

The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth in Increasing Brand Trust at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) on brand trust at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio in Medan. The background highlights that weak digital communication strategies and poor management of online reviews have reduced the company's credibility, despite sufficient technical capacity. The research method employs a descriptive quantitative approach with a sample of 75 respondents selected through saturated sampling. The questionnaire instrument was tested for validity and reliability, and the data were analyzed using multiple linear regression, t-test, F-test, and coefficient of determination. The findings show that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust, with a regression coefficient of 0.211 and a t-value of 4.427 (sig. 0.000 < 0.05). Meanwhile, E-WOM exerts a more dominant influence, with a regression coefficient of 0.470 and a t-value of 6.207 (sig. 0.000 < 0.05). Simultaneously, both variables contribute 65.9% to brand trust, while the remaining percentage is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. These results emphasize the importance of integrating digital communication strategies through social media with proactive management of online reviews to strengthen brand trust. The study provides practical contributions for architectural service firms in enhancing content quality, transparency of information, and responsiveness to client reviews, while also enriching the literature on brand trust in the professional services sector.

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1. Introduction

The professional services industry in the digital era faces major challenges in building and maintaining brand trust (Pemer, 2021). Competition is becoming increasingly fierce, consumers are more critical, and information spreads rapidly through social media (Pantano, 2021; Russo & Simeone, 2017). This means that the quality of the final output alone is no longer sufficient to assess a company's performance. Performance assessment should evaluate system consistency and alignment of interconnected elements (Damtoft et al., 2025; Sales, 2019), simultaneous use of quantitative and qualitative, financial and non-financial measures across multiple evaluation fields (Głodziński, 2019). Consistency in processes, transparency in communication, and the ability to

respond to public complaints have become decisive factors in establishing brand trust (Nurmalasari et al., 2024).

A case study at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio in Medan shows that, despite having sufficient technical capacity, inconsistencies in digital content, miscommunication with clients, and weak management of online reviews have reduced the company's credibility and consumer trust. The main problem faced by this studio lies in the weakness of its social media marketing strategy and the management of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM). The content presented is still limited to aesthetic visuals without technical explanations, the frequency of uploads is low, and there is minimal transparency regarding project progress. On the other hand, client testimonials are general in nature, negative comments are not openly addressed, and audience interaction remains low. This condition causes positive reviews to fail in strengthening the brand image, while negative reviews spread quickly and worsen the reputation. Field data show that 68% of clients complained about delays in project updates, 52% felt that invoices were unclear, and 49% stated that finishing materials differed from the agreed digital mock-up.

Brand trust is the customer's willingness to place confidence in a brand despite potential risks, because they anticipate positive outcomes (Monfort et al., 2025; Pandiangan et al., 2021; Portal et al., 2019). Social media marketing is a new medium for exchanging information and offering a company's products (Chen & Lin, 2019; Rizky et al., 2023). Social media marketing has significant role in influencing consumer behavior (Cheung et al., 2019). E-WOM is a recommendation or criticism made by users on the internet that has the potential to influence prospective buyers' decisions (Luthfiyatillah et al., 2020; Mahmud et al., 2024; Nuseir, 2019). Specifically, E-WOM information quality, credibility, usefulness, and ease of use critically determine purchase intention (Rahaman et al., 2022).

Previous studies consistently confirm that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. Research shows that interactive and well-managed social media strategies strengthen consumer confidence in brands and enhance loyalty (Rizky et al., 2023). Other research also shows that social media marketing has a significant effect on brand trust and brand loyalty (Sohail et al., 2020). Meanwhile, research by Agustina & Mahendri (2023) found that user generated content and E-WOM have a positive and significant effect on brand trust. However, previous research is still limited to a general context and has not much examined the integration of these two factors in the architectural services industry, particularly in Indonesia. Previous research conducted by Chavadi et al. (2023) also shows that social media marketing has an influence on brand trust.

The novelty of this research lies in the combination of the role of social media marketing and E-WOM to explain how brand trust is formed in the local context, with a focus on digital communication practices and client experiences in Medan. This approach offers a new, more practical and relevant perspective for architecture service companies, as it directly highlights digital communication strategies as well as the management of online reviews that can be applied to sustainably enhance brand trust. Thus, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing and electronic word of mouth both partially and simultaneously on brand trust at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio.

Hypotheses Development

Social Media Marketing and Brand Trust

Social media marketing has become an essential component of digital marketing strategies, enabling firms to communicate with customers more effectively through interactive, timely, and personalized content. Unlike conventional marketing channels, social media facilitates two-way communication, allowing organizations not only to disseminate information but also to build long-term relationships with consumers (Pang et al., 2018). Through consistent content, active engagement, and transparent communication, companies can enhance customers' perceptions of credibility and reliability, which are fundamental dimensions of brand trust. In service industries, where customers often face high levels of uncertainty before making purchasing decisions (Hale et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2021), social media serves as an important source of information that reduces perceived risk and strengthens confidence in the service provider.

Effective social media marketing positively influences brand trust by providing valuable information, increasing customer interaction, and creating positive brand experiences (Ali et al., 2025). Similarly, Sohail et al. (2020) found that social media marketing significantly enhances brand loyalty through the development of trust and emotional attachment between customers and brands. Furthermore, social media marketing activities directly influence brand trust in telecommunications users and banking participants (Althuwaini, 2022; Ebrahim, 2020). These findings indicate that social media is not merely a promotional platform but also a strategic communication channel that supports the development of sustainable customer relationships.

In the context of architectural services, social media marketing plays a particularly important role because customers generally seek comprehensive information before selecting a service provider. Architectural projects involve substantial financial investment and long-term commitment, making trust a critical factor in customers' decision-making processes. By presenting project portfolios, technical explanations, project progress, client testimonials, and responsive communication through social media, architecture firms can reduce information asymmetry and demonstrate their competence and professionalism. Consequently, customers are more likely to perceive the company as credible and trustworthy. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio.

Electronic Word of Mouth and Brand Trust

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) refers to customers' opinions, reviews, recommendations, and experiences shared through digital platforms such as social media, online forums, and review websites. Compared with company-generated information, E-WOM is generally perceived as more credible because it originates from actual users who have experienced a product or service. Source expertise, trustworthiness, and homophily significantly influence perceived e-WOM credibility Ismagilova et al. (2020). Positive online reviews reduce consumers' uncertainty, strengthen perceptions of service quality, and increase confidence in a company's ability to fulfill its promises (Verma et al., 2023). Consequently, E-WOM has become one of the most influential factors in shaping brand trust, particularly in service industries where purchase decisions involve higher perceived risk.

Previous studies have consistently reported a positive relationship between E-WOM and brand trust. Agustina and Mahendri (2023) found that Electronic Word of Mouth significantly enhances consumers' trust by providing authentic information and positive customer experiences. Likewise, Luthfiyatillah et al. (2020) demonstrated that online reviews and recommendations influence consumer perceptions, increase purchase intention, and strengthen confidence in a brand. These findings indicate that credible customer-generated information plays a crucial role in building long-term trust.

In the architectural services industry, prospective clients often rely on testimonials, project reviews, and recommendations before selecting a service provider because architectural projects require substantial financial investment and long-term collaboration. Positive online reviews can therefore reinforce perceptions of professionalism, reliability, and service quality, ultimately strengthening customers' trust in the company. Based on these theoretical and empirical arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio.

Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth toward Brand Trust

Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) are complementary components of digital marketing communication that jointly contribute to the development of Brand Trust. While social media marketing enables companies to communicate directly with customers through informative content, interactive engagement, and timely responses (Wibowo et al., 2021), E-WOM reflects customers' evaluations and experiences that are voluntarily shared through digital platforms (Martinez-Navalón et al., 2021). The integration of these two communication channels creates a more comprehensive information environment, allowing prospective customers to evaluate

a company's credibility from both organizational and consumer perspectives. As a result, consistent social media activities supported by positive online reviews are expected to strengthen customers' trust in a brand.

Previous studies have provided empirical evidence supporting the combined influence of these variables on brand trust. Chavadi et al. (2023) reported that social media-based brand communities significantly enhance brand trust by facilitating customer interaction and encouraging positive consumer responses. Similarly, Rizky et al. (2023) emphasized that effective social media marketing strengthens customer trust, whereas Agustina and Mahendri (2023) found that Electronic Word of Mouth reinforces consumers' confidence through authentic recommendations and shared experiences. These findings indicate that both company-generated communication and customer-generated content play complementary roles in establishing trust.

In the context of architectural services, customers generally evaluate both the firm's digital communication and the experiences of previous clients before selecting a service provider. Therefore, effective social media marketing combined with positive Electronic Word of Mouth is expected to reduce perceived risk, enhance perceptions of professionalism, and strengthen Brand Trust. Based on these theoretical and empirical arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth simultaneously has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio.

2. Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach using an explanatory research design to examine the influence of Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on Brand Trust at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio in Medan, Indonesia. The study focused on testing the causal relationships between the independent variables, namely Social Media Marketing (X1) and Electronic Word of Mouth (X2), and the dependent variable, Brand Trust (Y). The unit of analysis consisted of customers who had previously used the architectural services of Benny & Associates Architecture Studio. The target population comprised all active customers recorded by the company during the research period. Since the total population consisted of 75 customers, all members of the population were included as research respondents using a saturated sampling (census) technique. Therefore, the sample size was identical to the population size, resulting in a total of 75 respondents.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire items were developed based on established constructs from previous studies. Social Media Marketing was measured through indicators related to content quality, interaction, informativeness, consistency, and responsiveness. Electronic Word of Mouth was measured through online review credibility, recommendation, review quality, and customer experience sharing. Brand Trust was measured using indicators reflecting reliability, confidence, and customers' willingness to rely on the company.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the research instrument was evaluated using validity and reliability tests to ensure measurement accuracy and internal consistency. Classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, were subsequently performed to verify the suitability of the regression model. The research hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis. Partial effects of each independent variable on Brand Trust were examined using the t-test, while the simultaneous effect was assessed using the F-test. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was employed to evaluate the proportion of variance in Brand Trust explained by Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth. The findings of this study are limited to customers of Benny & Associates Architecture Studio. Therefore, the results should be interpreted within the organizational context of the company and should not be generalized to the broader architectural services industry without further empirical validation involving multiple organizations and a larger sample.

3. Results

Study conducted using a regression analysis model. The regression analysis were processed the data by using SPSS version 25 program on 75 respondents who are clients using the services of Benny & Associates Architecture Studio.

Table 1. Validity test

Variable	r _{count}	r _{table}	Criteria	Conclusion	
Social Media Marketing	X1.1	0.810	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.2	0.709	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.3	0.705	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.4	0.679	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.5	0.543	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.6	0.368	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.7	0.391	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.8	0.450	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.9	0.646	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.10	0.398	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.11	0.417	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.12	0.445	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.13	0.595	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.14	0.699	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X1.15	0.716	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
Electronic Word of Mouth	X2.1	0.708	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.2	0.896	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.3	0.375	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.4	0.553	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.5	0.457	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.6	0.392	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.7	0.512	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.8	0.579	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.9	0.428	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.10	0.467	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.11	0.708	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	X2.12	0.896	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
Brand Trust	Y1	0.741	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	Y2	0.646	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	Y3	0.652	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	Y4	0.469	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	Y5	0.556	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	Y6	0.476	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	Y7	0.601	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	Y8	0.752	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid
	Y9	0.591	0.3610	r _{count} > r _{table}	Valid

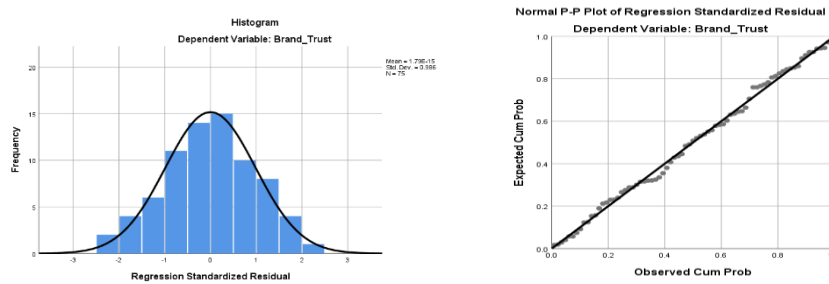
Table 1 shows the results of the validity test for variable (X1) of social media marketing showed that each r_{count} value > r_{table} 0.3610, so it can be concluded that the 15 questionnaire statement items for variable X1 were declared valid. For the variable (X2) electronic word of mouth, it is shown that each r_{count} value > r_{table} 0.3610, so it can be concluded that the 12 questionnaire statement items for variable X2 are declared valid. The results of the validity test for the (Y) brand trust variable showed that each r_{count} value > r_{table} 0.3610, so it can be concluded that the 9 items of the questionnaire statement for the Y variable were declared valid.

Table 2. Realibility test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Grades	Reliability Value	Criteria	Conclusion
Social Media Marketing	0.857	0.600	Cronbach's Alpha Grades > Reliability Value	Reliable
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.809	0.600	Cronbach's Alpha Grades > Reliability Value	Reliable
Brand Trust	0.788	0.600	Cronbach's Alpha Grades > Reliability Value	Reliable

The reliability test table above shows that Cronbach's Alpha values of social media marketing, electronic word of mouth, and brand trust are all greater than 0.60, so according to the standard, it can be concluded that all of these variables are reliable.

Normality Test

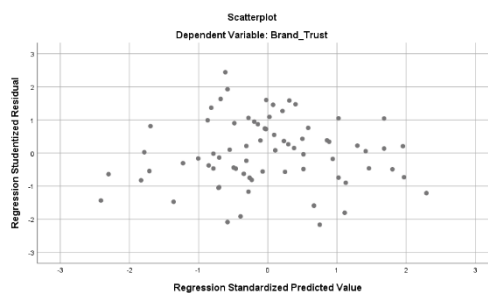


Source: Data processed, 2026

Figure 1. Normality Test Results

Figure 1 exhibits that the results of the histogram normality test showed that the data were normally distributed, indicated by the direction of the data line that followed the histogram line in the histogram normality test. In the normal p-p test, the plot also shows that the data points are around the diagonal line and follow the direction of the diagonal line, so the regression model meets the assumption of normality.

Heteroscedasticity Test



Source: Data processed, 2026

Figure 2. Scatterplot

Based on Figure 2. The scatterplot graph presented, it can be seen that the dots are scattered randomly and do not form a clear pattern and spread both above and below zero on the Y axis. This means that there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model, so the regression model can be used to predict the dependent variable based on inputs from independent variables.

Multicollinearity Test

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Social Media Marketing (X1)	.651	1.537
Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	.651	1.537

Source of Processed Data 2026

Table 3 shows that the correlation values for the social media marketing and electronic word of mouth variables have a tolerance value (0.651) > 0.1 and a VIF value (1.537) < 10 so that it can be concluded that the social media marketing and electronic word of mouth variables do not have multicollinearity.

Multiple Linear Regression Test

The following values of the beta coefficient and the correlation coefficient of the independent variable can be seen in the Table 4.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Test

Model		Coefficients ^a		
		Unstandarized Coefficients		Standarized Coefficients
		B	Std. Error	Beta
1	(Constant)	1.953	2.653	
	Social Media Marketing	.211	.048	.378
	Electronic Word of Mouth	.470	.076	.529

Source of Processed Data 2026

$$\text{Brand Trust} = 1.953 + 0.211 \text{ Social Media Marketing} + 0.470 \text{ Electronic Word of Mouth} + e$$

Based on this equation, it can be concluded that the constant of 1.953 statistically means that if social media marketing and electronic word of mouth have a value of 0 then brand trust remains at 1.953. The regression coefficient of the social media marketing variable (X1) of 0.211 shows that every increase in the social media marketing variable of 1 unit, then brand trust will increase by 0.211 units and the coefficient is positive, so it can be concluded that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand trust. The regression coefficient of the electronic word of mouth (X2) variable of 0.470 shows that every increase in the electronic word of mouth variable by 1 unit, brand trust will increase by 0.470 units and the coefficient is positive so that it can be concluded that electronic word of mouth has a positive effect on brand trust.

Partial Hypothesis Test (t-test)

Table 5. Test t

Variable	t	Sig
Social Media Marketing	4.427	.000
Electronic Word of Mouth	6.207	.000

Source of Processed Data 2026

In Table 5 above, it can be seen that social media marketing (X1) shows that the tcount value (4.427) > ttable (1.97) with a significant level (0.000) < 0.05 so that it can be concluded that social media marketing has a partial and significant positive influence on brand trust. Meanwhile, the electronic word of mouth (X2) shows that the t-value (6.207) > ttable (1.97) with a significant level (0.000) < 0.05 so that it can be concluded that electronic word of mouth has a partial and significant positive influence on brand trust.

Simultaneous Hypothesis Test (F Test)

Table 6. Test F

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	712.395	2	356.197	69.624	.000 ^b
	Residual	368.352	72	5.116		
	Total	1080.747	74			

Source of Processed Data 2026

In table 6 above, it can be seen that the F-value (69.624) > Ftable (3.00) with a significant level (0.000) < 0.05, by Chavadi et al. (2023) So it can be concluded that social media marketing and electronic word of mouth simultaneously affect the brand trust.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 7. Coefficient of Determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.812 ^a	.659	.650	2.262

Source of Processed Data 2026

Based on the result in Table 7, it shows that the R Square value obtained is 0.659. The results of this test showed that 65.9% of brand trust was influenced by social media marketing and

electronic word of mouth variables, while the remaining 34.1% were influenced by other variables that were not studied in this study.

4. Discussion

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust in Benny & Associates Architecture Studio Services

The results of the study show that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. The regression coefficient of 0.211 with a t-value of 4.427 (sig. 0.000 < 0.05) confirms that the better the marketing strategy through social media, the higher the consumer trust in the brand. These findings are in line with research Rizky et al. (2023) which emphasizes that social media marketing through interactive and relevant content can increase brand trust and repurchase intention. In addition, (Sohail et al., 2020) It also emphasizes that social media marketing contributes to brand loyalty, which is a derivative of brand trust. In the context of Benny & Associates, the weakness of content that only highlights aesthetics without technical explanations and low upload frequency is a major challenge. Therefore, consistency in the presentation of project information, transparency of progress, and active interaction with the audience are important strategies to strengthen brand trust.

The influence of electronic word of mouth on brand trust in Benny & Associates Architecture Studio services

Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) has been shown to have a greater influence than social media marketing, with a regression coefficient of 0.470 and a t-value of 6.207 (sig. 0.000 < 0.05). This shows that reviews, comments, and recommendations from clients have a dominant role in shaping brand trust. These findings are consistent with research by Agustina and Mahendri (2023) which found that user generated content and E-WOM have a positive effect on brand trust, especially in the cosmetics industry. Luthfiyatillah et al. (2020) also emphasized that E-WOM through social media such as Instagram can influence buying interest and purchase decisions. In the case of Benny & Associates, the poor management of negative reviews and the lack of response to public complaints actually worsened its reputation. Therefore, a more proactive strategy in responding to comments, displaying detailed testimonials, and managing reviews openly will significantly strengthen brand trust

The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Trust in Benny & Associates Architecture Studio Services

Simultaneously, social media marketing and E-WOM had a significant effect on brand trust with an F value of 69.624 (sig. 0.000 < 0.05) and a contribution of 65.9% to the brand trust variable. These findings reinforce the results of research by Chavadi et al. (2023) which show that social media-based communities can increase brand trust, brand equity, and consumer response. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of the two variables in the context of architectural services in Indonesia, which have not been widely studied before. Thus, the combination of digital communication strategies through social media and E-WOM management is the key to building sustainable brand trust.

5. Conclusion

This study proves that social media marketing and electronic word of mouth have a positive effect both partially and simultaneously on brand trust at Benny & Associates Architecture Studio. Social media marketing contributes through content consistency, information transparency, and interaction with audiences, while electronic word of mouth has a more dominant influence because client reviews and recommendations directly affect the perception of trust. Simultaneously, the two variables contributed 65.9% to brand trust, demonstrating the importance of integrating digital communication strategies and managing online reviews. Based on the findings, companies are advised to improve the quality of social media content by adding technical explanations, project progress, and more intense interaction with the audience. E-WOM management must be carried out proactively by responding to negative comments openly, displaying detailed testimonials, and encouraging clients to provide authentic reviews. The integration of social media marketing strategies with E-WOM management will create synergies that strengthen brand trust in a

sustainable manner. In addition, further research can expand on other variables such as brand image, perceived quality, or customer engagement to provide a more comprehensive picture of the factors that affect brand trust in the architectural services industry.

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