

Being Influenced To Purchase: The Role Of Credibility And Brand-Influencer Fit

Dipengaruhi Untuk Membeli: Peran Kredibilitas Dan Kesesuaian Merek Dengan Influencer

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit affect purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Bandung, Indonesia. As influencer marketing are currently rapidly mature, the alignment between brand identity and influencer persona became a crucial determinant of marketing effectiveness. Drawing from the source credibility theory and the match-up hypothesis, this research investigates whether credible and well-matched influencers strengthen consumers' willingness to purchase. Data were collected from 180 active social-media users from Generation Z who follow cosmetic brands promoted by Indonesian influencers. Using multiple linear regression, results reveal that both influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit have a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that trustworthiness and congruence enhance persuasive impact. The findings highlight the importance for marketers to select influencers not only based on popularity but on authenticity and value alignment to sustain consumer engagement and conversion.

Keywords: Brand-Influencer Fit, Influencer Credibility, Purchase Intention

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana kredibilitas influencer dan kesesuaian merek-influencer memengaruhi niat pembelian di kalangan konsumen Generasi Z di Bandung, Indonesia. Seiring dengan perkembangan pesat pemasaran influencer, keselarasan antara identitas merek dan persona influencer menjadi faktor penentu penting dalam efektivitas pemasaran. Berlandaskan teori kredibilitas sumber dan hipotesis kesesuaian, penelitian ini menyelidiki apakah influencer yang kredibel dan sesuai memperkuat niat pembelian konsumen. Data dikumpulkan dari 180 pengguna media sosial aktif dari Generasi Z yang mengikuti merek kosmetik yang dipromosikan oleh influencer Indonesia. Menggunakan regresi linier berganda, hasil menunjukkan bahwa baik kredibilitas influencer maupun kesesuaian merek-influencer memiliki efek positif yang signifikan terhadap niat pembelian ($p < 0.05$). Temuan ini mengonfirmasi bahwa kepercayaan dan kesesuaian meningkatkan dampak persuasif. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya bagi pemasar untuk memilih influencer tidak hanya berdasarkan popularitas, tetapi juga berdasarkan keaslian dan keselarasan nilai untuk mempertahankan keterlibatan dan konversi konsumen.

Kata Kunci: Kesesuaian Merek-Influencer, Kredibilitas Influencer, Niat Pembelian

1. Introduction

In recent years, social media has become one of the most influential platforms in shaping consumer behavior, particularly among Generation Z (Balaban & Mustătea, 2019; Saputra & Dewobroto, 2022). This demographic group, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, represents the first generation to grow up fully immersed in digital environments. Their purchasing decisions are not only shaped by traditional marketing communication but also by the opinions, lifestyles, and content shared by social media influencers (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Saima & Khan, 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020). As a result, influencer marketing has emerged as one of the most effective tools for brands to reach and engage younger consumers (Astuti & Risqiani, 2020; Rutter et al., 2021; Suprawan & Pojanavatee, 2022), especially in industries such as cosmetics, where visual appeal and authenticity play a central role.

By 2022, Indonesia witnessed a significant increase in influencer-led campaigns on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Local cosmetic brands collaborated with content creators to promote beauty products through tutorials, reviews, and aesthetic storytelling (Tunpornchai et al., 2021). Unlike conventional advertising, influencer marketing relies on parasocial relationships—a sense of emotional closeness and trust developed between influencers and their followers (Buvár et al., 2022; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Yuan & Lou, 2020). Consumers perceive influencers not merely as endorsers but as relatable figures whose opinions carry credibility (Janssen et al., 2022; J. K. Lee, 2021). This dynamic has redefined how consumers evaluate product information, trust brand messages, and form purchase intentions.

Among the various factors that determine the success of influencer marketing, influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit is two of the most critical. The source credibility theory (Seiler & Kucza, 2017; Shrivastava et al., 2021) suggests that the persuasiveness of a message largely depends on the perceived credibility of its source, reflected through expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Greve & Schlüschen, 2018; Silalahi et al., 2021). When followers view an influencer as knowledgeable and sincere, they are more likely to adopt the influencer's recommendations and translate them into purchase behavior (Belanche et al., 2021; Lee & Kim, 2020). In the context of cosmetics marketing, credibility plays an even more essential role, as consumers rely heavily on product demonstrations, skin-type recommendations, and honest reviews before making buying decisions.

In addition to credibility, the brand–influencer fit (often grounded in the match-up hypothesis) determines how well an influencer's personal image aligns with the brand's identity (Park & Lin, 2020; Till & Busler, 2000). A high degree of congruence between the two increases the perceived authenticity of promotional content and strengthens consumers' attitudes toward both the influencer and the brand (Ahmadi & Ieamsom, 2022; Breves et al., 2019b; von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021). For instance, when a skincare brand collaborates with an influencer known for advocating clean beauty and minimalistic routines, followers perceive the partnership as natural and believable. Conversely, a mismatch between influencer image and brand identity can create skepticism and weaken purchase intention (Breves et al., 2019a; Schneewind & Sharkasi, 2022; Schouten et al., 2020), as followers may see the endorsement as forced or purely commercial.

Previous studies (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Sesar et al., 2022; Xiao et al., 2018) have consistently demonstrated that both credibility and congruence significantly influence purchase-related outcomes, including trust, brand attitude, and intention to buy. However, empirical evidence in the Indonesian context—particularly focusing on Gen Z consumers in Bandung—remains limited. This group tends to follow multiple influencers simultaneously and exhibits more dynamic patterns of brand engagement compared to older generations. They are also more selective and critical toward promotional content, seeking authenticity and genuine storytelling over celebrity glamour. Therefore, understanding how credibility and brand–influencer fit influence their purchase intentions provides valuable insights for marketers operating in competitive and fast-evolving digital ecosystems.

In light of these considerations, this study aims to examine the effect of influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit on purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Bandung. By integrating the principles of source credibility theory and the match-up hypothesis, this research seeks to explain how influencer characteristics and alignment with brand identity jointly shape consumer responses. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically, offering marketers guidance in selecting appropriate influencers, crafting more authentic campaigns, and strengthening consumer–brand relationships through credible and congruent partnerships.

2. Literature Review

Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention

The credibility of an influencer is a crucial determinant of message persuasiveness in digital marketing. According to the Source Credibility Theory (Seiler & Kucza, 2017; Shrivastava et al., 2021), a communicator's effectiveness depends on how audiences perceive their expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. These elements collectively form the foundation of influencer credibility. In social media contexts, credibility is built through consistent content quality, transparency, and personal authenticity (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2018). Influencers who are perceived as honest and knowledgeable can reduce consumer skepticism, making followers more receptive to promotional messages (Mabkhot et al., 2022; Shamim & Islam, 2022).

Prior studies highlight that influencer credibility significantly influences purchase intention, which refers to the likelihood that consumers will buy a product after exposure to marketing messages (Martínez-López et al., 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020). When audiences believe that an influencer genuinely uses or endorses a product, they are more likely to develop positive brand attitudes and trust the recommendation. In the cosmetics industry, where product results are highly personal and visible, credibility plays an even greater role (Johan et al., 2024). Consumers often rely on influencers for skincare tips, product trials, and usage tutorials, which bridge the gap between advertising and personal recommendation. Therefore, credible influencers can strengthen consumer confidence and transform attention into actual buying interest.

H1: Influencer credibility has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Brand-Influencer Fit and Purchase Intention

Another vital factor determining the success of influencer marketing campaigns is the fit or congruence between the influencer and the brand. This concept stems from the Match-Up Hypothesis (Park & Lin, 2020; Till & Busler, 2000) which posits that endorsements are more persuasive when there is a logical and symbolic alignment between the characteristics of the endorser and the brand image. In other words, the more the influencer "fits" the product, the more believable and appealing the endorsement becomes (Ahuja & Loura, 2020; Tunpornchai et al., 2021).

In digital marketing, brand-influencer fit includes elements such as similarity of values, lifestyle, aesthetics, and audience demographics (Astuti & Risqiani, 2020; Ketrin & Adrián Szilárd, 2020). When the influencer's personal brand resonates with the product's identity, followers perceive the collaboration as natural rather than transactional. This congruence enhances perceived authenticity and emotional connection, which are crucial for Generation Z consumers who often reject overtly commercial or forced promotions (De Cicco et al., 2021; Schneewind & Sharkasi, 2022). For example, a local beauty influencer known for advocating self-confidence and natural looks will likely create stronger engagement when endorsing a skincare line emphasizing "real beauty."

Empirical research consistently supports the positive influence of brand-influencer fit on purchase-related outcomes, including trust, brand attitude, and purchase intention (Breves et al., 2019a; Folkvord et al., 2020; von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021). When the perceived fit is high, consumers experience less cognitive dissonance and are more inclined to internalize the message. Conversely, poor alignment may lead to skepticism and reduced persuasion.

H2: Brand-influencer fit has a positive effect on purchase intention.

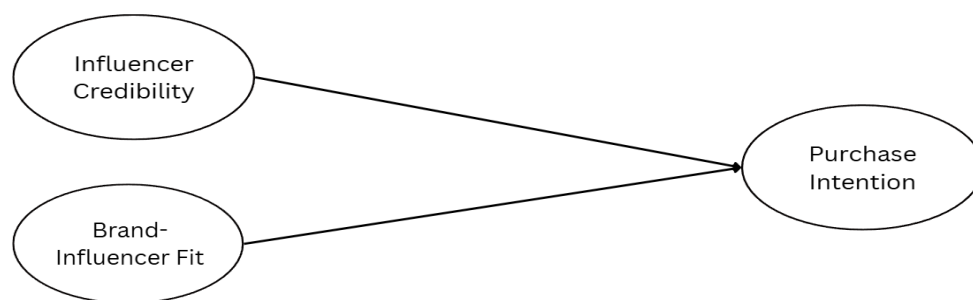


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a survey method to examine the effects of influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit on purchase intention. The study design was cross-sectional, collecting data at a single point in time from social media users in Bandung. This method was chosen to provide a snapshot of consumer perceptions toward influencer marketing in 2022, when digital platforms and influencer collaborations were growing rapidly among Generation Z audiences.

The population of this study consisted of Generation Z consumers in Bandung who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, and who follow at least one cosmetic influencer. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, as respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the study objectives. A total of 180 valid responses were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The sample size met the minimum requirement for regression analysis, ensuring sufficient statistical power to test the proposed hypotheses.

During data collection, respondents were asked to identify an influencer they follow who promotes cosmetic products and to answer questions based on their perceptions of that influencer’s credibility and fit with the brand. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: demographic information (age, gender, frequency of social media use, and preferred platform) and statements measuring the three key constructs. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression with SPSS 25.0. Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity) were performed to ensure model validity. Hypothesis testing examined the direct effects of influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit on purchase intention. Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$).

Measurement of Variables

- Influencer Credibility (IV1): Measured using indicators adapted from Breves et al. (2019), consisting of three dimensions—expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Sample item: *“The influencer is knowledgeable about the cosmetic products they promote.”*
- Brand–Influencer Fit (IV2): Measured using items adapted from Buvár et al. (2022). Sample item: *“The influencer’s image is consistent with the brand’s image.”*
- Purchase Intention (DV): Measured using three items adapted from Mabkhot et al. (2022), such as *“I am likely to purchase the cosmetic products recommended by this influencer.”*

4. Results And Discussion

Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 180 respondents who participated in this study. The majority were female (65.6%) and aged between 21–23 years

(49.4%). Most respondents used Instagram (54.4%) and TikTok (35.6%) as their primary platforms for following cosmetic influencers. These findings confirm that young, digitally active Gen Z users dominate the social-media-driven cosmetics market in Bandung.

Table 1. Respondent Profile (n = 180)

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	62	34%
Female	118	66%
Age Group		
18-20 years old	54	30%
21-23 years old	89	49%
24-26 years old	37	21%
Main Social Media Platform		
Instagram	98	54%
TikTok	64	36%
Twitter	18	10%
Monthly Cosmetic Purchase Frequency		
1-2 times	103	57%
3-4 times	77	43%

Validity and Reliability Test

The reliability and validity of each construct were tested before regression analysis. As shown in Table 2, all variables achieved Cronbach's alpha > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50, confirming internal consistency and convergent validity. Mean scores above 4.0 indicate that most respondents positively perceived influencer credibility, brand-influencer fit, and purchase intention.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Test

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Influencer Credibility	4.32	0.53	0.872	0.903	0.655
Brand-Influencer Fit	4.25	0.57	0.846	0.888	0.670
Purchase Intention	4.18	0.60	0.867	0.901	0.694

Hypothesis Test

Regression results are summarized in Table 3. Both influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.480$, $p < 0.001$) and brand-influencer fit ($\beta = 0.364$, $p < 0.01$) had significant positive effects on purchase intention, supporting both hypotheses (H1 and H2). The model explained 57.2% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.572$), indicating a strong predictive power. Diagnostic tests confirmed that the assumptions of normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were met ($VIF < 5$, tolerance > 0.20).

Table 3. Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Result
(Constant)	0.742	—	2.114	0.036	—
Influencer Credibility	0.465	0.480	6.827	0.000	Supported (H1)
Brand-Influencer Fit	0.343	0.364	5.023	0.001	Supported (H2)

Model Summary: $R = 0.756$, $R^2 = 0.572$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.566$, $F = 120.642$, Sig. = 0.000

These findings demonstrate that influencer marketing effectiveness in the cosmetics industry largely depends on the trustworthiness of the influencer and the perceived congruence between the influencer and the brand.

Discussion

The results validate the predictions of the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), emphasizing that credible communicators enhance message acceptance. Influencers with higher expertise and trustworthiness can effectively build consumer trust and reduce perceived risk, particularly for cosmetics products that require reliability in product claims. Gen Z consumers, who rely on peer-like recommendations, are more likely to convert trust into purchase intentions when they perceive the influencer as authentic and knowledgeable.

The significance of brand–influencer fit reinforces the Match-Up Hypothesis (Kamins, 1990). When influencers embody values consistent with the brand’s identity, followers perceive the collaboration as genuine, thereby increasing the persuasive impact of the endorsement. This congruence fosters emotional resonance, leading to stronger consumer engagement and purchase behavior. Conversely, a mismatch can diminish authenticity and trigger skepticism, especially among Gen Z audiences who are highly sensitive to insincerity in marketing.

These findings are consistent with prior research (Lou & Kim, 2019; Breves et al., 2019), which suggests that alignment between influencer image and brand positioning enhances both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. In Indonesia’s fast-growing digital market, influencer selection based on credibility and fit is not merely an aesthetic choice but a strategic marketing decision.

From a managerial standpoint, cosmetic brands should prioritize influencer partnerships that balance reach with relevance. Marketers should evaluate potential collaborators beyond follower count, focusing instead on expertise, engagement authenticity, and brand congruence. Long-term, value-based partnerships are more effective than one-off sponsorships, as they build consistent messaging and deepen trust among followers.

In essence, this study underscores that effective influencer marketing for Gen Z consumers in Bandung hinges on two intertwined elements: credibility and congruence. Credibility creates trust; congruence creates authenticity — and together, they transform digital influence into genuine purchase intention.

5. Conclusions And Implications

This study investigated the influence of influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit on purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Bandung, focusing on the cosmetics industry in 2022. Using a quantitative approach and regression analysis on 180 social-media-active respondents, the findings confirmed that both influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit positively and significantly affect purchase intention.

Theoretically, the results reinforce the principles of the Source Credibility Theory and the Match-Up Hypothesis. Consumers are more likely to trust and act upon marketing messages when they perceive influencers as credible—knowledgeable, trustworthy, and attractive communicators—and when the influencer’s image aligns naturally with the brand’s personality. Together, these two factors create authenticity and emotional resonance, which are crucial in forming strong purchase intentions in digital environments.

Managerial Implications

For practitioners, these findings offer several insights. Brands should evaluate influencers not merely based on follower count but on expertise, consistency, and trustworthiness. A smaller yet credible influencer can drive stronger engagement and conversion than a high-profile personality with weak authenticity. Furthermore, marketers must assess alignment in values, aesthetics, and audience demographics before forming partnerships. Collaborations that feel

natural and coherent enhance consumer trust and long-term brand image. In addition, sustainable influencer collaborations help maintain message consistency and brand authenticity. Repeated and consistent endorsements strengthen audience perception and lead to higher loyalty and revisit intentions.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its cross-sectional design and focus on cosmetic products within a single city. Future research could employ a longitudinal approach, include other product categories (such as fashion or food and beverage), or explore mediating variables like brand trust or consumer engagement to provide a deeper understanding of influencer marketing dynamics in Indonesia's evolving digital landscape.

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