

Social Media Advertising and Electronic Word of Mouth as Determinants of Consumer Trust in the Pertamina Brand

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Abstract

This study empirically examines the influence of Social Media Advertising and Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Trust among Pertamina consumers. The transformation of marketing communication in the digital era has shifted from traditional, one-way corporate messaging toward participatory and community-driven interactions. Digitally transmitted consumer opinions, experiences, and perceptions through eWOM have a substantial potential to shape public trust, emphasizing the relevance and urgency of this research. From a managerial perspective, the findings provide actionable insights for Pertamina in designing more effective digital communication strategies, recognizing that consumers are central actors in the dissemination and co-creation of brand meaning. A quantitative research design employing purposive sampling was adopted, and data were collected from 153 respondents residing in the Greater Jakarta area who had been exposed to Pertamina's social media advertisements. The survey was administered online in October 2025, and the data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares technique with SmartPLS version 4.1.0.0. The empirical results reveal that both social media advertising and eWOM exert a positive and significant effect on brand trust. These findings highlight the strategic importance of informative digital communication and constructive user engagement in building consumer trust in the Pertamina brand. Managerial implications underscore the need to enhance the credibility of advertising messages and proactively manage eWOM to maintain brand reputation, trust, and long-term loyalty.

Keywords: Brand Trust, Electronic Word of Mouth, Energy Sector, Social Media Advertising

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Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology and the widespread use of social media platforms, according to Al-lami et al. (2024), have transformed the landscape of corporate marketing communication, including within the energy and fuel sector. The shift of consumer attention toward the digital realm has positioned social media advertising as a strategic tool to build brand awareness, influence consumer perceptions, and foster two-way interactions between companies and the public (Singha, 2024). Therefore, understanding the effectiveness of social media advertising activities is essential for large corporations such as Pertamina, which operates in a critical sector and faces high public exposure. In addition to paid advertising functions, online consumer-to-consumer communication known as Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) plays a central role in shaping consumer perceptions and trust toward a brand (Tafolli et al., 2025). eWOM differs from traditional marketing communication because it is peer-to-peer, easily accessible, rapidly disseminated, and often perceived by consumers as more authentic. This condition has a significant impact on consumer attitudes and decision-making processes toward a brand (Li & Park, 2025).

According to Park & Minton (2025), brand trust is generally built through direct experiences, message consistency, service quality, and external cues such as testimonials and third-party recommendations. In the digital context, a combination of informative and communicative advertising messages with credible eWOM can accelerate the formation of trust, but may also create conflict when there is dissonance between paid messages and consumer opinions (Ngo et al., 2024). Pertamina, as a state-owned enterprise (SOE) providing strategic fuel and energy services in Indonesia, has a unique character its strong public role, connection to national energy policy, and exposure to issues related to service quality and public perception. Pertamina's digital initiatives (e.g., digital services and customer platforms such as MyPertamina and social media campaigns) place the company in a position where both social media advertising and eWOM are likely to influence public trust.

Pertamina actively utilizes social media platforms such as Instagram, X/Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok for digital campaigns like #EnergiUntukNegeri or MyPertamina App promotions. However, most of the content remains informative and one-directional, resulting in suboptimal engagement and perceived credibility of its digital advertising (Vazquez, 2020). Consequently, Pertamina's digital communication credibility has not been fully consistent. The public often expresses complaints on social media regarding service issues, fuel queues, or pricing policies, which spread rapidly through comments and user-generated posts. As a result, negative eWOM can weaken consumer trust toward the brand, particularly if it is not addressed with prompt and transparent communication (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2019). Although Pertamina's digital campaigns frequently emphasize innovation and energy sustainability, some segments of the public perceive inconsistencies between the promoted brand image and real experiences, such as issues of fuel availability or environmental concerns (Arifin et al., 2024). Such inconsistencies may reduce brand credibility and hinder the establishment of brand trust.

This research is urgent given the changing patterns of marketing communication in the digital era, which have shifted the dominance of one-way

corporate messages toward participatory and community-based communication. For Pertamina, as the national energy company with a strategic role, public trust is not only a corporate asset but also has broad social and economic implications. Consumer opinions, experiences, and perceptions circulated digitally through eWOM have the potential to strengthen or erode public trust. Therefore, understanding how eWOM can reinforce or weaken brand trust is essential to maintaining the company's image and legitimacy in the public eye. This urgency is heightened by Indonesia's high intensity of social media usage, which positions digital space as a primary arena for brand perception formation. Unmanaged negative opinions can quickly trigger trust erosion, whereas the spread of positive consumer experiences can serve as a strong foundation for enhancing corporate reputation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to expanding the understanding of the relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth and brand trust in the energy industry context, which has received relatively little attention compared to the retail or fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sectors (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Verma et al., 2023; Yuliana et al., 2025). This research reinforces the Consumer-Based Brand Equity framework, asserting that brand perception is built through social interactions and consumer experiences within digital environments. Moreover, it emphasizes that brand trust is formed not only through corporate messages but also through social legitimacy produced by consumer discourse. Practically, the findings of this study can serve as a foundation for Pertamina to formulate more effective digital communication strategies, based on the understanding that consumers are the primary actors in disseminating brand-related information and shaping brand image. This study is expected to provide direction for the company to proactively manage digital conversations through social listening, develop community engagement and customer advocacy programs, and improve service quality as the main source of positive eWOM generation.

Informative, interactive, and credible advertising enhances consumers' positive perceptions and trust toward a brand (Kothari et al., 2025). A study by Yuliana et al. (2025) on local sneaker brands demonstrated that Social Media Advertising has a positive and significant influence on Brand Trust. Effective social media advertising in delivering messages can drive consumers to purchase products (Hahn & Kovashka, 2019). Consumers decide to buy products because they trust the brands that produce them (Hassan et al., 2021). Advertising campaigns conducted by companies shape consumers' brand experiences and positively affect brand trust (Kwon et al., 2020).

H1 = Social Media Advertising has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust

Positive and credible consumer-to-consumer communication strengthens perceptions of brand reliability and integrity (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Verma et al., 2023). A study by Yuliana et al. (2025) on local sneaker brands revealed that Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant influence on Brand Trust. Word of mouth communication possesses strong persuasive power due to its inherent credibility. Ikhsan et al. (2024) noted that consumers tend to seek information before purchasing a product by consulting users who already have experience with it. The internet has paved the way for consumers to socialize and read product reviews, making electronic word of mouth publicity a key factor

influencing whether a brand is perceived as trustworthy (Jasrai et al., 2024).
H2= Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust.

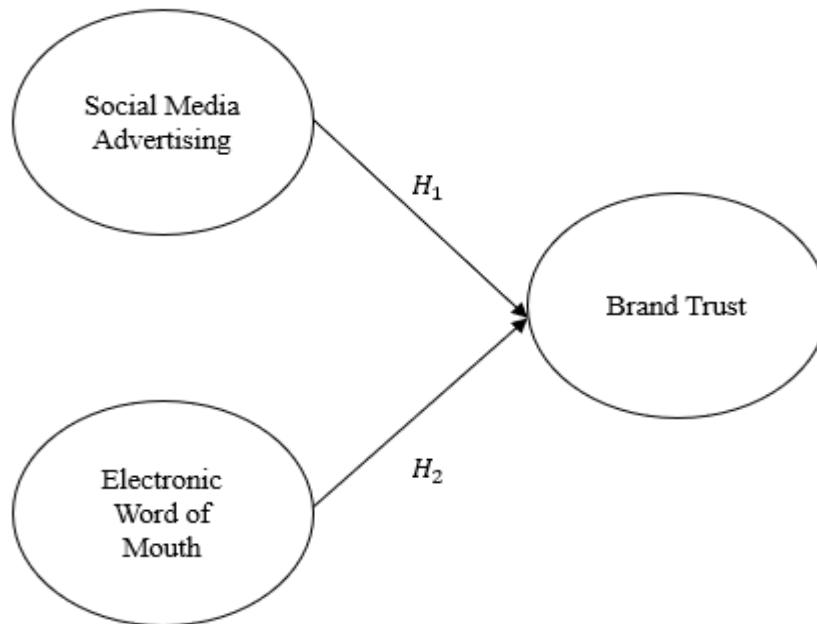


Figure 1 Conceptual Research
Source: Data Processed (2025)

Most studies on social media advertising, eWOM, and brand trust have been conducted in the retail, tourism, or fashion (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Verma et al., 2023; Yuliana et al., 2025). The energy industry context, particularly for state-owned enterprises like Pertamina, remains underexplored. This gap is important because consumer behavior in public service organizations differs from that in purely commercial products. Hence, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media advertising and electronic word of mouth on brand trust, with Pertamina serving as a case study.

Methodology

Research design is a research technique used in collecting and analyzing data, thus providing results in the form of answers to questions arising from a study. The research method chosen by the author is quantitative research. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. The respondent criteria are men and women who are consumers of Pertamina products and users of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Respondents who have seen Pertamina advertisements on social media are also included. A total of 152 respondents domiciled in Greater Jakarta (Jabodetabek) were involved in this study, with an age range of 17-60 years. The study was conducted in October 2025. The data source used primary data by distributing questionnaires through Google Forms. The data analysis technique used was Partial Least Squares with the SmartPLS data processing tool version 4.1.0.0. The research construct is presented in Table 1

below.

Table 1 Research Construct

Variable	Indicator	Reference
Social Media Advertising	SMA1 = Pertamina's social media ads are consistent with what I'm looking for	Suprpto et al. (2020); Yuliana et al. (2025)
	SMA2 = Pertamina's social media ads reflect what I like	
	SMA3 = Pertamina's social media ads cater to users like me	
	SMA4 = Participation, such as liking and commenting, is enjoyable	
	SMA5 = Participation on social media is something I want to do as a social being	
	SMA6 = I recommend friends to participate in Pertamina's social media ads	
	SMA7 = Pertamina's social media ads provide me with product information (Pertamax, Petralite)	
	SMA8 = Pertamina's social media ads are a source of product information (Pertamax, Petralite)	
	SMA9 = Pertamina's social media ads help me stay up-to-date on products (Pertamax, Petralite)	
	SMA10 = I like Pertamina's product ads	
	SMA11 = I like posts made by Pertamina	
	SMA12 = I like posts made by Pertamina consumers	
Elektronik Word of Mouth	EWOM1=I want to help others with my positive product purchasing experience	Suprpto et al. (2020); Yuliana et al. (2025)
	EWOM2=I want others to buy Pertamina products	
	EWOM3=I feel happy when I tell others about the advantages of Pertamina	

	products	
	EWOM4=I can share my pleasant experiences with Pertamina	
	EWOM5=I am satisfied with Pertamina products	
	EWOM6=I think the good Pertamina brand should be supported	
Brand Trust	BT1 = Pertamina is a brand that can meet my expectations	Suprpto et al. (2020); Yuliana et al. (2025)
	BT2 = I trust the Pertamina brand	
	BT3 = I can rely on the Pertamina brand to meet my fuel needs	
	BT4 = Pertamina always strives to provide the right fuel products	
	BT5 = If there is a problem with the product, Pertamina is willing to help resolve the issue	

Source: Data Processed (2025)

Result and Discussion

Respondent Demographics

Based on Table 2, the majority of respondents in this study were female, totaling 70 individuals (46%), while male respondents accounted for 83 individuals (54%). This composition indicates that male respondents are more dominant or have a higher level of involvement with the object of research compared to female respondents. Most of the respondents originated from Jakarta, with the dominating final education level being high school (SMA/SMK equivalent), and working primarily as private sector employees. The dominant age range was 21-30 years old.

Table 2 Respondent Demographics

Respondent criteria	Number of respondents	Percentage
Based on gender		
Female	70	46%
Male	83	54%
Based on age		
17-20	45	29%
21-30	60	39%
31-40	34	22%
41-50	12	8%

51-60	2	1%
Based on domicile		
Jakarta	95	62%
Bekasi	30	20%
Bogor	11	7%
Tangerang	9	6%
Depok	8	5%
Based on education		
High School	91	60%
Bachelor's Degree	43	28%
Diploma 3	9	6%
Postgraduate Degree	8	5%
Professional Education	2	1%
Based on work		
Private Employees	66	43%
Students	57	37%
Self-Employed	29	19%
Military/Police	1	1%
Civil Servants	3	3%

Source: Data Processed (2025)

Validity Test

The convergent validity test is conducted to measure the degree of correlation between the indicators and their respective latent construct. The criteria used to establish this validity are the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the outer loadings. As presented in Table 3, all indicators satisfied the convergent validity criteria, having achieved factor loadings above 0.70, with the exceptions of EWOM 1, SMA4, and SMA5.

Table 3 Validity Test

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading
Brand Trust	BT1	0.863
	BT2	0.914
	BT3	0.892
	BT4	0.935
Electronic Word of Mouth	BT5	0.859
	EWOM2	0.884
	EWOM3	0.912
Social Media Advertising	EWOM4	0.902
	EWOM5	0.887
	EWOM6	0.782
	SMA1	0.787
	SMA2	0.772
	SMA3	0.825
	SMA6	0.778

	SMA7	0.768
	SMA8	0.793
	SMA9	0.756
	SMA10	0.805
	SMA11	0.802
	SMA12	0.797

Source: Data Processed (2025)

Vornell-Larcker Criterion and HTMT

The results of the discriminant validity test in Table 4 using the Fornell–Larcker criteria show that most constructs have a higher AVE square root value compared to the correlation between other constructs. The constructs of Brand Trust (0.893) and Social Media Advertising (0.789) meet this criterion. However, Electronic Word of Mouth has a slightly lower AVE square root value (0.875) compared to its correlation with Brand Trust (0.886), thus indicating a marginal issue in discriminant validity between the two constructs. However, this very small difference is still acceptable, especially if the HTMT results are also below the recommended threshold.

Table 4 Vornell-Larcker Criterion and HTMT

Fornell–Larcker	Brand Trust	Electronic Word of Mouth	Social Media Advertising
Brand Trust	0.893		
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.886	0.875	
Social Media Advertising	0.738	0.693	0.789
HTMT			
Brand Trust			
Electronic Word of Mouth	1.926		
Social Media Advertising	1.926		

Source: Data Processed (2025)

Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Testing

Reliability testing is conducted to assess the consistency and stability of the research instrument. This test utilizes the values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is also evaluated to strengthen the validity test. A construct is declared reliable if it possesses a Cronbach's Alpha value of greater than 0.70 and a Composite Reliability value of greater than 0.70. For validity, the AVE value must be greater than 0.50. The test results are presented in Table 5. The reliability test results indicate that every variable has a Composite Reliability value exceeding 0.70. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha values are also above 0.70, and the AVE values for all three constructs exceed the 0.50 threshold.

Table 5 Reliability and AVE Testing

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Trust	0.936	0.952	0.798
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.922	0.942	0.765
Social Media Advertising	0.933	0.943	0.622

Source: Data Processed (2025)

HTMT and VIF

The results of the discriminant validity test in Table 6 using HTMT show that most construct pairs have values below the threshold of 0.90, so that Social Media Advertising and Brand Trust (0.769) and Social Media Advertising and Electronic Word of Mouth (0.722) can be declared to meet discriminant validity. However, the correlation between Electronic Word of Mouth and Brand Trust shows an HTMT value of 0.950, which is above the tolerance limit, indicating a discriminant validity issue between these two constructs. This condition reflects the closeness of the concepts or potential overlap in the indicators used to measure E-WOM and Brand Trust.

Table 6 HTMT and VIF

Correlation	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)	Indicator	VIF
Electronic Word of Mouth <-> Brand Trust	0.950	BT1	2.780
Social Media Advertising <- > Brand Trust	0.769	BT2	4.155
Social Media Advertising <- > Electronic Word of Mouth	0.722	BT3	3.696
		BT4	5.548
		BT5	2.824
		EWOM2	3.300
		EWOM3	4.452
		EWOM4	3.720
		EWOM5	2.908
		EWOM6	1.844
		SMA1	2.935
		SMA10	2.953
		SMA11	3.268
		SMA12	2.332
		SMA2	3.326

	SMA3	3.100
	SMA6	2.310
	SMA7	3.736
	SMA8	4.495
	SMA9	4.051

Source: Data Processed (2025)

The results of the multicollinearity evaluation in Table 6 using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values show that most indicators have VIF values below 5, indicating the absence of disruptive multicollinearity in the measurement model. The indicators in the Social Media Advertising and Electronic Word of Mouth constructs range from 1.84 to 4.49, thus being considered safe. However, one indicator in the Brand Trust construct (BT4) shows a VIF value of 5.548, which slightly exceeds the ideal threshold. However, this value is still tolerable in the context of PLS-SEM and does not indicate extreme multicollinearity. Overall, the measurement model can be declared free from significant multicollinearity issues.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the effects among the latent variables. Based on the results of the hypothesis testing presented in Table 5, it is concluded that both H1 and H2 are supported.

Table 7 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	T- Statistics	P- Values	Information
Social Media Advertising -> Brand Trust	0.237	3.366	0.001	Hypothesis Accepted
Electronic Word of Mouth -> Brand Trust	0.722	11.896	0.00	Hypothesis Accepted

Source: Data Processed (2025)

The Social Media Advertising variable has a significant and positive effect on Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.237$; $p = 0.001$). The unidirectional relationship between the two variables is presented in a positive path coefficient value. In addition, the p -value < 0.05 ($0.001 < 0.05$) means that Social Media Advertising has a significant effect on Brand Trust. Furthermore, the Electronic Word of Mouth variable has a significant and positive effect on Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.722$; $p = 0.000$). The unidirectional relationship between the two variables is also presented in a positive path coefficient value. The p -value < 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$) means that Electronic Word of Mouth has a significant effect on Brand Trust.

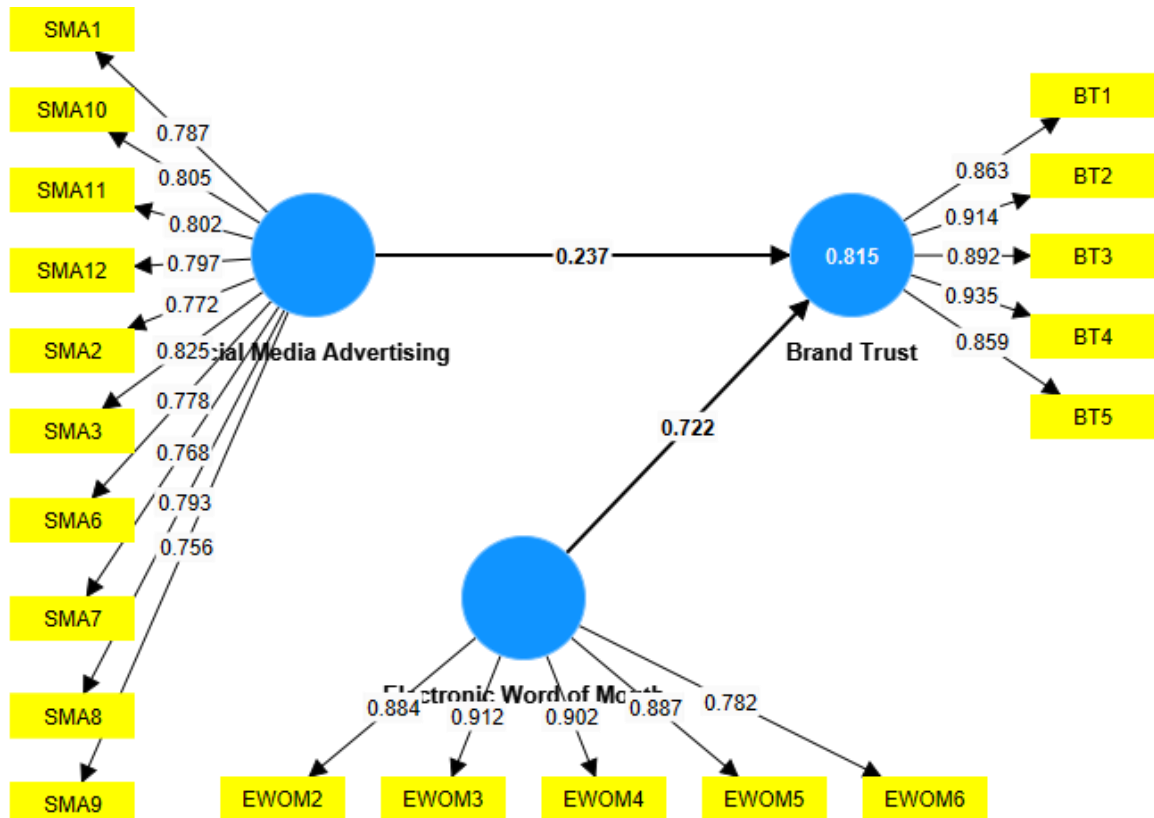


Figure 1 Hypothesis Test
Source: Data Processed (2025)

DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis, based on the results of the testing, confirms that the Social Media Advertising variable positively and significantly influences Brand Trust. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Yuliana et al. (2025). These results indicate that the marketing communication efforts carried out by Pertamina via social media are effective in forming and strengthening consumer trust in the brand. In the context of the energy industry, brand trust is a fundamental aspect, considering the utilitarian nature of the product, its strategic value, and its relation to security and supply sustainability. Therefore, the effectiveness of advertising messages on social media plays a substantive role in generating consumer confidence and acceptance.

This positive influence can be explained by the quality of the communication content delivered by Pertamina across various social media platforms. When advertising messages are designed to be informative, relevant, transparent, and consistent with the corporate image, consumers tend to perceive the brand as a credible and responsible entity. Moreover, the use of social media enables a two-way interaction that provides consumers with the opportunity to seek clarification, provide feedback, and validate information through direct responses from the company. This interactive communication mechanism significantly strengthens consumer evaluation of the brand's integrity and reliability.

The challenges of digital discourse in state-owned enterprises stem from a combination of bureaucratic organizational characteristics, high public expectations, the complexity of corporate structures, and the need to balance

transparency, security, and responsiveness. Social Media Advertising that highlights the values of sustainability, commitment to service quality, and the company's vision in supporting national energy resilience can construct a positive perception regarding the brand's good intentions and competence. These two aspects are key elements in the formation of Brand Trust. Consumers who see Pertamina actively communicating educational information, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, and maintaining openness on public issues will find it easier to place their trust in the brand.

The second hypothesis demonstrates that the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) variable has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust. This research is aligned with the findings of Yuliana et al. (2025). This result indicates that information, opinions, and consumer experiences shared through digital platforms such as social media, discussion forums, blogs, and consumer reviews make a vital contribution to shaping the perception of brand trust. In an era of increasingly open digital communication, consumers tend to rely on recommendations from fellow users rather than one-way messages from the company, especially when evaluating a brand's credibility and reliability.

This positive influence reflects that eWOM provides a source of information deemed more authentic and unbiased because it originates from real consumer experiences. When other consumers provide positive, consistent feedback that supports Pertamina's reputation, the perception of the brand's integrity and competence is enhanced. Information circulating through eWOM reinforces the consumer perception that Pertamina possesses the capability to provide energy products and services, has good intentions in fulfilling public needs, and operates transparently and responsibly.

When consumers find alignment between reviews and their own consumption experiences, brand trust increases. Conversely, companies that are unresponsive or allow negative opinions to develop without action can experience a decline in public trust. Potential negative eWOM for Pertamina arises primarily from inconsistent service experiences, product availability and quality issues, digital service failures, public perception of pricing policies, and environmental and governance issues. In this context, Pertamina needs to manage online perception and conversation through digital media monitoring strategies, rapid response, and the dissemination of objective and informative clarifying content. The strength of eWOM lies not only in the volume of information disseminated, but also in the credibility of the source, the message's consistency with brand values, and the level of consumers' emotional involvement in the information spreading process.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Social Media Advertising and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) have a positive and significant influence on Brand Trust among Pertamina consumers. Theoretically, these findings enrich the existing literature on the relationship between Social Media Advertising, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), and Brand Trust within the context of public service and energy-based enterprises. Most prior studies have predominantly focused on the retail, digital services, or fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industries. This research demonstrates that in industries with high levels of public engagement, such as energy and fuel, social media and eWOM can function as strategic communication

spaces to restore, maintain, and strengthen brand trust.

Managerial implications of this research include: First, Pertamina needs to continuously optimize the use of various social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn as primary channels for marketing message dissemination, and strengthen its digital conversation monitoring system through social listening tools to identify opinions, sentiments, and emerging issues in the public sphere in real time. This optimization encompasses not only the intensity and frequency of message delivery, but also the quality of narratives, visuals, and message consistency that reflect the corporate identity.

Second, Pertamina needs to develop storytelling-based advertising content that presents the company's value journey, commitment to sustainability, and social contributions. A storytelling approach is relevant to fostering emotional connections with audiences and strengthening perceptions of brand reliability and sincerity. Additionally, educational content regarding product benefits, safe and environmentally friendly production processes, and pricing transparency can enhance the perceived integrity of the brand.

Third, ongoing engagement with audiences should be maintained through prompt responses, active interaction, and dialogue-based management of public opinion. Quick and appropriate responses to public inquiries or complaints can reinforce perceptions of brand competence and empathy. Therefore, Pertamina's digital service and online community management teams should be strengthened through strategic communication training grounded in empathy and data analytics.

This study acknowledges its limitations regarding the use of Social Media Advertising, Electronic Word of Mouth, and Brand Trust as the sole variables. Future research is encouraged to conduct simultaneous testing and include additional variables such as Brand Performance and Brand Integrity to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of brand trust in the energy sector.

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