

## **Digital Word of Mouth Communication Strategies in Building Customer Loyalty to the @jelione Brand**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Local perfume brand @jelione utilizes Word of Mouth (WOM) communication strategies to build customer loyalty. Online perfume purchases offer limited sensory experiences, making conversations via Instagram and WhatsApp an important aspect in shaping consumer perceptions and trust before making a purchase. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a focus on analyzing consumer experiences that are not only related to user experiences with physical products, but also Communication Experiences formed through digital interactions. The results show that @jelione's WOM strategy is oriented towards creating positive and authentic communication experiences, including through active responses to comments and Direct Messages (DM) by utilizing user-generated content. This two-way communication has been proven to increase brand credibility and customer emotional attachment. This study contributes to strengthening interactive marketing communication research through the application of a symmetrical two-way communication model, emphasizing that trust, interaction quality, and communication satisfaction are key factors in shaping customer loyalty to products that cannot be directly tested by the senses.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the digital economy era, marketing communication strategies have undergone fundamental changes influenced by technological developments and consumer behavior. This change is marked by the increasingly important role of interactive communication between brands and consumers through digital media, which is now key to building long-term relationships with customers. One of the easiest approaches in this context is Word of Mouth (WOM), which is a form of interpersonal communication that occurs when consumers share their experiences, recommendations, or opinions about a product with others (Maulidiyah & Handoko, 2024). WOM has proven to be more credible and trusted by consumers than conventional advertising messages because it is often more authentic and based on the real experiences of users (Nathaniel & Samaria, 2025).

Globally, the perfume and lifestyle products industry has experienced significant growth in recent years. According to (Sulistyo, 2020), word of mouth recommendations facilitated by social media have a strong influence in increasing customer loyalty through immersive digital experiences. This phenomenon is also confirmed by Chinomona & Maziriri (2022), who state that effective brand communication strengthens customer trust and ultimately increases loyalty in the cosmetics industry, with customer loyalty growth rates reaching 12–14% per year. Additionally, (Rahmawati & Pratama, 2024) identified that perfume purchasing behavior in Indonesia is increasingly influenced by digital lifestyles, where consumers tend to trust online input and recommendations before making purchasing decisions. This data highlights that digital word of mouth has become a key advantage in shaping customer trust and loyalty in the perfume industry.

Given these developments, local perfume brands in Indonesia face increasingly fierce competition to retain customers. One brand that is growing is @jelione, a relatively new local perfume business. @Jelione was launched in December 2024, but this has not caused the business to fall behind. On the contrary, @jelione has succeeded in attracting consumers through innovation and a unique service experience. Despite being a brand that started small, @jelione continues to make various strategic efforts to expand its market reach, such as utilizing digital platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, enriching its perfume product catalog, and offering custom perfume blending services

according to consumer preferences. These efforts are made to build emotional closeness with customers through responsive service, friendly communication, and products that meet expectations. Based on pre-research interviews with the owner and several customers, it was found that @jelione also implements communication strategies that encourage positive word of mouth, including providing personalized perfume recommendations, competitive prices, and special offers for loyal customers as a form of relationship marketing to strengthen the spread of positive messages from consumers to other potential buyers.

This phenomenon can be explained through the symmetrical two-way communication theory introduced by (Grunig & Grunig, 2020). This theory emphasizes the importance of balanced communication relationships in which organizations not only convey messages but also listen, respond, and adapt to the needs of the public. In the context of digital marketing, this approach is appropriate because it allows brands to create more authentic and participatory relationships. When consumers feel heard and valued, they tend to develop a deeper emotional attachment to the brand (Pamungkas et al., 2024). A number of local perfume brands, including @jelione, implement communication strategies that allow consumers to actively participate in the value creation process, including through aroma consultations and custom fragrance blending services that accommodate consumer preferences regarding the desired perfume characteristics. By tailoring products and services based on user input, @jelione demonstrates a tangible form of symmetrical communication that strengthens trust, positive experiences, and ultimately customer loyalty. Through open and reciprocal communication, WOM evolves into a collaborative process that not only disseminates information but also strengthens customer trust and loyalty.

Although the effectiveness of WOM has been widely discussed, with most previous studies focusing on the food, beverage, and fashion sectors, studies highlighting the perfume industry in Indonesia are still very limited. Research (Yanuarita & Desnia, 2023), for example, shows that WOM has a significant influence on purchasing decisions in the culinary sector, but the context of products with high emotional value, such as perfume, has not been studied in depth. (Nabila, 2024) adds that effective digital marketing strategies must be tailored to product characteristics and consumer behavior in order to build sustainable loyalty.

This gap indicates a need to explore how WOM communication strategies are specifically applied in building customer loyalty. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of how word of mouth communication strategies play a role in shaping customer loyalty to the @jelione perfume brand. This approach allows researchers to explore consumer experiences contextually and explore the meaning behind digital interaction patterns that build relationships between customers and brands. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to expanding the literature on interactive marketing communication, particularly regarding the application of symmetrical two-way communication theory in the context of digital customer engagement. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a strategic reference for local perfume businesses to design more authentic and interactive communication that is oriented towards long-term customer loyalty.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of Word of Mouth (WOM) communication strategies in building customer loyalty to the local perfume brand @jelione. This approach allows researchers to explore the meaning, perceptions, and experiences of consumers regarding WOM communication through digital interactions such as Instagram and WhatsApp.

The main method of this study is in-depth interviews with a semi-structured approach so that researchers can explore the informants' experiences flexibly while remaining focused on the topics of WOM and customer loyalty.

The research subjects consisted of two groups:

1. The marketing team and social media managers @jelione, who are responsible for communication strategies and customer interactions.

**Table 1. Research Informants Data Table**

<b>Initials of Informant</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Job Description / Role in the Brand</b>
GT (Informant 1)	Tangerang	Owner/ Manager Manage	Overall, designing brand communication and marketing strategies, as well as maintaining customer relationships.

2. Active consumers @jelione are individuals who have purchased perfume products and participated in digital communication.

**Table 2. Research Informants Data Table**

<b>Initials of Informant</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Consumer Status</b>	<b>Purchase Frequency</b>	<b>WOM Communication Pattern</b>
JS (Informant 1)	Ciledug	Active Consumer	≥10 Times purchases	Direct recommendation to friends
HN (Informant 2)	Balaraja	Loyal Customer	3–5 purchases	Through Instagram Story
WN (Informant 3)	South Tangerang	Loyal Customer	1–4 purchase	Personal WhatsApp message
EK (Informant 4)	Tangerang	Active Consumer	≥ 5 times purchase	Comments & personal WhatsApp messages

To maintain data authenticity, researchers conducted member checking with informants to ensure that data interpretation was consistent with their experiences. This approach was considered effective in enhancing the credibility of WOM communication research (Beka et al., 2024).

Qualitative data analysis in this study follows the Miles & Huberman model, which consists of three main stages:

1. Data reduction through a simplification process, where researchers group data into thematic categories such as WOM strategies, customer experiences, and forms of digital interaction in order to focus on relevant information.
2. Data Presentation by compiling data in the form of narratives and tables or charts to make it easier for researchers to understand the flow of WOM communication and how it contributes to the formation of customer loyalty.
3. Drawing Conclusions in formulating meanings and findings based on data that has been analyzed systematically.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

Informants were selected based on their direct involvement in communication activities and product usage experience. The group of informants consisted of one owner or manager as the main source from within the brand and four active consumers as external sources representing customer behavior. These statements are reflected in the interview excerpts:

*"...we always try to create a positive experience, because that's when customers will usually take it upon themselves to recommend the product. So, in my opinion, WOM arises naturally..."*  
(GT, owner and manager @jelione, interview, November 10, 2024)

In the informants' statements, creating positive experiences is considered a central factor that encourages customer recommendations. The WOM process is perceived as a natural phenomenon that cannot be forced through direct communication strategies. Thus, customer recommendations are understood to arise as a response to perceived satisfaction, rather than as a result of explicit instructions or encouragement from brand managers.

Digital interactions on Instagram are identified as an important aspect in forming emotional closeness because quick responses to comments and direct messages are seen as creating a sense of appreciation. This response mechanism makes customers feel that they are receiving personal attention, thereby enabling closer relationships to be built through two-way communication. The quality of digital communication in this context is constructed as an element that strengthens engagement rather than merely complementing marketing activities. Although product quality is recognized as a top priority, positive communication experiences are emphasized as a factor that mediates the effectiveness of WOM. Without good interaction experiences and customer recommendations, it is considered that even if a product meets quality standards, it cannot be optimally distributed.

Thus, the role of digital communication is positioned as a supporting factor that facilitates the sustainable development of WOM. There is a correlation between customer experience and the tendency to participate in WOM. In addition, consistent and responsive digital interactions can increase the perception of trust in the brand, so that customers feel more comfortable sharing their experiences with others.

This shows that WOM is not only influenced by functional satisfaction with the product but also by the emotional experience gained through digital communication. Thus, the integration of product quality and digital interaction and communication experience becomes a mutually supportive mechanism in which each element collectively contributes to building customer loyalty and facilitating the occurrence of WOM naturally and sustainably.

Overall, the relationship between product quality digital interaction and communication experience is understood as a complementary relationship in which each element is considered to play a role in shaping loyalty and encouraging natural word of mouth.

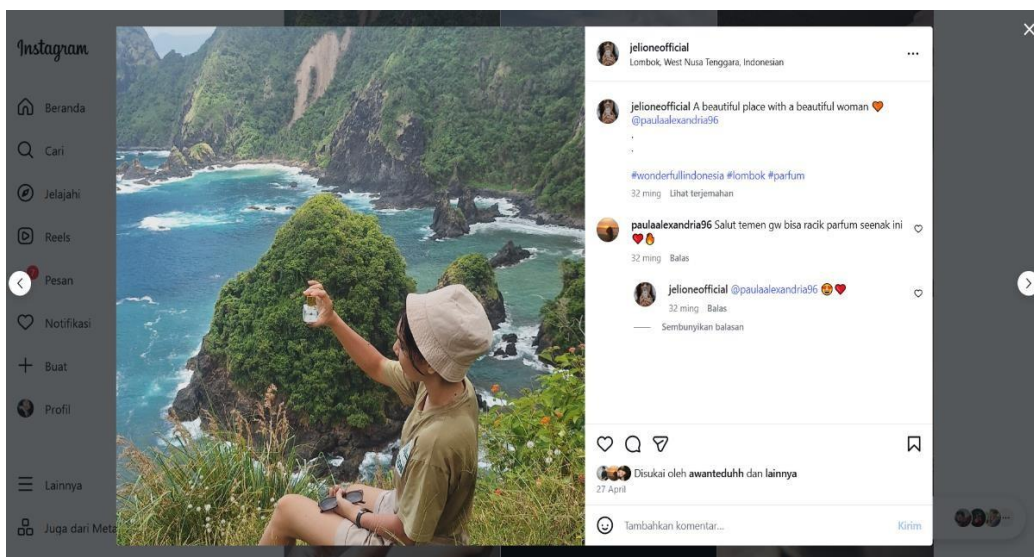


Figure 1  
(Source: Instagram @Jelione)

The Instagram feed post was created by the seller, featuring a friend as the subject of the photo holding a perfume product at a tourist location. In the same post, consumers then gave appreciative comments about the product and their experience using it. This situation shows that WOM arises not only from functional satisfaction with the product but also from the emotional experience built through digital interaction between sellers and consumers. Visuals that display the product in a lifestyle context, combined with positive comments from consumers on the feed, show how product quality, digital interaction quality, and communication experience are integrated. These three elements play a complementary role in strengthening customer loyalty while encouraging the formation of natural and sustainable WOM.

The findings were analyzed through informant statements showing how satisfaction with the product drives repeat purchase decisions and the natural emergence of recommendations to others. This understanding forms the basis for identifying the relationship between the quality of the consumption experience, the formation of customer loyalty, and the contribution of active consumers in expanding the reach of WOM communication. The focus of the analysis is directed at the actual behavior of consumers that reflects their attachment to the brand and the trust formed from direct interaction with the product. This statement is reflected in the interview excerpt:

*"... I have bought from @jelione many times, maybe more than ten times. So far, their products have been suitable. So if a friend asks, I will definitely recommend trying @jelione." (JS, active customer, interview on November 12, 2025)*

In JS's statement, it is evident that repeated purchases are a result of consistent satisfaction with @jelione products. It is mentioned that purchases have been made more than ten times, indicating customer loyalty through high purchase frequency. In this section, it can be understood that the suitability of the product has been personally experienced, so the decision to repurchase is considered to be influenced by the quality of the product received.

Recommendations to others are stated to occur spontaneously, so positive word of mouth behavior can be categorized as behavior that is formed naturally as a result of a satisfying experience. The way the informant conveyed that "the recommendation just came out on its own" shows that the process of spreading positive information occurred without coercion or direction from the brand but rather originated from positive perceptions that had been formed through direct interaction with the product. In addition, it was explained that recommendations were given when questions arose from friends, so that the pattern of interpersonal communication could be identified as need-based or need-based WOM.

This explanation shows that the @jelione product is positioned as a choice that informants believe can meet the needs of those close to them because trust in its quality has been built through personal experience. Thus, JS's behavior reflects that the product is consistently considered satisfactory, with loyalty already established and positive WOM generated as a consequence of a good consumption experience, not because of promotion or external encouragement.

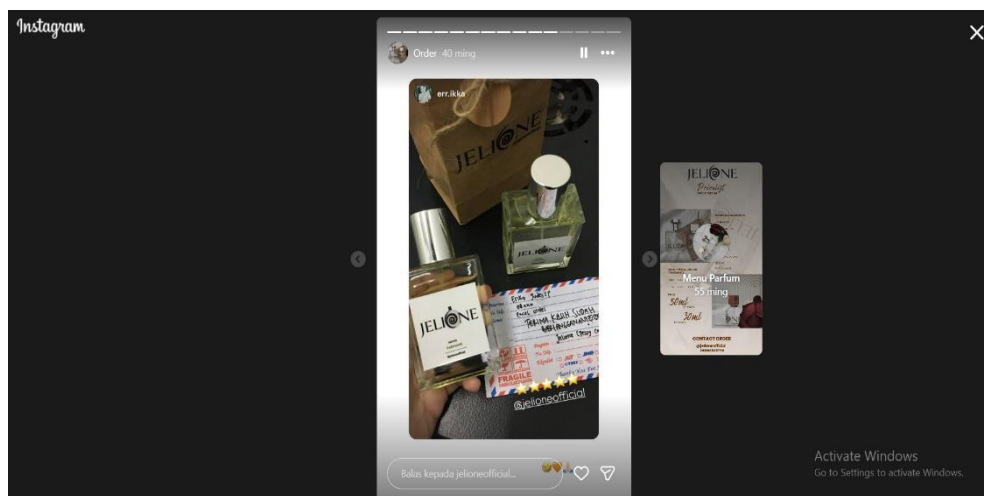


Figure 2  
(Source: Instagram @Jelione)

The image shows an Instagram Story post from a consumer showing the brand's perfume product along with the packaging and a personal greeting card from the seller. This post represents a form of positive Electronic Word of Mouth or e WOM, where consumers voluntarily share their purchasing experiences through visual content that shows the quality of the product, the neatness of the packaging, and personal attention through written messages. The presence of the brand's official account tag reinforces the function of this post as an organic promotional tool that has the potential to increase brand trust and exposure. Additionally, elements such as the five-star sticker indicate buyer satisfaction, which also demonstrates the role of digital communication experiences in building emotional connections between consumers and brands.

The analysis focuses on consumer behavior that not only demonstrates satisfaction through repeat purchases but also consistent support for the brand through various communication channels. The findings in this section illustrate that customer loyalty is driven not only by the functional quality of the product but also by the flexibility of the fragrance formulation and the emotional closeness built through two-way communication and trust that grows from direct experience. Thus, WOM is understood as a natural expression of internalized satisfaction, both openly in public spaces and in more personal interpersonal relationships. This statement is reflected in the following interview excerpt:

*"...Their products suit me because they can usually be tailored to my preferences. When it comes to giving recommendations, I sometimes comment on their posts or send private messages to friends via WhatsApp. (EK, active consumer, interview on November 16, 2025)*

Informant EK's statement shows that a purchase frequency of more than five times has been described as a sign that satisfaction with the product has been consistently felt. This relatively high purchase frequency indicates early loyalty, as the decision to repurchase is influenced by positive experiences from previous use. The product's aroma is cited as one factor that adds to satisfaction, with the variety of scents and the ability to customize the product to the customer's liking mentioned as important added value. Thus, aroma customization is considered to provide a more personalized experience, strengthening the product's appeal through the flexibility of formulation provided by the brand. EK's recommendation activities are carried out through two channels: public spaces in comment sections and private WhatsApp messages. When the product quality is deemed good, the willingness to leave positive comments in public spaces is described as a form of active participation in spreading

positive WOM, thereby conveying consumer support for the brand in a context that can be seen by many people.

This pattern shows that appreciation for the product has been expressed openly when the results of use are considered satisfactory. However, private recommendations are said to occur when questions come from specific friends, so more detailed explanations are provided through private interpersonal communication. In this case, interpersonal WOM is considered to be formed on the basis of closeness of the relationship and the more specific information needs of the message recipient. This pattern shows that the sharing of positive information about the product is adapted to the context of communication and the social relationships involved. Trust in the brand is strengthened through repeated usage experiences, so that the credibility of the recommendations given is considered higher. Consumer satisfaction and loyalty to WOM tendencies are reflected in the pattern of positive information dissemination that occurs situationally. Intensive interaction with the brand through digital media, such as quick responses to comments and messages, is seen as providing a sense of attention and building emotional closeness.



*Figure 3*  
(Source: WhatsApp @Jelione)

Evidence of customer conversations via the WhatsApp application showing product ordering activities as well as recommendations to friends indicates the existence of the process Word of Mouth that is formed in an organic manner based on positive experiences with the perfume used. When customers not only repurchase but also share their experiences with others, and friends who receive these recommendations also like the product's scent, this illustrates the formation of high perceived value and consistent satisfaction levels. This situation shows that WOM functions as an interpersonal communication mechanism that strengthens brand credibility because opinions from trusted sources, namely friends, are more convincing than formal marketing messages. Thus, this interaction becomes an indicator of initial loyalty that develops through satisfaction.

This two-way communication mechanism is considered to enhance the quality of the customer experience, thereby strengthening brand attachment. Thus, based on EK's overall statement, it appears that positive WOM has been generated as a consequence of a satisfying user experience, product scent personalization, and positive assessments of brand quality. The dissemination of recommendations is described as situational, where public recommendations are given when the quality is considered worthy of open promotion, while private recommendations are given when requests for information come from specific individuals.

The satisfaction felt by informants JS and EK is considered to be the main factor that triggers positive WOM behavior. The dissemination of public recommendations is considered to occur when the quality of the product is considered satisfactory and worthy of being shared openly, while the dissemination of private recommendations occurs when a request for information is made by a specific individual. The factors of a satisfying user experience and product aroma personalization, as well as

positive assessments of brand quality, are considered to have naturally generated positive WOM. Initial loyalty formed through repeat purchases is considered to facilitate informants' readiness to share positive experiences through both public and private channels. Consistent interaction with the brand is seen to have strengthened trust in the product, so that the spread of WOM is considered to have higher credibility.

The high frequency of purchases by both informants was used as an indicator of established loyalty, and positive experiences gained from using the product were seen as the main factors driving the spread of recommendations. This process was considered to occur naturally and situationally, where personal experience was the dominant factor in the formation of positive WOM. The spread of positive information was seen as occurring organically and voluntarily, without interference or coercion from the brand. Personal experience is the dominant factor in the formation of positive WOM. The spread of positive information is seen as occurring organically and voluntarily, without interference or coercion from the brand.

Thus, the behavior of both informants shows that @jelione products are consistently viewed as satisfactory, customer loyalty has been established, and positive WOM has been generated as a consequence of a good user experience. The process of spreading recommendations is seen to occur situationally and be based on interpersonal context, reinforced by the quality of the digital experience and interactions received by customers. The spread of positive WOM is considered to be the result of the integration of user experience, product personalization, digital communication quality, and relational closeness built through repeated interactions. In other words, the quality of interactions and personal experiences are considered key elements in shaping loyalty and facilitating the continuous spread of positive WOM.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the formation of Word of Mouth (WOM) on the local perfume brand @jelione is influenced by three main factors, namely product quality, the ability to personalize scents, and the digital communication experience provided by the brand. These findings reinforce the basic assumption in Word of Mouth Marketing, which asserts that WOM arises when consumers feel that a product has significant and relevant value.

In the context of @jelione, this value is reflected in the suitability of the fragrance to consumers, flexibility in blending perfumes according to individual preferences, and a responsive communication approach from the brand. This custom perfume blending feature also reflects the concept of Co-Creation, where consumers are actively involved in the product creation process, fostering a sense of emotional ownership and encouraging them to voluntarily share this unique experience with others.

The brand owner's (GT) statement describes WOM as a spontaneous communication process, aligning with the theory that WOM effectiveness increases when the process is organic and not forced. This is consistent with the findings (Nasution & Prasetya, 2024), which emphasize that positive experiences will encourage consumers to give recommendations voluntarily, so that WOM is more influenced by experience and interaction than direct promotion.

Other findings also confirm the relevance of Media Richness Theory, whereby communication success is influenced by the media's ability to create warm, rapid, and personalized interactions. Quick responses to comments and direct messages on Instagram are perceived as a form of interpersonal attention that increases emotional closeness, thereby strengthening consumers' tendency to spread positive WOM. From a consumer perspective, findings from informants JS and EK show that loyalty is formed through consistently satisfying product usage experiences, including aspects of aroma personalization that add emotional value to the brand. This explains that loyalty is reflected not only in repeat purchase behavior but also through consumers' willingness to recommend products to others.

The variety of WOM channels used by consumers, either directly through conversations via Instagram stories or through private messages, shows the influence of social context and closeness of relationships in accordance with the principles of Social Influence Theory. Interpersonal WOM appears more often when relationships between individuals are closer, while public WOM is given when consumers feel confident about product quality. Overall, this study reinforces previous findings that product quality is not the only factor that determines the formation of WOM, but effective digital interactions and the brand's ability to provide personalized experiences play a significant role in facilitating sustainable WOM.

The findings show that Word of Mouth for the perfume brand @jelione is formed naturally as a result of consistently satisfying product quality and the brand's ability to provide personalized scents according to consumer preferences. Responsive digital communication, especially through Instagram, can increase emotional closeness and strengthen loyalty, encouraging consumers to give recommendations both publicly and interpersonally. The pattern of WOM dissemination is influenced by the social context and the level of relationship closeness in accordance with the principles of Social Influence while communication effectiveness is supported by the characteristics of rich media as outlined in the Media Richness Theory. Overall, these findings align with WOMM theory and previous research, which emphasize that positive experiences and quality interactions are the primary drivers of voluntary WOM and sustained customer loyalty.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research objective, which focused on analyzing the application of Word of Mouth (WOM) communication strategies in building customer loyalty to the @jelione perfume brand through a symmetrical two-way communication approach in the digital era, it can be concluded that the WOM strategy implemented by @jelione is highly effective in building constructive relationships between the brand and its consumers. This two-way communication is reflected in active interactions on social media, particularly through the Instagram platform, where brand owners participate directly in responding to comments and messages and creating open dialogue with customers. This communication pattern demonstrates a balance and reciprocity of information that plays a role in strengthening trust and emotional closeness as well as consumer engagement with the brand. Furthermore, the research results indicate that the implementation of WOM strategies significantly contributes to the formation of customer loyalty.

Consumers who are satisfied with product quality and service show a tendency to voluntarily share their positive experiences, both through traditional WOM with direct recommendations to those closest to them and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) through social media and digital messages. The synergy between these two forms of communication expands the brand's reach, creating organic promotion and strengthening the emotional bond between customers and the brand. Thus, the WOM strategy implemented by @jelione is not only oriented towards product promotion but also serves as a means to foster trust by enhancing customer experience and building sustainable long-term loyalty.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research results, it is recommended that @jelione continue to strengthen two-way communication through digital channels by maintaining personal interactions, responding to consumer reviews, and developing a customer community to continuously expand word of mouth. The brand also needs to present content that highlights real experiences and authentic testimonials to increase credibility and maintain product and service quality as the basis for customer loyalty. With a consistent strategy focused on consumer engagement, @jelione has the opportunity to strengthen its position as a competitive local perfume brand in the digital era.

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