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The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on the Purchase Decision of Persebaya Surabaya's Original Jersey for the 2024-2025 season with Brand Trust as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract

This study analyzes the influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on the purchase decision of Persebaya Surabaya's original jerseys for the 2024–2025 season, with brand trust as a mediating variable. Persebaya Store, the club's official merchandise outlet, has recorded fluctuating sales despite a large social media following, raising the question of how far digital marketing communication actually shapes consumer purchase decisions. Using a quantitative approach and purposive sampling, 150 respondents who are consumers of Persebaya Store domiciled in Surabaya were surveyed through an online questionnaire and analyzed with Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that SMM and e-WOM have a positive and significant effect on brand trust and on purchase decisions, both directly and indirectly. Brand trust also positively and significantly affects purchase decisions and is proven to mediate the effect of SMM and e-WOM on purchase decisions. These findings indicate that consumer trust plays a central role in converting digital marketing communication into an actual purchase decision for Persebaya Surabaya's original jerseys.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth, Brand Trust, Purchase Decision, Original Jersey

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology, particularly the internet, has turned social media from a mere communication tool into an effective marketing channel used by businesses of all sizes (Kuspriyono & Nurelasari, 2018; Muljono, 2018; Fakriyah & Abdurrahman, 2024). At the same time, a purchase decision is the act of choosing

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whether to buy a product based on the information and judgment a consumer holds; a positive perception of a brand, built through quality, reputation, and available information, tends to strengthen this decision (Imansyah & Pudjoprastyono, 2023; Ragatirta & Tiningrum, 2020).

The football-merchandise industry has increasingly relied on this shift. Persebaya Surabaya, founded on 18 June 1927 as the Soerabaiasche Indonesische Voetbal Bond (SIVB), has a large and loyal fan base known as Bonek, while the rising “blokecore” fashion trend has extended the jersey's function beyond match day into everyday streetwear, boosting demand for original products. Persebaya Store, the club's official retail unit managed by PT DBL Indonesia under PT Persebaya Indonesia since 2017, channels every purchase directly back to the club. Despite around 694,000 Instagram and 89,800 TikTok followers, sales data from June 2024 to June 2025 show a fluctuating pattern—peaking at 2,063 units in December 2024 before declining and fluctuating through 2025—indicating that a large social media audience does not automatically translate into stable purchase decisions.

Persebaya Store also faces a mix of positive and negative e-WOM across marketplaces and social media, from praise for fabric quality to complaints about print quality or design opinions, which can either strengthen or undermine consumer confidence. In this context, brand trust becomes critical, especially given the circulation of non-original jerseys in the market; it reflects a consumer's willingness to rely on a brand's ability to perform as expected (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, in Suntoro & Silintowe, 2020), and has been shown to matter for purchase-related outcomes (Suntoro & Silintowe, 2020; Khasanah et al., 2021). While prior studies confirm that SMM and e-WOM affect purchase decisions, findings on the strength of e-WOM's effect and the mediating role of brand trust remain mixed, and most of this research has focused on beauty, general fashion, skincare, or culinary products rather than football-club merchandise (Rahayu & Cahyani, 2023). This study therefore tests whether brand trust mediates the effect of SMM and e-WOM on the purchase decision of Persebaya Surabaya's original jerseys.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Social media marketing refers to the use of digital platforms to win customers, build brand awareness, strengthen brand reputation, and drive sales, measured through content creation, content sharing, connecting, and community building (Gunelius, 2011, in Raihano & Izaak, 2026). Electronic word of mouth is the use of internet-based media to replicate the effects of word-of-mouth marketing, measured through intensity, valence of opinion, and content (Goyette et al., 2010, in Pramudita & Suharyati, 2024). Brand trust is a consumer's willingness to rely on a brand's ability to perform its function (Chaudhuri

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& Holbrook, 2001, in Suntoro & Silintowe, 2020), measured through trust, reliability, honesty, and safety. Purchase decision is the process by which consumers evaluate a product while forming a preference among available choices, measured through product confidence, buying habit, willingness to recommend, and repurchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Informative and engaging social media content can strengthen consumer trust in a brand, while online reviews and shared experiences shape the trust perceptions of prospective buyers; the trust that follows, in turn, tends to make consumers more confident about purchasing, alongside the direct influence that marketing content and online reviews can exert on their own. Based on this reasoning, the study proposes seven hypotheses:

H1. Social media marketing has a positive effect on brand trust.
H2. Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a positive effect on brand trust.
H3. Brand trust has a positive effect on the purchase decision of Persebaya Surabaya's original jersey.
H4. Social media marketing has a positive effect on the purchase decision of Persebaya Surabaya's original jersey.
H5. Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a positive effect on the purchase decision of Persebaya Surabaya's original jersey.
H6. Social media marketing affects the purchase decision through brand trust.
H7. Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) affects the purchase decision through brand trust.

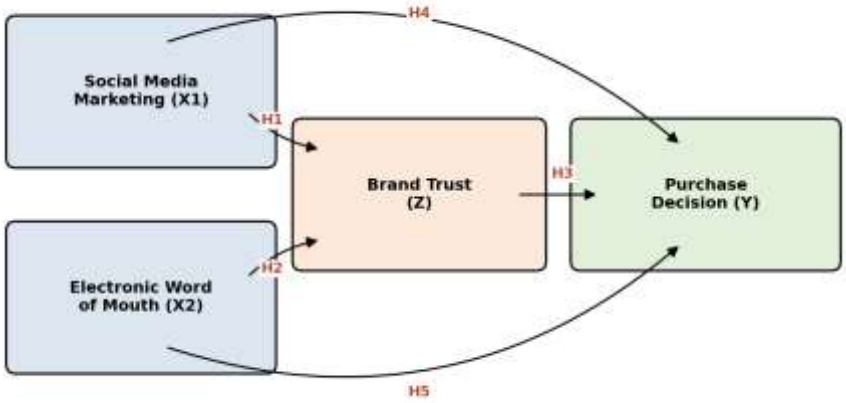


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effect of SMM and e-WOM on brand trust; the effect of brand trust, SMM, and e-WOM on purchase decisions; and the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between SMM, e-WOM, and the purchase decision of Persebaya Surabaya's original jersey for the 2024–2025 season.

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RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative, associative approach to test causal relationships among variables. The population covers all consumers of Persebaya Store in Surabaya, whose exact size cannot be determined. Following Hair et al. (2019), the minimum sample size was set at n × (5–10), where n is the number of indicators; with 15 indicators in total, the minimum required sample is 150 respondents.

Respondents were selected through non-probability purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2019) based on the criteria that they had purchased jersey products from Persebaya Store, had seen the store's social media account and product reviews, were domiciled in Surabaya, and were at least 18 years old. Primary data were collected via an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The study involves two independent variables—social media marketing (X1) and electronic word of mouth (X2)—one mediating variable, brand trust (Z), and one dependent variable, purchase decision (Y), with the operational definitions summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Definitions and Indicators

Variable	Indicators	Source
Social Media Marketing (X1)	Content creation, content sharing, connecting, community building	Gunelius (2011) in Raihano & Izaak (2026)
Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	Intensity, valence of opinion, content	Goyette et al. (2010) in Pramudita & Suharyati (2024)
Brand Trust (Z)	Trust, reliability, honesty, safety	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) in Suntoro & Silintowe (2020)
Purchase Decision (Y)	Product confidence, buying habit, willingness to recommend, repurchase	Kotler & Keller (2016)

Source: Processed by the researcher (2026)

Instrument validity was assessed by comparing the calculated r-value with the table r-value at a 5% significance level, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (Sugiyono, 2019). Data were analyzed using Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS, chosen because it does not require normally distributed data and can simultaneously handle reflective and formative indicators (Ghozali, 2018). Model evaluation covered the outer model (outer loading, average variance extracted, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and discriminant validity) and the inner model (R-square and f-square), while hypotheses were tested through bootstrapping based on the original sample value, T-statistic, and P-value.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 150 respondents who are consumers of Persebaya Store in Surabaya. Respondent characteristics by gender, age, and occupation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Category	Group	n	Percentage
Gender	Male	132	88.00%
	Female	18	12.00%
Age	18–25 years	65	43.33%
	26–35 years	64	42.67%
	36–45 years	18	12.00%
	≥ 46 years	3	2.00%
Occupation	Student	49	32.67%
	Private/Government Employee	69	46.00%
	Entrepreneur	32	21.33%

Source: Data processed by the researcher (2026)

Respondents were dominated by males (88%), reflecting Persebaya's fan base, for whom the jersey is a near-mandatory symbol of loyalty and identity, and by the 18–35 age group (86% combined), a digitally native segment that is highly responsive to social media content and reliant on e-WOM before purchasing. By occupation, employees formed the largest group (46.00%), followed by students (32.67%) and entrepreneurs (21.33%), indicating a consumer base with adequate purchasing power.

Outer Model Evaluation

Table 3 presents the outer loading results used to assess indicator validity.

Table 3. Outer Loading Results

Indicator	SMM (X1)	e-WOM (X2)	Brand Trust (Z)	Purch. Dec. (Y)
X1.1	0.819	-	-	-
X1.2	0.771	-	-	-
X1.3	0.730	-	-	-
X1.4	0.738	-	-	-
X2.1	-	0.748	-	-
X2.2	-	0.790	-	-
X2.3	-	0.767	-	-

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Indicator	SMM (X1)	e-WOM (X2)	Brand Trust (Z)	Purch. Dec. (Y)
Z.1	-	-	0.779	-
Z.2	-	-	0.753	-
Z.3	-	-	0.709	-
Z.4	-	-	0.794	-
Y.1	-	-	-	0.812
Y.2	-	-	-	0.650
Y.3	-	-	-	0.689
Y.4	-	-	-	0.743

Source: Data processed by the researcher (2026)

Nearly all indicators exceed the recommended minimum loading of 0.70, except Y.2 (buying habit) at 0.650, which is still acceptable given that the average variance extracted (AVE) of the Purchase Decision construct as a whole meets the convergent-validity requirement. The AVE values for SMM, e-WOM, Brand Trust, and Purchase Decision are 0.585, 0.591, 0.577, and 0.527 respectively, all above the 0.50 threshold. Composite reliability values (SMM = 0.849; e-WOM = 0.812; Brand Trust = 0.845; Purchase Decision = 0.816) are all above 0.70, while Cronbach's alpha for SMM and Brand Trust (0.764 and 0.755) exceeds 0.70; e-WOM (0.655) and Purchase Decision (0.699) fall slightly below but remain acceptable for exploratory research given their adequate composite reliability.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Variable	Brand Trust	e-WOM	Purch. Dec.	SMM
Brand Trust (Z)	0.760			
e-WOM (X2)	0.690	0.769		
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.701	0.609	0.726	
SMM (X1)	0.750	0.558	0.679	0.765

Source: Data processed by the researcher (2026)

The square root of AVE for each construct (Brand Trust = 0.760; e-WOM = 0.769; Purchase Decision = 0.726; SMM = 0.765) exceeds its correlation with other constructs, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Inner Model Evaluation

Table 5. R-Square and F-Square Values

Relationship	R-Square	F-Square
Brand Trust (Z)	0.670	-

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Relationship	R-Square	F-Square
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.569	-
SMM (X1) → Brand Trust (Z)	-	0.588
e-WOM (X2) → Brand Trust (Z)	-	0.325
SMM (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y)	-	0.110
e-WOM (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y)	-	0.055
Brand Trust (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	-	0.072

Source: Data processed by the researcher (2026)

SMM and e-WOM jointly explain 67.0% of the variance in Brand Trust, while SMM, e-WOM, and Brand Trust together explain 56.9% of the variance in Purchase Decision. SMM shows the strongest effect size on Brand Trust (0.588), followed by e-WOM (0.325), while the effects on Purchase Decision, including that of Brand Trust (0.072), range from weak to moderate (0.055–0.110).

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results (Direct Effect)

Path	Orig. Sample	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
SMM (X1) → Brand Trust (Z)	0.530	8.143	0.000	Supported
e-WOM (X2) → Brand Trust (Z)	0.395	6.182	0.000	Supported
SMM (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.331	3.558	0.000	Supported
e-WOM (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.213	2.334	0.020	Supported
Brand Trust (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.306	2.613	0.009	Supported

Source: Data processed by the researcher (2026)

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Results (Indirect Effect)

Path	Indirect Effect	Result
SMM (X1) → Brand Trust (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.162	Significant mediation
e-WOM (X2) → Brand Trust (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.121	Significant mediation

Source: Data processed by the researcher (2026)

All direct-effect hypotheses (H1–H5) are supported, with P-values below 0.05 and T-statistics above 1.96, and the indirect-effect results confirm that brand trust mediates the effect of both SMM (H6) and e-WOM (H7) on purchase decision, so that all seven hypotheses (H1–H7) are accepted.

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DISCUSSION

Both SMM (T = 8.143; p = 0.000) and e-WOM (T = 6.182; p = 0.000) have a positive and significant effect on brand trust: more informative and engaging social media content from Persebaya Store, together with reviews and shared shopping experiences circulating online, strengthens consumer confidence in the brand. These results support the view that social media marketing builds communication and relationships with consumers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Aini et al., 2025) and that online reviews function as an objective, social-proof source of information that shapes brand trust (Aini & Astuti, 2022; Putri et al., 2024).

Brand trust (T = 2.613; p = 0.009), SMM (T = 3.558; p = 0.000), and e-WOM (T = 2.334; p = 0.020) each have a positive and significant direct effect on purchase decision. Established trust removes consumer doubt and encourages transactions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, in Suntoro & Silintowe, 2020; Putri et al., 2024); attractive product visuals and promotions on social media directly draw purchase interest (Gabriella et al., 2022); and peer recommendations shared online provide social validation that increases purchase confidence (Raihano & Izaak, 2026).

Brand trust also mediates the effect of both SMM (indirect effect = 0.162) and e-WOM (indirect effect = 0.121) on purchase decision. This indicates that marketing content and online reviews do not only serve a promotional function but also build the trust that ultimately reinforces the purchase decision, consistent with Salman and Prasetyo (2025) on the mediating role of brand trust between social media marketing and purchase decision, and with Putri et al. (2024) on e-WOM influencing purchase decision through brand trust.

CONCLUSION

Based on the PLS-SEM analysis of the effect of Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decision, with Brand Trust as a mediating variable, for Persebaya Surabaya's original jersey in the 2024–2025 season, SMM and e-WOM each have a positive and significant effect on brand trust and on purchase decision, both directly and indirectly; brand trust itself positively and significantly affects purchase decision and mediates the effect of both SMM and e-WOM on purchase decision. All seven hypotheses (H1–H7) are therefore accepted, confirming that consumer trust is the key mechanism that converts digital marketing communication into an actual purchase decision.

Persebaya Store is accordingly advised to keep improving the creativity and consistency of its social media content, to respond actively to both positive and negative consumer reviews to protect its reputation, and to maintain product authenticity, material quality, and transparent sales information to sustain consumer trust. Future research

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could incorporate additional variables such as price, brand image, or lifestyle, and expand the sample or research setting to improve the generalizability of findings within the football-fan merchandise industry.

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