

INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY AND BRAND REPUTATION IN SHAPING TRUST AND PURCHASE INTENTION: EXPLORING GENERATION Z'S RESPONSE TO LOCAL BEAUTY PRODUCTS ON TIKTOK

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ABSTRACT

Driven by societal pressures and beauty standards, skincare products have become a daily necessity, especially through TikTok, emerging as a prominent platform for beauty trends. This study explores the impact of brand reputation on purchase intention for local beauty products among Generation Z, examining the moderating role of TikTok influencer credibility and the mediating effect of trust. Although TikTok has become a powerful platform for shaping consumer behavior, particularly purchase intention, the extent to which influencer credibility moderates the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention remains insufficiently examined. This research addresses this gap in the literature by proposing a single framework and conducting an experiment to assess how influencer credibility influences the strength of brand reputation's effect on purchase intention. A quantitative approach was applied using a 2 (brand reputation: positive vs. negative) × 2 (influencer credibility: high vs. low) between-subjects experimental design, involving 135 participants who were randomly assigned to one of 4 different scenarios. The findings confirm that brand reputation significantly increases purchase intention. Moreover, an influencer with high credibility strengthens the positive impact of brand reputation on purchase intention. However, influencers with low credibility do not significantly affect consumer purchase decisions, highlighting the importance of authenticity and expertise over mere popularity. Interestingly, influencer credibility does not moderate the relationship between brand trust and purchase intention. Trust was found to fully mediate the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention, serving as a crucial psychological mechanism that converts positive brand perceptions into buying behavior. This suggests that trust, grounded primarily in consumers' direct brand experiences and overall reputation, is less influenced by external endorsements. These findings highlight the importance of managing brand reputation and partnering with credible influencers to maximize marketing effectiveness in Generation Z's purchasing decisions in the local beauty market.

Keywords: *Brand Reputation, Brand Trust, Purchase Intention, TikTok Influencer Credibility, Beauty Products*

1. INTRODUCTION

Skincare has become an essential aspect of daily routines, particularly among women, driven by increasing concerns over skin health and societal beauty standards [1]. Beauty products are among the

most sought-after categories based on research indicating a significant portion of online transactions, accounting for 16% of total e-commerce spending, highlighting the strong demand for beauty products [2]. This demand is not limited to international brands, as local beauty brands have

gained popularity due to affordability and the use of locally sourced ingredients [1]. In Indonesia, local beauty brands in the cosmetics category experienced a 20.6% increase in growth from 2021 to 2022, with the skincare segment achieving the highest revenue growth at 29.6% [3]. Local beauty brands must prioritize safe ingredients in developing skincare products tailored to diverse skin types in tropical Asia, enhancing their reputation for meeting regional needs and standards [1]. As local brands strive to enhance their market presence, brand reputation emerges as a critical determinant of consumer purchase intentions [4]. The importance of brand reputation makes it a valuable research topic, as it strongly impacts consumers' purchase intentions in the beauty industry [5]. A positive brand reputation fosters consumer trust and strengthens brand credibility, influencing purchasing behavior across various sectors, including automotive [6], fashion brands [7], and e-commerce [8]. In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, social media platforms, particularly TikTok, have become integral to brand marketing strategies [9].

The rising popularity of social media platforms, particularly TikTok, has significantly impacted internet users worldwide [10]. TikTok has emerged as a critical player in shaping consumer perceptions and a central focus of brand marketing efforts [9]. TikTok, with approximately 157.6 million users in Indonesia, represents a significant channel for brand engagement, particularly among Generation Z, who comprise 60% of its user base [10], [11]. This generation has been raised alongside the internet and social media, emphasizing the significant influence of social platforms on their current and future consumer behavior. Generation Z's behaviors and interests are relevant for present and future business ventures, as they wield considerable purchasing power and serve as trendsetters, making them a prime focus for marketers. One way to engage Generation Z is by leveraging influencers they admire, as they actively support influencers they perceive as credible, authentic, talented, or those who take direct action on products or services [12].

The growing reliance on influencers as marketing agents raises critical questions regarding their role in shaping brand perceptions. Influencers, perceived as credible and authentic, can significantly impact consumer attitudes and purchase decisions by leveraging trust and relatability [13], [14]. Fierce competition in today's market drives many brands to use social media influencers to market their products

[15]. The positive reputation of credible influencers significantly impacts purchase decisions [16], by leveraging attractiveness, trustworthiness, and perceived similarity to consumer trust [13], ultimately enhancing brand value. Consequently, influencers' effectiveness in shaping consumer perceptions affects the brand's reputation and enhances its reputation [17]. In social media marketing, considering influencers with high credibility is crucial as they can influence consumer perceptions of the brand and their purchase decisions. To our knowledge, the effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping brand reputation and fostering trust remains underexplored, particularly in the context of Generation Z consumers engaging with beauty brands on TikTok. Trust plays a crucial role in shaping brand perceptions, as it leads consumers to view products as more reliable and increases purchase likelihood [18]. Credible influencers enhance trust, positively influencing consumer perceptions even when brand reputations vary [19]. Moreover, active engagement on social media platforms has been shown to strengthen consumer-brand relationships, fostering trust and positive purchase intentions [20], [21].

Despite the growing body of literature on influencer marketing and brand reputation, most prior studies have treated these constructs in isolation, with limited attention to their combined effects on consumer trust and purchase intention, particularly in digital-native contexts. Furthermore, few studies have investigated how influencer credibility interacts with brand reputation in short-form video platforms such as TikTok, especially among Generation Z in emerging markets like Indonesia. The moderating role of influencer credibility and the mediating role of trust remain underexplored in experimental settings, leaving a critical gap in understanding the psychological mechanisms that drive consumer behavior, particularly purchase intention, in the era of social media. To address these gaps, the present research aims to examine the causal relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention, the moderating effect of TikTok influencer credibility, and the mediating role of trust among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. Through an experimental approach, this study seeks to offer empirical insights that both extend the theoretical discourse and inform practical marketing strategies for local beauty brands operating in highly competitive digital environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Brand Reputation

A solid brand reputation is essential for companies seeking a competitive edge [22]. Previous studies have explored how brand reputation influences purchasing intentions through many factors such as the country-of-origin image [6], brand awareness [7], and positive live stream experiences [8]. High awareness, positive image, and minimal risk perception are the keys to success for companies with a good brand reputation [23]. According to signal theory [24], image and brand reputation function as important external clues that guide consumers in assessing a product, and influencing buying decisions. Brand reputation helps consumers make choices, especially in the absence of clear intrinsic cues [25], [26].

Consumers consider a product's brand reputation when making a purchase decision. Consumers consider brands with a high reputation to have less risk. In contrast, brands with low reputation are often perceived as unreliable and inconsistent in delivering expected product performance. This perception heightens consumers' sense of risk and uncertainty, reducing their confidence and making them more likely to delay or cancel purchase decisions [26]. This can influence purchase intention [27] because values have a significant role in consumer brand selection [28]. Brand managers must therefore take consumer values into account when developing strategies to attract consumer attention. Previous studies show that consumers tend to prefer brands that have a direct connection to values that are important to them [29] as well as brands that have a good reputation [30].

2.2 TikTok Influencer

Influencer credibility refers to the trustworthiness and reliability of online content creators targeting a specific audience, enabling them to become opinion leaders whose posts can impact brands, products, and potential consumers [31]. The level of trust from followers is particularly important for influencers [31], [32]. Thanks to their expertise and closeness to their followers' interests, influencers are considered more credible than celebrities, so their opinions have a more significant impact on their followers [32], [33]. This increase is due to the growing number of social media influencers pursuing careers in specialized fields,

such as food reviews, which are considered expert professions [34].

With the ability of influencers to influence followers' reactions to the products they endorse [13], brands collaborate with influencers as an effective way to convey their offerings [35], due to the substantial trust placed in influencers [13]. This trust in influencers also increases consumer trust in brands online [36], highlighting how influencers greatly influence people's opinions about brands. However, when influencers are perceived as lacking credibility or authenticity, the impact can backfire. Influencers with low perceived trustworthiness can trigger doubt among followers, which may damage the perceived integrity of the brand and reduce consumers' willingness to place trust in it. This erosion of trust ultimately undermines consumers' purchase intention, as followers may question the value or authenticity of the recommended products [35]. Previous studies have found that the credibility of social media influencers affects trust in several industries, including the beauty industry [16], the cosmetics industry [37], and the culinary industry [38].

2.3 Trust

Trust in a brand can be explained as consumer confidence in how dependable and responsible [18] and also certainty in the brand [39]. Trust is built through shared experiences and activities. This is a concept that companies and customers need to cultivate to build successful relationships [40]. Research shows that brand trust promotes positive reactions [21] and improves purchase intentions for products from that brand [41]. Brand trust also shapes consumers' trust in online merchants [20].

Consumers' purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by their level of trust in the brand [18], [42]. This suggests that high levels of brand trust can enhance perceptions of product benefits, thereby increasing purchase intention [43]. Nonetheless, earlier studies have demonstrated that negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a substantial impact on diminishing brand trust, ultimately lowering consumers' willingness to make a purchase [42]. It has been observed that negative eWOM acts as a strong signal of risk, which not only weakens consumer trust in the brand but also directly reduces their purchasing intentions. This highlights how detrimental negative eWOM can be in shaping consumer behavior, especially when trust is compromised [42].

2.4 Hypothesis Development

When consumers make purchases, they often consider a brand's reputation, seeing highly reputable brands as safer choices [27]. This factor significantly impacts their intention to buy [28]. Previous research has shown that brand reputation is significantly influenced by consumer interactions on social media [14], corporate social responsibility [44], and corporate reputation, which encompasses brand image and brand credibility [4]. Consequently, this enhances consumer trust and affinity towards a brand [4] while driving positive attitudes toward consumer purchase intentions [5]. Moreover, the choice of well-known brands serves as a way to indicate social status, appealing to consumers aiming to demonstrate their societal standing [27].

According to previous research, a positive brand reputation can increase purchase intention, while a negative brand reputation can decrease purchase intention [7]. Previous studies examining Skintific as an international skincare brand have shown a positive impact of brand reputation on consumer purchase intention [5]. Skincare and cosmetics are critical areas for research due to their significant impact on skin health and overall well-being. Studies on skincare products, including cosmeceuticals, aim to develop formulations with therapeutic benefits that address specific skin concerns and enhance overall skin health [45]. Particularly for individuals with sensitive skin, choosing products with the right ingredients is essential [46]. Consumers with specific skin needs often rely on trusted brands to provide safe and effective solutions. This highlights the critical role of brand reputation in the skincare industry. As a result, building and maintaining a positive reputation is crucial for brands to influence consumer behavior and purchase intention, ultimately ensuring success in the market.

Based on all the previous research described above, we hypothesize that:

H1: Positive brand reputation has a higher influence on purchase intention compared to negative brand reputation in local beauty products among Generation Z.

In today's dynamic marketplace, brand reputation is pivotal in shaping consumers' purchase intentions [5]. With so many choices, consumers rely on brand reputation to guide their decisions. However, the emergence of influencers has added a new dimension to this relationship. Influencers hold substantial power to shape consumer opinions and preferences through their engaging content [15]. Therefore, it has become essential for brands to

leverage social media to glean insights into their customer base and disseminate brand and product information. Social media influencers, as powerful figures in the digital landscape, act as intermediaries between brands and consumers by leveraging their substantial online presence and authentic engagement [15]. Through platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, they share personal experiences, endorse products, and shape public opinion, enabling them to establish significant social influence and credibility in promoting brands and driving consumer behavior [15]. Influencers enhance brand visibility and value by leveraging their credibility, utilizing social media to shape consumer perceptions, foster positive impressions, and drive higher purchase intentions [15], [16].

As consumers increasingly turn to influencers for guidance, brands recognize the power of influencer credibility in shaping consumer perceptions. A wealth of research underscores this recognition. Previous research has consistently highlighted the significance of influencer credibility in shaping purchase intention across diverse consumer domains such as influencer marketing, brand equity, consumer behavior [47], celebrity endorsement, brand trust, and lifestyle [48], also product marketing and endorsements [49]. Moreover, additional research has underscored the persuasive influence of influencers [15] and their reputation for honesty and sincerity [14] in influencing consumer purchasing intentions.

We aim to examine the effect of influencer credibility in moderating the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention. We propose that influencers with high credibility increase the viewer's purchase intention, with the effects being more pronounced for the brand with a positive reputation than the brand with a negative reputation. The credibility of an influencer essentially gives a level of assurance to their viewer [50], so when an influencer with high credibility talks about a product or a brand, the viewer will have a kind of assurance that those influencers know what they are talking and recommending about, which eventually sparks interest. Subsequently, those who are interested in the product will conduct further research, thereby acquiring information about the brand's reputation, which may be either positive or negative. This will then inform them of their decision as to whether or not they intend to purchase the product.

In contrast, we propose influencers with low credibility should neither increase nor decrease purchase intention towards either brands with positive or negative reputations. Low-credibility influencers will neither give assurance nor spark interest in their viewer about the brand [50], irrelevant to their popularity. The reason popularity does not translate to credibility is that an influencer's credibility depends on the trust of their viewers [31], [32] and their expertise [32], [33]. Even if the influencer is highly popular, the viewers may not trust them to provide sound advice. Consequently, when the influencer discusses a brand, some viewers may perceive their content as only entertainment rather than genuine advice. In contrast, others will doubt the brand discussed regardless of the brand's reputation. This skepticism leads to a noticeable lack of difference in purchase intention for products or brands promoted by influencers who lack credibility.

Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2a: When influencer credibility is high, purchase intention towards products with positive brand reputation is greater than purchase intention towards products with negative brand reputation.

H2b: When influencer credibility is low, purchase intention towards products with positive brand reputation and purchase intention towards products with negative brand reputation are insignificant.

When talking about purchase decisions, previous studies have established trust as a mediator that affects purchase intention, in combination with other factors such as brand reputation [51], blogger recommendations [52], and online reviews [53]. Trust in a brand leads consumers to perceive the product as better, increasing the likelihood of purchase. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that brand trust has the potential to mediate the positive relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention toward natural personal care products.

Building brand trust is essential for success, so all brands should prioritize it by actively engaging with customers, particularly on social media, to demonstrate responsiveness to their concerns [20]. Moreover, influencers who are highly valued and trusted by their followers have the potential to increase customer trust in a brand regardless of their brand reputation [19]. This leads to the hypothesis that the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention is moderated by influencer credibility and is mediated by trust. Therefore, we

would like to assess the relationship between brand reputation and influencer credibility to purchase intention through trust, as shown in Figure 1.

Therefore, our following hypothesis is:

H3: Trust mediates the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention moderated by influencer credibility.

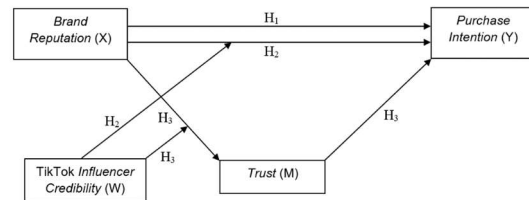


Figure 1: Research Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Pretest

This pretest selected five top influencers (Tasya Farasya, Jharna Bhagwani, Nanda Arsyinta, Maria Clarin, Asyifa Nadya Ivan) according to the Pop Star website [54], while the five most controversial influencers (Emil Mario, Popo Barbie, Denise Chariesta, Lucinta Luna, Felicia Angelista) were selected based on the Starnage websites [55]. In determining the level of TikTok influencer credibility, the results from a survey of 40 respondents (87.5% female; $M_{age} = 22.38$) determined that Tasya Farasya and Lucinta Luna were chosen for the study due to their similar familiarity levels ($M = 5.897$). Low familiarity can influence the level of trust in influencers, hence, only influencers with the same familiarity were chosen to ensure that familiarity did not become an additional factor affecting the study. Moreover, familiarity was selected for direct comparison purposes and to solely focus on their credibility. The pretest results revealed that Tasya Farasya had the highest mean credibility ($M=5.615$), while Lucinta Luna had the lowest ($M=3.33$). This indicates that Tasya Farasya was perceived as more credible than Lucinta Luna based on the respondents' perceptions in the pretest. Thus, both influencers were chosen to be subjects in further research regarding the influence of Tasya Farasya's credibility as a high-credibility TikTok influencer and Lucinta Luna as a low-credibility TikTok beauty influencer.

3.2 Procedure

One hundred thirty-five online participants

(65.18% female; $M_{age} = 17$) were randomly assigned to one of four conditions of a 2 (brand reputation: positive vs. negative) \times 2 (influencer credibility: high vs. low) between-subjects design. Eligible participants were Generation Z individuals residing in Indonesia who use TikTok and have an interest in local beauty products. Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, was selected because of their unique characteristics of digital capabilities, diverse values, and distinct behaviors [12]. Additionally, the relevance of Generation Z was evident, as 60% of primary users of TikTok were Generation Z individuals [11].

Following Roscoe (1975) and Gay and Diehl (1992), a minimum of 30 subjects per condition was set for this experimental research. The manipulation of brand reputation to either a positive or negative was conducted by presenting participants with images of products and concise details about a fictional brand. This approach aimed to prevent bias from existing brand images and provided participants with insights designed to influence their perception of the brand, either positively or negatively [56]. The manipulation of influencer credibility to either high or low was achieved by presenting participants with images of real influencers selected based on pretest results. These images were accompanied by descriptions crafted to convey the influencer's level of credibility, such as achievements or controversies the influencer had experienced [57]. After reviewing the brand and influencer information, participants were asked to respond to 8 questions: 4 items measured trust [58], and the remaining 4 assessed purchase intention [59]. All questions were using a 7-point Likert scale (1= strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree).

4. RESULTS

Before analyzing and processing the data, we conducted reliability tests on the trust and purchase intention variables. Reliability tests using Cronbach alpha showed that both trust ($\alpha = 0.944$) and ($\alpha = 0.943$) purchase intention, surpassed the acceptable threshold ($\alpha > 0.70$). These findings confirm that the constructs of trust and purchase intention used in this study are consistent and reliable for further analysis. To test hypothesis 1, the influence of brand reputation (positive vs. negative) on the purchase intention of local beauty products among Generation Z was examined using one-way ANOVA analysis. The analysis results showed a significant influence

of brand reputation on purchase intention for local beauty products among Generation Z, with higher purchase intentions in brands with positive reputation ($M = 4.053$; $SD = 1.75$) compared to negative reputation ($M = 3.271$; $SD = 1.80$; $F(1,134) = 6.522$, $p < 0.012$), which is shown in Table 1. These results indicate that the positive reputation of the brand significantly influences the purchase intention of local beauty products among Generation Z. Respondents tend to have higher purchase intentions when the brand has a good reputation compared to brands with a poor reputation, indicating the importance of brand reputation in influencing purchase decisions of Generation Z consumers towards local beauty products, which supports hypothesis 1.

Table 1: One-Way ANOVA Test Results

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Positive Brand Reputation	4.053	1.755	0.012
Negative Brand Reputation	3.271	1.800	0.012

To test hypothesis 2, 2 (brand reputation: positive and negative) \times 2 (influencer credibility: high and low) ANOVA was run and revealed a significant interaction effect between influencer credibility and brand reputation ($F(1,70) = 9.531$, $p < 0.003$) which shown in Fig. 2. Specifically, when influencer credibility is high, consumers showed a notably higher purchase intention for products with a positive brand reputation ($M = 4.772$; $SD = 1.60$) compared to products with a negative brand reputation ($M = 3.480$, $SD = 1.88$; $F(1,70) = 9.531$, $p < 0.003$). These findings indicate a clear tendency among consumers to exhibit stronger purchase intentions for products with positive brand reputations when influencers possess high credibility, aligning with hypothesis H2a. Meanwhile, when influencer credibility is low, there is no significant difference between positive and negative brand reputation ($M_{positive} = 3.31$ vs $M_{negative} = 3.02$; $SD = 1.69$; $F(1,63) = 0.491$, $p > 0.4$), which supports H2b.

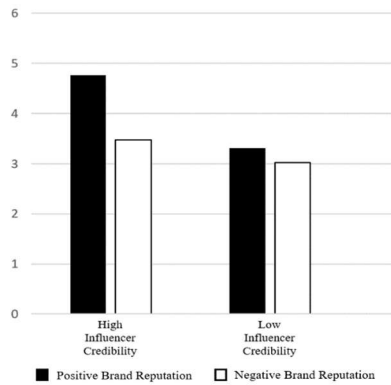


Figure 2: Influence of TikTok Influencer Credibility and Brand Reputation on Purchase Intention

To test hypothesis 3, an analysis with PROCESS Model 7 by Hayes (2013) was conducted to evaluate the effect of brand reputation on purchase intention moderated by influencer credibility and mediated by trust in local beauty products among Generation Z. Contrary to hypothesis 3, the analysis of the index of mediated moderation results in ($B = 0.2731$, $SE = 0.4131$, 95% confidence interval $[CI_{95}] = [-0.262, 1.1010]$), indicating that hypothesis 3 was not supported. This indicates that the credibility of influencers does not moderate the relationship between brand reputation mediated by trust and purchase intention. To investigate this phenomenon further, an additional experiment was conducted to examine the mediation effect. The Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step method was utilized to determine whether mediation occurred in the absence of moderation. The SPSS analysis results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Baron and Kenny Method (1986) Results

Independent variable	Dependent variable	β Value	Sig.
Brand reputation	Purchase intention	-0.782	< 0.013
Brand reputation	Trust	-1.548	0.000
Trust	Purchase intention	0.715	0.000
Brand reputation	Purchase intention	0.407	> 0.1
Trust		0.769	= 0.000

These findings indicate that trust fully mediates the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention. This conclusion is supported by the fourth step, where the inclusion of both brand reputation and trust in the model results in trust being

significant while brand reputation becomes insignificant, fulfilling the criteria for full mediation. To validate this result, a mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 by Hayes. The outcome revealed a significant mediation effect ($B = -1.1898$, $SE = 0.2175$, $CI_{95} = [-1.6340, -0.7740]$), confirming the mediating role of trust in the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention. These results suggest that influencer credibility does not moderate the effect of brand reputation on trust, indicating the absence of moderated mediation. In other words, trust consistently serves as a crucial mechanism linking brand reputation to purchase intention, regardless of the level of influencer credibility. This highlights the dominant role of trust in shaping consumer intentions in the local beauty product market.

5. GENERAL DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that brand reputation significantly influences purchase intention in the local beauty products industry among Generation Z consumers. This aligns with previous research [18], [7], which highlights how a strong brand reputation enhances consumer confidence by reducing perceived risk and increasing purchase likelihood. Consumers tend to favor reputable brands, associating them with higher quality, greater reliability, and lower uncertainty. Additionally, this study reinforces the idea that brand reputation serves as a critical external cue when evaluating beauty products, particularly in an industry where trust and perceived effectiveness play a key role in purchasing decisions [25], [26].

Furthermore, this study provides empirical support for the moderating role of TikTok influencer credibility in the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention. The findings indicate that highly credible influencers enhance the positive impact of brand reputation on purchase intention, as consumers exposed to endorsements from trusted influencers exhibit greater confidence in the brand. This aligns with prior research [31], [16], which suggests that influencer credibility strengthens consumer perceptions of brand quality and reliability. Additionally, this study finds that low-credibility influencers do not significantly affect purchase decisions, reinforcing the argument that credibility, rather than mere popularity, determines consumer trust [32]. Generation Z consumers, known for their digital savviness, critically evaluate

influencer endorsements, placing greater value on authenticity and expertise. As a result, influencers lacking credibility fail to provide the assurance needed to drive purchasing behavior, leading to neutral or indifferent responses toward endorsed brands.

Interestingly, the findings reveal that influencer credibility does not moderate the relationship between brand trust, brand reputation, and purchase intention. This contrasts with previous studies [19], [36], which suggested that influencers could enhance trust in a brand regardless of its reputation. The discrepancy may stem from the fact that, in this study, trust pertains specifically to the brand rather than the influencer. While prior research [13] has demonstrated that influencer credibility can transfer to the brand, this effect appears less pronounced when consumers already have an established perception of brand trust. When trust is rooted in the brand itself, consumers rely more on their prior experiences and overall brand reputation than on influencer recommendations. However, it is worth noting that the results might differ if trust were primarily associated with the influencer's credibility rather than the brand.

Additionally, this study confirms that trust fully mediates the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention. This aligns with previous research [51], [41], which suggests that trust serves as a crucial mechanism in translating brand reputation into actual purchasing behavior. While a strong brand reputation enhances consumer perceptions, it is the development of trust that ultimately drives purchase intention. Consumers who trust a brand are more likely to associate its products with high quality and reliability, reinforcing their willingness to buy [52]. These findings emphasize the importance of trust-building strategies, such as transparent communication and consistent product quality, in strengthening the connection between brand reputation and consumer loyalty. Furthermore, this study considers influencer credibility as a moderating factor but finds that its impact is limited in the presence of established brand trust, highlighting the primary role of trust in shaping purchasing decisions.

5.1 Comparison with Prior Research

This study differs from prior work by experimentally examining the interaction between brand reputation, influencer credibility, and consumer trust, specifically within the context of TikTok influencers and local beauty products,

achieving a deeper understanding of how credibility moderates and trust mediates their combined effect on Generation Z's purchase intentions. Compared to prior literature, this study extends theoretical perspectives by integrating and applying multiple frameworks, such as signal theory and trust theory, within a single experimental model. Previous studies like Lou and Yuan (2019) and Rathnayake and Lakshika (2023) primarily explored the effects of influencer credibility on trust and purchase intention in isolation, without incorporating the reputational context of the brand or the moderating role of influencer traits. This study diverges by framing brand reputation as a signal that affects perceived risk, and simultaneously examining how trust mediates consumer behavior in high-credibility versus low-credibility influencer scenarios.

Moreover, while previous research often utilized correlational analysis, this study provides experimental validation to demonstrate the causal interaction between theoretical constructs using brand reputation, influencer credibility, and trust that offers stronger theoretical grounding and empirical clarity. By focusing specifically on Generation Z within the Indonesian beauty market, the study further enhances existing theory by contextualizing how digital-native consumers interpret credibility cues and brand reputation differently than older demographics. This demographic-specific insight adds a layer of novelty and theoretical refinement that is often lacking in global or non-segmented studies.

This study adopts a comprehensive and in-depth approach by investigating the influence of TikTok influencer credibility on consumer behavior toward local Indonesian beauty products, specifically among Generation Z, a digitally native and rapidly expanding consumer segment. Unlike previous research that often focuses on traditional social media platforms or global brands, this study emphasizes TikTok, a fast-evolving and visually driven platform that heavily shapes Gen Z's digital consumption habits in Indonesia. By centering on local beauty brands rather than established international labels, the study offers valuable insights into how emerging companies can strategically leverage influencer marketing to build trust and drive purchase intention.

A key contribution of this research lies in its integration of brand reputation, influencer credibility, and consumer trust within a single moderated mediation model. This holistic framework allows for a deeper understanding of how these variables interact dynamically. As a result, the study successfully maps the psychological decision-

making pathway that consumers follow, as reflected in the proposed research framework. The findings further extend theoretical discourse by revealing that while influencer credibility can enhance brand reputation and visibility, factors that positively influence purchase intention, it does not significantly impact brand trust. This suggests that trust may be more strongly rooted in consistent brand experience and long-term consumer relationships than in influencer endorsement alone.

Methodologically, the study employs a 2×2 experimental design to provide empirical evidence of causal relationships, moving beyond the correlational survey-based methods that dominate current research in this field. Additionally, the study challenges common industry assumptions by clearly distinguishing between influencer credibility and popularity. It demonstrates that influencers with high follower counts but low credibility fail to influence trust or purchase intention, highlighting that perceived trustworthiness and expertise, not mere visibility, are the true drivers of credibility.

5.2 Limitations

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The focus on Generation Z limits the generalizability of the findings to other demographic groups. Future research should examine whether these dynamics hold true across different age cohorts. Additionally, this study is confined to the TikTok platform, which may not reflect consumer behavior on other social media platforms such as Instagram or YouTube. Exploring cross-platform differences would provide a more comprehensive understanding of influencer marketing. Furthermore, the study does not distinguish between paid and organic influencer content, an important variable that may shape consumer perceptions of credibility and authenticity. Future studies are encouraged to investigate the effects of sponsorship disclosures on consumer trust and purchase behavior. Lastly, alternative operationalizations of brand reputation and influencer credibility should be considered in future research to enrich the conceptual robustness and applicability of the findings across diverse contexts.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aims to examine the role of influencer credibility in shaping the relationship between brand reputation and purchase intention. It investigates how social media influencers impact

consumer behavior, particularly in the context of local beauty products. The findings confirm that social media influencers significantly impact consumer behavior, especially in driving purchase intention for local beauty products. Consumers tend to be drawn to a product after exposure to influencer content, especially when the influencer is perceived as credible and the brand carries a positive reputation. However, the study also finds that influencers, regardless of their credibility, have minimal impact on the relationship between brand reputation and brand trust. This suggests that while influencers enhance brand visibility, trust in local beauty brands remains primarily shaped by consumers' direct perceptions, experiences, and the consistency of the brand itself. Thus, while influencers play a role in brand exposure, they do not alter the fundamental trust consumers place in beauty products, which is primarily rooted in the brand's reputation and consumer understanding. This implies that in marketing practice, influencers are more effective in driving brand awareness and interest rather than establishing long-term consumer trust.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in the integration of brand reputation, influencer credibility, and trust within a 2×2 experimental design, allowing for the isolation of their respective effects on purchase intention. Prior research has explored these variables individually, but few have experimentally examined their interactions, particularly in the context of TikTok influencers and local beauty brands in Indonesia. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the influence of brand reputation and influencer credibility on consumer trust with brands, thereby influencing purchase intention. The findings contribute to previous brand reputation research [5], [8], [19], by examining the relationship between brand reputation and influencer credibility. Moreover, we contribute to influencer credibility research [47], [49], by examining TikTok influencer credibility as a moderator and combining it with brand reputation. This research also contributes to studies on high-reputation celebrities' impact on purchase intention by using TikTok influencers instead, considering their ability to shape consumer attitudes toward brands and products [31]. We use the trust variable as a mediator, contributing to trust literature [38], [39], [16]. This study also contributes to studies on social media by discussing TikTok and its user characteristics [15], [9].

Theoretically, this study enriches

understanding of how digital endorsement credibility interacts with brand-driven trust formation. It adds to the academic discourse by showing that the relationship between trust and purchase intention may be less influenced by influencers and more dependent on brand-internal cues. This study fills a gap in previous literature by using an experimental method to provide empirical evidence on the causal effects of influencer credibility and brand reputation. It also offers new insights into how TikTok-specific influencer dynamics affect Generation Z consumers. These findings open further research avenues to explore the role of platform-specific characteristics, types of trust (affective vs. cognitive), and how different consumer segments interpret influencer credibility in varied contexts

These findings offer valuable managerial implications for brands operating in the digital era, particularly within highly visual and trend-driven platforms such as TikTok. Marketers should prioritize building and maintaining a strong brand reputation because it directly enhances consumer trust and significantly influences purchase intention. This can be achieved through consistent product quality, active consumer engagement, responsiveness to feedback, and coherent brand messaging. In parallel, collaborating with highly credible influencers who are perceived as knowledgeable and authentic can amplify the positive effects of brand reputation on consumer behavior. Companies should adopt a strategic approach when selecting influencers by evaluating their credibility, expertise, and alignment with brand values rather than relying solely on popularity. Additionally, it informs marketers that while influencer strategies enhance interest and exposure, trust must be earned through consistent brand behavior. By implementing these strategies, marketers can strengthen brand trust, maximize the effectiveness of influencer marketing, and build stronger connections with Generation Z consumers in increasingly competitive digital marketplaces.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Nathasia: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Funding Acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project Administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing; **Hansen Thendy:** Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Funding Acquisition, Investigation,

Methodology, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing; **Julius Romario:** Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Funding Acquisition, Investigation, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing; **Anisa Larasati:** Conceptualization, Funding Acquisition, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing.

Data Availability

The authors of the article titled "*Influencer Credibility and Brand Reputation in Shaping Trust and Purchase Intention: Exploring Generation Z's Response to Local Beauty Products on TikTok*" affirm their commitment to data transparency and openness. To support further research and verification, the dataset used in this study has been made publicly available at the following link:

- [TikTok Gen Z Respondent Data: This data comes from a survey conducted by the authors](#)

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