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#TimPakeTangan: Leveraging Electronic Word of Mouth for Payakumbuah's Marketing Strategy on Twitter

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ABSTRACT

Consumers increasingly make offline decisions based on online information, often relying on other users' opinions shared on social media, with hashtags functioning as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) that amplifies brand messages and shapes audience engagement. This study aims to analyze how the hashtag #TimPakeTangan was utilized as e-WOM in Payakumbuah's marketing strategy on Twitter. Payakumbuah, a Padang restaurant owned by Arief Muhammad, collaborated with Azizi from JKT48 to popularize the hashtag and enhance brand visibility. Drawing upon Social Proof Theory, this research employs a quantitative approach using Social Network Analysis (SNA) to examine online interactions and network dynamics. Data were collected from Twitter posts containing #TimPakeTangan between January 14 and 16, 2023, and analyzed using Netlytic and Gephi 0.9.7. The analysis identified 3,700 nodes and 5,042 edges, revealing @officialjkt48 as the central actor generating high engagement, while @jeon_sunghye and @a_zeejkt48 played active roles in disseminating the hashtag through replies, retweets, and original posts. The findings indicate that collaborations with influential social media figures significantly enhance e-WOM effectiveness and network reach. Theoretically, this research contributes to understanding how social proof operates within digital communication networks, while practically, it demonstrates how strategic hashtag campaigns and influencer collaborations can strengthen brand awareness and consumer engagement in social media marketing.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of science and technology has profoundly transformed consumer behavior in fulfilling everyday needs. Multiple factors, including product quality, pricing, promotional strategies, and ease of access, influence these behavioral shifts. In the digital era, social media has become a central component of marketing strategies, particularly through viral marketing, which facilitates rapid information dissemination across platforms and enhances brand visibility (Salsabela et al., 2024). Social media allows potential consumers to easily obtain product information—such as benefits, prices, and purchasing options—enabling more informed decision-making. As a result, it has evolved into the most widely used communication medium, serving both individual users and companies seeking to engage target audiences (Puspasari & Hadithya, 2023).

The increasing integration of the internet into daily life has also shaped how people seek and process information. Consumers frequently rely on online opinions when making offline decisions, such as which products to buy or services to use (Dellarocas, 2003; Amin, 2019). Product-related information is now often packaged through marketing communication strategies designed to influence consumer perceptions and behaviors. Among the most effective online strategies are Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) and Online Consumer Reviews (OCR), which provide accessible and credible product insights to prospective buyers (Sari et al., 2022). Empirical studies have shown that e-WOM and

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OCR significantly influence purchasing decisions in e-commerce contexts, reinforcing the importance of peer-generated content in shaping consumer trust and purchase intentions (Chen et al., 2022; Khoirunnisa et al., 2023).

Technological development has also given rise to digital influencers—figures capable of shaping public opinion and consumer behavior. One notable example is Arief Muhammad, a prominent Indonesian influencer who successfully integrates personal storytelling, lifestyle content, and entrepreneurship. As the founder of the Padang restaurant Payakumbuah, Arief utilizes various digital platforms, particularly Instagram and Twitter, to promote his business. His use of social media not only strengthens customer engagement but also enhances brand visibility, as supported by research showing that Instagram effectively increases restaurant brand awareness and image (Sudrajat & Ramadhan, 2024).

In the digital marketing landscape, e-WOM has emerged as a crucial form of communication. e-WOM refers to informal online exchanges among consumers regarding product use, quality, and brand experiences (Rani et al., 2022). The internet amplifies this form of communication, making e-WOM an influential and cost-effective marketing tool for enhancing brand exposure (Amali et al., 2024; Andriputra et al., 2021). Both consumers and companies can generate e-WOM, which spreads rapidly across various platforms such as social media, blogs, and forums (Christanto et al., 2024; Erkan & Evans, 2016).

Among social media platforms, Twitter occupies a significant position in Indonesia's online ecosystem. According to data from We Are Social and Hootsuite, Twitter ranks sixth among the most active social media platforms and fourth in social networking, with a 52% user share (Kemp, 2024). Recognizing this potential, Arief Muhammad leveraged Twitter for Payakumbuah's marketing campaigns by initiating collaborative hashtag movements such as #TimPakeTangan and #TimPakeSendok (Bate & Prasetyo, 2024). These hashtags demonstrate how digital engagement and e-WOM can be amplified through strategic communication tactics

Hashtags serve as powerful tools in electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) marketing, enhancing post visibility and encouraging audience engagement (Shin et al., 2018). They enable users to connect with brands and others who share similar interests through shared topics or themes. By fostering user participation, hashtags can yield cost-effective, impactful advertising outcomes (Lin et al., 2024). Positive e-WOM generated through hashtag campaigns has been shown to strengthen brand loyalty and influence consumers' purchase intentions (Nyagadza et al., 2023). To maximize these benefits, marketers must strategically employ hashtags.

Although hashtags may not always translate into tangible outcomes for digital campaigns (Heidbreder et al., 2021), they effectively expand information reach and heighten brand awareness. As one of the most accessible and widely recognized features on social media, hashtags allow users to easily identify and evaluate online discourse (Innocento, 2023). Beyond their functional role as digital labels, words or phrases without spaces preceded by the "#" symbol, hashtags help structure conversations and mobilize online communities by framing issues, defining problems, and proposing solutions (Zuraida, 2023). In doing so, they act as gateways that connect users to relevant topics, discussions, and campaigns within digital spaces.

In the case of #TimPakeTangan, Arief Muhammad collaborated with Azizi, a member of the JKT48 idol group, to promote Payakumbuah through a Twitter-based campaign that harnessed user participation and e-WOM dynamics. The hashtag quickly gained traction, generating over 3,000 tweets and widespread discussion across platforms, effectively increasing Payakumbuah's visibility and online engagement. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how the hashtag #TimPakeTangan functions as e-WOM within Payakumbuah's digital marketing strategy on Twitter.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws upon Social Proof Theory, which posits that individuals tend to imitate others' behaviors, particularly in situations of uncertainty (Cialdini, 2009). This phenomenon, often described as the bandwagon effect, is a psychological mechanism that reduces uncertainty and guides decision-making about products, beliefs, or actions (Roy, 2021). In the digital context, e-WOM represents a contemporary manifestation of social proof, as consumers rely on online reviews, ratings, and user-generated content to validate purchasing decisions (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Social proof manifests in several forms—expert social proof, which emphasizes authority-based influence; celebrity social proof, derived from endorsements by public figures; and user social proof, based on testimonials from everyday consumers. Within the #TimPakeTangan campaign, the collaboration between Arief Muhammad and Azizi combined elements of celebrity and user social proof, generating trust, credibility, and participatory engagement that amplified e-WOM and brand awareness.

Previous studies have consistently highlighted the effectiveness of e-WOM and hashtag-based communication in enhancing audience engagement and shaping consumer behavior in digital spaces. Research on the communication network surrounding the keyword "Mixue" revealed that online interactions involving 7,702 actors and 8,391 connections effectively functioned as e-WOM, contributing to increased product sales and brand visibility (Andriani et al., 2023). Similarly, another study demonstrated that the strategic use of hashtags significantly strengthens e-WOM promotions by accelerating message dissemination and aligning with the rapid product turnover typical of modern digital markets (Shin et al., 2018). In a related context, research examining the hashtag #IbuKotaBaru identified three key actors, @detikfinance, @yulionta, and @derupiston, as central nodes in the diffusion of information about Indonesia's capital

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relocation, underscoring how communication networks and user interconnectivity shape the spread of online discourse (Yusriyah et al., 2020). Collectively, these findings underscore the evolving role of hashtags as powerful tools in digital marketing communication, serving not only as organizational markers but also as catalysts for viral engagement and information amplification.

Building upon these studies, this research extends the discussion of e-WOM in marketing communication by employing Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Social Proof Theory to examine the hashtag #TimPakeTangan. While previous research has primarily emphasized the influence of celebrities or users with large followings, limited attention has been given to the roles of ordinary users within e-WOM networks. This study fills that gap by revealing how actors without substantial fan bases can still emerge as key opinion drivers in online communication networks. Additionally, applying Social Proof Theory provides a deeper understanding of how expert actors, celebrity figures, and everyday users collectively shape online reviews, user-generated content, and engagement patterns within the #TimPakeTangan communication network.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach using Social Network Analysis (SNA) to examine the communication patterns and interactions surrounding the hashtag #TimPakeTangan on Twitter. SNA serves as a methodological tool for analyzing relationships and interactions among individuals, groups, or organizations within a network (Eriyanto, 2014; Rahmat & Rafi, 2022). In communication studies, it is particularly valuable for mapping interaction patterns, tracing information flow, and identifying influential actors within social media ecosystems such as Twitter and Facebook (Yusriyah et al., 2020; Lukman et al., 2024; Wibisono, 2024). By applying SNA metrics, such as degree centrality (indegree and outdegree), betweenness centrality, reciprocity, and network density, this method allows researchers to visualize network structures, measure influence, and assess how information circulates among users (Santoso & Veliyanti, 2021; Setiamukti & Nasvian, 2023).

The object of this research is the communication network generated through the hashtag #TimPakeTangan, used by Arief Muhammad in collaboration with JKT48's Azizi to promote the Padang restaurant Payakumbuah. The population includes all tweets containing the hashtag #TimPakeTangan on Twitter, representing user interactions and e-WOM activities during the campaign. The sample was collected via Netlytic.org and consisted of 6,807 tweets posted between January 14 and January 16, 2023—the period when the hashtag peaked as a top trending topic on Twitter. This purposive sampling approach was used to capture the most active engagement phase, ensuring the dataset accurately represents the campaign's viral dynamics.

The data collection technique involved retrieving all publicly available tweets containing the hashtag #TimPakeTangan via Netlytic.org, which automatically gathered tweet content, usernames, timestamps, mentions, and reply relationships. These data were then exported and processed for network mapping and visualization. The data analysis technique utilized SNA to identify central actors, evaluate the structure of interactions, and interpret the communication flow within the network. Key SNA indicators, such as indegree (popularity), outdegree (activity), and betweenness centrality (influence), were analyzed to identify the most influential users and the intensity of interactions.

To ensure validity and reliability, this study employed data triangulation and structural validation. Data from Netlytic.org were cross-checked with Twitter's native search to ensure consistency, while duplicate and irrelevant tweets were excluded. Structural validation was conducted by reviewing key network metrics (degree, betweenness, and density) to confirm an accurate representation of interactions. Additionally, interpretive validation was conducted by aligning SNA results with tweet content analysis to ensure coherence between identified key actors and actual communication patterns within the #TimPakeTangan network.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Payakumbuah is a Padang rice restaurant owned by content creator Arief Muhammad, established on July 24, 2022. Arief Muhammad has a vision to offer authentic and appetizing Padang cuisine to his customers. As a content creator, Arief Muhammad employs a different approach to promote his restaurant. One of the strategies used is a marketing campaign featuring the challenge #TimPakeTangan vs. #TimPakeSendok, which was also used to inaugurate the Payakumbuah Padang Restaurant in Gading Serpong. This strategy was carried out in collaboration with a public figure with a large Twitter following, Azizi, a member of JKT48. In addition to having a substantial number of followers, Azizi also has a significant fan base, making this collaboration highly likely to attract many people.

The strategy began with a tweet from Azizi stating that she eats Padang rice using a spoon, including the hashtag #TimPakeSendok. This tweet sparked debate among netizens, with many arguing that it is easier to eat Padang rice with your hands than with a spoon, using the hashtag #TimPakeTangan as a counter-hashtag. Netizens were eventually divided into #TimPakeSendok and #TimPakeTangan. Many netizens participated, making #TimPakeSendok and #TimPakeTangan trending topics on Twitter. Netizens uploaded photos or videos of themselves eating rice using a spoon or hands. The culmination of this strategy was when Azizi and Arief Muhammad conducted a live session together to demonstrate how

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to eat Padang rice using hands and spoons.

#TimPakeTangan became a trending topic on Twitter, indicating that netizens were actively engaging with the Payakumbuah restaurant's marketing strategy. #TimPakeTangan eventually evolved into electronic word-of-mouth used to promote the restaurant. The researchers then conducted a study to analyze the dissemination of #TimPakeTangan as an electronic word-of-mouth strategy to encourage the Payakumbuah restaurant. The researchers performed data crawling using Netlytic and Gephi 0.9.7 from January 14 to 16, 2023, during which #TimPakeTangan was a trending topic.

The analysis was conducted at both the network and actor levels and was further elaborated in relation to Payakumbuah's current marketing strategy for promoting the restaurant. Social Network Analysis (SNA) was employed not only to identify the actors involved but also to provide an overview of the social network surrounding the studied topic (Wulandari et al., 2024), highlighting the levels of closeness and interactivity among them. The primary objective of SNA is to examine the actors, the strength and types of their relationships, the media with the most connections, the distance between actors, the range of each actor, and other relevant aspects (Ramadhani et al., 2023). Furthermore, SNA is designed to analyze how communication networks are formed and structured through interactive activities on social media (Tabassum et al., 2018).

A. Network Structure of #TimPakeTangan

Based on data crawling conducted from January 14 to January 16, 2023, using Netlytic and Gephi 0.9.7, the communication network of #TimPakeTangan comprised 3,700 actors (nodes) and 5,042 relationships (edges). These nodes and edges successfully created five main clusters. A cluster is a group of nodes with dense connections and a higher likelihood of communicating with each other. These five clusters were centered around the actors @officialJKT48, @ idntimes, @jeon_sunghye, @pocong, and @a_zeejkt48. These actors became central nodes because they posted tweets using #TimPakeTangan and had a significant number of followers, leading to interactions via mentions, replies, and quotes.

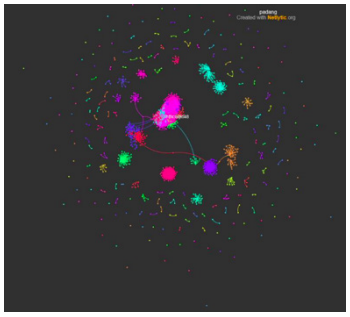

Fig 1. Visualization of the #TimPakeTangan Communication Network
Source: Netlytic Crawling (2024)

Figure 1 illustrates the system-level network of the #TimPakeTangan communication. The system level is an overall depiction of the network that better interprets its structure and characteristics(Kurniawan & Apriliani, 2020). The system level includes several metrics shown in Figure 2.

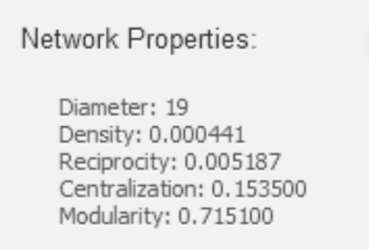

Fig 2. Metrics of the #TimPakeTangan Communication Network
Source: Netlytic Crawling (2024)

Diameter: measures the longest distance that an actor can reach to connect with another actor in a network. The diameter of the #TimPakeTangan communication network is 19, meaning it takes 19 steps for an actor to reach another at the opposite end of the network. The actors are spread across several clusters, interconnected through tweets using #TimPakeTangan.

Density: compares the number of social relations and the potential social ties in the network (Indrihapsari, 2013). A high-density value indicates that network members interact frequently, whereas a low-density value indicates minimal interaction between members or that interactions are not evenly distributed. The density value of the #TimPakeTangan

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communication network is 0.000441, suggesting that interactions between network members are minimal or only concentrated around specific central actors. The formed interactions occur only within clusters, among central actors with many followers, and do not spread to other actors.

Reciprocity: This metric measures the degree to which relationships are one-way or two-way, with a range from 0 to 1. A reciprocity value of 1 indicates that actors engage in two-way interactions, reciprocating each other's communication. The reciprocity of the #TimPakeTangan communication network is 0.005187, suggesting that some actors engage in two-way communication, but with low intensity. Conversations occur between actors who comment on central actors and receive responses from others, but some conversations may not receive any response at all.

Centralization measures the average centrality of all nodes in a network (Andriani et al., 2023). A network with a value approaching 1 indicates that certain actors or members dominate the flow of information within the network. If the network has a centralization value close to 0, the flow of information is not dominated by one actor and is spread widely. The centralization of #TimPakeTangan is 0.153500, which is close to 0. This value indicates that the distribution of information in the #TimPakeTangan communication network is relatively broad, with several clusters.

Modularity describes the clusters that are formed within a network. A modularity value below 0.5 indicates that the communication network has more than one dominating cluster. The modularity of the #TimPakeTangan communication network is 0.715100, suggesting that it consists of several dominant clusters. Based on the data-crawling results from Netlytic and Gephi, the #TimPakeTangan communication network has at least five dominant clusters, each with different central actors, such as @a_zeejkt48, @pocong, and @officialJKT48. @a_zeejkt48 is Azizi's account, a member of JKT48 who collaborated with Arief Muhammad; @pocong is Arief Muhammad's account; and @officialJKT48 is the official account of JKT48. These three accounts have hundreds of thousands to millions of followers, enabling them to mobilize a large audience on Twitter.

B. Actor-Level Analysis of #TimPakeTangan as Electronic Word of Mouth for Promoting Payakumbuah

Within the #TimPakeTangan communication network, several key actors play a significant role in disseminating information about the collaboration between Azizi and Arief Muhammad. The data is packaged in tweets that include the hashtag #TimPakeTangan. Actors with large followings can form extensive networks, yet even those with fewer followers can play a crucial role within them. This can occur depending on the virality of the tweets shared. If a tweet is considered engaging and receives significant responses, the account can become an influential actor within the #TimPakeTangan communication network.

Based on data crawling conducted from January 14th to January 16th, 2023, using Netlytic and Gephi 0.9.7, the #TimPakeTangan communication network consists of 3,700 actors (nodes) and 5,042 relationships (edges). These actors and relationships play a role in disseminating information regarding Payakumbuah and the collaboration between Azizi and Arief Muhammad. Active participation from these actors made #TimPakeTangan a trending topic, thereby functioning as e-WOM to promote the Payakumbuah restaurant. Hashtags are considered vital instruments in e-WOM marketing. Positive e-WOM generated through hashtag campaigns can significantly boost brand loyalty and influence consumers' purchase intentions (Nyagadza et al., 2023).

In the #TimPakeTangan network, several central actors emerged as influential nodes because they attracted interactions. These actors include @officialJKT48, @a_zeejkt48 (Azizi), and @pocong (Arief Muhammad). Their tweets involving the hashtag #TimPakeTangan not only generated a large number of replies and retweets but also helped spread information widely within the network. This demonstrates that actors with high follower counts, along with active engagement from other users, contribute to the formation of clusters and the overall network structure. The network's ability to generate clusters around key actors underscores the hashtag campaign's effectiveness in driving online conversation and creating visibility for Payakumbuah's brand.

Through the #TimPakeTangan campaign, Arief Muhammad successfully leveraged social media and its network to implement e-WOM marketing, demonstrating the potential of social media interactions to promote businesses and build brand awareness.

C. Degree Centrality

The #TimPakeTangan communication network includes several key actors who play significant roles in disseminating information about the collaboration between Azizi and Arief Muhammad in promoting the Payakumbuah restaurant. Based on the data-crawling results, 10 prominent actors were identified with the highest degree centrality values.

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Label	In-Degree	Out-Degree	Degree
officialjkt48	928	1	929
jeon_sunghye	339	7	346
idntimes	314	4	318
a_zeejkt48	184	0	184
idn_app	173	4	177
_sherly01	153	1	154
morethann_	122	3	125
poconggg	111	2	113
keranwater	102	1	103
48timee	89	3	92
xxoref	86	1	87
vittci	62	1	63

Fig 3. Actors with the Highest Degree Centrality in the #TimPakeTangan Communication Network
Source: Netlytic Crawling (2024)

Based on Figure 3, the @officialjkt48 account is the most popular actor, with an In-Degree of 929 and an Out-Degree of 1. @officialjkt48 had 929 interactions with other accounts, including 928 mentions, retweets, and replies, and provided 1 response. @officialjkt48 is the official account of JKT48, with over 4.9 million followers on Twitter. Additionally, @officialjkt48 became a popular actor due to the support of a loyal fan community for the JKT48 music group, who actively engaged with #TimPakeTangan.

@jeon_sunghye is the second-most-popular actor, with an In-Degree of 339 and an Out-Degree of 7. @jeon_sunghye is one of JKT48's fan accounts with more than 10,000 followers. This account had a total of 346 interactions through mentions, retweets, and replies. @idntimes became the third-most popular actor using #TimPakeTangan, with an In-Degree of 314 and an Out-Degree of 4. @idntimes is a media account focused on news and entertainment, with over 400,000 followers. As a media account frequently covering entertainment news, @idntimes had a total of 318 interactions with other accounts in the #TimPakeTangan communication network.

Additionally, several other accounts played supporting roles in distributing #TimPakeTangan, including @a_zeejkt48, @idn_app, @sherly01, @morethann, @poconggg, @keranwater, @48timee, @xxoref, and @vittci. These actors helped disseminate information about Payakumbuah by tweeting with #TimPakeTangan, thereby expanding the network's reach and amplifying its impact.

This analysis highlights the crucial role of influential actors in a network, where accounts with large followings and active engagement, such as @officialjkt48, serve as central nodes that can disseminate information effectively (Figure 3). Their participation not only raises awareness but also facilitates interaction among the broader audience, making #TimPakeTangan a successful e-WOM campaign to promote the Payakumbuah restaurant.

D. Betweenness Centrality

Betweenness centrality measures the extent to which an actor serves as a bridge within a communication network, connecting different parts of the network and facilitating the flow of information between them (Andriani et al., 2023). In the #TimPakeTangan communication network, @jeon_sunghye holds the highest betweenness centrality value of 0.000295 (Figure 4). This indicates that @jeon_sunghye is the most influential actor in terms of connecting other nodes and ensuring the flow of information across the network.

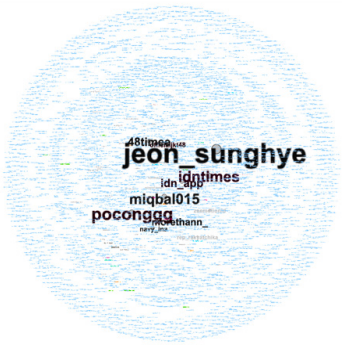

Fig 4. Visualisasi Betweenness Centrality dalam Jaringan Komunikasi #TimPakeTangan
Source: Netlytic Crawling (2024)

The second-highest betweenness centrality value belongs to @poconggg, with a score of 0.000177. @poconggg is Arief Muhammad's personal account, with a total of 4.9 million followers. Given its large follower base, tweets from @poconggg with the hashtag #TimPakeTangan can be retweeted and widely disseminated among its followers, further

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amplifying their impact.

The third-highest betweenness centrality is held by @idntimes, with a score of 0.000155. @idntimes, as a media and entertainment news account, has a considerable follower base and serves as a central hub for sharing information about the #TimPakeTangan campaign.

Several other actors with substantial follower bases also rank high in betweenness centrality, indicating that these actors play significant roles in linking different segments of the network. Their active participation and large follower bases enable them to connect distinct clusters within the network, making the dissemination of information more efficient and effective.

Overall, the analysis of betweenness centrality reveals that key actors like @jeon_sunghye, @poconggg, and @idntimes act as central hubs in the network, facilitating the spread of information and interactions across different groups. This interconnectedness ensures the hashtag campaign #TimPakeTangan reaches a broad audience, contributing to the success of Payakumbuah's electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) strategy.

E. Closeness Centrality

Closeness centrality measures the average shortest distance from one actor to all other actors in the network. A higher closeness centrality value indicates that an actor is in a central position within the network and can quickly disseminate information to others (Andriani et al., 2023). Based on Figure 5, the closeness centrality score ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the highest level of proximity and efficiency in the spread of information.

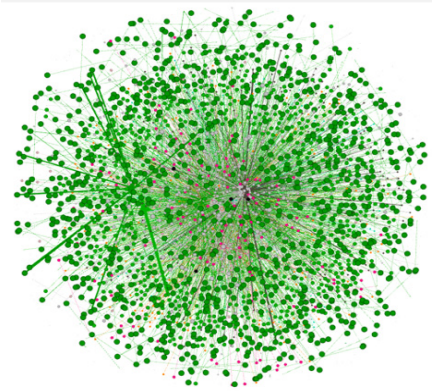

Fig 5. Visualisasi Closeness Centrality dalam Jaringan Komunikasi #TimPakeTangan
Source: Netlytic Crawling (2024)

In the #TimPakeTangan communication network, many actors achieved a closeness centrality score of 1.0, indicating they are well-positioned to quickly and efficiently spread information within the network. This high level of closeness centrality among multiple actors suggests that the network is tightly interconnected, allowing for rapid dissemination of information through the hashtag campaign.

The closeness centrality score of 1.0 for these actors indicates that they are highly accessible to each other within the network. This accessibility is essential for the effectiveness of the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) strategy, as it allows information about Payakumbuah and the collaboration between Azizi and Arief Muhammad to reach a broad audience swiftly.

F. Eigenvector Centrality

Eigenvector centrality is a measure used to identify influential actors within a network based on the number and quality of their connections to highly connected actors (Eriyanto, 2014). An actor is considered significant if their eigenvector centrality value approaches 1(Andriani et al., 2023).In the #TimPakeTangan communication network, the account @officialjkt48 is identified as a central and influential actor with an eigenvector centrality value of 1. This indicates that @officialjkt48 is highly interconnected with other prominent actors in the network and exerts substantial influence over the flow of information. As one of the initial actors to engage in discussions under the #TimPakeTangan hashtag, @officialjkt48 successfully initiated interactions with other nodes, thereby further amplifying the campaign's reach (see Figure 6).

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Fig 6. Tweet of @officialjkt48 Using #TimPakeTangan
Source: JKT48 Twitter (2023)

Moreover, other actors, such as @a_zeejkt48, @idntimes, @jeon_sunghye, @idn_app, and @poconggg, also have eigenvector centrality values close to 1 (Figure 7), suggesting they play pivotal roles in disseminating information about the #TimPakeTangan campaign. These accounts, due to their high eigenvector centrality scores, are not only central to the network structure but also contribute significantly to the propagation and virality of the hashtag across the platform.

Fig 7. Visualization of Eigenvector Centrality in the #TimPakeTangan Communication Network
Source: Netlytic Crawling (2024)

Arief Muhammad collaborated with Azizi, a member of JKT48, through a challenge to eat Padang rice with a spoon or by hand as a marketing strategy to promote the Payakumbuah restaurant. This collaboration incorporated the hashtags #TimPakeTangan and #TimPakeSendok, which were disseminated on Twitter. The initiative successfully captured netizens' attention, who subsequently participated by identifying themselves as #TimPakeTangan or #TimPakeSendok. Both hashtags became trending topics, generating numerous relationships among actors within the network.

Based on data crawled between January 14 and January 16, 2023, using Netlytic and Gephi 0.9.7, the #TimPakeTangan communication network consisted of 3,700 actors (nodes) and 5,042 relationships (edges). The network exhibited low values for diameter, density, reciprocity, and centralization, indicating a limited volume of conversations. However, the interactions that did occur were characterized by close and intensive communication, primarily initiated by major accounts such as @officialJKT48, @idntimes, @jeon_sunghye, @pocong, and @a_zeejkt48.

The accounts @officialJKT48, @idntimes, @jeon_sunghye, @pocong, and @a_zeejkt48 emerged as significant and influential actors within the #TimPakeTangan communication network due to their substantial follower counts. Their tweets using #TimPakeTangan generated interactions, including likes, retweets, quote retweets, and replies. The use of #TimPakeTangan on Twitter facilitated the emergence of e-WOM to promote the Payakumbuah restaurant. These hashtags enhance post visibility and foster social media engagement (Chakrabarti et al., 2023).

#TimPakeTangan functioned as e-WOM through the comments posted on social media, particularly Twitter. Netizens who were not actively participating in the #TimPakeTangan communication network still received information about Payakumbuah, thereby serving as a promotional medium. This aligns with the assumptions of Social Proof Theory, which holds that individuals are inclined to follow others, especially during periods of uncertainty (Roy, 2021). The public was already aware of Payakumbuah but may not have been fully convinced of the restaurant's flavor profile. By obtaining information and opinions about Payakumbuah through #TimPakeTangan, potential customers felt more assured in their decision to try the restaurant. In the digital age, e-WOM represents a crucial form of social proof, as consumers

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increasingly depend on online reviews, ratings, and user-generated content to validate their purchasing decisions (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

The #TimPakeTangan communication network fostered public trust through celebrity social proof and user social proof. The involvement of Azizi and Arief Muhammad, as public figures, successfully influenced the public to try the Payakumbuah restaurant. The audience was intrigued and motivated to emulate the actions of these public figures, prompting them to sample the offerings at Payakumbuah. Furthermore, the trending status of #TimPakeTangan effectively motivated netizens to participate in the challenge. Observing the enthusiasm of netizens on social media, the public became inclined to try Payakumbuah, as they perceived the opinions there as authentic reviews.

Arief Muhammad's marketing strategy implemented in 2023 has significantly contributed to Payakumbuah's sustained success. Today, the restaurant is recognized as the most expensive Padang restaurant franchise in Indonesia, requiring an investment capital of Rp4.4 billion (Pujiati, 2024). Payakumbuah continues to expand across various regions in the country, driven not only by its authentic culinary offerings but also by the effectiveness of its marketing campaigns. Through the #TimPakeTangan and #TimPakeSendok challenges, Arief Muhammad successfully leveraged electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) to promote the brand. These campaigns effectively enhanced audience engagement and brand perception, as explicit e-WOM tends to have a more substantial influence on consumers' cognitive attitudes toward e-WOM adoption. In contrast, implicit e-WOM more effectively shapes affective attitudes (Aghakhani et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the #TimPakeTangan campaign effectively generated extensive social media interaction and significantly enhanced Payakumbuah's brand awareness, illustrating the pivotal role of e-WOM in modern digital marketing. The results validate the applicability of Social Proof Theory within this context, showing how individuals' behaviors and decisions are influenced by the actions and endorsements of others—particularly celebrities and influencers. The engagement around the hashtag encouraged users to interact, share their experiences, and participate in online discussions, reinforcing the power of e-WOM in shaping consumer decision-making.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enhances the understanding of how Social Proof Theory operates within social media ecosystems, where digital interactions act as cues for credibility and trust. It demonstrates that e-WOM serves as both a social and psychological mechanism of persuasion, driven by visibility, validation, and peer influence. The use of Social Network Analysis (SNA) provides empirical evidence that dense communication networks and central actors facilitate message diffusion and information amplification. In practice, the study emphasizes the importance of using hashtag strategies to structure online discussions and drive viral engagement. The collaboration between influencers such as @officialJKT48 and @a_zeejkt48 effectively expanded message reach and audience participation, showing that combining influencer partnerships with data-driven hashtag strategies can optimize brand communication in digital spaces.

Overall, the #TimPakeTangan campaign illustrates how effective influencer collaborations and strategic hashtag use can enhance brand visibility, strengthen consumer relationships, and generate impactful e-WOM. Hashtags function not only as tools for organizing content but also as catalysts for viral engagement and information dissemination in digital marketing communication. Future research could examine the comparative effectiveness of macro- and micro-influencer collaborations in driving e-WOM and analyze cross-platform hashtag performance across Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Moreover, conducting longitudinal SNA would offer deeper insights into the evolution of online interaction patterns, providing practical implications for the culinary industry and other sectors aiming to develop more targeted and sustainable digital marketing strategies.

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