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The Influence of Social Media Influencer Credibility on Purchase Intention for Beauty Products with Brand Trust as a Mediating Variable

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A B S T R A C T

This study analyzes the influence of influencer credibility on purchase intention for beauty products, with brand trust as a mediating variable. The study used a quantitative approach with PLS-SEM analysis on 150 respondents selected through purposive sampling, namely active Instagram and TikTok users who had been exposed to beauty product promotions by influencers. Data were collected in December 2025. The results show that the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness have a positive effect on purchase intention. Furthermore, brand trust is proven to mediate the influence of influencer credibility on purchase intention. These findings provide implications for digital marketing strategies in increasing brand trust and consumer purchase intention.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of social media has transformed the marketing communication landscape in Indonesia from a one-way model to an interactive and digital community-based one. The high internet penetration and the dominance of platforms such as Instagram and TikTok make social media a major touchpoint in the consumer decision journey. Based on the We Are Social and Meltwater (2025) report, the majority of Indonesian internet users actively use social media to search for product information before making a purchase. This condition encourages companies to adopt influencer marketing as a persuasive communication strategy that utilizes the credibility of digital figures in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences. McKinsey and Company (2015) through the Consumer Decision Journey model explain that social media plays a role as an important digital contact point that influences the process of evaluating and making consumer purchase decisions. Social media is now a place where beauty standards, personal care trends, and healthy lifestyles are formed and disseminated (Khuong An et al., 2024).

The beauty industry is one of the sectors that uses this strategy the most. Skincare and cosmetic products are classified as high involvement and experience goods, so consumers tend to need social validation before making a purchase. In this context, influencers play the role of opinion leaders who not only convey product information, but also build a narrative of personal experiences that affect consumers' evaluation of brands. *Influencer credibility* has a positive influence on the intention to buy beauty products, but does not consider the mediating role of brand trust Khuong An et al., (2024). On the other hand, (Najar et al., 2024) found that brand trust plays a mediator in the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention in the context of tourism. Influencer credibility, which consists of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, is believed to be able to form a positive perception of the brand and increase purchasing tendencies.

However, empirical findings related to the influence of influencer credibility on purchase intention still show inconsistent results. A number of studies have found a direct and significant influence, while other studies have shown that the influence is weakened when the psychological variables of the intermediary are not considered. This inconsistency indicates that the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention is not linear, but through a certain mediation mechanism. The selection of skincare categories is based on the high intensity of skincare product promotion through social media influencers and its relevance to the formation of brand trust in the beauty industry (Statista, 2024; Euromonitor, 2023). In this context, brand trust is seen as a key variable that has the potential to bridge this relationship, because trust in influencers can be transferred to trust in the brand. However, the testing of the role of brand trust mediation in the context of the beauty industry in Indonesia is still relatively limited and has not been widely analyzed using the PLS-SEM-based mediation model approach.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of influencer credibility consisting of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness on the

purchase intention of beauty products with brand trust as a mediating variable. This study makes a theoretical contribution by clarifying the mediation mechanism in the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intent in the context of digital marketing in developing countries. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to help beauty companies in designing collaboration strategies with influencers that are not only visually appealing, but also able to build brand trust in a sustainable and strategic manner.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Source Credibility Theory

This research is based on the Source Credibility Theory developed by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss (1951). This theory states that the effectiveness of persuasive communication is greatly influenced by the level of credibility of the message source. Sources that are considered credible will be more able to influence the attitudes, perceptions, and behavior of the audience than less trusted sources. In the context of digital marketing, influencers act as a source of messages that bridge communication between brands and consumers.

Source credibility initially consists of two main dimensions, namely expertise and trustworthiness. A number of modern studies, such as those conducted by (Belanche et al. 2021) and (Alfarraj et al. 2021) confirm that influencer credibility plays an important role in shaping consumer trust and positive attitudes towards promoted brands. Trust in brands is an important factor that bridges the influence of influencer credibility on consumer purchasing decisions. Trust in brands can increase consumer purchase intention for products promoted by Shaheen et al., (2025) and Yuwono et al., (2024). Thus, this theory provides a basis for explaining how the characteristics of influencers as a source of messages can affect the formation of brand trust and consumer purchase intention.

Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility refers to the audience's perception of an influencer's level of honesty, competence, and attractiveness in delivering promotional messages. In the social media era, influencer credibility is the main determinant of influencer marketing effectiveness, because consumers tend to trust individual recommendations more than direct communication from brands. Influencer credibility on platforms such as Instagram has a direct effect on the attitudes and behaviors of their followers, Belanche et al., (2021a). Another study found that the three dimensions of credibility trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness have a significant effect on consumer purchase intentions, especially in the industry. Alfarraj et al, (2021).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness describes the extent to which the audience trusts the honesty, integrity, and sincerity of the influencer in conveying information. The honesty and authenticity of influencers are important factors in building long-term relationships with the audience, Belanche et al., (2021a). Researchers

(Yuwono et al., 2024) found that trustworthiness has a direct influence on brand trust and has a positive impact on the purchase intention of beauty products.

Expertise

Expertise refers to the level of ability and knowledge that influencers have regarding the products they promote. According to (Hovland and Weiss, 1951) the expertise of the message source determines the extent to which the audience considers the message credible and worthy of trust. Research (Alfarraj et al., 2021) shows that influencers with a high level of expertise can increase the perception of product quality in the eyes of consumers. This finding is in line with (Shaheen et al., 2025) who explain that expertise has a big role in building brand trust and strengthening the effectiveness of digital promotion strategies.

Attractiveness

In digital marketing, the visual appeal of influencers is often the first factor that builds audience engagement or engagement with the content delivered. (Belanche et al., 2021a) assert that attractiveness increases the perception of credibility and strengthens the parasocial relationship between influencers and their followers. (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) also found that influencers who are visually appealing and have a positive personality are more effective in influencing beauty product purchase decisions.

Brand Trust

In digital marketing, brand trust is becoming increasingly important because consumers interact with brands through online media that are full of information and influence. (Sahin et al., 2011) explained that trust in brands is formed through factors such as experience. consumers, brand reputation, and the credibility of information sources that convey brand messages.

Honesty, expertise, and influencer attractiveness significantly increase the perception of trust in brands in the beauty industry, Alfarraj et al., (2021). Other researchers stated that brand trust is an important mediating variable between influencer credibility and consumer purchase intent, where the higher the trust in the brand, the greater the consumer's tendency to make purchases. Shaheen et al., (2025). In addition, (Yuwono et al., 2024) prove that brand trust acts as a psychological bridge between trust in influencers and purchase intentions in local skincare products.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is one of the important indicators in understanding consumer behavior and is a benchmark for the success of marketing strategies. Influencer credibility directly increases purchase intent through increased trust and positive attitudes towards brands, Belanche et al., (2021a). Similar results are shown by (Shaheen et al., 2025) that the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of influencers have a significant influence on purchase intention, both directly and through brand trust. Other research by (Yuwono et al., 2024) in the context of local skincare products also shows that brand trust has

an important role in strengthening purchase intent formed from trust in influencers.

Trustworthiness and Brand Trust

Trustworthiness describes the extent to which influencers are perceived to be honest, sincere, and trustworthy. Influencers who are considered authentic and transparent in delivering product reviews tend to build stronger emotional relationships with their followers. In the beauty industry, honesty is a crucial factor because products are related to skin health and appearance, so consumers have a relatively high level of risk perception.

Several studies have shown that the perception of influencer honesty strengthens brand trust through increased source credibility, Belanche et al., (2021a). (Islamiyah & Hapsari, 2023; Khuong An et al., 2024) prove that audiences who consider influencers to be sincere and transparent tend to trust the brands they promote. In addition, research (Komara & Erwand, 2023) found that trust in influencers is able to form trust in brands through the mechanism of meaning transfer from the influencer's image to the product. Other researchers found that trustworthiness has a direct influence on brand trust and has a positive impact on the intention to buy beauty products, Yuwono et al., (2024). Therefore, the higher the level of influencer trustworthiness, the more likely it is to form brand trust.

H1: Trustworthiness has a positive effect on brand trust.

Expertise and Brand Trust

Expertise refers to the level of knowledge, experience, and competence of influencers in a certain field. In the context of the beauty industry, influencers who have a deep understanding of product content, skin type, and usage techniques will be more trusted in providing recommendations.

Research has found that influencers' expertise strengthens the perception of professionalism and increases brand trust, Janssen et al., (2022). Laiina explained that influencers who have a product-relevant background tend to foster trust in brands through strengthening the credibility of messages, Asad, (2024). The same results are also confirmed by (Najar et al., 2024; Risma Rifatul Koirunisa & Rini Kuswati, 2025) who state that influencer competence is an important factor in building brand trust in beauty products. Consumers tend to trust brands recommended by individuals who are considered to have relevant competencies. Thus, the higher the level of influencer expertise, the stronger the brand trust formed.

H2: Expertise has a positive effect on brand trust.

Attractiveness and Brand Trust

Attractiveness not only includes physical attractiveness, but also includes personality, communication style, and similarity of values with the audience. Influencer attractiveness can increase attention, engagement, and parasocial relationships between influencers and their followers.

Research found that attractiveness significantly affects trust in brands through increased social and psychological bonds between influencers and audiences Casaló et al., (2020). Meanwhile, other researchers state that the alignment of an influencer's image with the brand strengthens the perception of credibility, Belanche et al., (2021b). And researchers (Shaheen et al., 2025; Yuwono et al., 2024) support that the visual attractiveness of influencers is able to foster consumer trust in the brand indirectly through emotional connections. Therefore, the higher the level of influencer attractiveness, the more likely it is to form brand trust.

H3: Attractiveness has a positive effect on brand trust.

Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

Brand trust is a consumer's belief that a brand has the ability, integrity, and consistency to fulfill the promises offered. From a relationship marketing perspective, trust is the main foundation in building a long-term relationship between consumers and brands.

Several researchers have found that brand trust has a direct effect on purchase intention, Sherbaz Khan, (2023). Dan Asad, (2024). Other researchers also explained that trust in brands is able to strengthen the emotional relationship between consumers and products, as well as increase loyalty to brands in the long term, Yuwono et al., (2024).

Trust in the brand serves as a risk-reduction mechanism in the purchase decision-making process. When consumers trust a brand, they tend to have higher confidence in the quality of the product and the benefits offered. Therefore, the higher the level of brand trust, the greater the tendency of consumers to make a purchase.

H4: Brand trust has a positive effect on purchase intention.

The Influence of Trustworthiness on Purchase Intention

An influencer's honesty and integrity not only foster trust in the brand, but also play a direct role in influencing consumers' purchase intentions. Influencers who are considered authentic and not excessive in recommending products tend to create trust that drives purchase decisions. Research (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) shows that trustworthiness plays a role in increasing purchase intention through trust in the credibility of messages. (Shaheen et al., 2025) adds to the perception that influencer honesty is able to reduce consumer doubt. Studies (Komara & Erwand, 2023; Risma Rifatul Koirunisa & Rini Kuswati, 2025) also reveal that trust in influencers is the main predictor of purchase intent on social media.

H5: Trustworthiness has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

The Influence of Expertise on Purchase Intention

Influencers with a high level of expertise in the field of product reviewed are able to increase trust and encourage audience purchase intent. This expertise allows influencers to provide information that is educational and in accordance with consumer needs. (Ismagilova et al., 2020) assert that expertise influences purchase intention through increasing the perception of professionalism.

(Khuong An et al., 2024; Najar et al., 2024) show that influencers who are experts in explaining product benefits can foster confidence and purchase motivation. In addition, the study, (School et al., 2022) highlights that the combination of influencer expertise and the quality of consumer reviews significantly increases purchase intent, especially in the context of sustainable marketing. This shows that influencer expertise not only builds trust, but is also an important factor in driving purchasing behavior.

H6: Expertise has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

The Effect of Attractiveness on Purchase Intention

The personal appeal of influencers is one of the factors that creates an emotional connection with the audience. Influencers who have an attractive image and positive personality are often used as role models by their followers, so their purchasing behavior tends to be imitated. (Belanche et al., 2021b; Casaló et al., 2020) show that attractiveness strengthens the parasocial relationship between influencers and audiences, which ultimately increases purchase intent. (Shaheen et al., 2025) also added that attractiveness can strengthen emotional engagement, while (Yuwono et al., 2024) found that attractiveness increases the effectiveness of promotional messages in the industry.

H7: Attractiveness has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

The Role of Brand Trust Mediation

Brand trust acts as a mediating variable that connects influencer credibility with purchase intent. When consumers trust credible influencers, they will trust the promoted brand more, and this trust becomes a major driver in purchasing decisions. Research (Khuong An et al., 2024) shows that brand trust mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention significantly. (Najar et al., 2024; Yuwono et al., 2024) also emphasized that this mediation effect strengthens the relationship between the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness and consumer purchase intention. Further research, (School et al., 2022) found that brand trust is a key factor that channels the influence of influencer credibility on consumer purchasing behavior, especially in the context of marketing that emphasizes authenticity and sustainability.

H8: Brand Trust mediates the influence of influencer credibility on Purchase Intention.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to test the causal relationship between variables. The research model was analyzed using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with the help of SmartPLS software. This method was chosen because it is able to analyze complex structural models with mediating variables and does not require strict normal data distribution.

The population in this study is active users of Instagram and TikTok social media in Indonesia who have been exposed to the promotion of beauty products

by influencers. The sampling technique used purposive sampling with the criteria of respondents: At least 17 years old, active in using Instagram and/or TikTok, and Having seen the promotion of beauty products by influencers. After the screening process was carried out based on the completeness of the answers and the suitability of the research criteria, 150 respondents who were eligible for analysis were obtained.

Data collection Primary data was collected through the distribution of online questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data collection was carried out in the period of December 2025.

Variable Measurement

The influencer credibility variable is measured through three dimensions, namely trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, adapted from Ohanian (1990). Brand trust is measured based on indicators that represent consumer confidence in brand reliability and integrity. Purchase intention is measured through indicators that reflect respondents' tendency to buy beauty products recommended by influencers. Indicators are measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using PLS-SEM through two stages of evaluation, namely: The first stage was the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model), including the test of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. And stage 2 of the evaluation of the structural model (inner model), including testing the path coefficient, R^2 value, and testing the mediation effect using the bootstrapping method. This approach was used to test the direct and indirect influence (mediation) between influencer credibility, brand trust, and purchase intention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of Measurement Models (Outer Model)

The results of the convergent validity test showed that all indicators had an outer loading value above 0.70 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value exceeded 0.50. Trustworthiness (0.775), Expertise (0.809), Attractiveness (0.722), Brand Trust (0.780), Purchase Intention (0.775) These results indicate that the indicator is able to adequately reflect latent constructs and meet the convergent validity criteria. Discriminant Validity in this study was measured using cross loading intention and average variance extracted (AVE). Cross loading values were used to ensure that constructs had adequate discrimination. Discriminant validity based on AVE value is met if the AVE value of each variable exceeds 0.5 (Fauzi et al., 2023)

Furthermore, discriminant validity testing using the HTMT criterion showed a value below 0.90, which means that each construct has a clear difference from each other. Thus, the measurement model was declared to meet all the validity and reliability criteria required in the PLS-SEM analysis.

The reliability test showed that the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values on all variables were above 0.70, so the construct was declared to have good internal consistency.

Evaluation of Structural Models (Inner Model)

The value of the determination coefficient (R^2) in the purchase intention variable of 0.333 indicates that 33.3% of the variation in purchase intention can be explained by the variables in the model, while the remaining 66.7% is an unexplained variance. Based on the criteria of Chin (1998), this value is included in the moderate category. Meanwhile, according to Hair et al., (2021) the value is above the threshold of 0.25, indicating that the model has predictive capabilities that are acceptable in the context of social research. This study shows that influencer credibility is able to explain variance in brand trust in the moderate category. Meanwhile, the combination of influencer credibility and brand trust is able to explain the variance in purchase intention in the medium category. This indicates that the research model has adequate predictive power in explaining the relationship between variables.

Hypothesis test results:

Trustworthiness has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. This can be seen from trustworthiness to Brand Trust showing a coefficient of 0.138 with a T-statistic value of 2.019 and a P-value of 0.044 (<0.05) means dIt supports data and is significant, which means it has a positive and significant effect even though it has a relatively smaller influence power than other dimensions.

The influence of expertise on Brand Trust has the largest coefficient, which is 0.485 with a T-statistical value of 7.765 and a P-value of 0.000, supported by data and significant. This value shows that expertise is the most dominant variable in forming Brand Trust

The effect of attractiveness on Brand Trust showed a coefficient of 0.315 with a T-statistical value of 4.932 and a P-value of 0.000 (<0.05) which means dsupported data and significant, so that it can be concluded that attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust.

The results of the analysis showed that Brand Trust had a positive and significant effect with a coefficient of 0.353 (T-statistics 3.878; P-value 0.000) which means that it is supported by data and significant. This shows that the higher the level of consumer trust in the brand, the higher the consumer's purchase intention for the beauty products promoted

Trustworthiness to Purchase Intention shows a coefficient of 0.172 (T-statistics 2.319; P-value 0.020), which means that it has a positive and significant effect at a significance level of 5% or supported by data and significance.

The direct influence of expertise on Purchase Intention did not show significant results, with a coefficient of 0.063, a T-value of 0.771, and a P-value of 0.441 (>0.05) not supported by data. This is not supported by data. show that Influencer expertise does not directly affect consumer purchase intent.

Attractiveness was proven to have a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention with a coefficient of 0.271 (T-statistics 3.945; P-value 0.000)

which means that it is supported by data and significant, which shows that influencer attraction is able to directly encourage consumer purchase intention.

These findings indicate that even though influencers are considered to have competence or expertise, it does not necessarily directly encourage consumers to make purchases without trust in the brand. Since the influence of expertise on Purchase Intention is not significant, while the influence of expertise on Brand Trust is significant and Brand Trust on Purchase Intention is also significant, it can be concluded that Brand Trust plays a mediating variable in the relationship between expertise and Purchase Intention. In other words, the expertise of influencers first increases consumer trust in the brand, which then push the formation of buying intentions. This shows that the mechanism of influencing influencer credibility on purchase intent is not always direct, but can go through a psychological process in the form of building brand trust.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study strengthen the argument of Source Credibility Theory which states that the effectiveness of persuasive communication is highly dependent on the credibility of the message source. In the context of digital marketing, influencers who are perceived to be honest and have attractiveness are able to build trust in the brand significantly.

The trustworthiness dimension has proven to be the most dominant factor in forming brand trust. This shows that in the beauty industry, consumers emphasize the aspect of honesty and authenticity more than just technical expertise. Beauty products related to skin health and appearance increase consumer sensitivity to risk, so the trust factor is a major determinant in brand evaluation.

Findings on expertise that do not always have a strong effect on purchase intention suggest that competence alone is not enough to drive purchase intent if it is not accompanied by a perception of honesty and emotional closeness. In social media ecosystems such as Instagram and TikTok, parasocial relationships and perceptions of authenticity are often more decisive than formal credentials.

The significant role of brand trust as a mediator confirms that the influence of influencers on purchase intentions is not direct, but through the process of transferring trust. Consumers who trust influencers tend to transfer this trust to recommended brands, thereby increasing the probability of buying intention formation.

Overall, the study shows that an effective influencer marketing strategy in the beauty industry does not only depend on the popularity or visual appeal of the influencer, but rather on his or her ability to build sustainable brand trust.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of influencer credibility consisting of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness on purchase intention with brand trust as a mediating variable in beauty products. The results of the study show that influencer credibility plays an important role in forming brand trust, which in turn has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Specifically, the dimensions of trustworthiness and attractiveness have been shown to have a stronger influence on building brand trust than expertise. These findings indicate that in the context of the beauty industry, consumers place more emphasis on the honesty, authenticity, and interpersonal attractiveness of influencers rather than just technical competence. Beauty products related to health and appearance increase consumer sensitivity to risks, so the trust factor is the main determinant in brand evaluation.

Furthermore, the results of the mediation test confirmed that brand trust plays a role as the main psychological mechanism that bridges the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention. Thus, the influence of influencers on purchase intent is not direct, but through the process of transferring trust from influencers to brands before finally influencing purchase decisions.

IMPLICATIONS

1. Theoretical Implications

This study reinforces the relevance of Source Credibility Theory in the context of modern digital marketing by showing that the effectiveness of influencers is not only determined by their credibility, but also by their ability to build trust in the brand. These findings make it clear that the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention is indirect and mediated by brand trust.

Conceptually, this study contributes by affirming the role of brand trust as a crucial intervening variable in influencer marketing models, especially in the beauty industry in developing countries. In addition, this study shows that not all dimensions of credibility have the same power of influence, thus opening up space for the development of more contextual and industry-specific models in the future.

2. Managerial Implications

For beauty companies, the results of this study show that influencer selection should not only be based on the number of followers or popularity level, but rather on the level of trustworthiness and the ability to build authentic relationships with the audience. Collaboration strategies need to emphasize transparency, honesty in product reviews, and value matching between influencers and brands.

In addition, companies are advised to develop a long-term strategy that is oriented towards building brand trust, not just a momentary increase in brand awareness. Strong brand trust will increase the probability of buying intention formation while strengthening consumer loyalty.

SUGGESTIONS

The Company's management is advised to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the credibility of influencers before establishing cooperation. In addition, companies can encourage influencers to deliver content that is educational, based on real experiences, and transparent to increase the perception of authenticity and strengthen consumer trust in the brand.

Further research is recommended for:

a. Testing models in other industry sectors to see the consistency of the mediating role of brand trust.
b. Add other variables such as brand image, perceived risk, or parasocial interaction to enrich the conceptual model.
c. Using longitudinal design to observe the dynamics of the formation of trust and purchase intention over a certain period of time.

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