

## Impact of Social Media Engagement on Brand Trust in the Philippines' Real Estate Products

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### Abstract

In the Philippine real estate industry, one of the most high-stakes and risk-sensitive markets, consumer trust is salient in purchase decisions. With the growing reliance on social media platforms for marketing and client interaction, understanding how engagement influences brand trust has become increasingly important. This study employed a descriptive–correlational design and surveyed 100 respondents who actively followed or interacted with real estate brands on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Social media engagement was measured in three dimensions—cognitive (attention and processing), emotional (affective response), and behavioral (active interactions)—while brand trust was assessed through credibility and benevolence. Findings showed that social media engagement was high across all dimensions, with means ranging from 3.07 to 3.15, while brand trust was also rated high, particularly in credibility ( $M = 3.20$ ) and benevolence ( $M = 3.06$ ). Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between cognitive engagement ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ) and behavioral engagement ( $r = 0.32$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) with brand trust. On the other hand, emotional engagement had a significant negative relationship ( $r = -0.23$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). The results highlight that transparent, information-rich, and interactive strategies enhance trust, while overly emotional appeals may diminish credibility in the Philippine real estate market.

*Keywords: social media engagement, brand trust, credibility, benevolence, real estate marketing*

### Introduction

The real estate sector is one of the strongest drivers of economic growth in the Philippines, stimulating investment, employment, and infrastructure development across residential, commercial, and industrial markets. As property transactions require large financial commitments and long-term contracts, trust between consumers and brands is a decisive factor in the purchase decision-making process (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). In the current digital era, the industry faces growing pressure to modernize marketing practices by using social media platforms as strategic communication tools. These

platforms allow real estate brands to expand their visibility, showcase developments, and interact with potential buyers, making digital engagement a key determinant of competitive advantage (Manko, 2022; Newell & Marzuki, 2022).

Social media penetration in the Philippines is among the highest in the world, with platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube playing central roles in information exchange and consumer decision-making (Cheng, 2024; Hamid et al., 2022). Real estate developers and brokers use these platforms not only to advertise properties but also to host virtual tours, share client testimonials, and provide immediate responses to inquiries. Unlike traditional advertising channels, social media fosters two-way interactions, which help humanize brands and project authenticity (Samarah et al., 2021). These interactive features make social media a powerful space for building brand relationships and, if managed effectively, cultivating trust among prospective clients (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

Brand trust, defined as the consumer's confidence in a brand's reliability, competence, and goodwill, is an essential intangible asset in the real estate sector (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Fong et al., 2024). It is commonly conceptualized through two dimensions: credibility, which refers to the perception of a brand's honesty, consistency, and expertise, and benevolence, which reflects the belief that a brand genuinely cares for its customers' welfare (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). In high-involvement purchases such as property investments, trust reduces perceived risk and increases buyer confidence, often becoming the decisive factor that drives transaction completion. Therefore, how real estate firms leverage social media to strengthen credibility and benevolence is of significant academic and practical interest (Salhab et al., 2023; Liu & Wang, 2023).

Social media engagement, however, is not monolithic. Scholars view it as a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Cognitive engagement reflects consumers' attention to and mental processing of content, emotional engagement captures affective responses such as enjoyment and inspiration, while behavioral engagement is expressed in observable actions like likes, comments, and shares. These forms of engagement may have differing impacts on trust. For instance, cognitive and behavioral engagement have been linked to increased perceptions of reliability and competence (Rahman et al., 2022), whereas emotional engagement can have either positive or negative effects depending on whether it is perceived as authentic or manipulative (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021; Karawya, 2024). Understanding these nuanced effects is critical for real estate brands that operate in a market where both rational evaluation and emotional reassurance are important.

Studies across industries demonstrate the varying outcomes of social media engagement on brand trust. In retail and hospitality, emotionally resonant content has been shown to boost consumer interaction and strengthen brand affinity (Kaur & Kathuria, 2024; Lin et al., 2023). However, in high-stakes sectors such as healthcare or finance, consumers prioritize informational quality, transparency, and responsiveness over emotional appeal (Farsi, 2021; Hatamleh et al., 2023). Real estate, as a high-involvement market, is closer to these latter industries: consumers typically require accurate, credible, and timely information before committing to significant purchases. This suggests that emotional engagement, while useful, may not be sufficient to build trust unless paired with fact-based and transparent communication (Shen, 2023; Karawya, 2024).

In the Philippine context, firms have widely adopted social media marketing, yet the specific mechanisms linking engagement and trust remain underexplored. While companies often focus on metrics such as reach, likes, and impressions, these indicators do not always reflect deeper relational outcomes such as credibility and benevolence (Macalood et al., 2024). Local research has highlighted social media's

influence on consumer choice in sectors like education and retail (Ines & Tolentino, 2024; Krisprimandoyo et al., 2024), but there is little empirical work examining how engagement shapes trust in real estate, where purchase cycles are longer, risks are higher, and consumers tend to be more cautious. This lack of evidence limits the ability of firms to design effective digital strategies that translate visibility into meaningful consumer trust.

This study seeks to address that gap by investigating how social media engagement influences brand trust in Philippine real estate products. It specifically examines how the three dimensions of engagement—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral—affect the two components of trust: credibility and benevolence. By analyzing these relationships, the study provides empirical evidence on which forms of engagement are most effective in shaping consumer perceptions. Such evidence can guide real estate firms in tailoring content strategies that not only attract attention but also reinforce consumer confidence (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Tasente & Stan, 2024).

Ultimately, the research contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it extends the Digital Content Marketing Framework (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019) into a high-involvement, high-risk industry where the stakes for trust are exceptionally high. Practically, it proposes a Social Media Engagement–Trust Alignment Model that provides actionable guidance for practitioners on how to optimize cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement strategies to reinforce credibility and benevolence. By aligning digital practices with consumer expectations of transparency, responsiveness, and authenticity, the study aims to enhance the strategic use of social media in fostering long-term trust and loyalty in the Philippine real estate sector (Hatamleh et al., 2023; Salhab et al., 2023).

## Objectives of the Study

This study aims to answer the following:

1. To determine the level of respondents' social media engagement with real estate brands in terms of cognitive (content attention), emotional (feelings toward the content), and behavioral engagement (likes, comments, shares).
2. To assess respondents' perceptions of brand trust in real estate companies in terms of brand credibility (reliability and competence) and brand benevolence (care and concern for clients).
3. To examine the relationship between social media engagement and brand trust.

## Methodology

*Research Design.* This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between social media engagement and brand trust among Filipino consumers of real estate products. The descriptive aspect was used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, levels of engagement, and perceptions of brand trust, while the correlational component was applied to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables (Field, 2022). This design is appropriate for exploring naturally occurring associations without manipulating variables, allowing the researchers to assess how cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement relate to trust dimensions, namely credibility and benevolence (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

*Research Setting and Sampling.* The study targeted Filipino consumers who actively follow or interact with real estate brands on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Using purposive non-probability sampling, participants were deliberately selected based on the criteria of social media activity and engagement with real estate content. This sampling method is suitable for studies focusing on a specific subgroup within a population, particularly when the target respondents possess knowledge or experience relevant to the research topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A total of 100 respondents were recruited from Metro Manila and surrounding urban areas, reflecting a diverse cross-section of age groups, educational backgrounds, and property preferences.

### Respondents

**Table 1**  
*Profile of the respondents*  
 (N = 100)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25 years old and below	17	17
26 years old – 32 years old	21	21
33 years old – 39 years old	35	35
40 years old – 47 years old	12	12
47 years old – 53 years old	15	15
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	60	60
Male	40	40
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
College Graduate	73	73
Master's Degree	17	17
Doctoral Degree	10	10
<b>Product Preference</b>		
Residential	50	50
Commercial	23	23
Industrial	7	7
Mixed-use	20	20
<b>Level of Exposure to Real Estate Brand</b>		
Daily	50	50
Several times a week	23	23
Once a week	11	11
A few times a month	17	22

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 100 respondents. In terms of age, the largest group was 33–39 years old (35%), followed by 26–32 years old (21%) and 25 years old and below (17%), while smaller proportions were 40–47 years old (12%) and 47–53 years old (15%). The sample was predominantly female (60%), with males accounting for 40%. Most respondents were college graduates (73%), while 17% held a master’s degree and 10% a doctoral degree, indicating a generally well-educated sample. Regarding product preference, residential properties (50%) were the most preferred, followed by commercial (23%), mixed-use (20%), and industrial (7%). In terms of exposure, half of the respondents (50%) reported daily interaction with real estate brands on social media, while 23% engaged several times a week, 11% once a week, and 17% a few times a month.

*Research Instruments.* Data were collected through a structured, researcher-developed survey questionnaire, which consisted of three parts.

1. *Demographic Profile.* This section gathered information on age, gender, educational attainment, preferred real estate product type (residential, commercial, industrial, or mixed-use), and the frequency of exposure to real estate brands on social media.
2. *Social Media Engagement Questionnaire.* This section measured engagement across three dimensions: Cognitive engagement: attention, thought processing, and information retention (e.g., “I actively seek information from real estate pages”) Emotional engagement: affective responses such as inspiration, curiosity, and enjoyment (e.g., “I feel emotionally connected to certain real estate brands”) Behavioral engagement: observable actions including liking, commenting, sharing, and following brand content (e.g., “I participate in online contests or polls of real estate brands”)
3. *Brand Trust Questionnaire.* This section assessed perceptions of trust across two dimensions: Credibility: perceived reliability, competence, and consistency of the brand (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995); Benevolence: perceived concern and care for clients’ welfare (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005)

All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), following standard practices in social science research to capture attitudes and perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

*Data Gathering Procedure.* Data collection commenced after obtaining formal approval from the relevant institutional review board. Participants were recruited via online platforms, including real estate-focused social media groups and communities. An informed consent form preceded the survey to ensure voluntary participation and ethical compliance. Respondents completed the structured questionnaire electronically, which facilitated efficient distribution and collection, consistent with the digital nature of the study variables (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). The confidentiality of responses was maintained throughout the process, and data were securely stored for analysis.

*Data Analysis.* Collected data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic profiles, levels of social media engagement, and brand trust. Pearson’s correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between engagement dimensions and trust

components, with significance determined at  $p < 0.05$  (Field, 2022). The analysis provided empirical evidence on which aspects of engagement—cognitive, emotional, or behavioral—most strongly influence perceived brand credibility and benevolence.

This methodology allows for both a comprehensive description of respondents' social media behavior and a rigorous assessment of the relationships between engagement and trust, supporting the study's objective of developing a Social Media Engagement–Trust Alignment Model for real estate brands in the Philippines.

*Ethical Consideration.* This study adhered to ethical standards by obtaining academic approval and informed consent from all participants. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time, and confidentiality was ensured through anonymized, securely stored data. No physical or psychological risks were involved, and findings were reported accurately in accordance with institutional and privacy guidelines.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Level of social media engagement in real estate

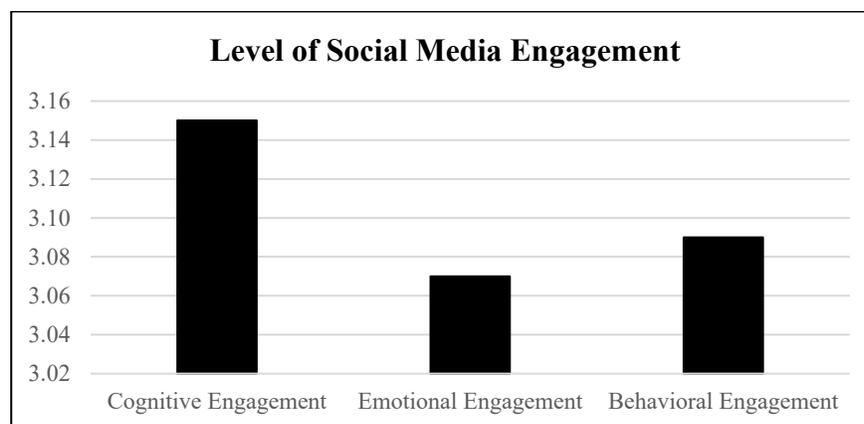


Figure 1. Level of social media engagement among respondents, showing high mean scores across cognitive ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), emotional ( $M = 3.07$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ), and behavioral engagement ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) on a 4-point Likert scale.

Figure 1 presents the respondents' level of social media engagement in terms of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. The findings indicate that all three dimensions were rated at a “High” level on the 4-point Likert scale.

For cognitive engagement, the mean score was  $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ , suggesting that respondents generally paid attention to real estate content, processed the information provided, and retained details for future consideration. This aligns with the Digital Content Marketing framework, which emphasizes that cognitively engaging content, such as informative posts and market updates, fosters deeper consumer-brand relationships (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

In terms of emotional engagement, respondents reported a mean of  $M = 3.07$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ , reflecting positive affective reactions such as enjoyment, curiosity, and connection when interacting with real estate content online. However, while this level is still high, it is slightly lower compared to cognitive engagement. This suggests that although emotional resonance is important, consumers in high-involvement markets like real estate may prioritize factual and transparent information over purely affective content (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021).

Behavioral engagement registered a mean of  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ , which shows that respondents actively liked, shared, commented on, and followed real estate pages. The relatively higher standard deviation indicates variability in participation levels, suggesting that while some users are highly interactive, others may prefer passive engagement. Prior studies affirm that behavioral actions, particularly comments and shares, serve as visible signals of brand interest and can strengthen online trust and loyalty (Samarah et al., 2021).

Overall, the results reveal that cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement are consistently high among Filipino consumers of real estate brands on social media. This underscores the importance of firms to design strategies that not only inform and emotionally resonate but also encourage active participation. The balanced presence of all three dimensions indicates that effective engagement strategies should integrate informative content, authentic emotional storytelling, and interactive activities to reinforce consumer trust and strengthen brand relationships.

## 2. Perceived brand trust

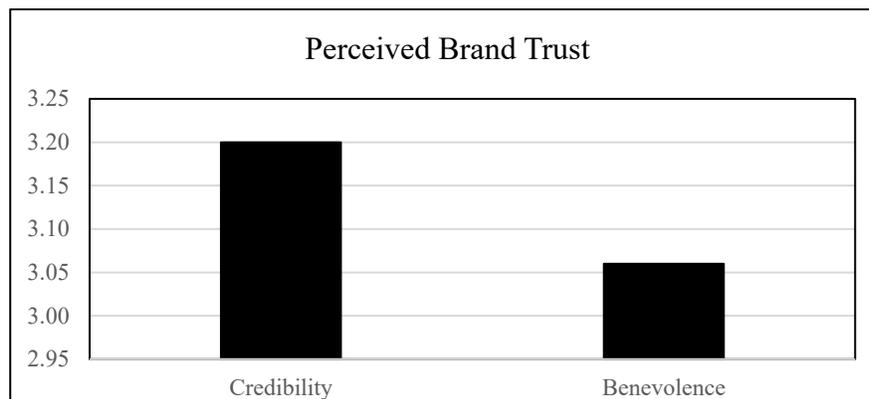


Figure 2. Perceived brand trust among respondents, with high ratings for credibility ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) and benevolence ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) on a 4-point Likert scale.

Figure 2 presents the respondents' perceived brand trust in terms of credibility and benevolence. The results reveal that both dimensions were rated at a "High" level on the 4-point Likert scale.

Credibility received a slightly higher mean score ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ), indicating that respondents perceive real estate brands as generally reliable, competent, and consistent in fulfilling their promises. This aligns with prior studies emphasizing that credibility is a cornerstone of trust, particularly in high-involvement sectors where accurate information and professional conduct are critical to purchase decisions (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Fong et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, benevolence was also rated high ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ), reflecting that consumers believe real estate brands show concern for their clients' welfare, demonstrate responsiveness, and act in the best interest of buyers. Although slightly lower than credibility, benevolence underscores the importance of genuine customer care in enhancing trust, consistent with Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) model of organizational trust.

Overall, the findings suggest that brand trust in the Philippine real estate sector is strongly anchored in credibility, while benevolence complements this trust by assuring clients that brands value their interests. This highlights the need for real estate firms to balance professional reliability with customer-centric engagement strategies to sustain trust and long-term relationships.

### 3. Relationship between Social Media Engagement and Brand Trust

**Table 2**

*Relationship between Social Media Engagement and Brand Trust*

Variables	<i>r</i> -value	Sig. value	Decision on $H_0$	Interpretation
Cognitive engagement	0.15	0.03	Reject $H_0$	Significant
Emotional engagement	-0.23	0.02	Reject $H_0$	Significant
Behavioral engagement	0.32	0.01	Reject $H_0$	Significant

Table 2 presents the correlation results between the three dimensions of social media engagement and brand trust. The analysis reveals that cognitive engagement ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ) has a small but statistically significant positive relationship with brand trust. This indicates that when consumers pay closer attention to and process the content of real estate brands online, they are more likely to view these brands as credible and trustworthy. This finding is consistent with Hollebeek and Macky (2019), who argued that cognitive involvement fosters deeper consumer–brand connections by enhancing information processing and evaluation.

Interestingly, emotional engagement demonstrates a significant negative relationship with brand trust ( $r = -0.23$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). This suggests that excessive reliance on emotional appeal, such as inspirational or highly promotional content, may not always enhance consumer confidence. In high-involvement markets like real estate, buyers may become skeptical when content is perceived as overly sentimental or lacking factual grounding. This result echoes Shahbaznezhad et al. (2021), who noted that emotional engagement can backfire if not paired with authenticity and transparent information. For practitioners, the implication is clear: emotional resonance must be balanced with accuracy and sincerity to avoid undermining trust.

The strongest positive correlation was observed for behavioral engagement ( $r = 0.32$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ), confirming that active consumer participation—such as liking, commenting, sharing, or joining brand activities—significantly reinforces trust. These visible interactions reflect not only consumer interest but also their willingness to associate with the brand publicly, thereby strengthening both credibility and benevolence perceptions. This aligns with Samarah et al. (2021), who emphasized that behavioral engagement plays a crucial role in sustaining long-term brand relationships through repeated, interactive exchanges.

The findings highlight that in the Philippine real estate sector, trust is primarily built through informative and interactive strategies rather than purely emotive ones. Real estate marketers should prioritize cognitive engagement by providing transparent property details, pricing information, and expert insights that satisfy consumers' need for accuracy and credibility. At the same time, they must encourage behavioral engagement by fostering two-way interactions such as prompt responses, online discussions, and interactive campaigns that showcase responsiveness and care. While emotional engagement should not be disregarded, it must be delivered authentically, grounded in real client stories, and paired with factual data to avoid skepticism. Overall, these insights underscore the need for a balanced, evidence-based social media strategy that integrates cognitive clarity, interactive responsiveness, and authentic emotional appeal to cultivate brand trust in high-stakes industries like real e

## Conclusions

These findings suggest that brand trust in the Philippine real estate sector is most effectively strengthened through informative and interactive engagement strategies. Cognitive engagement enhances credibility by helping consumers process and evaluate accurate information, while behavioral engagement fosters both credibility and benevolence through active participation and responsiveness. The negative relationship of emotional engagement, however, underscores the importance of ensuring that affective content is authentic and fact-based.

## Recommendations

Overall, the results highlight that trust is best cultivated when brands combine transparency and interaction, while exercising caution in the use of purely emotional appeals. Real estate brands should prioritize informative and interactive social media strategies that enhance credibility and encourage active consumer participation. Emotional appeals must be used cautiously, ensuring authenticity and accuracy to avoid undermining brand trust.

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