



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/sijdb.v3i4>
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

The Influence of Social Media Advertising, Word of Mouth, and Owner Personal Branding on Consumer Trust in Culinary MSMEs in Cirebon City.

Yasser Muhamad¹, Rudianto², Siska Ernawati³

¹Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, Indonesia, Muhamadyasser27@gmail.com

²Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, Indonesia, rudirudianto7788@gmail.com

³Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, Indonesia, Siskaef@ugj.ac.id

Corresponding Author: Siskaef@ugj.ac.id³

Abstract: This study addresses the need of culinary micro, small, and medium enterprises to build consumer trust within a competitive digital marketplace. The objective is to determine the extent to which social media advertising, word of mouth, and owner personal branding affect consumer trust. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed with 120 consumers of culinary MSMEs in Cirebon who actively access social media. Data were collected via a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using multiple linear regression following validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests. The results indicate that all three predictors exert positive and significant effects on consumer trust, both partially and simultaneously, with the model explaining 58 percent of the variance. These findings highlight that transparent and consistent advertising, credible consumer reviews, and the owner's authenticity and competence provide complementary trust signals. The study concludes that an integrated orchestration of paid, earned, and owned channels is essential to strengthen consumer trust in culinary MSMEs.

Keyword: Consumer Trust, Social Media Advertising, Word of Mouth, Personal Branding, Culinary Msmes.

INTRODUCTION

The culinary sector constitutes one of the most dynamic drivers of Indonesia's creative economy, with micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) serving as its primary backbone. National statistics report that 4.85 million food-and-beverage enterprises operated in 2023, absorbing 9.80 million workers and generating sales of approximately Rp998.37 trillion, indicating the magnitude and economic relevance of the sector for consumer-trust-based marketing research (BPS, 2024). In parallel, Indonesia's rapid digital transformation has broadened the reach and strategic importance of digital communication channels. With 185.3 million internet users and 139.0 million social media users recorded in early 2024, digital platforms have become central arenas for shaping consumer perceptions, influencing evaluations of credibility, and facilitating purchasing decisions (DataReportal,

2024). These developments highlight the urgency for MSMEs particularly in the culinary field to adopt credible, transparent, and consumer-oriented marketing strategies capable of strengthening trust within increasingly competitive digital ecosystems.

In urban localities such as Cirebon, the culinary MSME landscape displays notable vibrancy supported by government initiatives, promotional festivals, and the rise of digital marketplaces. Culinary events featuring more than 250 MSMEs have enhanced brand exposure and consumer engagement, intensifying the relevance of research exploring determinants of consumer trust in local culinary markets (AntaraneWS, 2025). As many purchasing decisions now begin on social platforms, marketing stimuli especially *social media advertising*, *word of mouth* (WOM or *electronic word of mouth*, eWOM), and *personal branding* of business owners are increasingly instrumental in shaping consumers' confidence and willingness to rely on a brand.

Theoretically, consumer trust is defined as a belief in the integrity, competence (or reliability), and benevolence of a brand or business actor, which together determine the extent to which consumers are willing to depend on the brand under uncertainty (Khamitov, 2024). A meta-analysis of 50 years of empirical research emphasizes that integrity-based antecedents such as transparency, honesty, and consistency exert the strongest influence on trust formation, especially in digital contexts characterized by high information asymmetry. In digital environments, *consumer digital trust* emerges when platforms minimize suspicion regarding identity misrepresentation, manipulated visuals, and non-transparent content practices, making credibility signals from advertising, customer reviews, and brand actors critical to consumer judgment (Hochstein, 2025).

Within this theoretical landscape, *social media advertising* serves as a paid communication strategy that, when transparent, consistent, and responsive, strengthens perceptions of integrity and competence by reducing perceived risk and providing clear product information. Recent Indonesian studies show that Instagram advertisements and paid promotional content can positively influence satisfaction and purchasing intentions, often mediated by trust (Pamungkas, 2024; Yusuf, 2024). Meanwhile, *WOM/eWOM* contributes an earned source of credibility by offering diagnostic information from fellow consumers; meta-analytical evidence identifies argument quality, source credibility, and message usefulness as strong predictors of purchase behavior through mechanisms of trust (Ismagilova, 2020). Empirical studies in Indonesian marketplaces further demonstrate that eWOM and customer reviews enhance trust, which subsequently affects purchase decisions (Wahyuningjati, 2024).

At the same time, *personal branding of business owners* plays a vital role in MSMEs, where the identity of the entrepreneur is often inseparable from the brand itself. Owner authenticity, competence, and interpersonal warmth communicate integrity, reliability, and benevolence, thereby reinforcing trust (Razeghi, 2018). Evidence from Indonesia's live-commerce environment indicates that strong personal branding significantly increases consumer trust and facilitates purchase behavior (Safitri, 2024). For culinary MSMEs where perceptions of hygiene, quality, and care are central owner visibility and authentic engagement act as distinctive credibility signals difficult to replicate through impersonal promotional materials.

Based on these considerations, the present study examines the influence of *social media advertising*, *WOM/eWOM*, and *owner personal branding* on *consumer trust* in culinary MSMEs in Cirebon. The operational definition of consumer trust applied in this study reflects the three classical dimensions: integrity (transparency and honesty of information), competence (consistency of product quality and service reliability), and benevolence (responsiveness and goodwill toward customers). Social media advertising is defined as consumers' perceptions of the clarity, relevance, and honesty of promotional content presented

by MSMEs. WOM/eWOM refers to perceptions of credibility, usefulness, and consistency of customer reviews or recommendations across platforms. Personal branding captures perceptions of the owner's authenticity, professional competence, and value-based narrative consistency as communicated through digital interaction.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to answer the following central research question: To what extent do social media advertising, WOM/eWOM, and owner personal branding influence consumer trust in culinary MSMEs in the City of Cirebon? Addressing this question provides empirical and theoretical contributions to digital marketing literature and offers practical insights for strengthening trust-based marketing strategies within regional culinary MSME ecosystems.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design aimed at examining causal relationships between social media advertising, word of mouth (*WOM/eWOM*), and owner personal branding as independent variables, and consumer trust as the dependent variable. The explanatory design is appropriate because the study seeks to test the direction and magnitude of influence among variables that, theoretically, correspond to *integrity-*, *competence-*, and *benevolence-based* antecedents of trust as described in the grand theory of consumer trust. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed to capture respondents' perceptions at a single point in time.

Population and Sample

The population of this research consists of consumers who have purchased products from culinary MSMEs in the City of Cirebon and who also follow or access these MSMEs' social media accounts on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, or WhatsApp Business. Because the study requires respondents who have been exposed to social media advertising, WOM/eWOM, and the owner's personal branding, a purposive sampling technique was applied.

A minimum sample size of 120 respondents was established to ensure statistical adequacy for multiple regression analysis, given the number of indicators used across all constructs. This threshold aligns with common quantitative research standards and the requirement for stable parameter estimation. Data collection was carried out online to reach digitally active MSME consumers.

Time and Location of the Study

The research was conducted in the City of Cirebon, a region with a rapidly expanding culinary MSME ecosystem supported by various government programs, festivals, and digital marketing activities. Data collection occurred during the period when culinary MSMEs actively utilized social media for promotion, in line with ongoing digitalization initiatives.

Research Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire applying a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Each construct was operationalized based on theoretical dimensions and prior literature:

- 1) Consumer Trust (Y) was measured using indicators reflecting integrity (transparency and honesty of information), competence or reliability (consistency of product quality), and benevolence (responsiveness and goodwill).

- 2) Social Media Advertising (X1) included perceptions of advertising clarity, transparency, relevance, consistency between advertised messages and actual products, visual quality, and account responsiveness.
- 3) WOM/eWOM (X2) encompassed credibility of reviews, usefulness of information, argument quality, message valence, and cross-platform consistency.
- 4) Owner Personal Branding (X3) reflected competency signals, authenticity, narrative consistency, visibility, and interpersonal engagement on social media.

All indicators were developed based on the theoretical literature presented in the introduction and literature review sections. Instrument quality was verified through item-level validity testing using Corrected Item–Total Correlation and reliability testing using Cronbach’s Alpha. All items met the required criteria, with alpha values ranging from 0.873 to 0.944, indicating strong internal consistency.

Procedures

The procedures consisted of (1) preparing the questionnaire based on validated theoretical constructs; (2) distributing the online survey link through social media channels and MSME consumer groups; (3) screening respondents through eligibility questions to confirm prior purchase experience and social media exposure to the relevant MSMEs; and (4) collecting and cleaning data to ensure completeness and suitability for statistical analysis. A preliminary observation of MSMEs’ digital traces was also conducted to contextualize the survey findings, including content formats, advertising materials, and consumer reviews.

Data Collection Techniques

Primary data were obtained through online questionnaires administered via digital platforms. The questionnaire included demographic items, filter questions, and construct-specific items. Online distribution allowed efficient access to respondents familiar with digital marketing practices, which aligns with the objective of studying trust formation in online settings. Secondary data, such as MSME digital content and public statistical reports, were used to describe the research context.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed several stages. First, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize respondents’ characteristics and general perceptions of each variable. Second, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. Third, classical assumption tests were performed, including tests of normality, multicollinearity (Tolerance > 0.10 and VIF < 10), heteroskedasticity, and linearity. Fourth, hypothesis testing was carried out using multiple linear regression, expressed as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + e$$

where Y is consumer trust, X_1 is social media advertising, X_2 is WOM/eWOM, X_3 is owner personal branding, and β_1 – β_3 represent the partial effects of each variable. The significance of partial effects was assessed through t -tests, while the combined effect was evaluated using an F -test. The model’s explanatory power was measured using R^2 and Adjusted R^2 . Interpretation of results was guided by theoretical principles emphasizing integrity, competence, and benevolence as core trust antecedents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 120 respondents participated in the study, representing consumers of culinary MSMEs in Cirebon who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp Business, and Facebook. The majority were female (58.3%), aged 18–34 (73.4%), and frequently engaged with digital content related to culinary MSMEs. They also reported high exposure to online reviews and owner-generated content.

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the research variables based on the five-item Likert scale for each construct.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Constructs (n = 120)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Category
Social Media Advertising (X1)	3.00	1.28	1	5	Moderate
WOM/eWOM (X2)	3.00	1.23	1	5	Moderate
Personal Branding (X3)	3.00	1.26	1	5	Moderate
Consumer Trust (Y)	3.00	1.16	1	5	Moderate

All variables fall into the *moderate* category, with sufficient variability to support inferential statistical analysis.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

All items for each variable showed corrected item–total correlation (CITC) above 0.30, indicating good item validity. Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients ranged from 0.873 to 0.944, confirming that all measurement scales were reliable and internally consistent.

Multiple Regression Analysis

To test the partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables on consumer trust, a multiple linear regression model was estimated.

Partial Effects (t-Test Results)

Table 2. Coefficients (Partial Test)

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized)	t	Sig.
Constant	-0.696	0.318	–	-2.191	0.030
Social Media Advertising (X1)	0.535	0.054	0.594	9.844	0.000
WOM/eWOM (X2)	0.379	0.057	0.404	6.610	0.000
Personal Branding (X3)	0.318	0.056	0.346	5.657	0.000

All three predictors have positive and significant effects on consumer trust ($p < 0.001$).

Simultaneous Effect (F-Test)

Table 3. ANOVA (Simultaneous Test)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	92.128	3	30.709	53.302	0.000
Residual	66.832	116	0.576	–	–
Total	158.960	119	–	–	–

The model is **significant** overall ($F = 53.302, p < 0.001$).

Coefficient of Determination

$R^2 = 0.580$, indicating that 58% of the variance in consumer trust can be explained by the combined influence of social media advertising, WOM/eWOM, and personal branding. The remaining 42% is attributed to other factors not included in the model.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of social media advertising, WOM/eWOM, and owner personal branding on consumer trust in culinary MSMEs in Cirebon. The findings strongly support all research hypotheses and align with theoretical expectations.

The Effect of Social Media Advertising on Consumer Trust

The results demonstrate that social media advertising has the **strongest** effect on consumer trust ($\beta = 0.535$). This indicates that clear, consistent, and transparent advertising increases consumers' perceptions of integrity and competence—two key components of trust. When advertisements accurately portray product attributes and align with consumer experience, perceptions of honesty strengthen, reducing perceived risk.

This finding is consistent with studies showing that digital advertising improves consumer attitudes when accompanied by transparency, informative content, and interactive communication (Pamungkas, 2024; Yusuf, 2024). For culinary MSMEs, advertisements that highlight hygiene practices, product quality, and honest pricing are particularly effective in strengthening trust.

The Effect of WOM/eWOM on Consumer Trust

WOM/eWOM has a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.379$), confirming that consumer-generated information influences trust stronger than promotional content. Reviews, ratings, and user-generated photos act as diagnostic cues that help consumers reduce uncertainty. High-quality arguments, review usefulness, and cross-platform consistency enhance credibility.

This finding aligns with meta-analytical evidence showing that eWOM credibility and message quality are among the most powerful predictors of consumer trust and purchase intentions (Ismagilova, 2020; Wahyuningjati, 2024). The eye-tracking evidence suggesting consumers focus heavily on negative reviews underscores the importance of consistent review management.

For culinary MSMEs, authentic reviews—especially from verified customers—serve as strong integrity signals that foster trust in product quality and service reliability.

The Effect of Owner Personal Branding on Consumer Trust

Owner personal branding also positively influences consumer trust ($\beta = 0.318$). Although smaller than the effects of advertising and WOM/eWOM, this predictor shows that the owner's authenticity, expertise, and interpersonal warmth matter greatly in MSME contexts.

Since MSME brands often reflect the identity of the entrepreneur, consistent personal storytelling, demonstration of culinary expertise, and transparent communication help establish perceptions of integrity, competence, and benevolence. This supports findings that personal branding in small businesses enhances brand authenticity and trust (Razeghi, 2018; Safitri, 2024).

In the culinary sector—where hygiene, care, and quality are paramount—visible owner engagement provides symbolic reassurance to consumers.

Simultaneous Influence of X1, X2, and X3 on Consumer Trust

The combination of advertising, eWOM, and owner personal branding explains 58% of the variance in consumer trust ($R^2 = 0.580$). This substantial effect confirms that a multichannel, integrated strategy is required to build trust effectively.

Within the “paid–earned–owned” framework:

- 1) Advertising (paid) provides structured, controlled information.
- 2) WOM/eWOM (earned) offers independent social proof.
- 3) Owner branding (owned) supplies authenticity and interpersonal cues.

When these signals are aligned and consistent, trust is strengthened because consumers receive confirmation from multiple sources. This validates grand theory perspectives emphasizing the combined influence of integrity-, competence-, and benevolence-based cues on trust formation.

The findings confirm that social media advertising, WOM/eWOM, and owner personal branding each have significant and positive effects on consumer trust—both individually and collectively. These results provide empirical support for the theoretical premise that trust arises from transparent communication, credible social proof, and authentic personal engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how social media advertising, word of mouth (*WOM/eWOM*), and owner personal branding influence consumer trust in culinary MSMEs in the City of Cirebon. The findings demonstrate that all three variables exert significant and positive effects on consumer trust, individually and in combination, thereby supporting the theoretical premise that trust in the digital marketplace is shaped by signals of integrity, competence, and benevolence provided through multiple communication channels. Within this context, social media advertising emerges as the strongest predictor, indicating that clear, transparent, and consistent promotional messages play a central role in building confidence among consumers. *WOM/eWOM* further complements this influence by offering credible social proof that reduces uncertainty, while the personal branding of owners strengthens perceptions of authenticity and interpersonal reliability that are particularly salient for small culinary businesses.

These findings directly answer the research problem and demonstrate that the integrated use of paid (advertising), earned (*WOM/eWOM*), and owned (owner personal branding) communication channels is essential for cultivating consumer trust in culinary MSMEs. By confirming the simultaneous contribution of these variables, the study underscores the importance of strategic alignment across different types of digital signals in order to reinforce trustworthy brand impressions. The research thus contributes to the broader field of marketing science by providing empirical evidence that multisource trust cues—rather than single-channel efforts—more effectively support consumer confidence in digitally mediated environments. More specifically, the study enriches the literature on trust formation in small business ecosystems by showing that owner visibility and authenticity remain powerful determinants of trust even amid the growth of algorithm-driven digital content.

Beyond its empirical confirmation of established theoretical constructs, the study also advances the scientific understanding of how trust operates in the context of Indonesia’s culinary MSMEs, a sector marked by high competition and strong reliance on digital engagement. The evidence demonstrates that transparency in advertising, credibility in consumer-generated information, and authenticity in owner communication collectively strengthen the relational foundations upon which sustained consumer trust depends. These insights contribute to the development of more robust trust-based digital marketing frameworks applicable not only to culinary MSMEs but also to other small-scale enterprises operating in similarly dynamic digital environments.

In conclusion, the research affirms that building consumer trust requires the orchestration of coherent and credible signals across diverse digital touchpoints. By strengthening theoretical explanations and providing empirical validation, this study enhances scientific understanding of trust formation in the digital economy and offers a foundation upon which future research and practical strategies can be developed to support MSME resilience and competitiveness.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, Y., & Lee, J. (2024). The impact of online reviews on consumers' purchase intentions: Examining the social influence of online reviews, group similarity, and self-construal. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 19(2), 1060–1078. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer19020055>
- ANTARA News. (2025, 11 Februari). *GoFood rilis "Tren Surga Makanan", kuliner yang diminati 2024–2025*. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/4640585/gofood-rilis-tren-surga-makanan-kuliner-yang-diminati-2024-2025>
- ANTARA News. (2025, 12 Juli). *Kota Cirebon libatkan 250 UMKM dalam festival kuliner nasional*. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/4962093/kota-cirebon-libatkan-250-umkm-dalam-festival-kuliner-nasional>
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2024, 23 Desember). *Statistik penyediaan makanan dan minuman 2023* (No. Publikasi 06300.24017). <https://www.bps.go.id/id/publication/2024/12/23/f2c7743c4712aaeaa4abf694/statistik-penyediaan-makanan-dan-minuman-2023.html>
- Borchers, N. S. (2023). Why do we trust in online reviews? Integrative literature review and future research directions. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 17(2), Article 7. <https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2023-2-7>
- Chen, T., Samaranayake, P., Cen, X., & Qi, M. (2022). The impact of online reviews on consumers' purchasing decisions: Evidence from an eye-tracking study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 865702. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.865702>
- DataReportal; We Are Social; Meltwater. (2024, Januari). *Digital 2024: Indonesia*. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-indonesia>
- Dinas Koperasi, Usaha Kecil, Menengah, Perdagangan dan Perindustrian (DKUKMPP) Kota Cirebon. (2026). *Portal resmi DKUKMPP Kota Cirebon*. <https://dkukmpp.cirebonkota.go.id/>
- Hochstein, R. E., Harmeling, C. M., & Perko, T. (2025). Toward a theory of consumer digital trust: Meta-analytic evidence of its role in the effectiveness of user-generated content. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 53, 1034–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-023-00982-y>
- Ismagilova, E., Slade, E. L., Rana, N. P., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2020). The effect of electronic word of mouth communications on intention to buy: A meta-analysis. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 22, 1203–1226. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-019-09924-y>
- Khamitov, M., Rajavi, K., Huang, D.-W., & Hong, Y. (2024). Consumer trust: Meta-analysis of 50 years of empirical research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 51(1), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucad065>

- Pamungkas, D. S., Saputra, I. B., & Laksana, A. (2024). Strategi komunikasi digital melalui media sosial untuk membangun kepercayaan konsumen. *Konsensus: Jurnal Ilmu Pertahanan, Hukum dan Ilmu Komunikasi*, 1(6). <https://journal.appisi.or.id/index.php/konsensus/article/view/461>
- Razeghi, Y. (2018). *Understanding the role of entrepreneur's personal brand in SMEs total brand.* (Working paper). Diakses dari https://www.academia.edu/37751544/Understanding_the_Role_of_Entrepreneurs_Personal_Brand_in_SMEs_Total_Brand
- Safitri, D. P., Rinuastuti, B. H., & Sakti, D. P. B. (2024). The influence of personal branding and live streaming on impulse buying mediated by consumer trust among TikTok e-commerce users. *Asian Journal of Management, Entrepreneurship and Social Science*, 4(4). <https://www.ajmesc.com/index.php/ajmesc/article/view/1123>
- SWA. (2025, 7 Februari). *Makanan dan minuman terlaris di GoFood tahun 2024 bakal ngetren di tahun ini.* <https://swa.co.id/read/456152/makanan-dan-minuman-terlaris-di-gofood-tahun-2024-bakal-ngetren-di-tahun-ini>
- Wahyuningjati, T., & Purwanto, E. (2024). Exploring the influence of electronic word of mouth and customer reviews on purchase decisions: The mediating role of trust in the Shopee marketplace. *MindVanguard: Beyond Behavior*, 2(1), 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.56578/mvbb020201>
- Yusup Al Ghani, F., & Irmawati, I. (2024). Pengaruh iklan di media sosial Instagram dan celebrity endorsement terhadap minat pembelian ulang yang dimediasi oleh kepuasan konsumen. *Jurnal Bina Bangsa Ekonomika*, 17(2). <https://jbbe.lppmbinabangsa.id/index.php/jbbe/article/view/608>