

ONLINE REVIEWS AND INFLUENCER ENDORSEMENTS ON PURCHASE INTENTION THROUGH TRUST AMONG GENERATION Z SKINTIFIC CONSUMERS

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of online customer reviews and influencer endorsements on purchase intention through consumer trust on the TikTok platform, focusing on Generation Z users of Skintific products in Makassar City. The rapid development of digital marketing has transformed how consumers access information and evaluate products, making online reviews and influencer endorsements key references in shaping purchase decisions. This research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design, involving 150 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method via SmartPLS. The findings reveal that online customer reviews and influencer endorsements do not have a direct effect on purchase intention. However, consumer trust has a significant positive effect on purchase intention and successfully mediates the relationship between both independent variables and purchase intention. These results highlight the crucial role of consumer trust in influencing purchasing behavior, suggesting that companies should prioritize building trust through credible information, transparent reviews, and effective digital marketing strategies.

Keywords: *Consumer Trust, Influencer Endorsement, Online Customer Review, Purchase Intention, TikTok.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The skincare industry in Indonesia has experienced rapid growth in recent years, driven by changes in lifestyle, increasing awareness of skin health, and the strong influence of social media on consumer behavior. Skincare products are no longer perceived merely as complementary goods but have become essential needs for various segments of society. This growth is supported by industry data showing that the beauty and personal care sector reached IDR 111.83 trillion in revenue in 2024 (CISAS, 2024), with an annual growth rate of 16% in value and 8% in sales volume (Kantar, 2024). Furthermore, the national cosmetics industry is projected to grow by 5.35% annually during 2024–2028 (Indonesia.go.id, 2024). Amid this rapid development, skincare brands are increasingly competing by offering scientifically formulated products. One notable brand is Skintific, which emphasizes science-based formulations and skin barrier protection. Along with product innovation, the rise of digital platforms such as TikTok has significantly transformed how consumers obtain information and form purchase intentions. Generation Z, as digital natives born between

1997 and 2012, heavily relies on online information, including online customer reviews and influencer endorsements, when evaluating products (Britannica, 2026). Their purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by digital content that is perceived as authentic and credible (Huwaida, 2024).

Despite the high exposure to information, consumers do not immediately make purchasing decisions but instead go through a purchase intention stage. Purchase intention reflects a consumer's willingness and interest in buying a product, which is influenced by perceived value and information received (Agustini & Elistia, 2024). However, this intention is highly dependent on consumer trust. Trust plays a crucial role in reducing uncertainty and perceived risk, particularly in online transactions (Wang, 2023). Without sufficient trust, positive information from reviews or endorsements may not effectively lead to actual purchase intention.

Previous studies have shown inconsistent findings regarding the influence of online customer reviews, influencer endorsements, and trust on purchase intention. Some studies found significant positive effects (Silitonga & Soelasih, 2022; Anjaya & Dwita, 2023; Sari & Aquinia, 2024; Fenolychia & Soepatini, 2024), while others reported non-significant relationships depending on context and consumer characteristics (Komara & Erwand, 2023; Pratama & Mardalis, 2024; Usmantara & Tandijaya, 2023). These inconsistencies highlight the need for further investigation, particularly by incorporating consumer trust as a mediating variable.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the influence of online customer reviews and influencer endorsements on purchase intention through consumer trust among Generation Z users of Skintific products in Makassar City. This research is important to provide a deeper understanding of how digital information and trust interact in shaping consumer behavior, as well as to offer practical insights for companies in developing effective digital marketing strategies.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach aimed at measuring and testing the relationships among variables numerically, specifically the effect of online customer reviews and influencer endorsements on purchase intention through consumer trust as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach is appropriate as it enables hypothesis testing and analysis of causal relationships using statistical methods such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach (Chen et al., 2022).

The research design used is explanatory research with a causal approach, which seeks to explain cause-and-effect relationships between variables based on theoretical and empirical evidence. In this context, the study examines whether changes in independent variables (online customer review and influencer endorsement) influence the dependent variable (purchase intention), both directly and indirectly through the mediating variable (consumer trust) (Islam & Khan, 2024).

The research was conducted in Makassar City, South Sulawesi, as this area has a large population of Generation Z with high digital activity, particularly in using social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. The target population consists of Generation Z individuals (born between 1997–2012) who reside in Makassar and are familiar with Skintific products. The sample was determined using purposive sampling with specific

criteria, including active social media usage, exposure to online reviews and influencer endorsements, and experience or interest in purchasing Skintific products. Based on Hair et al. (2010), the sample size is determined by multiplying the number of indicators (15) by 10, resulting in a total sample of 150 respondents.

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to respondents using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Secondary data were obtained from previous research, books, industry reports, and relevant online sources to support the theoretical framework.

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire technique, which is considered efficient for gathering standardized responses from a large number of respondents. Each research variable online customer review, influencer endorsement, consumer trust, and purchase intention was measured using indicators adapted from previous studies.

Data analysis was performed using SEM-PLS with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The analysis includes descriptive statistics to describe respondent characteristics and variable distributions, as well as inferential analysis through SEM-PLS. The evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) includes tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity (cross loading, Fornell-Larcker criterion, and HTMT), and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability). Meanwhile, the structural model (inner model) is evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and effect size (f^2).

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method to examine direct effects, indirect effects (mediation), and total effects. A relationship is considered significant if the t -statistic ≥ 1.645 and p -value < 0.05 . Mediation analysis follows the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2021), distinguishing between full mediation, partial mediation, and no mediation.

All analyses were carried out using SmartPLS software, which allows simultaneous testing of complex models and provides accurate and reliable results in examining the relationships among variables in this study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 1						
Hypothesis Code	Variable Relationships	Original Sample (O)	t -statistic	P -values	Remarks	Verdict
H1	$X1 \rightarrow Y$	-0.006	0.060	0.952	Negative and Insignificant	Rejected
H2	$X2 \rightarrow Y$	0.087	0.990	0.322	Positive and Insignificant	Rejected
H3	$From \rightarrow Y$	0.779	7.525	0.000	Positive and Significant	Accepted

Hypothesis Code	Variable Relationships	Original Sample (O)	t-statistic	P-values	Remarks	Verdict
H4	X1 → Z	0.630	7.055	0.000	Positive and Significant	Accepted
H5	X2 → Z	0.282	2.940	0.003	Positive and Significant	Accepted
H6	X1 → Z → Y	0.491	4.812	0.000	Positive and Significant Mediation	Accepted
H7	X2 → Z → Y	0.220	2.836	0.005	Positive and Significant Mediation	Accepted

Source: Data Processed, 2026

Based on Table 1, not all hypotheses proposed in this study are accepted. The results show that online customer review (H1) and influencer endorsement (H2) do not have a significant direct effect on purchase intention, as indicated by p-values greater than 0.05.

In contrast, trust (H3) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, online customer review (H4) and influencer endorsement (H5) are found to have a positive and significant effect on trust.

The indirect effect testing shows that both online customer review (H6) and influencer endorsement (H7) significantly influence purchase intention through trust. This indicates that trust acts as a full mediator, since the direct effects are not significant while the indirect effects are significant.

3.2 Discussion of Variables

The discussion of this study elaborates the relationships between variables based on the results of hypothesis testing.

First, online customer review (H1) is found to have no significant direct effect on purchase intention. This indicates that although Generation Z actively uses reviews to gather information, the reviews are not sufficiently persuasive to directly influence their intention to buy. The low impression value suggests that reviews function more as an informative tool rather than a persuasive factor.

Second, influencer endorsement (H2) also does not significantly affect purchase intention. Despite high visibility, the relatively low credibility of influencers reduces their ability to directly influence consumer decisions. This implies that frequent exposure alone is not enough to drive purchase intention without strong trust in the influencer.

Third, trust (H3) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. This finding confirms that trust is a key determinant in consumer decision-making. When consumers have high trusting intention, they feel confident about the product, which ultimately increases their intention to purchase.

Fourth, online customer review (H4) has a positive and significant effect on trust. This suggests that reviews play an important role in building consumer confidence by providing

relevant and informative content, even though they may not directly influence purchase intention.

Fifth, influencer endorsement (H5) also shows a positive and significant effect on trust. High visibility of influencers contributes to familiarity, which gradually develops into trust, although credibility still needs to be strengthened.

Sixth, the indirect effect of online customer review on purchase intention through trust (H6) is significant. This indicates that reviews influence purchase intention only after building trust. Therefore, trust fully mediates this relationship.

Seventh, influencer endorsement (H7) also significantly influences purchase intention through trust. Similar to online reviews, influencer exposure first creates awareness and familiarity, which then develops into trust before influencing purchase intention.

Overall, the results confirm that trust acts as a full mediator in the relationship between online customer review, influencer endorsement, and purchase intention. Generation Z consumers tend to evaluate information carefully, build trust first, and then form purchase intention, highlighting the crucial role of trust as a bridge between marketing stimuli and consumer behavior.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that online customer review and influencer endorsement do not have a direct significant effect on purchase intention among Generation Z consumers toward Skintific products. However, trust is proven to have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, indicating its crucial role in influencing consumer decisions. Furthermore, both online customer review and influencer endorsement significantly influence trust, showing that these variables contribute to building consumer confidence in the product.

In addition, trust is found to fully mediate the relationship between online customer review and influencer endorsement on purchase intention. This implies that Generation Z consumers tend to rely on trust as a key factor before forming purchase intention, rather than being directly influenced by reviews or endorsements.

Therefore, future strategies should focus on strengthening consumer trust by improving the credibility of reviews and the authenticity of influencer endorsements, so that marketing efforts can more effectively enhance purchase intention.

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