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Marketing Campaign and Client Acquisition in Interior Design: The Role of Customer Relationship Management

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ABSTRACT

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This study explored how interior designers in the Philippines conceptualize and execute marketing campaigns for client acquisition, focusing on the significance of customer relationship management (CRM) and brand reputation. Grounded in Service-Dominant Logic, CRM Theory, and the Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances, this research addressed the gap in service marketing literature by investigating culturally rooted marketing practices within the Philippine interior design sector. A phenomenological qualitative design was utilized, incorporating in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve licensed interior designers based in Metro Manila, who were directly engaged in marketing and client relationship decisions. Findings showed that getting new clients is mostly seen as a process based on relationships, not as a result of promotional activities. Participants stressed social media visibility, engagement through referrals, and a mix of client sourcing as the main ways to find new clients. Participants perceived CRM practices like personalized communication,

regular follow-ups, and post-project engagement were smart marketing tools that build trust, encourage referrals, and help keep long-term client retention. Brand reputation has become a key factor in building marketing credibility and influencing client choices in a service setting where trust and personalization are very important. The study provides context-specific insights into service marketing and presents practical implications for the creative and professional service sectors. These results give interior designers and other creative service professionals useful advice on how to get more clients by using relationship-based marketing, digital storytelling, and customer relationship management.

INTRODUCTION

The interior design industry is highly competitive and relies on interpersonal connections. To stay in business for a long time, they need to get new clients and keep their old ones. Interior designers have always been valued for their creativity and technical skills, but today they also need to be good at strategic marketing, managing customer relationships (CRM), and building a strong brand reputation. Interior design services are very personalized, not physical, and based on experience. Clients have to make big decisions based on trust, perceived expertise, and aesthetic judgment instead of standard outputs.

In the Philippines, especially in Metro Manila, cultural norms that stress personal relationships, referrals, and trust-based engagement shape how interior designers market themselves. At the same time, they are becoming more dependent on digital platforms like social media and online portfolios. Even though these practices are becoming more important, there isn't much scholarly research on how marketing campaigns, CRM, and brand reputation work together in the Philippine interior design industry. This study fills this gap by looking at the real-life experiences of selected interior designers as they come up with and carry out marketing campaigns to get new clients.

Even though creative service industries are using more digital marketing and relationship management techniques, there isn't much research on how these techniques work in the Philippine interior design industry. Most current research concentrates on general service marketing or digital promotion, neglecting the impact of cultural norms, professional networks, and relational trust on client acquisition in design-oriented professions. This study fills this gap by being one of the first qualitative studies to look into how licensed interior designers in Metro Manila think about and carry out marketing campaigns, customer relationship management, and reputation-building strategies in a business setting that is deeply rooted in culture.

Related Literature and Studies

The interior design industry has come to realize that running a successful business requires more than just being creative. It also requires using marketing campaigns, customer relationship management (CRM), and brand reputation in a smart way. As competition gets more challenging and clients spend more time online, interior design firms need to use promotional techniques that work together to acquire, retain, and convince clients. This review brings together research on marketing campaigns, content creation, CRM, and brand reputation.

Digital Marketing Campaigns and Content Creation

Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and TikTok are all great social media sites for businesses because they are visual and let people interact with them directly (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Content marketing has become an important tool to acquire new clients. Interior designers display their expertise by writing blogs, project walkthroughs, and design guides that are both useful and inspiring, which helps clients who are unsure of what to do (Pulizzi, 2012). High-quality content also makes it easier for search engines to recognize their internet presence, which helps businesses get organic leads. Content marketing campaigns bring in a lot more leads than traditional promotional methods, according to Halligan and Shah (2014).

Technological progress makes marketing even more effective. Artificial intelligence–driven personalization tools let companies look at how customers act and send them content that is relevant to them (Erevelles et al., 2016). Augmented reality apps let clients see how designs will look, which makes them feel less risky (Wirtz et al., 2020).

Customer Relationship Management in the Service Industry

Customer Relationship Management has evolved into a strategic philosophy centered on long-term relationship building rather than transactional exchanges. In service-dominant contexts, CRM aligns with Service-Dominant Logic, which frames value as co-created through ongoing interaction between firms and clients (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). CRM enables firms to manage client relationships across the lifecycle, supporting personalized communication, trust-building, and retention (Buttle & Maklan, 2019).

CRM contributes to client acquisition by centralizing client data, improving segmentation, and enabling tailored marketing messages (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012). Automated follow-ups, feedback systems, and personalized outreach increase conversion rates in competitive markets (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018). Social CRM further integrates communication across platforms such as email and social media, facilitating real-time engagement and responsiveness (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014).

In the Philippine context, CRM practices are often hybridized. Designers frequently combine informal relationship-based practices—such as direct messaging and personalized follow-ups—with digital tools (Lasola, 2025). While formal CRM systems offer scalability, their adoption is constrained by cost, technological literacy, and regulatory compliance issues among SMEs (Buttle & Maklan, 2019; BSP, 2021). These constraints highlight a gap between theoretical CRM models and localized practice. Relational networks, trust-building, and informal referral systems have a big impact on how creative service industries market themselves (Villanueva, 2021). Government reports on small and medium businesses also talk about how more and more creative professionals are using digital marketing tools. They also talk about problems with technology and limited resources (DTI, 2022).

Brand Reputation in Design-Based Firms

In interior design, where it's hard to judge the quality of service before you hire someone, brand reputation is very important in acquiring new clients. A good reputation lowers perceived risk and builds trust, which makes marketing campaigns more effective (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). Portfolio quality, client testimonials, professional affiliations, and recognition in the field all help build a person's reputation (Moorman & Day, 2016).

Recent research underscores the increasing significance of digital reputation. User-generated content, online reviews, and social proof frequently possess superior persuasive efficacy compared to firm-generated advertising (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Digital brand communities on sites like Houzz and social media groups make credibility even stronger by letting people validate each other's claims and share their own experiences (Brodie et al., 2013).

Brand reputation also changes over time with CRM and marketing. Good customer service through good CRM builds reputation, which makes marketing messages more persuasive (Davies et al., 2003; Helm et al., 2010). Companies with good reputations get more people to buy from them, keep their customers, and stay ahead of the competition (Aaker, 1996).

Although marketing strategies and CRM practices have been extensively studied in global service industries, there is a paucity of research investigating their application within the interior design profession, especially in Southeast Asia. Research in North America and Europe underscores the increasing significance of digital engagement, customer experience management, and reputation-based marketing within service sectors (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018; Wirtz et al., 2020). But these models often assume that the technology is advanced and that everyone uses the same CRM. Emerging markets like the Philippines, on the other hand, have business cultures that are more focused on relationships. In these cultures, trust, referrals, and interpersonal credibility are more important for professional engagement. This study analyzes the dynamics within the Philippine interior design sector, offering context-specific insights that enhance the relevance of global service marketing theories to culturally ingrained professional practices.

FRAMEWORK

This theoretical framework gives us a way to look at how marketing campaigns, customer relationship management (CRM), and brand reputation affect getting new clients in the interior design industry in Metro Manila. The study brings together three main ideas: *Service-Dominant Logic (SDL)*, *Customer Relationship Management Theory*, and the *Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances*. These theories directly affect the study's main variables and help explain how value is created, relationships are built, and credibility is used to get clients.

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) Theory

Vargo and Lusch's (2008) Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) theory emphasizes that value is co-created through interactions between service providers and clients. In the context of interior design, this theory suggests that interior designers cannot solely rely on showcasing aesthetic designs to attract clients; they must also engage clients in the process of design creation. SDL calls for a shift from a product-dominant approach to a service-centered approach, highlighting the importance of customer interaction and collaboration in delivering value.

Building upon SDL, the research framework proposes that interior design firms should utilize marketing campaigns that foster co-creation and collaboration with potential clients. These strategies include:

Collaborative Storytelling

Through storytelling, firms can demonstrate their design process, the journey behind the design choices, and the tangible benefits for clients. This makes potential clients feel like they are part of the process, which builds emotional connections and a sense of co-creation.

Targeted Content Marketing

By providing educational and informative content that addresses client needs and pain points, interior designers can build trust and demonstrate expertise, thereby nurturing potential client relationships.

Interactive Design Tools

Allowing clients to participate in the design process through interactive tools can increase engagement and investment in the process, resulting in higher conversion rates from interest to actual contracts.

By leveraging these strategies, interior design firms can engage clients more effectively, communicate their unique value propositions, and ultimately increase their client acquisition rates. SDL aligns directly with Research Question 1, which asks how new, client-focused marketing methods help service-based industries like interior design get new clients in ways that are different from traditional methods.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Malhotra and Agarwal (2021) highlight that Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory says that it's important to manage all interactions with customers throughout the whole customer lifecycle, from discovery to retention. In the service-oriented interior design industry, trust, communication, and personalization are very important for making long-term connections and getting referrals.

CRM strategies that can enhance client acquisition include:

Customer-Centric Approach: Understanding the needs and preferences of each client and tailoring the design experience to meet those needs can significantly increase client loyalty and satisfaction.

Customer Engagement: Ongoing engagement through various channels (e.g., newsletters, social media, personalized communication) helps keep the firm top-of-mind and strengthens client relationships, leading to referrals and repeat business.

Customer Loyalty Programs: Offering incentives or discounts to returning clients or those who refer new clients can further boost client acquisition rates.

These insights answer Research Questions 3 and 4, which look into how CRM connects marketing messages with customer experiences and how best practices in CRM help interior designers get new clients and keep them.

Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances

The Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances (Stern et al., 2014) says that brand reputation is a key sign of trust that affects the choices of potential clients. Reputation makes all marketing efforts more effective in an industry like interior design that is very visual and personal.

In the interior design industry, a positive brand reputation can be built through:

Client Testimonials

Positive feedback from previous clients serves as a powerful tool to build trust with new clients.

Industry Recognition

Awards, certifications, and recognition from reputable industry bodies contribute to the firm's credibility.

Strong Online Presence

A well-managed online presence, including reviews and social media engagement, can significantly impact how potential clients perceive the firm.

The reputation of the interior designers acts as a moderator in the relationship between marketing campaigns and client acquisition. A strong reputation amplifies the effectiveness of marketing messages, as potential clients are more likely to trust and engage with a firm that is well-regarded in the industry. This relationship goes along with Research Question 5, which looks at how a brand's reputation and perceived credibility affect how well marketing works.

By integrating SDL theory, reputation-based theory, and CRM, this research framework offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the factors influencing client acquisition in the interior design industry. The combination of effective marketing campaigns, customer relationship management, and a strong brand reputation may provide a solid foundation for interior design businesses seeking to enhance their client acquisition efforts and establish a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

The theories employed in this study—Service-Dominant Logic, Customer Relationship Management theory, and the Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances—are utilized as interpretative structures rather than predictive or hypothesis-testing models. These theories direct the interpretation of interior designers' narratives and professional experiences in accordance with the qualitative research design, facilitating the identification of patterns, consistencies, and context-specific insights. The research acknowledges that its findings may both correspond with and differ from theoretical assertions, and these differences are considered as significant contributions that illustrate the reality of the Philippine interior design sector rather than methodological constraints.

Table 1
Summary of Theories in Theoretical Framework

Role	Theory	Function in Framework
Leading Theory	Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008)	Frames client acquisition as a co-created service value
Supporting Theory	Customer Relationship Management (Malhotra & Agarwal, 2021)	Operationalizes co-creation via CRM tools and long-term relationships
Supporting Theory	Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances (Stern et al., 2014)	Explains how trust and credibility enhance marketing and CRM outcomes

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to explore how interior designers in the Philippine context conceptualize and implement marketing campaigns to achieve effective client acquisition, with particular emphasis on the role of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and brand reputation. It seeks to understand how marketing in interior design moves beyond traditional promotional approaches toward relationship-oriented, trust-based, and experience-driven strategies. By examining the professional perspectives of selected interior designers in Metro Manila, the research intends to uncover how culturally embedded practices, digital storytelling, and relational engagement shape the process of attracting and retaining clients in a highly personalized service industry.

Specifically, the study investigates the innovative marketing approaches adopted by interior designers and how these differ from conventional methods used in other service sectors. It aims to analyze how designers identify and utilize various client discovery channels, including social media, referrals, and hybrid sourcing strategies. In addition, the research seeks to examine how CRM practices—such as personalized communication, systematic follow-ups, and long-term relationship management—bridge the gap between marketing promises and actual client experience, ultimately strengthening client satisfaction, loyalty, and repeat engagement.

Furthermore, the study aims to determine how brand reputation and perceived credibility influence the success of marketing efforts in attracting new clients. It explores how trust, professional image, and positive client experiences reinforce marketing effectiveness and contribute to sustained client acquisition. Through these objectives, the research intends to generate context-specific insights into marketing and relationship management practices within the Philippine interior design industry, contributing both to academic knowledge and practical applications in service-oriented professions

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of selected interior designers in relation to marketing campaigns, client acquisition, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and brand reputation. Phenomenology was appropriate because the research aimed to understand how interior designers interpret, construct meaning, and describe their professional experiences within a real-world business context. The study focused on meaning-laden narratives rather than causal measurement, allowing the researcher to capture shared experiences, professional insights, and relational practices influencing client acquisition in the Philippine interior design sector. Systematic coding and thematic analysis were used to interpret interview narratives and extract the essence of participants' experiences.

Population and Locale of the Study

The study was conducted among licensed interior designers based in Metro Manila, Philippines. Participants were selected using purposeful sampling to ensure they possessed relevant professional experience related to marketing, CRM, and client acquisition. Inclusion criteria required participants to be licensed interior designers, active members of the Philippine Institute of Interior Designers (PIID), directly involved in marketing and client relationship decisions, and with at least five years of professional practice. A total of twelve interior designers participated, which falls within the recommended range for qualitative phenomenological studies to achieve thematic saturation while maintaining depth and richness of data.

Thematic saturation was established via iterative analysis of interview data. After the tenth interview, there were no major new themes that came up about marketing practices, CRM implementation, or ways to get new clients. Two more interviews were done to make sure that the themes were consistent and that the interpretations were deep. This process conforms to qualitative research standards that advocate for ongoing data collection until informational redundancy is attained.

Data Gathering Tool

The primary data gathering tool was a semi-structured interview guide designed to obtain in-depth qualitative information about marketing campaigns, client acquisition, CRM practices, and brand positioning. The interview instrument consisted of two parts: (1) demographic and professional background information, and (2) open-ended questions exploring participants' experiences, insights, and strategies. The instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability.

In addition, a demographic questionnaire administered through Google Survey was used to identify eligible participants and collect contextual data such as type of practice, years of experience, and specialization. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and later transcribed for analysis.

Data Gathering Procedure

Participants were recruited through a screening survey distributed in professional PIID groups. Qualified respondents received formal invitations to participate in one-on-one interviews. Interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on participant availability. Interviews were conducted in English and Filipino to ensure comfort and clarity of expression.

Following data collection, transcripts were reviewed and organized for coding. To strengthen validity, member checking was conducted by sharing summaries of themes and interpretations with participants, allowing them to confirm accuracy and provide additional insights. This process ensured that the findings reflected participants' actual experiences and perspectives.

While interviews offered valuable insights into professional experiences, the study acknowledges specific limitations in data collection. The findings are based mainly on self-reported stories from interior designers and do not include direct observations of how they market themselves or how they interact with clients. Also, the sample only included practitioners from Metro Manila, which may not be a good representation of how marketing works in other parts of the Philippines.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis consistent with phenomenological inquiry. Interview transcripts were first organized in Excel, where responses were coded and grouped to identify emerging patterns. Initial codes were then transferred to NVivo software for deeper qualitative analysis and theme development.

The analysis involved identifying significant statements, clustering meanings, and developing themes that reflected shared experiences related to marketing campaigns, CRM, and client acquisition. Member checking was used to validate interpretations and strengthen credibility. Reflexive journaling and peer discussions were also employed to minimize researcher bias and ensure that findings represented participants' voices rather than researcher assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to established ethical standards to ensure the protection of participants' rights, privacy, dignity, and well-being throughout the research process. Prior to any data collection, the researcher obtained formal Ethical Clearance from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) Research Ethics Committee, under Ethical Clearance No. CBAGS REC 2025-0616-02, dated June 16, 2025. This approval confirmed that the research complied with institutional and ethical guidelines for conducting qualitative research involving human participants.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before participation. The consent form clearly explained the purpose of the study, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality safeguards, and participants' right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. To ensure accessibility and convenience, consent was secured through both digital and written formats. Participants were also given the opportunity to review, revise, or request removal of their interview data through member checking procedures.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used in transcripts, reports, and presentations, and all identifiable information such as names of individuals, firms, or locations was removed. Audio recordings, transcripts, and digital files were securely stored in encrypted storage accessible only to the researcher. All collected data will be retained for a maximum of five years following completion of the study and will be permanently deleted thereafter, in accordance with standard research ethics guidelines. These procedures ensured the protection, privacy, and integrity of both participants and research data.

Microsoft Excel and NVivo 14 were used to code in two steps. First, the transcripts of the interviews were put into Excel, where each answer was put in a row and the initial codes were put in columns. This helped find patterns and put similar answers into groups. After the first codes were finished, they were brought into NVivo 14 for more in-depth study. Grammarly and Quillbot were also used to ensure that the paper was grammatically correct.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and interprets findings from in-depth interviews with selected interior designers in Metro Manila, examining how marketing campaigns, client discovery channels, customer relationship management (CRM), and brand reputation shape client acquisition. Guided by Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), CRM theory, and the Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances, the results reveal a strongly relational, digital-first, and trust-centered approach to marketing in the Philippine interior design industry.

Creative Marketing Campaigns and Content Marketing

The findings reveal that interior designers overwhelmingly adopt digital-first, content-driven marketing strategies, with social media platforms serving as the primary vehicles for creative expression and client engagement. Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok emerged as the most frequently used platforms, largely due to their visual orientation, accessibility, and capacity for real-time interaction. Participants reported that marketing effectiveness was strongest when content emphasized real project documentation, such as before-and-after transformations, narrated walkthroughs, time-lapse videos, and behind-the-scenes processes.

Two closely related themes emerged: Social Media–Driven Visual Storytelling and Relationship-Based Marketing and Content-Driven Client Engagement. Visual storytelling enables designers to move beyond static portfolios toward dynamic narratives that demonstrate creativity, problem-solving, and professional competence. Rather than presenting finished outputs alone, participants described intentionally showcasing design journeys—highlighting constraints, client needs, and design decisions—to humanize their practice and build trust.

This approach reflects the core premise of SDL, which conceptualizes value as co-created through interaction rather than embedded in outputs (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). By sharing process-oriented content, designers invite potential clients into the value-creation process even before formal engagement. Interactive features such as polls, comments, and Q&A sessions further reinforce this participatory dynamic, positioning marketing as a relational rather than transactional activity.

Content-driven engagement also includes educational and informational materials, such as design tips, DIY guides, space-planning explanations, and blog posts on trends. Participants emphasized that these materials reduce client uncertainty and establish professional authority. Consistent with content marketing literature, informative content functions as a trust-building mechanism, particularly in high-involvement services where outcomes are difficult to evaluate prior to purchase. Notably, participants placed minimal emphasis on paid advertising or influencer collaborations, suggesting a preference for organic, credibility-based growth strategies aligned with local resource constraints and relational norms.

The study found that interior designers have shifted toward digital, relationship-based marketing strategies, with social media functioning as a central platform for client engagement. Two dominant themes emerged: relationship-based marketing and social media–driven visual storytelling, and content-driven client engagement. Designers emphasized authenticity, educational value, and real project documentation as essential elements of effective marketing. Content such as before-and-after visuals, walkthroughs, and behind-the-scenes narratives helped potential clients understand the design process and foster emotional connection.

These practices align with Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), which frames clients as active participants in value creation. Interactive content and consistent communication also reflect CRM principles, as designers intentionally nurture long-term relationships rather than pursue transactional promotions. Brand reputation emerged as a reinforcing factor, with consistent and transparent content strengthening trust and professional credibility.

Digital platforms make things much more visible and engaging, but relying on digital-first strategies has its own set of problems. Platforms that use algorithms can unexpectedly limit the reach of content, and being dependent on a platform can make it harder to control audience data and long-term marketing strategy. International service marketing research has also found similar worries, with companies using more marketing channels to stay strategically independent (Wirtz et al., 2020). For small creative businesses like interior design firms, it is still important to find a balance between digital visibility and relationship-based marketing and professional networking in order to keep getting new clients.

Client Discovery Channels and Preferences

Analysis of client discovery patterns indicates that interior designers rely on two dominant and interrelated channels: social media visibility and personal referrals. Social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, were identified as the most common entry points for initial client inquiries. Designers noted that business pages, visual feeds, and direct messaging features facilitate immediate communication and lower barriers to inquiry.

Simultaneously, referrals from previous clients, colleagues, contractors, and personal networks remain a highly influential source of new engagements. This dual reliance gave rise to the theme Dual-Channel Trust Building: Social Media Visibility and Personal Referrals. Social media generates awareness and interest, while referrals provide validation and reassurance—particularly critical in a service industry where trust and perceived competence strongly influence decision-making.

A second theme, Dominance of Social Media as a Client Acquisition Tool, underscores the strategic centrality of digital platforms. Participants described tailoring content to platform-specific audiences: TikTok for younger, trend-driven clients; Instagram for visually discerning audiences; and Facebook for broader, locally embedded markets. This platform differentiation aligns with CRM principles of segmentation and personalization, as well as with SDL's emphasis on contextualized engagement across touchpoints.

The findings suggest that client discovery is not linear but cyclical and reinforcing. Positive client experiences generate referrals, which enhance reputation, thereby increasing the effectiveness of social media marketing. This interaction illustrates how marketing, CRM, and reputation operate as an integrated system rather than isolated functions.

Findings indicate that client acquisition occurs primarily through a dual-channel strategy combining social media visibility and personal referrals. Facebook and Instagram were identified as the most influential digital platforms due to their visual orientation and interactive features. Designers used these platforms not only for promotion but also for real-time engagement and storytelling.

At the same time, referrals from satisfied clients, colleagues, and professional networks remained a highly trusted source of new projects. This hybrid approach reflects the relational nature of the Philippine business environment, where trust and shared experiences strongly influence decision-making. The integration of digital reach and relational depth supports SDL's co-creation framework, CRM's emphasis on personalized engagement, and the Reputation-Based Theory's focus on credibility as a driver of client choice.

Operational Efficiency and Client Experience

While marketing visibility initiates client interest, participants consistently emphasized that operational execution and client experience ultimately determine conversion, satisfaction, and retention. Designers described a clear distinction between attracting inquiries and securing confirmed projects, noting that brand reputation and perceived credibility are decisive in bridging this gap.

Two interrelated themes emerged: Trust-Building Through Brand Reputation and Social Proof and Authentic Delivery and Communication Consistency. Brand reputation was conceptualized as an accumulation of professional conduct, service quality, and client satisfaction over time. Participants highlighted the powerful role of testimonials, referrals, and curated social media portfolios as forms of social proof that reduce perceived risk for prospective clients.

In the Philippine context, where professional networks are tightly interconnected, reputation was described as both highly valuable and fragile. Participants noted that negative feedback—even from a single client—could significantly impact future opportunities. This finding reinforces the Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances, which posits that trust and credibility amplify marketing effectiveness in relational markets.

Authenticity and consistency emerged as essential dimensions of client experience. Designers stressed the importance of ensuring that marketing representations accurately reflect actual service delivery. Practices such as regular progress updates, transparent communication about constraints, and honest portrayal of design processes were viewed as critical to maintaining trust. These practices align with CRM theory, which emphasizes consistency across the customer journey as a foundation for long-term relationships.

CRM in this context extends beyond systematized tools to encompass everyday practices of responsiveness, empathy, and accountability. By aligning marketing promises with operational realities, designers reinforce credibility and strengthen client confidence, thereby enhancing conversion and retention.

The study revealed that effective marketing must be supported by credible service delivery and consistent client experience. Two themes emerged: authentic delivery and communication consistency, and trust-building through brand reputation and social proof. Designers emphasized aligning marketing messages with actual service practices through transparency, regular updates, and client involvement.

Brand reputation was found to be cumulative and fragile, built through testimonials, referrals, and consistent professional behavior. Designers perceived that meeting or exceeding expectations strengthened trust and increased the likelihood of repeat engagements and referrals. These findings reinforce CRM theory's emphasis on managing the entire client journey and SDL's view of value as co-created through ongoing interaction.

Role of Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Findings reveal that interior designers perceive CRM as a strategic marketing asset rather than a purely administrative function. Participants consistently associated CRM practices—such as follow-ups, feedback integration, personalized communication, and post-project engagement—with increased referrals, repeat business, and brand loyalty.

Two themes emerged: Strategic Role of CRM in Client Attraction, Retention, and Loyalty Building and Client Relationship as a Strategic Marketing Asset.

Designers described satisfied clients as informal brand ambassadors whose recommendations significantly influence new client acquisition. CRM thus functions as a mechanism for converting service quality into marketing advantage.

Importantly, CRM practices were often hybridized, combining digital tools (e.g., messaging platforms, social media engagement) with culturally grounded interpersonal practices. Responsiveness, flexibility, and relational warmth were repeatedly emphasized as essential, reflecting Filipino cultural values that prioritize personal connection and trust. This hybrid approach demonstrates how global CRM concepts are adapted to local service contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings extend CRM theory by illustrating its role not only in retention but also in front-end client acquisition. CRM practices support SDL's notion of ongoing value co-creation by sustaining engagement beyond transactional boundaries and reinforcing relational continuity.

CRM emerged as a core strategic asset rather than a secondary operational tool. Designers associated CRM practices—such as personalized communication, timely follow-ups, feedback collection, and post-project engagement—with higher client satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy. Long-term relationship management was perceived as more effective than aggressive promotional tactics.

CRM practices were often hybrid in nature, combining digital tools with culturally grounded interpersonal engagement. Designers emphasized responsiveness, empathy, and personalization as essential for building trust. These findings align with CRM theory, SDL, and the Reputation-Based Theory, collectively underscoring the role of relationship quality and trust in sustainable client acquisition.

Building Credibility and Connection

The findings indicate that credibility is a decisive factor that converts marketing visibility into actual client acquisition. While digital marketing campaigns and CRM practices generate awareness and engagement, interior designers consistently emphasized that clients ultimately proceed based on perceived trustworthiness, professional consistency, and demonstrated competence. Participants described credibility as something earned over time through authentic service delivery, transparent communication, and consistent professional behavior rather than through promotional content alone.

Interior designers reported that prospective clients commonly evaluate credibility by reviewing completed projects, client testimonials, referrals, and online interactions prior to committing to a contract. Social proof—particularly word-of-mouth referrals and repeat clients—was perceived as more persuasive than curated marketing materials. Designers emphasized that even strong digital presence cannot compensate for weak reputation, highlighting the fragile yet powerful role of credibility in a service industry where outcomes are subjective and risk-sensitive.

Another key dimension of credibility involves alignment between marketing representation and actual service delivery. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that online portfolios, social media narratives, and promotional messages accurately reflect real processes, timelines, and design capabilities. Designers who maintained consistency between their digital presence and on-site performance reported fewer misunderstandings, higher client trust, and stronger long-term relationships.

From a theoretical perspective, credibility functions as a reinforcing mechanism across all three frameworks. Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) is reflected in the co-creation of trust through ongoing designer–client interaction; CRM theory explains how credibility is sustained through consistent communication, follow-ups, and feedback; and the Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances positions credibility as a strategic resource that amplifies marketing effectiveness and supports sustainable client acquisition.

The study found that credibility and brand reputation are foundational to marketing effectiveness in the interior design industry. Two key themes emerged: credibility as a catalyst for trust and conversion, and brand reputation as the foundation of marketing success. While marketing content attracts attention, it is professional consistency, authentic service delivery, and positive client experiences that ultimately convert interest into confirmed projects.

Social proof—through testimonials, referrals, and real project documentation—was consistently viewed as more persuasive than traditional advertising. Credibility was interpreted not as a promotional tactic but as a strategic necessity for long-term business sustainability. These findings strongly support the Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances and reinforce the importance of trust-driven marketing in service industries.

Table 2

Summary of Themes and Key Insights

Analytical Area	Core Themes	Key Interpretive Insights
Creative Marketing Campaigns and Content Marketing	• Social Media–Driven Visual Storytelling and Relationship-Based Marketing • Content-Driven Client Engagement	Authentic, process-oriented content (e.g., real projects, walkthroughs, behind-the-scenes narratives) fosters emotional connection and trust. Marketing is interpreted as a participatory, value co-creation process rather than one-way promotion, consistent with Service-Dominant Logic.
Client Discovery Channels and Preferences	• Dual-Channel Trust Building: Social Media Visibility and Personal Referrals • Dominance of Social Media as a Client Acquisition Tool	Social media generates initial awareness and engagement, while referrals validate credibility and trust. Client acquisition emerges from a hybrid model combining digital reach with relational endorsement, reflecting CRM and reputation-based dynamics.
Operational Efficiency and Client Experience	• Authentic Delivery and Communication Consistency • Trust-Building Through Brand Reputation and Social Proof	Consistency between marketing promises and actual service delivery strengthens trust and satisfaction. Transparent communication, regular updates, and reliable execution reinforce brand reputation and reduce perceived risk.
Role of Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	• Strategic Role of CRM in Client Attraction, Retention, and Loyalty Building • Client Relationship as a Strategic Marketing Asset	CRM practices such as follow-ups, personalization, feedback collection, and post-project engagement convert satisfied clients into repeat customers and referral sources. CRM functions as a long-term relationship strategy rather than a transactional tool.
Building Credibility and Connection	• Credibility as a Catalyst for Trust and Conversion • Professional Consistency and Authentic Representation	Credibility bridges marketing exposure and hiring decisions. Testimonials, referrals, repeat clients, and authentic portfolios outweigh promotional content. Alignment between digital representation and real service delivery strengthens trust and long-term reputation.

Synthesis

The findings of this study demonstrate that client acquisition in the Philippine interior design industry is not driven by isolated marketing tactics but by the integration of digital marketing, customer relationship management, and credibility-building practices. Marketing campaigns—particularly content-driven and visually oriented strategies—create initial visibility and engagement. However, these efforts are effective only when supported by credible service delivery, consistent communication, and positive client experiences.

Client discovery occurs through a hybrid process in which social media platforms generate awareness while referrals and personal networks validate trust. CRM practices operate as the connective tissue that sustains relationships across the client lifecycle, transforming one-time engagements into repeat projects and referrals. Within this system, credibility emerges as the central mechanism that links marketing exposure to client commitment, reinforcing trust and reducing perceived risk in hiring decisions.

Viewed through Service-Dominant Logic, value is co-created through continuous interaction rather than delivered through promotional outputs alone. CRM theory explains how trust and satisfaction are institutionalized through personalized engagement and follow-through, while the Reputation-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances highlights credibility as a strategic asset that strengthens competitive positioning. Collectively, the findings underscore that sustainable client acquisition in interior design depends on authenticity, relational consistency, and long-term trust, positioning credibility not as a by-product of marketing but as its foundation.

CONLUSION

The findings indicate that digital, content-driven marketing—particularly social media–based visual storytelling—has become central to how interior designers attract client attention. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram function not merely as promotional tools but as relational spaces where designers narrate processes, share expertise, and invite early client engagement. These practices reflect SDL's emphasis on value co-creation, as clients are engaged as participants rather than passive recipients of services.

Client discovery is achieved through a hybrid acquisition model that combines social media visibility with referrals from past clients and professional networks. While digital platforms generate awareness and inquiries, referrals serve as credibility validators that significantly influence hiring decisions. This dual-channel strategy reflects the relational nature of service markets in the

Philippine context, where trust, shared experiences, and social proof strongly shape decision-making.

CRM emerged as a strategic marketing mechanism rather than a purely administrative function. Practices such as personalized communication, consistent follow-ups, feedback integration, and post-project engagement were perceived as critical in converting satisfied clients into repeat customers and referral sources. CRM thus operates across the entire client lifecycle, reinforcing trust, loyalty, and long-term engagement.

Most importantly, the study highlights credibility as the central mechanism linking marketing exposure to client commitment. While marketing campaigns attract attention, it is professional consistency, authentic service delivery, and positive client experiences that convert interest into confirmed projects. Brand reputation—built through testimonials, referrals, and consistent performance—functions as a strategic asset that amplifies the effectiveness of both marketing and CRM. Together, these findings position client acquisition as a trust-driven, relational, and co-creative process rather than a transactional outcome.

The results indicate that interior design firms ought to implement integrated marketing strategies that merge digital storytelling with structured CRM methodologies and reputation management. Industry groups and professional associations can also help professionals by making training programs on ethical online branding, digital marketing, and relationship management. Government agencies and professional organizations could help creative industries more at the policy level by starting programs that help people become digital entrepreneurs, build their professional credibility, and run their businesses in a way that is good for the environment.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

This study demonstrates strong translational value by converting theoretical insights on marketing campaigns, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and brand reputation into practical strategies applicable to the interior design industry and other service-oriented sectors. By focusing on the Philippine context, the research provides actionable knowledge that helps interior design firms design more effective marketing approaches, strengthen client relationships, and improve long-term client acquisition and retention. The findings guide practitioners in applying relationship-based marketing, CRM integration, and reputation-building practices to enhance business performance, credibility, and sustainable growth.

Moreover, the study bridges theory and practice through the development of a Visual Marketing–Customer Journey Map, which translates research findings into a practical tool for professionals. This framework outlines the stages of client acquisition—from initial contact to project completion and retention—while identifying key CRM touchpoints, appropriate marketing content, decision triggers, and performance metrics. Such an applied output enables interior designers, educators, industry organizations, and policymakers to implement evidence-based strategies that improve client engagement, referral generation, and marketing effectiveness, thereby extending the impact of the research beyond academic contribution into real-world practice and policy development.

In addition to being shared in academic circles, the results of this study could be turned into teaching materials, professional training modules, and industry standards for interior designers and other creative professionals. Professional groups like the Philippine Institute of Interior Designers (PIID) might use these ideas in seminars for continuing education, marketing workshops, and toolkits for practitioners. Moreover, research findings can be disseminated via design publications, webinars, and social media platforms to engage a wider professional audience, thereby amplifying the study's influence from academic discussion to practical industry implementation.

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