Word-Of-Mouth Strategies Used by Tour Guides in Attracting International Tourists at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class

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Despite the rapid digitalization of tourism marketing, traditional Word of Mouth (WOM) delivered by tour guides remains a significant strategy for attracting international tourists, particularly for small handicraft businesses that rely on personal recommendations rather than digital promotion. This study aims to identify and describe the WOM marketing communication strategies employed by tour guides in attracting international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class in Celuk Village, Bali. A qualitative descriptive case study design was employed, involving three purposively selected informants: one tour guide, one business owner, and one international tourist. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model with the 5T framework (Talkers, Topics, Tools, Taking Part, Tracking) as the analytical lens. The findings reveal that tour guides act as credible talkers who deliver simple, attractive, and origin-adjusted topics about silver authenticity, affordable prices, and the jewelry-making process. Verbal messages serve as the primary tool, supported by brochures and videos, while taking part is manifested through on-site accompaniment, welcoming tourists, commissions, and comfortable waiting rooms. Tracking remains informal through tourists' impressions, WhatsApp purchase reports, Google reviews, and direct statements, with a Google Maps rating of 4.8 from 45 reviews. Challenges include limited silver class capacity, competition among silver businesses, tourists' freedom to choose, and cross-language communication. The study concludes that tour guide-based WOM is the main marketing communication strategy for Arnadi, effective because it is supported by product quality, service, and reciprocal relationships. These findings contribute to marketing communication literature by highlighting the role of tour guides as active WOM communicators and offer practical implications for optimizing structured tracking, multilingual supporting materials, and capacity management through tour guide-based reservations.

Keywords: Word of Mouth, tour guides, marketing communication, international tourists, silver handicraft

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1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the important sectors contributing to economic development, particularly in destinations that offer cultural experiences and locally produced handicrafts. Bali is widely recognized as an international tourist destination, attracting visitors through its natural attractions, cultural heritage, and traditional creative industries. The increasing number of international tourist arrivals creates opportunities for local businesses to introduce their products and services to a broader market. In 2025, international tourist arrivals to Bali reached 6,948,754, representing an increase of 9.72% compared with the previous year. Australian tourists accounted for the largest proportion, contributing 23.44% of international arrivals [1]. These figures indicate the importance of international visitors to Bali's tourism industry and the opportunities available for local businesses to reach foreign markets.

One of Bali's traditional creative industries is silver handicraft production, which has developed as part of the island's cultural and economic activities. Celuk Village in Gianyar Regency is particularly known for its silver craftsmanship and attracts tourists interested in observing and purchasing locally made jewelry [2], [3]. Beyond purchasing finished products, some businesses have also introduced interactive activities that allow visitors to experience the jewelry-making process. This combination of product offerings and cultural experiences provides local silver businesses with opportunities to attract international tourists. However, the presence of similar businesses also creates competition, making promotional strategies important for introducing products, building customer interest, and encouraging visits.

Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class, located in Celuk Village, Gianyar, Bali, is one of the businesses offering silver and gold jewelry as well as jewelry-making classes for visitors. The business serves international tourists who are interested in purchasing jewelry and experiencing the process of making it. To introduce its products and services, Arnadi utilizes both digital promotional activities and direct recommendations from tour guides. A preliminary interview with the owner on May 14, 2026, indicated that approximately 90–95% of international tourist visits originated from verbal recommendations by tour guides. This information suggests that tour guide recommendations have an important role in attracting visitors to the business. However, this does not mean that Arnadi excludes digital marketing from its promotional activities. In an interview conducted on November 5, 2026, the owner explained, “Arnadi uses both, digital and tour guide recommendations. Arnadi is a family business, so from the beginning we already used tour guide recommendations.” This statement confirms that both promotional channels are utilized, although direct recommendations from tour guides have a dominant role in generating visits.

Word of Mouth (WOM) is a form of interpersonal communication through which individuals share information, opinions, and recommendations about products or services with others [4], [5], [6]. Unlike promotional messages delivered directly by businesses, WOM often involves personal recommendations that potential customers may perceive as credible. In tourism, tour guides can become important communicators because they interact directly with tourists, provide information about destinations, and recommend places to visit. Their explanations and recommendations may influence tourists' interest and decisions, particularly when visitors are unfamiliar with local businesses or available experiences. For Arnadi, tour guides serve not only as intermediaries who introduce the business but also as communicators who explain its products, jewelry-making activities, and visitor experiences.

Previous studies have examined WOM and its role in consumer decisions and tourism promotion [4], [5], [6]. Other research has discussed the role of tour guides in providing information and shaping tourist experiences [7], [8], [9], [10], [11]. Although these studies provide a foundation for understanding interpersonal communication in tourism, several aspects remain open for further investigation. First, the role of tour guides as active WOM communicators who recommend specific local businesses requires further attention. Second, research focusing on face-to-face WOM in traditional silver handicraft businesses that also offer practical jewelry-making classes remains limited. Third, studies concerning tour guides have often emphasized tourist experiences and satisfaction rather than the communication strategies used to attract potential visitors before they arrive. These gaps provide a basis for examining how tour guides communicate recommendations and encourage international tourists to visit a local silver business.

To examine these communication activities, this study applies Sernovitz's 5T framework, consisting of Talkers, Topics, Tools, Taking Part, and Tracking [12]. The framework provides a basis for understanding who communicates information, what information is shared, which communication tools support WOM, how businesses participate in conversations, and how WOM activities are monitored. These five elements are used to explore how tour guides introduce Arnadi to international tourists, communicate information

about its products and services, and encourage tourist interest. The framework also helps identify how the business supports and maintains communication with tour guides as part of its promotional activities.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to describe the Word of Mouth communication strategies used by tour guides in attracting international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class. Specifically, it examines the roles of tour guides in delivering recommendations, the information communicated to tourists, the supporting tools used in the communication process, the business's involvement in maintaining relationships with tour guides, and the ways WOM activities are monitored. The study draws on three informants: the business owner, a tour guide, and an international tourist. By examining these perspectives, this research is expected to contribute to the discussion of WOM in tourism marketing, particularly regarding the role of tour guides in promoting local handicraft businesses. Practically, the findings may provide insights for Arnadi and similar businesses into strengthening relationships with tour guides and optimizing interpersonal recommendations as a complement to digital promotional activities.

2. Literature Review and Problem Statement

Marketing communication is a fundamental concept that explains how businesses deliver information, communicate value, and influence consumer perceptions and decisions. AMarketing communication refers to the means through which companies inform, persuade, and remind consumers, either directly or indirectly, about their products and brands [13]. Its activities include advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing [14]. Marketing communication aims to influence consumer perceptions and behavior, establish brand awareness, reduce uncertainty, and develop long-term relationships with consumers [15]. In the tourism industry, marketing communication plays an important role because tourism services are intangible, variable, perishable, and inseparable, making them difficult to evaluate before consumption [13]. Therefore, tourists require credible information about tourism attractions, service quality, and unique experiences before making visiting decisions [16]. One form of marketing communication that addresses this need is Word of Mouth (WOM), which refers to informal interpersonal communication involving information, evaluations, experiences, and personal recommendations about products or services [4]. Unlike formal advertising, WOM is often perceived as more credible because recommendations originate from individuals considered independent and trustworthy. WOM marketing is not merely spontaneous conversation but also a strategy through which businesses provide reasons and opportunities for people to discuss and recommend their products or services [12]. WOM is characterized by personal interaction, credibility, and two-way communication, allowing potential consumers to ask questions and obtain further explanations before making decisions [17]. In tourism, these characteristics help reduce uncertainty and perceived risks while strengthening tourists' trust in recommended destinations or businesses [6]. To examine WOM strategies, this study adopts the 5T framework [12], consisting of Talkers, Topics, Tools, Taking Part, and Tracking. Talkers refer to the individuals who communicate recommendations; Topics concern the information or reasons that encourage people to discuss a product or service; Tools refer to supporting facilities that facilitate communication; Taking Part involves the active participation of businesses in maintaining conversations; and Tracking refers to monitoring conversations, responses, and the outcomes of WOM activities. This framework has also been applied in previous qualitative research, its relevance for examining WOM strategies in business activities [7], [18].

Tour guides play an important role in implementing WOM strategies because they interact directly with tourists and provide information and recommendations during their journeys. A tour guide as an individual who guides visitors in their preferred language and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of a

destination [19]. Beyond accompanying tourists, tour guides function as information providers, cultural interpreters, interaction facilitators, and intermediaries between tourists and local destinations [19]. Their roles include providing accurate information, explaining local culture, assisting tourists in overcoming language and cultural differences, and recommending destinations, activities, and products according to tourists' interests [19], [20]. Tour guides also establish connections between tourists and local businesses, including handicraft producers and tourism shopping destinations [21]. Several previous studies have examined WOM and its relationship with promotional activities and tourist behavior. Face-to-face WOM functioned as an organic promotional instrument for traditional batik small and medium-sized enterprises, although electronic WOM and tracking activities remained less optimized [7]. The effectiveness of the 5T framework in WOM implementation through simple supporting tools [18], the five dimensions of WOM from a conceptual perspective [22]. A positive and significant influence of WOM on food purchase intention [23]. In the tourism sector, WOM as a promotional instrument in medical tourism through information sources, message content, and information credibility [17]. A quantitative study involving 355 tourists, found that WOM mediated the relationship between destination image and tourists' behavioral intentions [8]. Using survey data from 170 respondents, demonstrated that electronic WOM and service quality influenced revisit intention [9]. Meanwhile, Openness, empathy, support, positive attitudes, and equality contributed to emotional connections and tourist satisfaction in tour guide communication [10]. A quantitative study involving 100 respondents, found that WOM, accessibility, and tourist attractions simultaneously influenced visiting decisions [11]. Although these studies provide relevant insights, several research gaps remain. Previous studies have predominantly examined WOM from the perspectives of business owners, consumers, patients, or virtual communities, rather than tour guides as active communicators delivering verbal recommendations. The research contexts have focused on traditional batik businesses, medical tourism, food purchase intention, and electronic WOM in tourism destinations, leaving verbal WOM strategies in silver handicraft businesses offering direct jewelry-making experiences relatively unexplored. Studies concerning tour guides have primarily focused on tourist satisfaction after visiting rather than on the communication strategies used to attract potential international tourists who have not previously visited a business. Therefore, further research is needed to understand how tour guides actively implement verbal WOM as a marketing communication strategy in the tourism and handicraft industry.

Based on the literature review, this study establishes a conceptual framework that connects marketing communication, WOM, and the role of tour guides in attracting international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class. Marketing communication serves as the overarching concept for understanding how the business communicates its values and offerings to potential tourists. WOM represents the specific marketing communication strategy, while tour guides are positioned as the primary communicators who deliver verbal recommendations to international tourists. The research is grounded in the phenomenon that Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class relies primarily on face-to-face WOM delivered by tour guides, rather than focusing on digital promotional activities. To analyze this strategy, the study employs 5T framework [12]. The Talkers dimension examines tour guides as the primary message senders, including their relationships with the business and motivations for making recommendations. Topics focuses on the information communicated to tourists, particularly the uniqueness of silver jewelry-making classes, the cultural value of Celuk Village's silver craftsmanship, and the experience of learning directly from local artisans. Tools examines the supporting facilities used to deliver recommendations, including simple and digital communication tools. Taking Part explores the involvement of the business and tour guides in responding to tourists' questions and maintaining communication. Finally, Tracking examines how the business monitors tourists' responses and evaluates the outcomes of tour guide recommendations. These five dimensions serve as the analytical framework for developing interview guidelines, directing observations, and organizing research findings. Accordingly, the research problem is formulated as follows:

How do tour guides implement Word of Mouth marketing communication strategies to attract international tourists to visit Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class? This study uses a qualitative approach to explore and describe the communication processes and strategies employed by tour guides in delivering verbal recommendations and encouraging international tourists to visit the business.

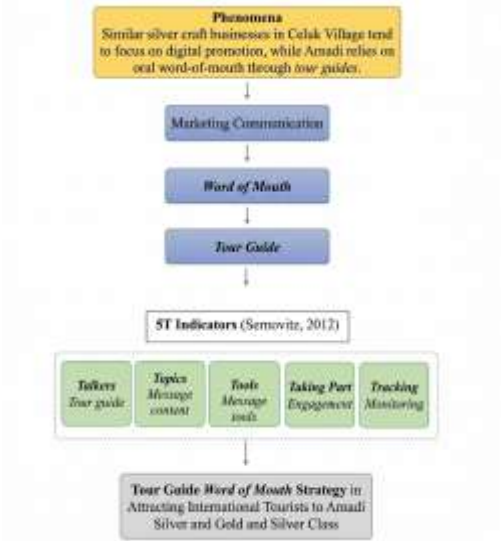


Fig. 1. Research Framework

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aimed to explore and understand how tour guides implement verbal Word of Mouth (WOM) strategies to attract international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class, rather than measure relationships between variables or test hypotheses. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding meanings, experiences, and social processes within their natural settings [24], [25]. A descriptive case study was considered appropriate because the research focused on a specific and clearly bounded case, namely the implementation of tour guides' WOM strategies at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class in Celuk Village, Gianyar, Bali. This design enabled an in-depth examination of the communication process, message content, supporting tools, business involvement, and challenges encountered in implementing WOM strategies [24], [25], [26].

The research was conducted at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class, located in Celuk Village, Sukawati District, Gianyar Regency, Bali. This location was selected because the business regularly receives international tourists for silver jewelry shopping and silver-making classes. Preliminary observations and an interview with the business owner on May 14, 2026, indicated that most tourist visits originated from tour guides' verbal recommendations rather than digital promotional activities. The research used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and non-participant observations involving tour guides who regularly bring international tourists to the business, the business owner or manager, and international tourists visiting for the first time based on tour guides' verbal recommendations. Secondary data included international tourist arrival statistics from the Bali Provincial Statistics Agency [1], relevant business documents and visitor records when available, communication or promotional materials, photographs, activity documentation, and previous studies concerning WOM, marketing communication, and tour guides. The data were primarily qualitative, consisting of interview transcripts, observation notes, narratives, photographs, and documentation. Quantitative data were used only to provide contextual information, including Bali's 6,948,754 international tourist visits in 2025,

representing a 9.72% increase from 2024, with Australian tourists accounting for approximately 23.44% of arrivals [1]. These figures were not subjected to statistical analysis.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives. This technique allows researchers to select individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon being investigated [24], [25]. In this study, one representative informant was selected from each relevant category to obtain perspectives from the three key actors in the WOM communication process. A total of three informants participated in the study, consisting of one tour guide as the primary informant, one business owner or manager, and one international tourist as supporting informants. The tour guide had regularly brought international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class during the previous two years and was willing to participate in the interview. The business owner or manager was selected based on direct involvement in receiving visitors and interacting with tour guides. The international tourist was selected because the tourist had visited the business based on a tour guide's verbal recommendation, was visiting for the first time, and was an adult. The informant composition is presented in Table 1.

Data were collected through three techniques: in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed from five WOM indicators: *talkers, topics, tools, taking part,* and *tracking*. This interview format allowed the researcher to explore responses more openly and ask follow-up questions when necessary [12], [24], [25]. Interviews were recorded with the informants' consent and subsequently transcribed. Interviews with international tourists could be conducted in English. Non-participant observation was carried out by positioning the researcher as an observer without directly participating in conversations between tour guides and tourists. The observations focused on how recommendations were delivered, tourists' responses, the business's reception of visitors, and tour guides' communication adjustments. Documentation included photographs of activities, visitor records, business communication materials, and relevant statistical data. These three techniques were used to complement one another and support methodological triangulation [24], [25].

Data analysis followed the interactive model, consisting of four interconnected activities: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification [26]. Data collection involved gathering interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation from the research location. Data condensation was conducted through transcription, repeated reading, focusing, simplifying, and coding the collected information. Initial codes were developed based on the five WOM indicators, while additional codes were allowed to emerge from the field data [25], [26]. The condensed data were then organized into narrative descriptions, matrices or tables based on the five indicators, and thematic relationship diagrams. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns, themes, and relationships across informants and data collection techniques. Preliminary conclusions were continuously verified through additional evidence, triangulation, and member checking before being established as final findings [26].

To ensure data credibility, the study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information provided by tour guides with that obtained from the business owner or manager and international tourists across the five WOM indicators. Technique triangulation involved comparing interview statements with observation findings and supporting documentation, including visitor records, activity photographs, and business communication materials. Any inconsistencies were examined and, when necessary, followed up through additional interviews or observations. Member checking was also conducted to confirm the accuracy of the information and preliminary interpretations. These procedures were intended to ensure that the research findings were supported by evidence from different sources and data collection methods [24], [25], [26].

The scope of the study was limited to the verbal, face-to-face WOM strategies implemented by tour guides at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class. The analysis focused on five indicators: *talkers, topics, tools, taking part,* and *tracking* [12]. Digital promotion, electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), and recommendation channels outside tour guides were not included. Furthermore, the findings were based on 14 purposively selected informants within one business location. Therefore, the study emphasized an in-depth understanding of the specific case rather than statistical generalization to all silver handicraft businesses in Celuk Village or the tourism industry in Bali.

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aimed to explore and understand how tour guides implement verbal Word of Mouth (WOM) strategies to attract international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class, rather than measure relationships between variables or test hypotheses. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding meanings, experiences, and social processes within their natural settings [24], [25]. A descriptive case study was considered appropriate because the research focused on a specific and clearly bounded case, namely the implementation of tour guides' WOM strategies at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class in Celuk Village, Gianyar, Bali. This design enabled an in-depth examination of the communication process, message content, supporting tools, business involvement, and challenges encountered in implementing WOM strategies [24], [25], [26].

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Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives. This technique allows researchers to select individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon being investigated [24], [25]. A total of three informants participated in this study, with one informant selected from each category to represent the main perspectives involved in the WOM communication process. The first informant was a tour guide who had regularly brought international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class during the previous two years and was willing to participate in the interview. The second informant was the business owner or manager, who was directly involved in receiving visitors and maintaining interactions with tour guides. The third informant was an international tourist who had visited the business for the first time based on a tour guide's verbal recommendation and was an adult. These criteria were established to ensure that each informant could provide information relevant to the research objectives. The characteristics of the three informants are presented in Table 1.

Data collection was conducted on November 5–6, 2026, through three techniques: in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed from the five WOM indicators: *Talkers, Topics, Tools, Taking Part,* and *Tracking*. This interview format allowed the researcher to explore responses more openly and ask follow-up questions when necessary [12], [24], [25]. Each interview lasted approximately [insert actual duration] minutes. Interviews were recorded with the informants' permission and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Interviews with international tourists were conducted in [insert language used during the interview]. If an interview was conducted in English, the recording was first transcribed in its original language and then translated into Indonesian for analysis. The translated transcripts were checked against the original recordings to maintain the accuracy of the informants' statements and intended meanings. Non-participant observation was carried out by positioning the researcher as an observer without directly participating in conversations between tour guides and tourists. The observations focused on how recommendations were delivered, tourists' responses, the business's reception of visitors, and tour guides' communication adjustments. Documentation included photographs of activities, visitor records when available, business communication materials, and relevant statistical data. These three techniques were used to complement one another and support methodological triangulation [24], [25].

Before data collection, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the interview process, and the intended use of the information to each informant. Participation was voluntary, and permission was obtained before interviews were recorded and statements were used in the research. If permission to disclose real names was not obtained, pseudonyms or general informant descriptions were used to protect their identities. Interview excerpts were presented in accordance with the informants' consent and without changing the intended meaning of their statements.

Data analysis followed the interactive model, consisting of four interconnected activities: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification [26]. Data collection involved gathering interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation from the research location. Data condensation was conducted through transcription, repeated reading, focusing, simplifying, and coding the collected information. Initial codes were developed based on the five WOM indicators, while additional codes were allowed to emerge from the field data [24], [25], [26]. The condensed data were then organized into narrative descriptions, matrices or tables based on the five indicators, and thematic relationship diagrams. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns, themes, and relationships across the three informants and the different data collection techniques. Preliminary conclusions were continuously verified through supporting evidence, triangulation, and member checking before being established as final findings [26].

To ensure data credibility, the study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information provided by the tour guide with that obtained from the business owner or manager and the international tourist across the five WOM indicators. Technique triangulation involved comparing interview statements with observation findings and supporting documentation, including visitor records, activity photographs, and business communication materials. Any inconsistencies were examined and, when necessary, followed up through additional interviews or observations. Member checking was also conducted to confirm the accuracy of the information and preliminary interpretations. These procedures were intended to ensure that the research findings were supported by evidence from different sources and data collection methods [24], [25], [26].

The scope of the study was limited to the verbal, face-to-face WOM strategies implemented by tour guides at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class. The analysis focused on five indicators: *Talkers, Topics, Tools, Taking Part,* and *Tracking* [16]. Digital promotion, electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), and

recommendation channels outside tour guides were not the primary focus of the analysis. The findings were based on in-depth information obtained from three purposively selected informants at one business location. Therefore, the study emphasized an in-depth understanding of the specific case rather than statistical generalization to all silver handicraft businesses in Celuk Village or the tourism industry in Bali.

4. Results And Discussion

The research results are presented through narrative descriptions and tables that summarize the main patterns, comparisons, and relationships emerging from the data. This presentation allows readers to identify the key findings quickly and objectively. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the informants, while Table 2 summarizes the key findings, comparisons with previous research, explanations of the phenomena, and preliminary conclusions.

Research Context

Celuk Village is one of the villages in Sukawati District, Gianyar Regency, Bali. It is known as a center for silver and gold handicrafts, with a population of approximately 4,357 people in early 2026, consisting of 2,147 males and 2,210 females. Administratively, Celuk Village is led by a Perbekel assisted by the Village Secretary, Heads of Affairs, Section Heads, and Hamlet Heads, with three hamlets in total [27].

This research was conducted at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class, located in Celuk Village, Gang Arca Jalan Raya Celuk, Sukawati District, Gianyar Regency, Bali. Celuk Village is situated on the route connecting Denpasar and Ubud, making it strategic and easily accessible and a stopping point for tourist groups heading to Ubud, Tampak Siring, or Kintamani. Most businesses in this village operate in the silver and gold sector. This condition creates competition in attracting tourists, making the role of tour guides important in determining stopover locations and enabling Word of Mouth (WOM) to form naturally. This situation makes Celuk Village a relevant context for examining how tour guides implement WOM strategies to attract international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class [27].

Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class is a jewelry craft business managed by Made Gede Artika Putra Arjaya since 2024. The business is located on Jalan Raya Celuk, Sukawati District, Gianyar Regency, Bali. As a silver craft business, Arnadi sells jewelry such as rings, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and pendants. Its main product is silver jewelry, while gold is only a complementary product. Most products are handmade and sold based on design rather than weight per gram, so two jewelry items with the same weight can have different prices. In addition to shopping tourism, Arnadi provides silver jewelry-making classes taught directly by experienced artisans.

In marketing, Arnadi focuses more on cooperation with travel agencies and tour guides. Tourist visits occur daily, and according to a preliminary interview with the owner on May 14, 2026, approximately 90–95 percent of international tourists come because of tour guide recommendations, with Australia as the largest source market. Based on the researcher's observation, visits usually follow this sequence: the tour guide brings the group to the location, the manager welcomes them, tourists observe the jewelry-making process in the gallery, and some participate in the silver class or shop. This class is one of the attractions for international tourists visiting Arnadi.

Informant Characteristics

This study involved informants selected through purposive sampling: one tour guide as the primary informant, the business owner, and one international tourist as supporting informants. The characteristics of the informants are explained in Table 1.

Table 1. Informant Characteristics

Informant	Age	Gender	Description
Radeka	43	Male	Freelance tour guide who also works at a hotel and has regularly brought international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class over the past two years
Made Gede Artika Putra Arjaya	20	Male	Business owner directly involved in receiving visits and maintaining relationships with tour guides
Nthabi Thulo	60	Female	Tourist who visited based on a tour guide's verbal recommendation, was a first-time visitor, and was an adult

Source: Processed by the researcher (2026)

The informant criteria in this study were as follows. First, the tour guide was a guide who had regularly brought international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class over the past two years and was willing to be interviewed. The tour guide was selected as the primary informant because tour guides act as *talkers*, namely parties who deliver verbal recommendations to tourists. From this informant's perspective, the study explored reasons for choosing Arnadi over other silver businesses, the content of messages delivered, how messages were adjusted to tourists' countries of origin, and the tools used to convince tourists. Second, the owner or manager of Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class was an informant directly involved in receiving visits and maintaining relationships with tour guides. The owner or manager had comprehensive understanding of business operations and cooperation with tour guides. From this perspective, the study explored why the business relied more on tour guide recommendations than digital promotion, how the business welcomed and maintained relationships with tour guides (*taking part*), and how the business knew that tourists came because of such recommendations (*tracking*). Third, the international tourist was an adult visitor who came to Arnadi based on a tour guide's verbal recommendation and was visiting for the first time. The tourist was selected as a supporting informant because tourists act as recipients of WOM messages. From this perspective, the study explored how they received and assessed tour guide recommendations, their expectations before coming, and the congruence between expectations and experiences after visiting. This information helped test whether the messages delivered by tour guides truly influenced tourists' decisions to come.

Word of Mouth at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class

Based on interviews and observations regarding the dynamics of WOM at Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class, the findings are presented through three informants representing each category: tour guide, business owner, and international tourist. The findings are organized according to the five WOM indicators (5T) from Sernovitz, followed by the challenges faced by tour guides [12].

Talkers

In the *Talkers* dimension, the tour guide is the party who talks about Arnadi to tourists. The starting point of WOM is a person who is willing and enthusiastic to speak because they feel satisfied and trust the business [12]. Based on an interview with Radeka (43 years old), a freelance tour guide who also works at a hotel, he became familiar with Arnadi through guests who booked a silver class. He explained that service to tour guides was the main reason for recommending this place:

> *"My guest had booked here, my guest had a silver class here, and I just accompanied them."* (Interview, *November 5, 2026)*

Radeka further stated:

"From my perspective as a tour guide, the best promotion is service to drivers or guides." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

From the business side, the owner of Arnadi, Made Gede Artika Putra Arjaya (20 years old), explained that Arnadi has used tour guide recommendations since its establishment as a family business, in addition to digital promotion:

"Arnadi uses both, digital and tour guide recommendations. Arnadi is a family business, so from the beginning we already used tour guide recommendations." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

Meanwhile, from the tourist side, Nthabi Thulo (60 years old) trusted her tour guide and explained her reason as follows:

"Because he was so honest with us. […] He didn't lie to us. He told us the truth." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

This means that Nthabi Thulo trusted the tour guide because the guide was honest and conveyed the truth.

Topics

In the *Topics* dimension, message content becomes the reason tourists are interested and want to retell it. Effective topics are simple, easy to retell, and attractive [12]. Based on the interview with Radeka, he described travel routes and interesting aspects of each place, including the silver-making process at Arnadi:

"Usually, when we have a trip, we tell them what we will pass and what is interesting about the place. Usually there is an interesting place here; you can see how the jewelry is made, and usually guests are interested and stop here." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

Radeka also adjusted the story to tourists' origins:

"For example, Australians usually prefer silver and beaches. For Europeans, we can take them to places like temples." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

In addition, Radeka delivered the offer before passing Celuk so that tourists could decide for themselves:

"Maybe when picking them up from the airport, before we pass this place, we explain first that we will pass an interesting place, and whether they are interested in stopping or not." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

From the business side, Made Gede Artika Putra Arjaya explained the message he provided to tour guides, namely Arnadi as an alternative store in Celuk:

"Compared to other places in Celuk, Arnadi can be considered an alternative store, in the sense that we sell more affordable goods, but we do not lower our quality." (Interview, November 6, 2026)

This message reached the tourist. Nthabi Thulo remembered the tour guide's message as follows:

"That we are going to get the best things and they are so cost-effective, it's easy to buy, it's easy to get some of the things they sell." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

This means that the tour guide promised the best goods at economical prices that were easy to buy.

Tools

In the *Tools* dimension, supporting facilities help messages be delivered more easily and convincingly. Good conversations need to be supported by tools that make it easier for people to convey and pass on messages [12]. Interview results showed that the tour guide's verbal message was the main tool, while materials from Arnadi served as support. Based on an interview with Made Gede Artika Putra Arjaya, the business owner stated that Arnadi provided tour guides with several materials:

"What we usually provide is, first, our brochure; we have this silver class activity; then a video of our gallery; and a video to help find the address." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

Radeka received these materials through WhatsApp but limited their use so that tourists would not feel pressured:

"We do not dare to push the guests too much. Sometimes guests ask, 'Do you get a commission from there?' That is what we avoid. So we only explain visually with words so as not to push the guests too much." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

From the tourist side, Nthabi Thulo also felt that the verbal explanation was convincing enough:

"The way they presented it, it was easy to see that they really said the correct thing. There was no need to see." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

This means that the tour guide's way of delivering the message made Nthabi Thulo confident, so she did not need additional materials.

Taking Part

In the Taking *Part* dimension, business actors and tour guides are involved in conversations and interactions with tourists. Businesses need to respond to questions, show attention, and appreciate those who have recommended them [12]. Based on the interview with Radeka, he accompanied tourists while they were at Arnadi and helped when tourists asked for special prices:

"We try to be close to the guests; maybe we can take photos for them. Sometimes guests also ask for a special price, so we come and help them bargain." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

Radeka also welcomed tourists' questions positively:

"Actually, many questions are what I like. Because from those many questions, we can provide definite information about what they want." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

From the business side, the owner of Arnadi limited his role to relationships with tour guides:

"For me, my job desk is more about maintaining relations, not handling the tourists." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

The business owner then explained the forms of appreciation given to tour guides:

"For basic appreciation for tour guides, we provide a comfortable waiting room, then there is a commission, and for their office or agent, we can support them in holding events." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

Meanwhile, Nthabi Thulo assessed the welcome at Arnadi as excellent:

"They are so amazing, respect, and acknowledge someone else. We don't know each other, we don't know their language, but they try their best that we understand what they are saying. It was the best." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

This means that Nthabi Thulo felt respected by Arnadi, even though they did not know each other and spoke different languages.

Tracking

In the Tracking dimension, business actors monitor what people say and the results of recommendations. Monitoring is important so that businesses know whether messages are received and what needs improvement [12]. Based on the interview with Radeka, he asked tourists about their impressions after visiting:

"We ask the guests, 'How was your experience here?' If not, it means there is something lacking here." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

Radeka also received reports of tourists' purchases from Arnadi:

"Usually Arnadi sends me what the guests bought via WhatsApp, because we are also registered here." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

From the business side, the owner of Arnadi knew that tourists came because of recommendations from the presence of tour guides:

"The easiest way is that they definitely come with their tour guide." (Interview, November 5, 2026)

The business owner mentioned that tourist feedback could be seen from online reviews and direct statements:

> *"There was one that could be seen from Google reviews, and some said directly, 'Yesterday my relative came here, was brought here.' They said the class place was good." (Interview, November 5, 2026)*

In addition to interviews, the researcher observed tourist reviews on Google Maps to see how tourists' experiences at Arnadi were discussed online. Based on this observation, Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class obtained a rating of 4.8 from 45 reviews. This high rating indicates that tourists' assessments of their experience at Arnadi were very good and strengthens the interview finding that tour guide recommendations led tourists to a satisfying experience.

From the tourist side, Nthabi Thulo even planned to return with her family:

> *"Yeah. That's why I would say I'm going to come with my husband, children maybe because it was the best." (Interview, November 5, 2026)*

This means that Nthabi Thulo planned to return with her husband and possibly her children because she considered Arnadi the best place.

Challenges Faced by Tour Guides

The challenges mentioned by informants related to tourists' freedom to choose destinations and business capacity. Radeka stated that tour guides should not pressure tourists because feedback returns to the tour guide and the company they work for:

> *"We cannot push the guests because the feedback returns to us or to the company we handle." (Interview, November 5, 2026)*

From the business side, the owner of Arnadi mentioned that tourists may have different travel interests and that silver class capacity is limited:

> *"Because this class has limited slots, one session can accommodate a maximum of 12 pax." (Interview, November 5, 2026)*

Discussion

Word of Mouth in the Marketing Communication of Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class

WOM plays a central role in the marketing communication of Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class. Unlike similar silver businesses in Celuk Village that tend to focus on digital promotion, Arnadi has grown through verbal recommendations from tour guides. The business owner stated that approximately 90–95 percent of international tourists come because of tour guide recommendations and emphasized that Arnadi has used tour guide recommendations since its establishment. This finding is consistent with who state that services are intangible, so potential consumers need trusted information sources before making decisions [28]. In the tourism context, international tourists who do not yet know Celuk entrust their stopover decisions to tour guides. Nthabi Thulo stated that she trusted the recommendation because her tour guide was honest. Thus, the tour guide functions as a credible third party, WOM messages are more convincing because they come from sources considered to have no direct commercial interest [17].

The field findings show that WOM at Arnadi can occur naturally but is also managed through maintained relationships with tour guides. WOM can occur naturally but can also be designed by giving people reasons and opportunities to talk about a business [12]. In the case of Arnadi, appreciation in the form of commissions, a comfortable waiting room, and support for travel agency events are part of the relationship with tour guides, while Radeka emphasized that good service to guides and drivers is the most effective promotion.

The success of this WOM is also supported by factors that make tour guides willing to continue recommending Arnadi, namely the quality and authenticity of silver products, more affordable prices compared to other stores in Celuk, the existence of silver class as a differentiating attraction, and reciprocal relationships maintained by the owner. The Google Maps rating of 4.8 from 45 reviews indicates that the experiences felt by tourists are in line with the messages delivered by tour guides.

Analysis of Tour Guides' Word of Mouth Strategy Based on the 5T Indicators

In the *Talkers* indicator, the tour guide is the main speaker who brings Arnadi into conversations with tourists. Starting point of WOM is a person who is willing to speak because they feel satisfied and trust the business [12]. The research findings show this: Radeka became familiar with Arnadi through guests who booked a silver class and recommended it because of good service, while Nthabi Thulo followed the recommendation because she considered her tour guide honest. Position tour guides as communicators who build closeness and trust with tourists [10].

In the *Topics* indicator, the tour guide chooses message content that is simple, interesting, and easy to retell [12]. The topics that emerged were the authenticity and quality of silver, affordable prices, and the jewelry-making process. Radeka adjusted topics to tourists' origins; for example, Australian tourists preferred silver and beaches, while European tourists could be invited to temples. This adjustment shows that the tour guide's WOM is two-way and interactive, not a uniform message repeated to all guests. The timing of message delivery was also regulated, namely before entering Celuk, so that tourists could decide for themselves whether they wanted to stop. The message reached the tourist because Nthabi Thulo remembered Arnadi as a place with the best goods at economical prices, consistent with the owner's message about an affordable but quality alternative store.

In the *Tools* indicator, the tour guide's verbal message was the main tool, while materials from Arnadi served as support. Good conversations need to be supported by tools that make it easier for people to convey messages [12]. The business owner stated that he had provided tour guides with brochures, gallery videos, and address-guide videos, and Radeka received them through WhatsApp. Nthabi Thulo stated that the verbal explanation was convincing enough, so supporting materials can continue to be developed and ensured to be available to all partner tour guides.

In the *Taking Part* indicator, Businesses need to respond to questions, show attention, and appreciate those who make recommendations [12]. Arnadi implements this through appreciation for tour guides in the form of commissions, a comfortable waiting room, and event support, as well as through welcoming tourists. Radeka accompanied tourists and welcomed questions positively, while the owner focused his role on maintaining relations with tour guides. The welcome at Arnadi was considered excellent by Nthabi Thulo.

In the *Tracking* indicator, monitoring at Arnadi took place verbally and informally. Monitoring is important so that businesses know whether messages are received and what needs improvement [12]. The tour guide asked tourists about their impressions after visiting, Arnadi sent reports of guests' purchases via WhatsApp, and the owner knew about the success of recommendations from tourists' arrival with tour guides as well as from Google reviews and direct statements. The rating of 4.8 from 45 reviews and Nthabi Thulo's plan to revisit indicate positive results. In the future, more structured recording can help Arnadi know each tour guide's contribution.

Challenges and Opportunities for Developing Word of Mouth Strategy

The tour guide WOM strategy at Arnadi has been running well, and the research results show three challenges that also open opportunities for development. The three are presented below with ongoing efforts and further steps that can be considered.

The first challenge relates to capacity and learning experience. The business owner mentioned that one silver class session accommodates a maximum of 12 participants. This limitation can be understood as an effort to maintain learning quality for each participant. As tour guide recommendations increase, the management can consider adding session schedules during peak season, for example through a reservation system via registered tour guides.

The second challenge relates to competition and tourists' freedom. Celuk Village is home to many silver businesses, so tour guides have many choices of stopover places. Radeka emphasized that tour guides do not pressure tourists because the feedback returns to the tour guide and the company they work for. This principle actually maintains tourist trust, so Arnadi can strengthen it by maintaining consistency of quality and price and giving tour guides room to adjust recommendations to tourists' interests.

The third challenge relates to cross-language communication and recording recommendation results. Arnadi's tourists come from many countries. Nthabi Thulo considered that Arnadi tried to ensure tourists understood explanations even though they spoke different languages. This effort can be strengthened with visual or multilingual guides, such as brochures and videos already sent via WhatsApp. Purchase reports and tourist reviews that already exist can also be recorded in a structured manner so that each tour guide's contribution is easy to evaluate.

Tour Guides' Word of Mouth Strategy in Attracting International Tourists

Based on this analysis, the tour guide's WOM strategy in attracting international tourists to Arnadi is implemented through five interrelated steps. First, the tour guide trusted by tourists becomes the main speaker. Second, the tour guide delivers topics about the authenticity of silver, affordable prices, and the making process adjusted to tourists' origins and delivered before entering Celuk. Third, the tour guide uses verbal messages as the main tool, supported by brochures and videos from Arnadi. Fourth, the tour guide and Arnadi are involved with each other through on-site accompaniment, welcome, and appreciation in the form of commissions and maintained relationships. Fifth, the tour guide and owner monitor the results through tourists' impressions, purchase reports, and reviews. This strategy is effective because it is supported by product and service quality and can be strengthened through more equitable supporting facilities and a more structured tracking system.

Table 2. Summary of Key Findings, Comparison with Previous Research, Phenomena and Explanations, and Preliminary Conclusions

Aspect	Description
Key Findings	WOM at Arnadi is centered on tour guides as *talkers* who deliver simple, attractive, and origin-adjusted *topics* about silver authenticity, affordable prices, and the silver-making process. Verbal messages are the main *tools*, supported by brochures and videos. *Taking part* is carried out through accompaniment, welcoming tourists, commissions, comfortable waiting rooms, and event support. *Tracking* is informal through tourists' impressions, purchase reports via WhatsApp, Google reviews, and direct statements. The Google Maps rating is 4.8 from 45 reviews. Challenges include limited silver class capacity (maximum 12 pax per session), competition among silver businesses, tourists' freedom to choose, and cross-language communication.
Comparison with Previous Research	The findings are consistent with Sernovitz (2012) on the 5T framework, Kotler et al. (2022) on the need for trusted information sources for intangible services, Rumyeni et al. (2023) on the credibility of WOM sources, and Faiz and Kurniadi (2026) on tour guides as communicators who build trust. The difference lies in the context: this

Aspect	Description
	study examines verbal, face-to-face WOM by tour guides in a silver handicraft business with a jewelry-making class, rather than digital WOM, business-owner WOM, or post-visit tourist satisfaction.
Phenomena and Explanations	The phenomenon found is consistent with expectations: tour guide WOM is effective because tourists perceive guides as honest and credible, and because Arnadi maintains reciprocal relations with guides. The contributing factors include product quality and authenticity, affordable prices, the silver class as a differentiating attraction, service to guides and drivers, commissions, and a comfortable waiting room. Limitations appear in informal tracking and limited class capacity.
Preliminary Conclusions	Tour guide WOM is the main marketing communication strategy for attracting international tourists to Arnadi. The strategy works through the five 5T dimensions, supported by product and service quality and maintained relationships. To strengthen it, Arnadi can develop more structured tracking, more equitable supporting materials, multilingual visual guides, and capacity management through tour guide-based reservations.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to describe the Word of Mouth (WOM) marketing communication strategies employed by tour guides in attracting international tourists to Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class. Based on data obtained from three informants, consisting of a tour guide, the business owner, and an international tourist, as well as field observations, the findings describe the implementation of Sernovitz's 5T framework through five interrelated dimensions. In the Talkers dimension, tour guides act as communicators who introduce and recommend Arnadi to international tourists based on their experiences and knowledge of the business. In the Topics dimension, the information communicated includes silver authenticity, product prices, and jewelry-making activities. These explanations are delivered before tourists arrive at the business, allowing them to consider the information and make their own decisions. In the Tools dimension, direct verbal communication serves as the main channel for recommendations, supported by brochures, gallery videos, and location-guidance videos shared by Arnadi through WhatsApp. In the Taking Part dimension, tour guides and the business owner participate in maintaining communication and supporting tourist visits through on-site assistance, visitor reception, commission arrangements, waiting facilities, and cooperation with travel agencies. Meanwhile, the Tracking dimension is implemented informally through tourists' impressions, purchase reports shared via WhatsApp, Google reviews, and direct feedback. Overall, the findings illustrate how the five dimensions of the 5T framework are applied in Arnadi's WOM activities. However, this study does not establish the effectiveness of WOM as a marketing strategy in a broader or measurable sense. The findings represent the experiences and observations obtained from three informants at one business location. Therefore, they provide an understanding of WOM implementation within the specific context of Arnadi Silver and Gold and Silver Class and cannot yet be generalized to other silver handicraft businesses in Celuk Village or Bali. Future research could involve a larger number of informants and multiple silver handicraft businesses to compare WOM practices across different business settings. Further studies could also examine the relationship between direct WOM recommendations and digital promotional activities to provide a broader understanding of how both channels contribute to attracting international tourists.

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