSTRACT

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has become an increasingly important component of Digital Public Relations (Digital PR), enabling organizations to engage stakeholders and shape organizational reputation through online interactions. Although studies on e-WOM have expanded across communication and marketing disciplines, evidence regarding its strategic role in Digital PR remains fragmented. This study systematically synthesizes the existing literature to examine how e-WOM has been implemented as a Digital Public Relations strategy for building organizational reputation. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted following the PRISMA approach. Literature published between 2015 and 2025 was identified through searches of Scopus, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and Google Scholar using predefined Boolean search strings. After applying the eligibility criteria, 19 studies were included in the qualitative thematic synthesis. The review identifies five recurring themes that characterize the strategic role of e-WOM in Digital Public Relations: (1) digital engagement as a mechanism for stakeholder interaction, (2) trust building through credible online communication, (3) stakeholder participation and co-creation, (4) content credibility and communication quality, and (5) reputation management through strategic e-WOM practices. Across the reviewed studies, these themes consistently indicate that e-WOM is associated with stakeholder engagement, organizational credibility, and digital reputation management. However, the evidence also highlights contextual differences across digital platforms, organizational settings, and methodological approaches, suggesting that the effectiveness of e-WOM depends on organizational responsiveness and communication strategies rather than e-WOM alone. This review contributes to Digital Public Relations scholarship by providing an integrated synthesis of recent research and identifying key strategic themes, theoretical perspectives, and future research directions for leveraging e-WOM in organizational reputation management.

Keywords: *Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM); Digital Public Relations; Organizational Reputation; Stakeholder Engagement; Systematic Literature Review.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped organizational communication by creating an interconnected environment in which organizations and stakeholders continuously exchange information through digital platforms. The rapid expansion of social media, online communities, and interactive technologies has shifted communication from one-way information dissemination toward dialogic, participatory, and networked communication, allowing stakeholders to actively influence organizational narratives and reputation (Vial, 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Verhoef et al., 2021).

Within this environment, Digital Public Relations (Digital PR) has evolved beyond the dissemination of organizational messages to emphasize stakeholder engagement, relationship management, transparency, and interactive communication (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Verčič et al., 2015). Organizational reputation is therefore increasingly shaped not only by official

communication but also by stakeholder-generated content, online interactions, and public conversations occurring across digital platforms (Macnamara, 2021; Valentini, 2021).

One of the most influential forms of stakeholder-generated communication is Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), which refers to positive or negative statements made by current or potential customers and disseminated through internet-based communication channels (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Compared with traditional word of mouth, e-WOM has greater reach, persistence, and visibility, enabling online opinions, reviews, and recommendations to influence stakeholder perceptions, organizational credibility, and reputation (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Erkan & Evans, 2016).

Existing studies have extensively examined e-WOM from the perspectives of consumer behavior, marketing communication, online reviews, purchase intention, and brand evaluation. Other studies have separately explored Digital PR, stakeholder engagement, or organizational reputation. However, evidence integrating these three concepts—e-WOM, Digital Public Relations, and organizational reputation—remains fragmented across different disciplinary perspectives. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how e-WOM functions strategically within Digital PR to support organizational reputation management.

Although several literature reviews have discussed e-WOM, Digital PR, or reputation management individually, few have systematically synthesized empirical evidence that explicitly connects these constructs within a single analytical framework. This gap limits the development of an integrated understanding of the strategic mechanisms through which e-WOM contributes to Digital PR practices and organizational reputation. Accordingly, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) provides an appropriate methodological approach for consolidating current evidence, identifying dominant research themes, and highlighting directions for future research.

Accordingly, this study aims to systematically review the literature on the role of e-WOM as a Digital Public Relations strategy in building organizational reputation between 2015 and 2025. Specifically, the review addresses three research questions: (1) how e-WOM has been utilized as a Digital PR strategy for organizational reputation; (2) which factors, communication practices, and digital platforms influence its effectiveness; and (3) what major research themes, challenges, and future directions emerge from the existing literature.

This review contributes to the Digital Public Relations literature in three ways. First, it integrates fragmented evidence across communication, marketing, and organizational studies into a coherent analytical framework. Second, it identifies recurring strategic themes describing how e-WOM supports stakeholder engagement and organizational reputation in digital environments. Third, it highlights methodological trends, theoretical perspectives, and research gaps that may guide future investigations into Digital Public Relations and organizational reputation management.

2. METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, and synthesize empirical evidence regarding the role of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) as a Digital Public Relations strategy for building organizational reputation. The SLR approach was selected because it provides a rigorous, transparent, and reproducible procedure for reviewing published research while minimizing selection bias and facilitating evidence synthesis across studies (Page et al., 2021; Snyder, 2019). The review focused on publications published between 2015 and 2025, reflecting the rapid development of digital communication technologies, social media ecosystems, and stakeholder engagement practices that have reshaped organizational reputation management.

This review addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. How has Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) been utilized as a Digital Public Relations strategy in building organizational reputation?

RQ2. Which communication factors, digital platforms, and organizational practices influence the effectiveness of e-WOM?

RQ3. What major themes, methodological trends, and future research directions emerge from studies on e-WOM and Digital Public Relations?

Database Selection and Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted on 31 January 2025, with the publication period limited to studies published between 2015 and 2025. Scopus was employed as the primary database because of its comprehensive coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed journals in communication, marketing, public relations, and information systems. To improve search completeness and reduce the possibility of overlooking relevant publications, supplementary searches were also conducted using the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Google Scholar. These additional databases were used primarily to verify the comprehensiveness of the search rather than to replace the quality standards established through the Scopus database.

A structured Boolean search strategy was developed by combining keywords representing the three principal concepts investigated in this review, namely Electronic Word of Mouth, Digital Public Relations, and Organizational Reputation. The primary search string applied in Scopus was: ("electronic word of mouth" OR "E-WOM" OR "online word of mouth" OR "digital word of mouth") AND ("digital public relations" OR "digital PR" OR "public relations" OR "strategic communication") AND ("organizational reputation" OR "corporate reputation" OR "brand reputation" OR "online reputation").

The search was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English or Indonesian. Only studies explicitly examining the relationship between e-WOM, digital communication strategies, and organizational reputation were considered eligible for further review.

Eligibility Criteria and Study Selection

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure transparency and

reproducibility throughout the review process (Page et al., 2021). Following the initial database search, 8,479 records were identified. After applying keyword relevance filtering, 8,425 records were excluded because they did not simultaneously address the three principal concepts investigated in this review. The remaining 54 studies proceeded to title and abstract screening. Subsequently, 23 articles satisfied the eligibility requirements and underwent full-text assessment. Four studies were excluded during this stage because they did not fully satisfy the inclusion criteria, resulting in 19 articles being retained for the final qualitative synthesis.

Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025, written in English or Indonesian, provided full-text access, and explicitly discussed Electronic Word of Mouth within the context of Digital Public Relations and organizational reputation. Publications in the form of books, book chapters, conference proceedings, review papers, editorials, theses, dissertations, and other non-peer-reviewed documents were excluded. Studies addressing unrelated topics or lacking sufficient methodological information were also removed during the screening process. The PRISMA 2020 framework is presented in more detail in FIGURE 1.

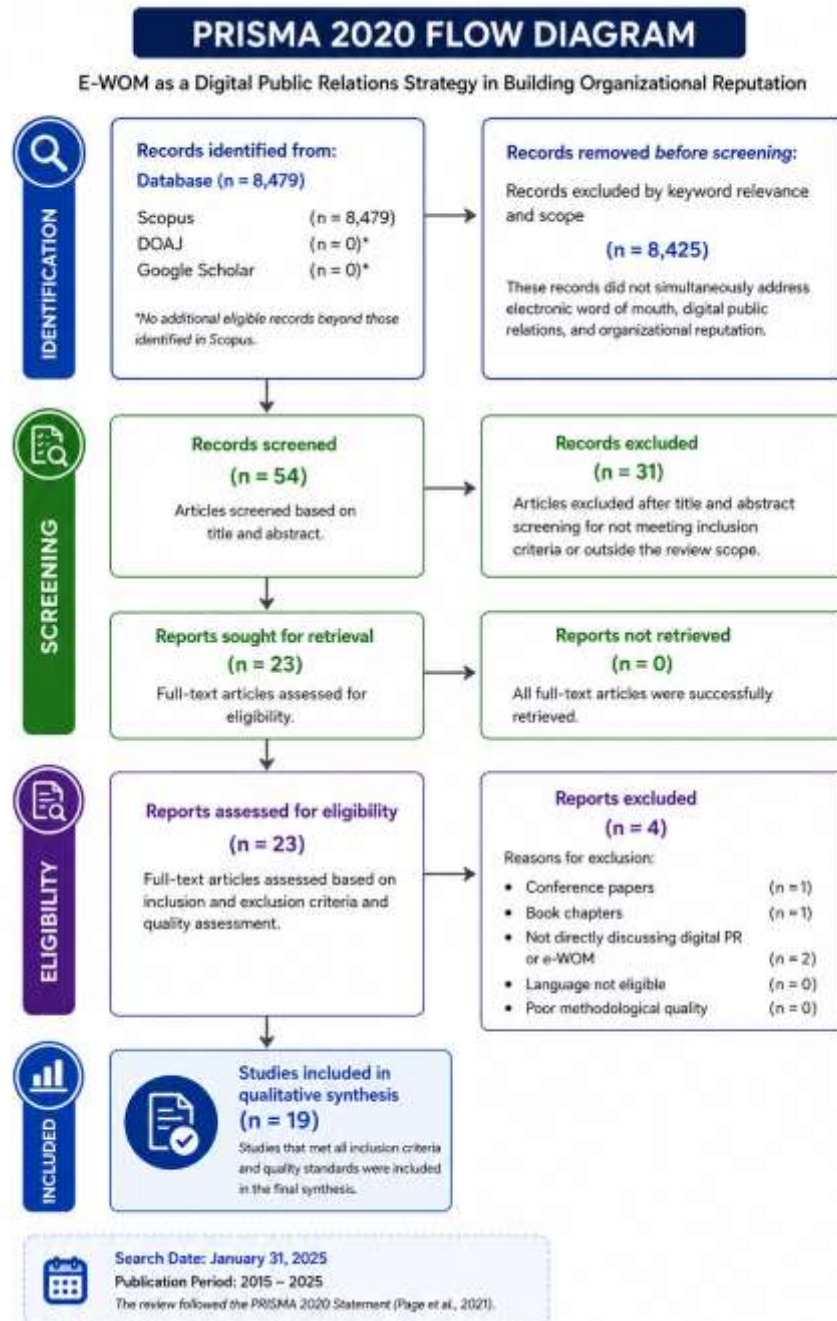


FIGURE 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

Source: data processing, 2026.

Quality Assessment

To enhance methodological rigor, all eligible studies underwent a quality assessment before inclusion in the final synthesis. The evaluation considered five dimensions: research

clarity, methodological rigor, transparency of data sources, analytical depth, and relevance to Electronic Word of Mouth, Digital Public Relations, and organizational reputation. Each criterion was assessed using a three-point scale ranging from **0** (not addressed) to **2** (clearly addressed), producing a maximum quality score of **10** for each article. Only studies achieving a minimum score of **7** were retained for thematic analysis, thereby ensuring that the synthesis was based on methodologically sound and relevant evidence.

Data Extraction and Thematic Analysis

After the quality assessment, data were systematically extracted using a structured coding framework to ensure consistency across all included studies. Information extracted from each article comprised publication details, country or research context, research methodology, theoretical framework, forms of e-WOM examined, digital communication platforms, organizational reputation dimensions, and principal findings. The extracted data were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis, following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved repeated reading of the selected studies, open coding of relevant findings, grouping related codes into broader conceptual categories, and synthesizing these categories into overarching themes. This iterative analytical process resulted in the identification of five recurring themes describing the strategic role of Electronic Word of Mouth in Digital Public Relations and organizational reputation management.

Review Transparency and Limitations

This review adhered to the reporting principles outlined in PRISMA 2020, including predefined research questions, database selection, search strategy, eligibility criteria, quality assessment procedures, and thematic synthesis. Employing this systematic protocol enhanced the transparency and reproducibility of the review while reducing the potential for researcher bias.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. Although supplementary databases were consulted to improve literature coverage, the review relied primarily on peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus. The analysis was limited to publications published between 2015 and 2025 in English and Indonesian, potentially excluding relevant studies published in other languages or outside the selected timeframe. Furthermore, variations in terminology related to Electronic Word of Mouth, Digital Public Relations, and organizational reputation may have prevented some relevant publications from being retrieved despite the systematic search strategy employed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section summarizes 19 studies included in the systematic literature review focusing on the role of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) as a digital public relations (PR) strategy in building organizational reputation. The reviewed studies examine various digital communication contexts, including social media engagement, online consumer interaction, digital platforms, AI-supported communication, transparency, and stakeholder relationship management. The studies were conducted across diverse contexts (e.g., Indonesia, the United States, Malaysia, Turkey, Kuwait, and other countries) using various research methods such as surveys, case studies, bibliometric analysis, content analysis, interviews, and conceptual

approaches. These studies provide a comprehensive understanding of how organizations adapt their PR strategies by utilizing E-WOM, digital engagement, and online communication practices to enhance trust, credibility, and organizational reputation. Characteristics of Included Studies are presented in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1. Characteristics of Included Studies

No	Author(s) Year	& Research Method	Key Focus	Main Findings	PR Strategy Adaptation
1	Erkan & Evans (2016)	Quantitative (SEM)	E-WOM influence on consumer decision-making	E-WOM credibility, usefulness, and information quality significantly influence purchase intention	PR adaptation through managing online conversations, credible content, and stakeholder engagement
2	Chu & Kim (2018)	Quantitative (Survey)	Social media E-WOM behavior	Trust, social interaction, and information sharing encourage online word-of-mouth activities	PR strategies shift toward relationship building through social media communities
3	Huang, Wu, & Huang (2017)	Content analysis	Development of digital PR research & social media communication	Digital PR research increasingly focuses on social media interaction and online engagement	Adaptation toward interactive communication and digital relationship management
4	Anderson, Swenson, & Gilkerson (2016)	In-depth interviews	Dialogic communication and engagement	Organizations still struggle to apply two-way communication effectively in digital environments	PR strategies require dialogic engagement rather than one-way information dissemination
5	Sezgin & Cesur (2019)	Content analysis (company websites)	Digital platforms as PR tools	Digital channels improve accessibility but content quality remains a challenge	PR should optimize digital platforms as interactive reputation-building tools

No	Author(s) Year	&	Research Method	Key Focus	Main Findings	PR Strategy Adaptation
6	Murniasih Ramadanty (2019)	&	Qualitative descriptive (interviews & observation)	Social media role in organizational image	Social media strengthens organizational image through consistency and interaction	Adaptation through social media branding and continuous stakeholder interaction
7	Permatasari Aras (2021)	&	Qualitative (case study)	Social media use in government PR	Social media improves public trust and opinion formation but requires better content management	PR adaptation through strategic content creation and online engagement
8	Zhou & (2021)	Xu	Conceptual paper	Dialogic theory and digital affordances	Digital platforms support organization- public relationships through interaction and usability	PR should select platforms based on engagement, accessibility, and relational value
9	Saraih et (2021)	al.	Qualitative (semi- structured interviews)	Digital PR in stakeholder communication	Digital media enables stakeholder participation and strengthens organizational image	Adaptation through stakeholder co- creation and user-generated content
10	Bulantseva (2022)		Content analysis	Digital PR in organizational communication	Digital PR enhances awareness, reach, and interaction through multiple online channels	Adaptation through integrated digital communication and real-time engagement
11	Öztay (2021)		Quantitative (Survey)	Digital events and online awareness	Online communication activities increase awareness and influence audience behavior	PR adaptation through digital campaigns and online engagement strategies

No	Author(s) & Year	Research Method	Key Focus	Main Findings	PR Strategy Adaptation
12	Ki, Ertem-Eray & Hayden (2024)	Bibliometric analysis	Digital PR trends over 27 years	Digital PR growth is driven by social media, AI, and online engagement	Adaptation through digital platforms, analytics, and relationship management
13	Kaleel & Alomari (2024)	Bibliometric analysis (Scopus 2018–2023)	AI and PR transformation	AI supports social media analysis, personalization, and predictive communication	Adaptation toward data-driven PR and personalized stakeholder interaction
14	Wamprechtsamer (2024)	Conceptual (genealogical reconstruction)	Transparency in online PR	Online transparency involves balancing openness, authenticity, and organizational control	Adaptation through strategic transparency and reputation management
15	Alhammad & Al-Omari (2024)	Survey (n=400)	Digital PR and internal communication	Digital PR improves communication effectiveness and organizational satisfaction	Adaptation through internal digital communication and digital literacy development
16	Yessenbek et al. (2025)	Comparative & content analysis	AI integration in PR practice	AI improves efficiency through automation and audience targeting but requires skills	Adaptation through AI-supported communication and automated engagement
17	Wulandari et al. (2025)	Qualitative (FGD + NVivo)	AI & Big Data in PR	Digital PR transformation requires literacy, infrastructure, ethics, and regulation	Adaptation through technology integration and responsible digital communication
18	Ahmed & Saxton (2025)	Quantitative (Big Data Analysis)	CEO communication and online reputation	Negative or controversial online communication damages	Adaptation through strategic social media management

No	Author(s) Year	&	Research Method	Key Focus	Main Findings	PR Strategy Adaptation
					organizational relationships and reputation	and reputation protection
19	Nga & (2025)	Tam	Mixed methods SEM	+ Digital transformation and organizational competitiveness	Digital transformation and communication capability improve organizational competitiveness	Adaptation through integrated digital PR, E- WOM management, and reputation strategy

source: data processing, 2026.

Systematic reviews often reveal methodological diversity within a research field, reflecting the variety of approaches used to investigate complex communication phenomena (Tranfield et al., 2003; Snyder, 2019). The reviewed studies on Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) as a digital public relations (PR) strategy employ diverse methodologies, including qualitative case studies, quantitative surveys, content analysis, bibliometric analysis, and mixed methods. This methodological diversity reflects the complexity of studying digital communication, online engagement, and organizational reputation management. Qualitative approaches provide in-depth understanding of stakeholder experiences, communication practices, and contextual factors, while quantitative and mixed methods identify measurable patterns related to E-WOM effectiveness, trust, engagement, and reputation outcomes.

The findings can be interpreted through several theoretical perspectives that explain the role of E-WOM in contemporary public relations practices. From a Strategic Communication perspective, the increasing use of E-WOM reflects the alignment between digital conversations, stakeholder engagement, and organizational reputation objectives (Hallahan et al., 2007). The development of social media platforms, digital networks, and data-driven communication illustrates organizational adaptation processes in responding to technological changes and evolving audience expectations (Donaldson, 2001). Furthermore, the emphasis on interaction, dialogue, relationship building, and stakeholder participation corresponds with the principles of Excellence Theory, which highlights two-way communication and mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (Grunig et al., 2002; Grunig & Grunig, 2008).

The methodological diversity of the reviewed studies, combined with multiple theoretical perspectives, highlights the interdisciplinary nature of E-WOM and digital PR research. These studies integrate perspectives from communication, marketing, organizational studies, consumer behavior, and digital technology (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ki et al., 2024; Kaleel & Alomari, 2024). Overall, these variations enrich the understanding of how E-WOM functions as a strategic communication mechanism and provide a foundation for identifying key themes related to digital PR adaptation and organizational reputation building.

Overview of Included Studies

This systematic review synthesizes findings from 19 studies examining the role of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) as a digital public relations strategy in building organizational reputation. The reviewed studies cover diverse contexts, including corporate communication, social media engagement, online communities, digital platforms, and technology-supported communication practices across various countries such as Indonesia, the United States, Malaysia, Turkey, and Kuwait. This diversity enables a broader understanding of how organizations utilize digital communication channels to influence public perception and strengthen relationships with stakeholders.

Methodologically, the included studies apply various research approaches, including qualitative interviews, case studies, surveys, content analysis, bibliometric analysis, and conceptual studies. Qualitative research emphasizes contextual understanding of organizational communication strategies, audience participation, and reputation management challenges, while quantitative and mixed-method studies provide empirical evidence regarding the influence of E-WOM on trust, engagement, credibility, and organizational outcomes.

The findings consistently demonstrate that E-WOM has transformed digital public relations by shifting communication processes from organization-controlled messages toward interactive, participatory, and stakeholder-driven communication. Online reviews, social media discussions, user-generated content, and digital interactions increasingly influence organizational reputation by shaping public trust, credibility, and perceptions. Therefore, organizations are required to actively monitor, manage, and participate in digital conversations to maintain positive relationships with their publics.

The literature also indicates increasing scholarly attention toward E-WOM and digital PR, driven by the rapid growth of social media, digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and data-driven communication practices. These developments position E-WOM not merely as consumer-generated communication but as a strategic PR tool that supports reputation management, stakeholder engagement, and long-term organizational sustainability.

Overall, the reviewed studies provide a strong foundation for understanding how E-WOM contributes to the transformation of public relations strategies in the digital era. The subsequent sections further synthesize the major themes of E-WOM adaptation, including digital engagement, trust building, stakeholder participation, content credibility, and reputation management.

Key Themes in E-WOM as Digital Public Relations Strategy

Digital Engagement as a Core Mechanism of E-WOM-Based PR

A dominant theme identified across the reviewed studies is the increasing importance of digital engagement as a fundamental mechanism of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) in contemporary public relations (PR). Digital platforms have transformed communication from a one-way information delivery model into an interactive process where organizations and publics actively exchange information, opinions, and experiences. Through social media interactions, online discussions, reviews, and user-generated content, audiences become active participants in shaping organizational narratives.

E-WOM enables organizations to create continuous engagement by encouraging conversations, responding to stakeholder feedback, and maintaining online relationships. Unlike traditional communication approaches, digital engagement allows organizations to observe public reactions in real time and adapt communication strategies based on audience expectations. This aligns with the principles of dialogic communication, where interaction and mutual understanding become central elements of relationship-building (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Furthermore, social media platforms strengthen engagement by enabling organizations to create communities and facilitate public participation. Active engagement through comments, responses, and interactive content increases audience involvement and strengthens organizational visibility (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Therefore, E-WOM functions not only as an information-sharing mechanism but also as a strategic PR tool for developing long-term relationships with stakeholders.

Overall, digital engagement represents a shift in PR practice from message control toward relationship-oriented communication, where organizations must actively participate in online conversations to maintain meaningful connections with their publics.

Trust Building Through Credible Electronic Word of Mouth

Trust building represents another essential theme in the role of E-WOM as a digital PR strategy. In digital environments, audiences increasingly rely on information generated by other users, online reviews, recommendations, and personal experiences when forming perceptions about organizations. E-WOM is considered influential because messages from other consumers or stakeholders are often perceived as more authentic and less controlled compared to organizational communication.

The credibility of E-WOM depends on several factors, including information quality, source reliability, usefulness, and perceived authenticity. Erkan and Evans (2016) found that the usefulness and credibility of online information significantly influence consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. This indicates that positive E-WOM can strengthen trust by reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence in organizational claims.

From a PR perspective, trust is a critical foundation of reputation. Organizations that encourage transparent communication and respond effectively to online feedback are more likely to develop stronger relationships with their publics. However, negative E-WOM can quickly damage trust when organizations fail to address stakeholder concerns. Therefore, managing E-WOM requires not only promoting positive communication but also maintaining honesty, responsiveness, and transparency.

Overall, trust building through E-WOM demonstrates that digital reputation is increasingly shaped by public conversations rather than solely by organizational-controlled messages.

Stakeholder Participation and Co-Creation in Digital Communication

Another key theme is the transformation of stakeholders from passive audiences into active contributors in digital public relations. E-WOM enables stakeholders to participate in organizational communication by creating, sharing, commenting, and distributing content

through digital networks. This participation changes the traditional PR model, where organizations were primarily responsible for producing messages.

User-generated content and online discussions allow stakeholders to become co-creators of organizational identity and reputation. Saraih et al. (2021) emphasize that digital platforms encourage stakeholder involvement by enabling interactive communication between organizations and their communities. Similarly, social media facilitates public participation by allowing individuals to contribute experiences and opinions that influence collective perceptions.

This participatory nature of E-WOM provides both opportunities and challenges for organizations. On one hand, stakeholder-generated content can increase authenticity, reach, and engagement. On the other hand, organizations must manage diverse opinions and potential reputational risks emerging from uncontrolled conversations.

Therefore, effective E-WOM-based PR requires organizations to adopt participatory communication strategies by listening to stakeholders, encouraging meaningful interactions, and creating spaces for collaborative communication.

Content Credibility and Quality in Managing Online Communication

Content credibility and quality are crucial factors determining the effectiveness of E-WOM as a digital PR strategy. In highly competitive digital environments, organizations must ensure that online information is accurate, relevant, transparent, and valuable for audiences. The increasing volume of digital information makes audiences more selective in evaluating communication messages.

High-quality content strengthens organizational credibility by providing useful information and supporting positive perceptions. According to Erkan and Evans (2016), information quality is one of the important factors influencing how audiences evaluate E-WOM messages. Content that is complete, attractive, and reliable is more likely to be trusted and shared by online communities.

In the context of digital PR, organizations must develop communication strategies that balance promotional objectives with informative and authentic content. Excessive promotional messages may reduce credibility, while transparent and audience-oriented communication can increase trust and engagement. Therefore, content management becomes an essential component of reputation-building strategies.

Overall, content credibility determines whether E-WOM becomes a valuable communication resource or a potential source of reputational challenges.

Reputation Management Through Strategic E-WOM Practices

Reputation management is the central outcome of E-WOM-based digital public relations strategies. In digital environments, organizational reputation is continuously shaped by online conversations, reviews, stakeholder experiences, and public perceptions. Unlike traditional reputation management, digital PR requires organizations to monitor and respond to dynamic communication processes in real time.

Positive E-WOM can strengthen organizational reputation by increasing credibility, trust, and public support. Conversely, negative E-WOM can spread rapidly and create reputational risks if organizations fail to respond appropriately. Therefore, reputation management requires proactive monitoring, strategic engagement, and effective crisis communication.

Digital PR practices emphasize that organizations should not only attempt to control online narratives but also build authentic relationships with stakeholders. The use of social media analytics, digital monitoring tools, and responsive communication strategies enables organizations to identify public concerns and adjust their approaches accordingly (Ki et al., 2024).

Overall, E-WOM has transformed reputation management from a controlled organizational activity into a collaborative process involving organizations, stakeholders, and digital communities. Effective reputation management depends on the ability of organizations to participate ethically and strategically in online conversations. Integrative Framework of E-WOM as a Digital Public Relations Strategy in Building Organizational Reputation presented in Figure 2.

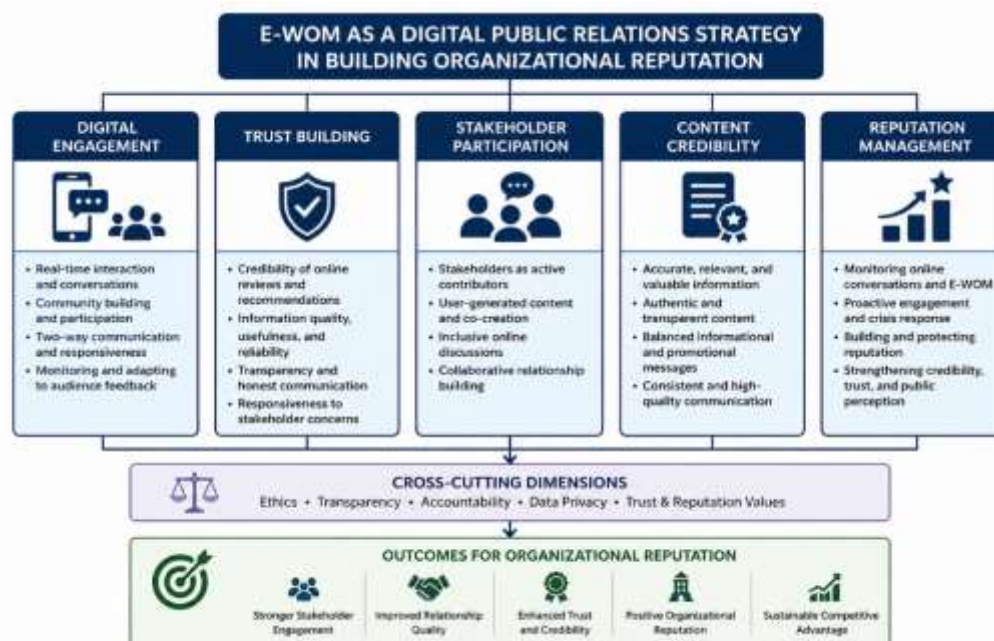


FIGURE 2. Integrative Framework of E-WOM as a Digital Public Relations Strategy in Building Organizational Reputation

source: data processing, 2026.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review demonstrate that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has transformed from a user-generated communication activity into a strategic instrument within digital public relations (PR). The reviewed studies indicate that organizational reputation in the digital era is no longer shaped solely by official organizational

messages but also by stakeholder-generated conversations, online reviews, and digital interactions. This transformation reflects a shift from organization-controlled communication toward participatory communication, where organizations and publics collectively influence reputation formation.

First, E-WOM functions as a strategic mechanism for building organizational reputation through digital engagement and stakeholder interaction. The findings reveal that digital platforms have changed communication practices from one-way information dissemination into interactive processes involving organizations and publics. Through social media conversations, online reviews, and user-generated content, stakeholders become active participants in constructing organizational narratives. This supports the perspective of Strategic Communication Theory, which emphasizes the alignment between communication activities, stakeholder relationships, and organizational objectives.

Second, the role of credibility and information quality emerges as a fundamental factor influencing the effectiveness of E-WOM-based public relations strategies. Online communication is considered influential because stakeholder-generated messages are often perceived as more authentic and less controlled than organizational communication. The findings show that credibility, usefulness, reliability, and authenticity of digital information contribute to trust formation and positive organizational perceptions. Therefore, organizations need to manage digital conversations by encouraging transparent communication and providing valuable information that supports stakeholder confidence.

Third, E-WOM strengthens organizational reputation through stakeholder participation and co-creation processes. Digital communication environments enable stakeholders not only to receive information but also to create, share, and distribute organizational-related content. This condition changes the traditional PR approach, where organizations were previously positioned as the main producers of communication messages. Instead, reputation becomes a collaborative outcome involving organizations, digital communities, and stakeholders. This finding aligns with Dialogic Communication Theory, which highlights mutual interaction, responsiveness, and relationship development between organizations and their publics.

Fourth, content credibility and communication quality represent essential dimensions in managing E-WOM as a digital PR strategy. The abundance of online information has increased stakeholder expectations regarding accuracy, relevance, and transparency. Organizations that provide informative and authentic digital content are more likely to develop positive perceptions and strengthen reputation. Conversely, low-quality information, misleading messages, or inconsistent communication may reduce stakeholder trust and create reputational challenges. Therefore, digital PR practitioners need to balance organizational communication objectives with audience-oriented and value-based content creation.

Fifth, reputation management in the digital era requires organizations to adopt proactive and adaptive E-WOM strategies. Unlike traditional reputation management approaches that focus on controlling messages, digital environments require continuous monitoring,

responsiveness, and participation in online conversations. Positive E-WOM can enhance organizational credibility and public support, while negative E-WOM may spread rapidly and threaten organizational legitimacy. Therefore, organizations need to develop digital listening capabilities, crisis communication mechanisms, and responsive engagement strategies.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the effectiveness of E-WOM as a Digital PR strategy is influenced by technological capabilities and organizational readiness. The increasing use of social media analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital monitoring tools enables organizations to understand stakeholder sentiment, identify communication risks, and personalize engagement strategies. However, technology adoption alone does not guarantee successful reputation management. Organizations must integrate digital capabilities with ethical communication practices, transparency, and human-centered relationship management.

Overall, E-WOM represents a fundamental transformation in contemporary public relations practice. It functions not merely as a communication channel but as a strategic ecosystem where trust, engagement, credibility, and reputation are continuously developed. The findings suggest that successful Digital PR requires organizations to move beyond message control toward collaborative communication approaches that recognize stakeholders as active contributors in shaping organizational reputation.

Implications for Public Relations Strategy

The findings provide several implications for digital public relations practice. Organizations should consider E-WOM as an essential component of reputation management rather than merely a form of customer feedback. PR practitioners need to actively monitor online conversations, encourage positive stakeholder engagement, and develop communication strategies that enhance credibility and trust.

Furthermore, organizations should strengthen their digital communication capabilities by utilizing social media analytics, AI-based monitoring systems, and stakeholder insights to support strategic decision-making. However, technological implementation should be accompanied by ethical considerations, transparency, and responsible communication practices to maintain long-term stakeholder relationships.

The study also highlights the importance of shifting PR strategies from organization-centered communication toward stakeholder-centered communication. By facilitating dialogue, encouraging participation, and responding effectively to public concerns, organizations can transform E-WOM into a valuable resource for building sustainable organizational reputation.

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has become an important Digital Public Relations strategy for building organizational reputation in the digital era. The findings demonstrate that E-WOM contributes to reputation development

through three interconnected dimensions: stakeholder engagement, information credibility, and organizational responsiveness. The review shows that digital transformation has changed the nature of public relations by shifting communication practices from controlled organizational messaging toward interactive and participatory communication. E-WOM enables stakeholders to actively influence organizational narratives through online discussions, reviews, and digital content creation. From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the relevance of Strategic Communication Theory and Dialogic Communication Theory in explaining how E-WOM contributes to relationship building and reputation management. Practically, organizations need to develop adaptive Digital PR strategies by combining technological capabilities, ethical communication, and meaningful stakeholder engagement. Future research should further explore the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and automated communication systems in managing E-WOM and strengthening organizational reputation across different cultural and organizational contexts.

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