

## The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention for Skincare Products with Brand Trust as a Mediating Variable Among Gen Z in the Special Region of Yogyakarta

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### Abstract

The rapid growth of the Indonesian skincare industry has been accompanied by a fundamental shift in consumer behavior, particularly among Generation Z, who increasingly rely on social media influencers (SMIs) as primary sources of product-related information. Despite extensive research on influencer marketing, empirical findings regarding the influence of SMIs on purchase intention remain inconsistent, particularly concerning the underlying psychological mechanisms involved. This study aims to examine the influence of social media influencers on purchase intention for skincare products, with brand trust serving as a mediating variable, among Generation Z consumers in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. A quantitative research design was employed using a survey method, with data collected from 280 Gen Z respondents through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that social media influencers have a positive and significant direct effect on both purchase intention and brand trust. However, brand trust does not exhibit a significant direct effect on purchase intention. Notably, brand trust significantly mediates the relationship between social media influencers and purchase intention, indicating that influencer effectiveness is strengthened through the formation of brand trust. These findings contribute to the digital marketing and consumer behavior literature by clarifying the conditional role of brand trust in influencer-driven persuasion within an emerging market context. Practically, the study provides insights for skincare brands to design influencer marketing strategies that emphasize authenticity and trust-building to effectively stimulate purchase intention among Generation Z consumers.

**Keywords** : Brand Trust, generation z, purchase intention, skincare products, social media influencer.

### 1. Introduction

The Indonesian beauty industry is experiencing rapid growth, positioning itself as a potential major global cosmetics market (Febriyanti et al., 2024). Within this expansion, the skincare segment is a primary contributor, driven by increasing consumer awareness and accessibility (Castillo et al., 2022). Notably, skincare revenue in Indonesia is substantial and projected to grow steadily, indicating a dynamic and promising market. This growth coincides with a significant shift in consumer behavior, particularly among younger demographics, who are increasingly turning

to digital platforms for product information and recommendations, moving beyond traditional advertising channels.

Generation Z, as digital natives, are at the forefront of this behavioral shift, heavily reliant on social media for daily activities, including purchasing decisions (Ding, 2024). For skincare products, Gen Z actively seeks information, reviews, and tutorials on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, with Social Media Influencers (SMIs) serving as key opinion leaders (Ellitan et al., 2022). SMIs leverage personal, authentic, and visually appealing content to build emotional connections, potentially shaping their followers' lifestyles and preferences (Castillo et al., 2022). The Special Region of Yogyakarta provides a relevant context for this study, as it has a disproportionately large Gen Z population that is digitally active and responsive to modern lifestyle trends, including skincare consumption.

However, academic findings on the influence of SMIs on purchase intention (PI) remain inconsistent. While some studies report a positive and significant impact (Castillo et al., 2022; Ding, 2024; Gadri et al., 2025), others find no significant direct effect (Febriyanti et al., 2024). This inconsistency suggests a research gap, indicating the need to investigate the underlying mechanism through which SMI exposure translates into PI. Brand Trust (BT) is posited as a critical mediating variable in this relationship. In the skincare context, where product efficacy and safety are paramount, trust acts as a risk-reducer (Ellitan et al., 2022). SMIs can cultivate BT by consistently endorsing brands that align with consumer values, thereby potentially transforming influencer credibility into concrete purchase intention.

The proposed mediating role of BT is also supported by conflicting empirical evidence. Several studies confirm that BT significantly mediates the SMI-PI relationship (Pattipeilohy & Pattipeilohy, 2025; Sanny et al., 2020), whereas others contest this mediating effect (Falah et al., 2022; Febriyanti et al., 2024). Similarly, the direct link between SMI and BT itself shows mixed results (Asad, 2024; Bibi, 2024). These inconsistencies highlight a clear literature gap, likely stemming from variations in research contexts, product types, and consumer characteristics. Therefore, a focused investigation within the specific context of skincare consumption among Gen Z in Yogyakarta is warranted to clarify these relationships.

To address this gap, this study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention for skincare products, with Brand Trust as a mediating variable, among Gen Z in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Specifically, it will examine: (1) the direct effect of SMI on PI, (2) the direct effect of SMI on BT, (3) the direct effect of BT on PI, and (4) the mediating role of BT in the relationship between SMI and PI. The findings are expected to contribute to digital marketing and consumer behavior literature by clarifying these dynamics in an emerging market context. Practically, the study will provide insights for skincare brands and marketers

in designing effective influencer collaboration strategies to build brand trust and stimulate purchase intention among the pivotal Gen Z demographic.

## 2. Research Method

This study employs a quantitative survey method with a hypothesis-testing approach to investigate the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between social media influencers and purchase intention for skincare products among Gen Z in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The primary data were collected via an online questionnaire using a purposive sampling technique. Respondents were selected based on specific criteria: being a member of Gen Z (born 1997-2012), residing in Yogyakarta, an active social media user who follows influencers, and having an intention to purchase skincare products promoted by influencers despite not having made a purchase yet. The minimum sample size was determined using the 10-times rule, resulting in a target of 287 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed digitally through social media platforms and networks.

The research variables are Social Media Influencer (SMI) as the independent variable, Purchase Intention (PI) as the dependent variable, and Brand Trust (BT) as the mediating variable. The constructs were measured using reflective indicators adapted from existing literature. SMI was assessed through dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Kumar et al., 2023). BT was measured using dimensions of brand credibility, reliability, honesty, safety, and reputation (Yaqin et al., 2025). PI was evaluated based on willingness to buy, recommend, purchase liked items, and purchase planning (Golalizadeh et al., 2023). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.0 software. The analysis followed a two-stage process. First, the measurement (outer) model was evaluated for validity and reliability. Convergent validity was assessed using factor loadings ( $>0.70$ ) and Average Variance Extracted ( $AVE > 0.50$ ). Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Reliability was confirmed through Composite Reliability ( $CR > 0.70$ ) and Cronbach's Alpha ( $>0.70$ ) (Ghozali, 2021; Hair et al., 2019). Second, the structural (inner) model was analyzed to test the hypotheses. Path coefficients and their significance ( $t\text{-value} > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) were examined to determine the direct effects of SMI on PI and BT, the direct effect of BT on PI, and the indirect (mediating) effect of BT using bootstrapping procedures (Hair et al., 2019).

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Respondent Characteristics

**Table 1. Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics of Respondents (n = 287)**

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	145	50.5%
	Female	142	49.5%
Age Group	13–18 years	37	12.9%
	19–23 years	76	26.5%
	24–28 years	174	60.6%
Domicile (DIY)	Yogyakarta City	123	42.9%
	Sleman Regency	73	25.4%
	Bantul Regency	46	16.0%
	Kulon Progo Regency	20	7.0%
	Gunungkidul Regency	25	8.7%
Social Media Usage	Yes	274	95.5%
	No	13	4.5%
Exposure to Skincare Influencers	Yes	235	81.9%
	No	52	18.1%

Table 1 summarizes the demographic and behavioral characteristics of the Generation Z respondents involved in this study. In terms of gender, the distribution is nearly balanced, with male respondents (50.5%) slightly outnumbering female respondents (49.5%), indicating that interest in skincare products is not exclusively dominated by women but also significantly involves men. Regarding age, the majority of respondents fall within the 24–28-year age group (60.6%), followed by those aged 19–23 years (26.5%) and 13–18 years (12.9%), suggesting that most participants are in a productive and cognitively mature stage, enabling more rational and informed purchase decision-making, particularly for skincare products. With respect to domicile, respondents are predominantly concentrated in Yogyakarta City (42.9%), followed by Sleman Regency (25.4%), reflecting a strong urban representation that is typically associated with higher exposure to digital content, lifestyle trends, and consumer-oriented marketing. Furthermore, an overwhelming proportion of respondents are active social media users (95.5%), underscoring the relevance of social media platforms as primary channels for information acquisition and interaction among Generation Z. Consistently, a substantial majority of respondents (81.9%) reported exposure to skincare influencers, reinforcing the contextual appropriateness of this study in examining influencer-driven marketing effects on skincare consumption behavior within a digitally engaged and influencer-aware population.

#### 3.2. Quantitative Analysis Results

##### 3.2.1 Outer Model

##### 3.2.1.1 Validity Test (Outer Loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE))

**Table 2. Convergent Validity and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Results**

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE	Assessment
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Social Media Influencer (X)	SMI1	0.734	0.601	Valid
	SMI2	0.719		Valid
	SMI3	0.783		Valid
	SMI4	0.771		Valid
	SMI5	0.769		Valid
	SMI6	0.776		Valid
	SMI7	0.892		Valid
	SMI8	0.753		Valid
	SMI9	0.771		Valid
Purchase Intention (Y)	PI1	0.793	0.648	Valid
	PI2	0.760		Valid
	PI3	0.833		Valid
	PI4	0.833		Valid
Brand Trust (Z)	BT1	0.735	0.618	Valid
	BT2	0.711		Valid
	BT3	0.922		Valid
	BT4	0.720		Valid
	BT5	0.711		Valid
	BT6	0.725		Valid
	BT7	0.746		Valid
	BT8	0.717		Valid
	BT9	0.709		Valid
	BT10	0.742		Valid
	BT11	0.727		Valid
	BT12	0.784		Valid
	BT13	0.913		Valid
	BT14	0.930		Valid
	BT15	0.929		Valid

The results of convergent validity assessment presented in Table 2 demonstrate that all measurement indicators exhibit satisfactory outer loading values, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. This indicates that each indicator strongly represents its respective latent construct. Specifically, the Social Media Influencer construct shows robust indicator loadings ranging from 0.719 to 0.892, reflecting a consistent and reliable measurement of influencer-related attributes. Similarly, the Purchase Intention construct displays high outer loadings across all indicators, with values between 0.760 and 0.833, suggesting that the indicators effectively capture consumers' behavioral intentions. The Brand Trust construct also demonstrates strong convergent validity, as evidenced by outer loading values ranging from 0.709 to 0.930, indicating that the indicators reliably measure consumers' trust perceptions toward the brand.

Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceed the minimum recommended criterion of 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity at the construct level. The AVE values of 0.601 for Social Media Influencer, 0.648 for Purchase Intention, and 0.618 for Brand Trust indicate that each

construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. These findings collectively affirm that the measurement model meets established validity standards, thereby providing a solid foundation for subsequent structural model analysis and hypothesis testing within the proposed research framework.

**3.2.1.2 Discriminant Validity Results**

**Table 3. Cross-Loading Factors**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Social Media Influence (X)</b>	<b>Purchase Intention (Y)</b>	<b>Brand Trust (Z)</b>
SMI1	0.734	0.321	0.638
SMI2	0.719	0.313	0.624
SMI3	0.783	0.390	0.627
SMI4	0.771	0.400	0.603
SMI5	0.769	0.379	0.633
SMI6	0.776	0.467	0.657
SMI7	0.892	0.457	0.701
SMI8	0.753	0.466	0.597
SMI9	0.771	0.425	0.619
PI1	0.419	0.793	0.453
PI2	0.424	0.760	0.500
PI3	0.366	0.833	0.460
PI4	0.461	0.833	0.487
BT1	0.638	0.498	0.735
BT2	0.629	0.455	0.711
BT3	0.711	0.530	0.922
BT4	0.594	0.479	0.720
BT5	0.569	0.415	0.711
BT6	0.609	0.374	0.725
BT7	0.646	0.447	0.746
BT8	0.606	0.358	0.717
BT9	0.613	0.442	0.709
BT10	0.587	0.435	0.742
BT11	0.610	0.390	0.727
BT12	0.649	0.422	0.784
BT13	0.711	0.565	0.913
BT14	0.718	0.552	0.930
BT15	0.716	0.553	0.929

Table 3 presents the cross-loading results for all measurement indicators across the three latent constructs: Social Media Influence, Purchase Intention, and Brand Trust. The findings indicate that each indicator exhibits the highest loading on its intended construct compared to the other constructs, thereby confirming adequate discriminant validity. Specifically, indicators of Social Media Influence demonstrate substantially higher loadings on the Social Media Influence construct than on Purchase Intention and Brand Trust, while Purchase Intention indicators show their strongest associations with the Purchase Intention construct. Similarly, all Brand Trust indicators load more strongly on the Brand Trust construct than on the other

latent variables. This pattern of cross-loadings suggests that each construct captures a distinct conceptual domain, ensuring that the measurement model is free from substantial construct overlap and is suitable for further structural model analysis.

### 3.2.1.3 Reliability Test Results

**Table 4. The Results of Reliability Test**

Variable		Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Threshold	Interpretation
Social Media Influencer		0.931	0.916	> 0.70	Reliable
Purchase Intention		0.880	0.818	> 0.70	Reliable
Brand Trust		0.960	0.955	> 0.70	Reliable

Table 4 summarizes the reliability assessment of the measurement instruments used in this study, evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA). The results indicate that all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 for both reliability indicators, confirming satisfactory internal consistency. Specifically, the Social Media Influencer construct demonstrates strong reliability, with a CR value of 0.931 and a CA value of 0.916. Similarly, Purchase Intention shows adequate internal consistency, as reflected by a CR of 0.880 and a CA of 0.818, indicating that the measurement items consistently capture the underlying construct.

Furthermore, the Brand Trust construct exhibits the highest reliability among all variables, with a CR of 0.960 and a CA of 0.955, suggesting excellent internal consistency and a high degree of measurement stability. These findings imply that the indicators used for each construct are homogenous and reliable for further structural model analysis. Overall, the strong reliability performance across all constructs enhances the robustness of the empirical results and provides a solid foundation for hypothesis testing and interpretation within the context of this study.

### 3.2 Inner Model Results

**Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>) and Predictive Relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>)**

Variable	R Square (R <sup>2</sup> )	Q Square (Q <sup>2</sup> )
Brand Trust	0.668	0.407
Purchase Intention	0.354	0.220

Table 5 presents the results of the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) and predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>) for the endogenous variables in the structural model. The R<sup>2</sup> value for Brand Trust is 0.668, indicating that 66.8% of the variance in Brand Trust is explained by its exogenous predictors, which reflects a strong explanatory power of the model for this construct. Meanwhile, Purchase Intention shows an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.354, suggesting that 35.4% of its variance is accounted for by the explanatory variables, representing a moderate level of explanatory capability. In terms of predictive relevance, the Q<sup>2</sup> values for both endogenous variables are positive, with Brand Trust

achieving a Q<sup>2</sup> of 0.407 and Purchase Intention a Q<sup>2</sup> of 0.220. These results confirm that the model demonstrates adequate predictive relevance for both constructs, as positive Q<sup>2</sup> values indicate that the structural model has meaningful out-of-sample predictive power. Overall, the combination of substantial R<sup>2</sup> values and satisfactory Q<sup>2</sup> statistics supports the robustness of the proposed model in explaining and predicting Brand Trust and Purchase Intention within the studied context.

### 3.3 Hypothesis Testing Results

**Table 6. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results (Direct and Indirect Effects)**

Path Relationship	Effect Type	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistic	P-Value
SMI (X) → PI (Y)	Direct Effect	0.499	0.502	0.096	5.224	0.000
SMI (X) → BT (Z)	Direct Effect	0.817	0.819	0.023	35.579	0.000
BT (Z) → PI (Y)	Direct Effect	0.113	0.109	0.105	1.073	0.284
SMI (X) → BT (Z) → PI (Y)	Indirect Effect	0.408	0.412	0.081	5.029	0.000

The bootstrapping results presented in Table 6 demonstrate that Social Media Influencer (SMI) exerts a statistically significant direct effect on Purchase Intention (PI), as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.499 and a T-statistic of 5.224 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This finding confirms that influencer-driven communication plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' intention to purchase, likely due to the persuasive credibility, perceived expertise, and social presence embedded in influencer content. In addition, SMI shows a very strong and significant direct effect on Brand Trust (BT), with a path coefficient of 0.817 and an exceptionally high T-statistic of 35.579 ( $p < 0.001$ ), highlighting the effectiveness of influencers in fostering trust toward the brand. Conversely, the direct relationship between Brand Trust and Purchase Intention is not statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.113$ ;  $T = 1.073$ ;  $p = 0.284$ ), suggesting that trust alone may be insufficient to directly trigger purchase intention without the reinforcing role of influencer endorsement.

Despite the non-significant direct effect of Brand Trust on Purchase Intention, the indirect effect of Social Media Influencer on Purchase Intention through Brand Trust is found to be positive and statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.408$ ;  $T = 5.029$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This result indicates the presence of an indirect mechanism whereby influencers enhance purchase intention by first strengthening consumers' trust in the brand. The findings imply a mediating role of Brand Trust in the relationship between Social Media Influencer and Purchase Intention, although this mediation appears to be complementary rather than fully explanatory. Overall, the results underscore the strategic importance of influencer marketing not only in directly stimulating purchase intentions but also in indirectly reinforcing them through the cultivation of brand trust, thereby providing nuanced empirical support for integrated influencer-based branding strategies.

### 3.4 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that social media influencers have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention for skincare products among Generation Z in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. This result confirms that influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumers' cognitive and affective responses, particularly during the early stages of interest formation and intention development. Within the framework of the *Theory of Planned Behavior*, social media influencers function as subjective norms by providing socially credible references through recommendations, reviews, and experiential narratives, thereby fostering favorable product perceptions and strengthening purchase intentions. The influence is further amplified by the characteristics of Generation Z as digital natives who rely heavily on social media as a primary source of consumption-related information. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Castillo et al. (2022), Al Gadri et al. (2025), and Ding (2024), although they diverge from Febriyanti et al. (2024), highlighting contextual and respondent-based variations.

The results further demonstrate that social media influencers exert a positive and significant influence on brand trust in the skincare context. Beyond serving as marketing communication channels, influencers act as trust-building agents through perceived credibility, honesty, and message consistency. Given that skincare products are closely associated with health and safety concerns, brand trust becomes a critical evaluative factor. Generation Z consumers tend to transfer the trust they place in influencers to the brands being endorsed, particularly when influencers are perceived as authentic, transparent, and objective. This finding aligns with prior research by (Asad, 2024), and Pattipeilohy and Pattipeilohy (2025), although it contrasts with (Bibi, 2024), suggesting that differences in consumer involvement and perceptions of influencer credibility may account for these discrepancies.

In contrast, brand trust does not exhibit a significant direct effect on purchase intention. This result suggests that trust in a brand alone is insufficient to independently trigger purchase intention among Generation Z consumers. Although brand trust generally functions to reduce perceived risk and uncertainty, this generation tends to consider additional factors—such as trends, third-party recommendations, and digital content exposure—before forming purchase intentions. Consequently, brand trust appears to operate as a latent construct that requires external stimuli to be activated into behavioral intention. This finding contradicts earlier studies by Ellitan et al. (2022), Rahmalida & Susan (2025), and Sanny et al. (2020), thereby underscoring the complexity of Generation Z's decision-making processes within digitally mediated environments.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that brand trust plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between social media influencers and purchase intention. This

finding indicates that influencer-driven effects on purchase intention occur not only directly but also indirectly through the formation of brand trust. Exposure to influencer content serves as an initial stimulus that shapes favorable brand perceptions, while brand trust provides the psychological legitimacy required before consumers develop purchase intentions. This mediating mechanism is consistent with the *Theory of Planned Behavior*, wherein influencers shape subjective norms and brand trust reinforces attitudes toward purchasing behavior.

Overall, the study confirms that brand trust is a key mechanism that bridges the effectiveness of social media influencers in stimulating purchase intention. These findings are in line with those reported by Pattipeilohy and Pattipeilohy (2025), Sanny et al. (2020), and Ellitan et al. (2022), although they differ from Febriyanti et al. (2024), who did not identify a mediating effect. Such differences emphasize the importance of research context, audience characteristics, and influencer credibility. Accordingly, influencer-based marketing strategies will be more effective when they extend beyond exposure enhancement and are systematically oriented toward the sustained development of brand trust within digital marketing ecosystems.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study concludes that social media influencers play a decisive role in shaping purchase intention for skincare products among Generation Z in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, both directly and indirectly through brand trust. The empirical results demonstrate that influencer endorsement significantly enhances purchase intention and strongly contributes to the formation of brand trust, confirming the relevance of influencer-driven communication within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior. However, brand trust does not exert a significant direct effect on purchase intention, indicating that trust alone is insufficient to independently stimulate purchasing intentions among Generation Z consumers. Instead, brand trust functions as a complementary mediating mechanism that strengthens the persuasive impact of social media influencers. These findings highlight the complexity of Generation Z's decision-making processes, which are shaped not only by trust perceptions but also by social validation, digital exposure, and influencer credibility within contemporary digital ecosystems.

Based on these conclusions, this study recommends that skincare brands strategically prioritize influencer marketing initiatives that emphasize authenticity, credibility, and value congruence rather than mere popularity or reach. Influencers should be positioned not only as promotional agents but also as trust-building intermediaries capable of legitimizing brand claims and reducing perceived consumer risk. Marketing strategies should therefore integrate influencer-generated content with long-term brand trust development efforts to maximize their impact on

purchase intention. From an academic perspective, future research is encouraged to explore additional moderating or mediating variables—such as perceived risk, product involvement, or influencer-brand congruence—and to extend the analysis across different demographic segments or product categories to enhance the generalizability and theoretical refinement of influencer-based consumer behavior models.

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