

The Role of E-WOM Communication in Changing the Image of Traditional Markets to Modern Markets

*E-WOM
Communication in
Changing the Image*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the communication strategy of electronic word of mouth in the process of rebranding traditional markets into modern markets through TikTok social media. The case study was conducted in Songgolangit Market, Ponorogo, which underwent a visual transformation, services, and image with the support of digital promotion. The research uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of the content of the market's official TikTok account. The results of the study show that electronic word of mouth communication built through visual content, visitor testimonials, collaborations with local influencers, and digital community-based campaigns has succeeded in increasing public perception, visitor interest, and positive image of the Songgolangit market. TikTok has proven to be an effective means of building an engaging rebranding narrative, while also accommodating the active engagement of the market community and visitors. The theoretical and practical implications of this research support the role of social media in the transformation of traditional markets in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital Communication, E-WOM, Rebranding, TikTok, Traditional Market.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi komunikasi electronic word of mouth dalam proses rebranding pasar tradisional menjadi pasar modern melalui media sosial TikTok. Studi kasus dilakukan di Pasar Songgolangit, Ponorogo, yang mengalami transformasi visual, layanan, dan citra dengan dukungan promosi digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis konten akun TikTok resmi pasar tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi electronic word of mouth yang dibangun melalui konten visual, testimoni pengunjung, kolaborasi dengan influencer lokal, dan kampanye berbasis komunitas digital telah berhasil meningkatkan persepsi publik, minat pengunjung, dan citra positif pasar Songgolangit. TikTok terbukti menjadi sarana yang efektif untuk membangun narasi rebranding yang menarik, sekaligus mengakomodasi

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional markets remain vital to Indonesia's local economy as hubs of commerce as well as social and cultural interaction. Nevertheless, their sustainability is increasingly challenged by the rise of modern retail and online shopping, which diminishes their competitiveness. To counter this, local governments and market managers have introduced rebranding strategies aimed at revitalizing traditional markets and making them more relevant. These efforts extend beyond physical improvements to include innovative communication approaches. Digital platforms such as TikTok play a key role, offering engaging short-form content that enhances visibility and virality. In this context, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) becomes a crucial tool for organically disseminating consumer experiences. Prior studies demonstrate that E-WOM strongly influences consumer perception, trust, and purchasing decisions, underscoring its significance in rebranding traditional markets (Kumari & Verma, 2018; Park et al., 2019; Fachrurazi et al., 2023; Kanimozhi & Sengottuvel, 2023; Nittayoosakulchot & Pankham, 2025).

The use of TikTok by Songgolangit Ponorogo Market illustrates how E-WOM reshapes consumer perceptions. Beyond serving as a promotional channel, the platform allows two-way interaction where audiences actively contribute to the market's brand image through likes, comments, shares, and user-generated content, adding authenticity and relatability (Wang & Yang, 2025; Ying et al., 2025). This participatory process builds trust and emotional connection, shifting marketing from one-way promotion to collaborative engagement. As a result, the market is not only seen as a trading space but also as a community hub aligned with digital culture (Luo, 2023). Such strategies strengthen competitiveness and ensure sustainability by appealing to younger, digitally engaged consumers.

Liaqat (2023) suggests that consumer dispositions and emotional behavior are not always consistent, as they are shaped by factors such as personal attachment to celebrities. Purchase intentions toward endorsed products become stronger when consumers feel connected to a celebrity's life, achievements, and struggles, often developing a sense of "celebrity worship." In such cases, consumers see themselves as loyal supporters, viewing celebrities as role models or companions, and are motivated to buy endorsed products. The study also shows that admiration and respect for influencers significantly shape consumer behavior. These insights are valuable for marketers in Pakistan's private universities, offering guidance to better understand consumer motivations and improve business strategies through survey-based findings. Yousaf (2022) and Nafisah and Istanti (2025) find that peer interactions and digital trends more influence Gen Z consumers on social commerce platforms than by traditional factors such as service quality or trust. This reflects a shift in purchasing behavior, shaped by community dynamics and the fast-paced online culture. The study advances theoretical understanding of digital consumer behavior in Indonesia. It offers practical guidance for e-commerce platforms to boost repeat purchases through social engagement features, influencer collaborations, and e-WOM strategies.

Similarly, Pahlawan et al. (2025) demonstrate that social media marketing has a significant impact on purchase intentions, both independently and in combination with e-WOM. This highlights the dual role of digital platforms as both promotional media and sources of consumer influence. The findings enhance theoretical insights into digital marketing effectiveness while providing practical strategies for MSMEs in Indonesia to foster loyalty and drive purchase conversions through creative and interactive online approaches. The success of E-WOM in rebranding depends on three elements: source

credibility, message visualization, and audience emotional engagement (Sohaib et al., 2018; Kabongo & Okpara, 2019; Al-Ja'afreh & Al-Adaileh, 2020; Shafiq, 2024; Panjaitan, 2025). TikTok's interactive features, such as challenges, duets, stitches, and hashtag campaigns, enable these aspects to be maximized. Accordingly, this study examines not only TikTok content but also how community-driven digital communication shapes social perception, fosters collective engagement, and contributes to the rebranding of traditional markets, such as the Songgolangit Ponorogo Market.

This study explores how Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) on TikTok supports the rebranding of traditional markets into modern ones, a topic rarely examined in local market transformation. Unlike previous research on consumer goods, hospitality, or digital retail, this study highlights the role of short-video content in enhancing the image and competitiveness of traditional markets. Using the Songgolangit Ponorogo Market's official TikTok account as a case, it demonstrates how E-WOM transforms marketing from one-way promotion into dialogical and collaborative communication, where consumers actively shape brand narratives through content creation, comments, and sharing. This study aims to analyze the communication strategy of E-WOM in the rebranding of traditional markets into modern markets via TikTok.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Markets and Modern Markets

Traditional markets are spaces where buyers and sellers interact directly, often through bargaining and personal relationships. Rooted in local culture, they serve not only as economic centers but also as hubs of social interaction and community life. These markets typically sell fresh produce, daily necessities, and local goods at affordable prices, yet they are often perceived as less organized in terms of cleanliness, infrastructure, and management compared to modern retail outlets (Tanjung et al., 2024; Tawe et al., 2025). Rebranding is a strategic process in changing the image and visual identity of an entity, including changes to logos, slogans, and brand values (Joseph et al., 2021). In the context of traditional markets, rebranding focuses not only on the physical appearance but also on the image that is conveyed to the public.

By contrast, modern markets such as supermarkets, malls, and retail chains are characterized by structured management, standardized product displays, fixed pricing, and a stronger emphasis on consumer convenience. They prioritize cleanliness, safety, parking facilities, and comfort, creating a shopping experience that is practical and efficient. In addition, modern markets frequently integrate technology through digital payments, online shopping, and loyalty programs, aligning them more closely with contemporary consumer lifestyles (Khwaja & Zaman, 2020; Adhikari, 2025).

Although different in structure, traditional and modern markets complement one another within the economy, traditional markets preserve cultural identity, offer affordable goods, and sustain small traders and local producers, while modern markets enhance efficiency, broaden consumer choices, and align shopping behavior with global retail standards. In the digital era, efforts to modernize traditional markets through rebranding, digital promotion, and infrastructure upgrades have grown (Yawson & Yamoah, 2022). This hybrid model enables traditional markets to maintain their cultural and social values while meeting consumer demands for cleanliness, comfort, and technology integration, thereby bridging tradition with modernity.

Social Media and TikTok in Marketing

Social media platforms such as TikTok have become powerful marketing tools because of their wide reach and ability to engage users through visual, participatory content (Gil-Cordero et al., 2023). With features like short videos, interactive challenges, and collaborative storytelling, TikTok is well-suited for rebranding campaigns that involve audiences in shaping brand narratives (Wahab et al., 2022; Roberta & Rachmawati, 2025). This is particularly relevant for traditional markets, which are often stereotyped as less organized, less clean, and less comfortable than modern retail spaces. By leveraging

TikTok, markets like Songgolangit can showcase comfort, cleanliness, efficient service, and sustainability, aligning with modern consumer expectations. Rebranding itself is a strategic effort to reshape image and identity through elements such as logos, slogans, and brand values (Joseph et al., 2021). In the case of traditional markets, it goes beyond physical improvements to focus on the public image being communicated.

Rebranding goes beyond adopting new visuals; it involves reshaping an entity's meaning and identity in the public's perception. According to Miller et al. (2014), successful rebranding must connect enduring values with emerging aspirations. For traditional markets, this requires balancing cultural heritage, local wisdom, and social functions with modern, digitally engaging approaches. By combining authenticity with innovative communication, rebranding helps traditional markets stay competitive, relevant, and meaningful in today's digital consumer landscape.

Thus, rebranding becomes an adaptive strategy that is holistic. It touches not only on the physical aspects like renovations and layouts, but also on the symbolic and emotional aspects, including how the consumer experience is repackaged through social media, how new narratives are built through digital testimonials, and how local communities are actively involved in reshaping the image of the traditional market.

E-WOM, Influencer Credibility, and Participatory Engagement

E-WOM is highly persuasive because it relies on credibility and relatability rather than traditional advertising. Park et al. (2019) and Ismagilova et al. (2020) note that its effectiveness stems not only from information quality but also from the emotional and social bonds among users. On TikTok, features like comments, likes, and duets strengthen this connection, allowing visitors of Songgolangit Market to engage actively with rebranding efforts and enhance authenticity. Influencers further amplify this impact. Wahab et al. (2022) found that perceived authenticity, not follower count, drives influencer credibility. For Songgolangit Market, local influencers and micro-creators are especially effective since their cultural closeness and shared values make endorsements more genuine, resonating with younger audiences who distrust overly polished marketing.

Moreover, TikTok's algorithm supports participatory E-WOM by boosting engaging, user-driven content (Gil-Cordero et al., 2023). Each visitor who shares experiences adds to a pool of digital testimonials, extending visibility and strengthening the market's modern image. Over time, this cycle of storytelling builds brand equity, drives sustained consumer interest, and fosters loyalty. Thus, E-WOM not only accelerates the rebranding of traditional markets but also ensures its sustainability in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method on the TikTok account of Songgolangit Ponorogo Market. Data collection techniques include participatory observation by observing TikTok market content, user interaction, and dominant content types; in-depth interviews with account managers, market traders, and visitors to understand communication strategies and their impact; and content analysis to examine visual narratives, testimonials, and promotional campaigns on TikTok accounts. Data analysis was carried out thematically to identify communication patterns and elements of the E-WOM strategy used. The population of this study comprises stakeholders associated with the Songgolangit Ponorogo Market, including market managers, traders, visitors, and TikTok account followers. The sample was determined using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals directly involved in or affected by the market's rebranding efforts, namely account managers, selected traders, frequent visitors, and local influencers. The instruments used in this study consist of observation guidelines, interview guides, and documentation sheets. These instruments helped ensure systematic data collection and consistency with research objectives. Although qualitative, this study highlights several key variables, namely the independent variable (E-WOM communication strategy on TikTok), the dependent variable (rebranding of traditional

markets), and supporting variables (source credibility, message visualization, and emotional engagement).

To ensure the credibility of the data, the researcher applied triangulation techniques by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. The thematic analysis process was conducted in several stages, namely coding, categorization, and interpretation of findings to reveal communication strategies and digital engagement patterns. This approach allows researchers to describe in depth how the Songgolangit Ponorogo Market leverages TikTok as a medium of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) in promoting local products and strengthening interaction between traders and consumers.

RESULTS

Strengthening Brand Awareness through TikTok

The transformation of Songgolangit Ponorogo Market is an adaptive response to shifting consumer preferences toward modern markets and digital platforms. The rebranding includes physical renovations, modern and Instagrammable visual identity updates, such as logos, slogans, and interior/exterior designs, and strategic digital integration through social media, particularly TikTok, as the main communication channel. Increasing brand awareness of Songgolangit Market through TikTok rebranding represents a strategic effort to position the traditional market as modern and relevant. TikTok's short video format, engaging visual effects, and interactive features effectively attract audiences, especially younger generations. Consistent content showcasing the market's physical improvements, cleanliness, convenient facilities, and organized trading activities shapes positive and sustainable public perception. Adiyono et al. (2021) emphasize that social media-based digital marketing strategies play a significant role in enhancing attractiveness and expanding promotional reach. Consistent content dissemination strengthens professional image while building public trust. AlQattan and Al Mubarak (2025) affirm that the transformation from traditional marketing to e-marketing through digital technology effectively boosts business competitiveness.

TikTok content virality is strongly influenced by how narratives resonate with visitors' daily experiences. High-quality visuals attract initial attention, while authentic storytelling strengthens emotional connection. Natural testimonials from merchants and visitors function as social proof, enhancing credibility. Dynamic formats such as "before-and-after" transformations, crowds during peak hours, and unique local culinary highlights amplify visual storytelling, providing tangible evidence of positive change while evoking curiosity and pride among the local community (Wang & Yang et al., 2025).

TikTok functions as an interactive platform for visual storytelling that shapes public perception. Engaging narratives help embed Songgolangit Market's new identity into audiences' minds subtly yet persuasively. Dynamic video formats encourage repeated exposure, allowing viewers to internalize the rebranding message without feeling directly marketed to. This process aligns with the Mere Exposure Effect in communication psychology, where repeated exposure increases familiarity, acceptance, and trust. Gil-Cordero et al. (2023) affirm that interactive visual media like TikTok generate cognitive and affective engagement quickly, impacting brand recall and positive image formation. This strategy is relevant because most target audiences are digital natives, more responsive to visual communication.

Increasing Credibility through User-Generated Content and Influencers

In the rebranding process of Songgolangit Market, credibility becomes a crucial foundation for rebuilding public trust. Credibility cannot be constructed solely through top-down management communication; it requires active community participation to create bottom-up social legitimacy. TikTok functions effectively as it combines visual storytelling, user participation, and real-time social interaction. Fachrurazi et al. (2023) argue that social media functions not only as a promotional channel but also as a conversation forum, influencing brand image and consumer decisions.

The main approach to building credibility is using User-Generated Content (UGC). Organic content from visitors, such as shopping experience recordings, culinary reviews, or vendor interactions, is perceived as more authentic than formal advertisements. Such content carries emotional elements difficult to simulate. Lariba (2024) found that UGC strengthens brand trust because it is considered honest, personal, and free from institutional bias. Collaboration with local influencers also plays a central role. Influencers act as opinion leaders providing social validation for the market's transformation. Belanche et al. (2021) demonstrated that influencer credibility significantly shapes audience attitudes toward brands. Combining UGC and influencer marketing validates Songgolangit Market's credibility based on real community experiences, aligning with Begho and Liu's (2023) Social Proof theory.

Local micro-influencers play a strategic role in amplifying the rebranding message. Unlike mainstream celebrities, micro-influencers are perceived as more relatable and authentic. Food vloggers, lifestyle creators, and young local figures introduce the market naturally through their platforms. Through parasocial relationships, messages about the market's transformation are received with greater credibility and emotional resonance. These collaborations extend beyond commercial promotions to community-driven initiatives, strengthening the narrative that the market's revitalization is a collective community achievement.

The synergy between organic UGC and local influencer endorsements creates a powerful digital credibility ecosystem. Authentic content from everyday visitors provides raw and relatable narratives, while influencer endorsements add authority and social validation. Wahab et al. (2022) emphasize that influencer credibility depends less on follower count and more on perceived trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. Positive comments, quick feedback responses, and two-way interaction between market managers and the digital community reinforce the perception that this rebranding is a genuine and open improvement effort. Market credibility is built through digital social mechanisms based on community engagement and interpersonal relationships. The E-WOM strategy based on user content and influencer roles has proven capable of creating sustainable credibility, ultimately accelerating the adoption process of positive perceptions toward Songgolangit Market's new image.

Interactivity and Digital Community

A main strength of the E-WOM communication strategy in Songgolangit Market's rebranding is the high level of interactivity generated between market managers, visitors, and the wider digital community. Unlike traditional promotional methods, TikTok allows dynamic two-way communication through likes, comments, shares, and stitched or duetted content. This immediacy connects institutional messages directly with public responses in real time, creating a more engaging and participatory communication environment. Kanimozhi and Sengottuvel (2023) highlight that E-WOM is powerful because it not only spreads information but also fosters trust and influence through peer-to-peer interactions.

Songgolangit Market's official TikTok account actively responds to both appreciative and critical comments. Such responsiveness demonstrates the manager's digital presence, reducing perceived distance between the institution and stakeholders. Quick, warm, and transparent responses reinforce the image of market managers as approachable and accountable. Song et al. (2023) state that interactivity in social media communication significantly enhances user engagement and strengthens the perceived relationship between institutions and audiences. Through this interactive communication, TikTok facilitates the formation of participatory social relationships between managers and market visitors. Ngo et al. (2024) show that E-WOM significantly influences consumer behavior by shaping attitudes, credibility, and purchase intentions.

Public participation through interactive campaigns serves as a crucial driver in strengthening the rebranding. By introducing hashtags like #PasarSonggolangitModern, video challenges, and creative contests, management not only increases visibility but also

stimulates active community involvement, transforming visitors from passive consumers into active contributors. Park et al. (2019) highlighted emotional engagement and social bonding as key factors behind E-WOM spread. At Songgolangit Market, these dynamics are evident in how users enthusiastically share culinary reviews, recommend favorite tenants, and voluntarily respond to potential visitor questions in comment sections.

This interactivity fosters an inclusive and adaptive communication ecosystem that strengthens the rebranding. The community formed does not merely act as a passive audience but actively contributes as a strategic partner in shaping the market's image. Through participation in campaigns, content sharing, and discussions, community members reinforce the transformation narrative, making the rebranding process collaborative. This participatory role enhances the authenticity of the new brand identity and ensures resonance with diverse social groups, providing symbolic social legitimacy that positions the market not only as a center for economic activity but as a living social space embedded within the community.

Real Impact on Visitor Perception and Behavior

The E-WOM communication strategy carried out through TikTok demonstrates tangible impacts not only on public perception but also on actual consumer behavior. Observation data and interviews reveal that after intensification of TikTok content campaigns, there was a notable increase in market visits, particularly among younger generations and urban families who previously had little interest in traditional markets. Waskita et al. (2024) emphasize that E-WOM significantly shapes consumer decision-making by influencing attitudes and behavioral intentions.

TikTok videos highlighting cleanliness, aesthetic design, and diversity of local products played a crucial role in reframing Songgolangit Market's image. By presenting the market as modern, neat, and Instagrammable, the content resonated with younger audiences' lifestyle aspirations. This transformation supports the concept of place branding, where communication strategies shape how a location is imagined and experienced by audiences (Wan & Li, 2024). The shift in perception was validated by positive narratives in social media comments, where users referred to Songgolangit Market as "Ponorogo's hidden gem," "a mall-like market," or "a new local hangout." Such language illustrates the re-signification of the market's identity from being associated with slums and outdatedness to being embraced as a modern, vibrant, and proud local landmark. Elalfy et al. (2024) support this phenomenon, showing that positive E-WOM not only enhances brand attitudes but also strengthens community pride and belonging.

These perceptions directly influence visitor and consumption behavior. Many visitors are drawn not by necessity but by curiosity and the desire to validate positive experiences showcased in viral TikTok content, highlighting E-WOM's power in shaping brand image and driving impulse visits and experiential shopping. The economic impact is evident among traders who reported significant turnover increases, rising 2-3 times during the initial weeks following viral content spread. Many traders adapted their kiosks' appearance and improved customer service to meet heightened consumer expectations influenced by online visuals, demonstrating that E-WOM affects not only consumer behavior but also motivates merchants to elevate business practices.

These findings reinforce Rafi et al.'s (2021) view that E-WOM's core strength lies in its capacity to shape social perceptions, directly influencing purchasing decisions. Kumar et al. (2023) emphasize that purchase intent is often mediated by perceived content credibility, particularly when information originates from third parties such as influencers or consumers with firsthand experience. In Songgolangit Market's case, both dynamics are clearly visible as credible endorsements and authentic consumer testimonials combine to create a persuasive communication flow. The rebranding campaign not only alters public perception but also succeeds in transforming the marketplace into a vibrant experiential ecosystem, more than a place for transactions. Songgolangit Market emerges as an attractive, participatory, and sustainable social space. This demonstrates that when

managed strategically, E-WOM has the potential to modernize traditional markets, strengthen their competitiveness, and ensure continued relevance in the digital era.

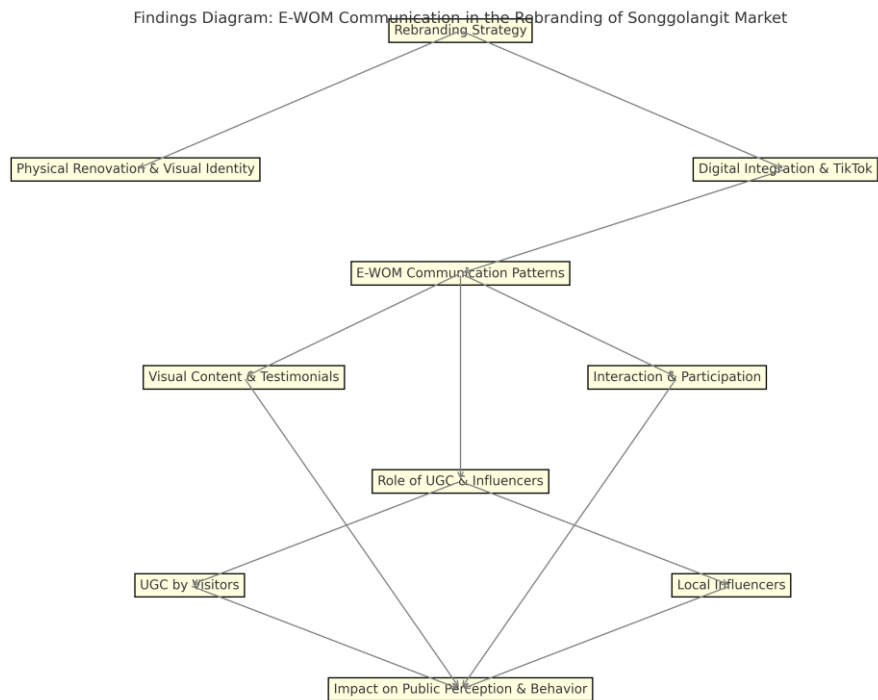


Figure 1. Findings Diagram

Based on Figure 1, the diagram directly links to E-WOM communication in rebranding traditional markets to modern markets through TikTok, where digital communication bridges physical transformation and public perception changes. Songgolangit Market's rebranding strategy extends beyond physical renovation and visual identity improvements through digital integration, particularly TikTok, to deliver the market's new narrative to wider audiences. Through visual content, testimonials, and interactive challenges, TikTok fosters emotional closeness with consumers while driving electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) creation.

E-WOM serves as the main mechanism strengthening traditional market rebranding's social legitimacy. User-generated content and local influencer amplification create a credible digital ecosystem. Roy et al. (2024) highlight that E-WOM's strength lies in shaping social perceptions and influencing purchasing decisions, while Qiu et al. (2023) argue that adoption is driven by emotional and social bonds between senders and receivers. At Songgolangit Market, micro-influencer collaborations and active community participation create strong emotional ties, encouraging deeper engagement. Wang and Weng (2024) emphasize that influencer credibility depends more on perceived authenticity, trust, and relatability than follower count, consistent with culturally close local influencers at Songgolangit Market. Maehle et al. (2023) found TikTok effective as a marketing medium due to its participatory and visual nature, enabling interactive strategies.

Thus, Songgolangit Market's rebranding demonstrates that integrating digital communication and E-WOM strategies significantly enhances public perception and consumer engagement. By combining physical improvements with interactive, visually appealing online content, the market strengthens emotional connections and builds social legitimacy. Culturally relatable local influencers and user-generated content amplify credibility and trust, driving awareness and purchase intentions. This case highlights that modernizing traditional markets requires a holistic approach merging tangible

transformations with strategic digital engagement to create a sustainable, attractive, consumer-oriented market ecosystem.

DISCUSSION

The results confirm that TikTok plays a central role in strengthening brand awareness, credibility, and consumer engagement for traditional markets. This aligns with Adiyono et al. (2021), who highlight that digital marketing strategies based on social media significantly enhance attractiveness and expand promotional reach. Similarly, AlQattan and Al Mubarak (2025) emphasize that digital transformation effectively boosts competitiveness amid changing consumer behavior. The power of TikTok lies not only in its visual appeal but also in its participatory nature. This is consistent with Gil-Cordero et al. (2023), who affirm that interactive visual media quickly generate cognitive and affective engagement, leading to stronger brand recall. In the case of Songgolangit Market, authenticity and relatability resonate strongly with digital-native audiences who respond more to visual communication than to conventional promotion.

The credibility aspect, supported by UGC and influencers, illustrates how rebranding is validated through bottom-up processes. Lariba (2024) highlights that UGC strengthens brand trust because it is honest and personal, while Belanche et al. (2021) demonstrate that influencer credibility shapes audience attitudes. This is further reinforced by Wahab et al. (2022), who stress that authenticity is more important than follower count in influencer marketing. In this context, Songgolangit Market's collaboration with local micro-influencers aligns with Begho and Liu's (2023) Social Proof theory, showing that people tend to trust and follow the behavior of others. The interactivity between managers and consumers also supports findings by Song et al. (2023), who argue that responsiveness in digital platforms enhances user engagement and institutional trust. Park et al. (2019) and Ngo et al. (2024) further explain that emotional engagement and credibility drive E-WOM adoption, which is evident in how visitors actively participate in shaping the narrative of Songgolangit Market's transformation.

The tangible impacts on visitor behavior align with Waskita et al. (2024), who note that E-WOM directly shapes consumer decision-making, and Elalfy et al. (2025), who find that positive E-WOM strengthens community pride. The reframing of Songgolangit Market's identity through digital storytelling also reflects the principles of place branding (Daowd et al., 2021; Wan & Li, 2024). There is the exposure effect, where repeated exposure builds familiarity and trust. The synergy of credible endorsements and authentic consumer testimonials demonstrates that Rafi et al. (2021) and Kumar et al. (2023) argue that E-WOM's persuasive power lies in credibility and social perception. The discussion shows that the Songgolangit Market case illustrates how integrating physical transformation with E-WOM on TikTok produces not only image enhancement but also real behavioral change. This highlights the potential of rebranding strategies that combine cultural authenticity with participatory digital communication to modernize traditional markets and ensure their sustainability.

This study shows that TikTok-based E-WOM boosts brand awareness, credibility, and engagement for traditional markets by combining physical upgrades with authentic digital storytelling. User-generated content and local influencers build trust and social proof, driving visits and economic benefits. This approach helps market managers modernize and engage digital audiences. Limitations include focus on a single market, reliance on TikTok, and short-term observation, highlighting the need for broader and longer-term studies.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) communication through the TikTok platform has proven to be an effective means in supporting the process of rebranding traditional markets into modern markets. TikTok, with the power of visual narratives and interaction-based algorithms, allows the process of delivering marketing messages to take place quickly, massively, and in a participatory

manner. Short video content featuring testimonials, updated market atmosphere, and collaborations with local influencers succeeded in building a positive public perception of Songgolangit Market, both in terms of service quality, cleanliness image, and visual appeal. The communication strategies adopted are visual, collaborative, and based on a digital community. These three are a strong foundation in forming the trust and loyalty of audiences, especially digital natives who are very responsive to authentic and interactive forms of communication. This research makes a conceptual contribution to the study of digital marketing communication, especially in the context of the transformation of the informal sector, such as traditional markets. In addition, this research also provides practical implications for local governments, market managers, and MSME actors in designing communication strategies that are relevant to consumer behavior in the digital era.

This study is limited by its focus on a single case, Songgolangit Market, so the findings may not fully represent the effectiveness of TikTok-based rebranding strategies in other traditional markets with different cultural contexts, management capacities, or levels of digital engagement. Recommendations for future research are to explore the effectiveness of other social media platforms such as Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, or Facebook Marketplace in supporting the rebranding of the informal sector. The research can also be extended by conducting comparisons between traditional markets in different regions or cities to see how local contexts affect the dynamics of digital communication and community responses.

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