

Influence of micro-influencer endorsements and authenticity perception on Gen Z purchase intentions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how endorsement by micro influencers and perceptions of authenticity influence Generation Z consumers' purchase intentions for Marina hand body lotion products on Instagram in Bandar Lampung. Using a quantitative approach with online surveys, the research analyzes data from Instagram-using Generation Z consumers in the region. Multiple linear regression analysis is employed to examine the relationship between the independent variables (endorsement by micro influencers and perception of authenticity) and the dependent variable (purchase intention). The results demonstrate a significant positive impact of both endorsement by micro influencers and perception of authenticity on purchase intention. This underscores the importance of these factors in shaping consumer behavior on Instagram. The study contributes to understanding Generation Z buying behavior in digital marketing contexts, particularly the effectiveness of micro influencer endorsements and message authenticity. Its practical implications can aid companies in crafting marketing strategies to engage Generation Z consumers in the hand body lotion market effectively.

KEYWORDS

Endorsement; Micro Influencer;
Perception of Authenticity;
Purchase Intention;
Generation Z

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Introduction

In the dynamic and complex business landscape of globalization, competition is intensifying, challenging companies to continually seek the best ways to capture and retain market share. Marketing is no longer solely about sales and advertising but also about deeply understanding consumer needs and satisfying them effectively (Rangkuti, 2004). Social media, particularly Instagram, has emerged as a popular marketing communication tool among the public. Instagram offers businesses the opportunity to develop their brands by reaching potential consumers through trusted influencers. The phenomenon of influencer marketing has gained popularity in recent years. Not only celebrities but even ordinary individuals can become influencers trusted to convey product reviews to the general public (Khamis, 2017). Influencers can be categorized into several types, ranging from mega influencers with over 1 million followers to nano influencers with fewer than 10,000 followers (Influencer Marketing Hub., 2020). Among them, micro influencers stand out because they have followers who trust them fully, which can increase consumer purchase intent (Made et al., 2021).

However, the success of influencer marketing not only depends on the number of followers but also on the authenticity conveyed. Authenticity reflects the genuineness of the brand reflected in the message conveyed by influencers. If the message aligns with the actual product quality, consumer purchase intent can increase (Firamadhina & Krisnani, 2021). Perceptions of authenticity can be influenced by indicators such as continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism (Morhart, 2014). Generation Z, growing up in the digital era, is the primary target for marketing hand body lotion products on Instagram. They are accustomed to technology and have a significant influence on purchasing products. This study focuses on Generation Z because of their unique characteristics in interacting with technology and social media and their tendency to seek affordable products.

This research aims to explore the influence of micro influencers and authenticity on the purchase intention of Generation Z consumers in Bandar Lampung for Marina hand body lotion products on Instagram. Consumer purchase intent is a crucial stage in the purchasing process and can be influenced by various factors, including the information conveyed by micro influencers and the authenticity of that message (Kotler & Keller, 2019). Through a quantitative approach, this study will measure the relationship between these variables. Companies need to consider marketing strategies that not only take into account consumer purchase intent but also factors such as the influence of micro influencers and product authenticity. Research shows that while micro influencers and authenticity can influence consumer purchase intent, there is a risk that the message conveyed by influencers may not align with the actual quality of the product, which can undermine consumer trust and even lead to legal issues related to illegal product modification.

Based on the background of the study, this research aims to address two key questions: (1) Does the endorsement by micro influencers affect consumer purchase intention? (2) Does the perception of authenticity influence consumer purchase intention? The objectives of this research are to determine the impact of micro influencers on consumer purchase intention and to assess how perceptions of authenticity affect consumer purchase intention. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights into the influence of micro influencers and authenticity perceptions on Generation Z consumers' purchase intentions in Bandar Lampung. This information will be beneficial for companies in designing more effective marketing strategies to attract and retain Generation Z consumers. Additionally, the research aims to explore ways for influencers to maintain a positive impact and strengthen authenticity in marketing products. Theoretically, this study aims to deepen the understanding of the relationship between micro influencers, authenticity, and consumer purchase intention. Academically, it will enhance students' knowledge and serve as a reference for future research. For the researchers, this study offers new insights and knowledge to apply theoretical concepts learned in academia to real-world scenarios.

Literature review

Marketing management

Marketing management involves the process of planning, executing, organizing, directing, and coordinating marketing operations within a company to achieve organizational goals efficiently and effectively (Sudarsono, 2020). The packaging process starts after production and ends with sales. To foster continuous product use or a more positive perception of the company, marketing strategies must also support customers. According to Keller and Kotler (2019), marketing management encompasses analyzing, planning, executing, and monitoring programs designed to create customer opportunities that are meticulously considered to meet business objectives. Long-established businesses recognize the importance of teamwork in achieving their goals and in identifying new approaches and potential mistakes. These new methods and approaches are referred to as the "Marketing Concept," which is a business strategy aimed at supporting the company's needs and goals. This means that companies must enhance their daily operations to maintain product quality. Thus, marketing extends beyond merely selling products; it strengthens a company's business operations by identifying customer needs, setting fair prices, determining how to sell and promote products, and establishing procedures for creating and distributing goods and services to meet the company's objectives.

Consumer behavior

According to Tjiptono (2010), consumer behavior is a dynamic process that fosters individual customer loyalty within a group and reflects the continuous changes experienced by the general public. It encompasses the actions consumers take when searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and assessing goods and services they believe will meet their needs. Thus, consumer behavior includes all actions an individual undertakes to seek, purchase, evaluate, and dispose of products, focusing not only on finding the required goods and services but also on seeking related information. Armstrong and Kotler (2010) highlighted that consumer behavior is influenced by several factors, including cultural factors such as culture, which is the most fundamental determinant of desires and behavior; sub-cultures, which identify and socialize unique member behaviors, categorized into nationality, religious, racial, and geographical groups; and social class, which is a relatively homogeneous and enduring division in society where members within each level share similar values, interests, and behaviors.

Micro influencers

Micro-influencers have significant benefits for the general public, which is why many businesses and organizations recognize their value, as noted by Brown and Hayes (2008). These individuals can provide access and potentially exacerbate situations for those with sensitive information. Influencers believe they can amplify and publicize content quickly, potentially making it viral and impacting a wide audience. They demonstrate how influencers are used on social media platforms like Instagram. Content created by influencers plays a crucial role in public relations strategies in the digital era. The effective use of micro-influencers relies on companies recognizing their target audience and collaborating with influencers that match their communication goals. Micro-influencers are seen as effective in influencing their followers on social media due to personalization, engagement, and authentic relationships, which build trust in their messaging (Made et al., 2021). Shimp (2014) highlights five key indicators for evaluating influencer effectiveness in marketing: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, and similarity. Trustworthiness involves the influencer's honesty and integrity, making their recommendations more credible. Expertise refers to the influencer's knowledge and skills relevant to the promoted brand, enhancing their influence. Attractiveness and respect involve the influencer's personal qualities and achievements, while similarity pertains to the commonalities between the influencer and their audience, increasing the relevance and impact of their content.

Perception of authenticity

According to Beverland (2005), brand authenticity in product marketing is closely linked to consumer credibility and trust in a brand. Grayson & Martinec (2004) argue that consumer perceptions of a brand's authenticity can personally support their purchase intentions. Eggers et al. (2013) further explain that brand authenticity, composed of brand consistency, brand orientation, and brand congruence, significantly influences consumer trust and their willingness to use a product. The perception of authenticity in a social context refers to how someone or something is regarded as "genuine" or "authentic." This authenticity is valued in interpersonal relationships, brands, and social media content. In interpersonal relationships, someone is considered authentic if they are sincere, honest,

and consistent. For brands, authenticity involves alignment between core values, brand image, and company behavior. In social media, authentic content reflects the true identity and experiences of individuals or brands. While the perception of authenticity is highly subjective, factors such as consistency, transparency, and honesty are crucial in shaping it. Authentic brands more easily build trust, loyalty, and engagement with consumers because they connect emotionally and personally (Morhart et al., 2015). According to Morhart et al. (2015), there are four indicators to measure brand authenticity: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. Continuity refers to the consistency of a brand's values, vision, and identity over time. Credibility is the level of trust consumers place in the brand based on its reputation and quality. Integrity reflects the alignment of the brand's actions with its ethical values. Symbolism pertains to the brand's ability to convey deeper messages or meanings to consumers, inspiring emotions and aspirations and strengthening the emotional bond with the brand.

Consumer purchase intention

According to Mowen (2007), purchase intention refers to the decision of a buyer to purchase a product or service, influenced by the consumer's belief and attitude towards it, which develops after stages of belief and attitude as explained by Engel et al. (1995). Purchase intention reflects how strong an individual's desire to purchase is, it is a combination of cognitive and affective components, and it is a consumer's action before the purchase decision. Internal factors such as knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals, as well as external factors such as opportunities, can influence purchase intention according to Ajzen (2005). Indicators of consumer purchase intention, according to Schiffman & Kanuk (2008), include interest in seeking information, desire to try the product, desire to know the product more deeply, desire to own the product, and interest in obtaining additional information about the product. These reflect the stages from research to considered purchase decisions by consumers before making transactions.

Methods

Data type and collection method

Data sources are essential for researchers to thoroughly investigate the key factors in their work, and these sources are categorized into primary and secondary data. Primary data, as defined by Sanusi (2014), are the initial data collected firsthand from verified sources. In this study, primary data are obtained by directly interacting with respondents, and their answers serve as research data. Secondary data, also defined by Sanusi (2014), consist of pre-existing data collected by others, such as historical records, documents, or reports available in published and unpublished archives. This research uses secondary data from an international website detailing the influence of influencers on Generation Z. According to Sugiyono (2019), data collection methods are critical in research, with documentation and questionnaires being employed here. Documentation involves gathering necessary data and records, while questionnaires, as described by Sugiyono (2019), involve providing respondents with a set of written questions or statements to answer. This study distributes questionnaires via Google Forms to Generation Z in Bandar Lampung to understand the impact of micro-influencers and perceived authenticity on their purchase intentions. Additionally, literature studies are conducted to gather related materials from scientific journals, literary works, and other publications. Measurement scales are used to quantify data intervals, with this study employing an interval scale where respondents choose from five responses based on their perceptions (Sugiyono, 2019).

Population and sample

The population refers to the generalized area consisting of objects or subjects with specific qualities and characteristics determined by the researcher for study and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2019). The population for this study includes Generation Z millennials in Bandar Lampung, currently aged 17-29 years. The sample, as a subset of the population with these qualities and characteristics (Sugiyono, 2019), is selected when it is impractical to study the entire population due to constraints like funding, manpower, and time. This research focuses on Generation Z in Bandar Lampung, aged 17-29 years, as the sample. The sample size is calculated using the formula by Hair et al. (2010), considering respondents who are aware of micro-influencers and Marina products. The sample size calculation is based on the formula: sample = number of indicators x sample size per indicator, which results in $12 \times 10 = 120$ samples.

Data analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to determine the influence of the independent variables, Micro Influencer (X1) and Perceived Authenticity (X2), on the dependent variable, consumer purchase intention (Y). The general equation for simple linear regression is $Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + e$, where Y represents consumer purchase intention, x_1 represents micro influencers, x_2 represents perceived authenticity, b represents regression coefficients, a is the constant, and e is the error term. The t-test (partial) is used to determine whether the independent variables have a significant influence on the dependent variable. The hypotheses tested are: $H_0: r = 0$, indicating no significant influence, and $H_A: r \neq 0$, indicating a significant influence. According to Sugiyono (2019), the t-test criteria are: if the t-value > t-table at a 5% significance level, H_0 is rejected, indicating a significant influence of micro influencers or authenticity on purchase intention; if the t-value < t-table, H_0 is accepted, indicating no significant influence. The F-test (simultaneous) is used to determine if all independent variables collectively influence the dependent variable, with a significance level of 5%. If the significance value of F is less than 0.05, it indicates that the independent variables simultaneously affect the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2016).

Results

Data collection

This study involved 120 respondents who participated by filling out a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms over two weeks. The respondents were selected based on specific criteria: they followed the micro-influencers featured in this study on Instagram, were aware of Marina hand body lotion, were aged 17 to 29 years, and had seen these micro-influencers promoting Marina products. The completed questionnaires from these 120 respondents were compiled and processed for the research data.

Descriptive analysis

The result shows that the number of female respondents in this study is significantly higher than male respondents, with 119 women and 1 man. This suggests that Marina hand body lotion in Bandar Lampung is predominantly used by women, highlighting a minimal interest from men in this beauty product. The likely reason for this female dominance is that Marina hand body lotion is more commonly used by women in Bandar Lampung. The age range of respondents varied from 17 to over 29 years, with the largest percentage (50%) aged 21 to 24, indicating that most consumers are young adults or teenagers, fitting Marina's target market of middle to lower-income young consumers. Respondents aged 25 to 28 and over 29 years accounted for 41% and 6% respectively, while only 3% were aged 17 to 20. Additionally, the average monthly expenditure of respondents is mostly between 2,500,000 to 3,000,000 IDR, primarily because many respondents are students managing their finances while living in rented accommodation. This aligns with Marina's target demographic of Gen Z with unstable incomes, making the product affordable for this group.

Multiple linear regression test

This study employs a multiple linear regression analysis to examine the influence of micro influencers and authenticity perception on consumer purchase intention for Marina hand body lotion in Bandar Lampung, with a sample size of 120 respondents and a confidence level of 95% ($\alpha = 0.05$). The obtained multiple linear regression equation is $Y = 0.632X_1 + 0.327X_2$, where Y represents purchase intention (dependent variable), X1 represents micro influencers, and X2 represents authenticity perception (independent variables). The regression analysis conducted at a significance level of 0.05 reveals significant positive coefficients for both micro influencers (0.632) and authenticity perception (0.327) on purchase intention. This indicates that micro influencers and authenticity perception significantly contribute to generating consumer purchase intention for Marina hand body lotion in Bandar Lampung. Furthermore, to determine which variable has the most significant impact on purchase intention, the β values for each sub-variable of micro influencers are calculated. The highest β value is observed for the sub-variable of authenticity perception (0.632), while the lowest is for the sub-variable of authenticity perception (X2) (0.327). This suggests that authenticity perception has a stronger influence on purchase intention compared to micro influencers in this context.

Table 1. Multiple linear regression result

Model		Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1.	(constant)	0.021	0.629		0.033	0.973
	Micro influencer	0.663	0.087	0.632	7.644	0.000
2.	Perception of Authenticity	0.425	0.107	0.327	3.960	0.000

Partial t test

Partial t-tests are utilized to evaluate the significance of each independent variable on the dependent variable while controlling for other variables in the model. In essence, partial t-tests examine whether the regression coefficients of each independent variable are individually significant when other variables are held constant in the model. This test allows researchers to filter out non-significant variables in the regression model, aiding in obtaining a more robust and accurate model that explains the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The null hypothesis (H0) states that predictor variables individually do not significantly affect the dependent variable (Y), while the alternative hypothesis (H1) suggests that predictor variables do have a significant impact on the dependent variable. Conducting individual tests for each predictor variable helps ascertain their individual contributions to the model. Based on the provided data, the individual tests for both X1 and X2 yield t-values higher than the critical t-value, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for both variables. Thus, it can be concluded that both X1 and X2 significantly influence the dependent variable, Y.

Table 2. Partial t test result

Variable	t-value	t-table	sig.	conclusion
H1: Micro influencers have a positive influence on Marina consumers' purchasing intentions	7,644	1,980	<0.000	Ha supported
H2: Authenticity has a positive influence on Marina consumers' purchasing intentions	3,960	1,980	<0.000	Ha supported

Simultaneous f test

Simultaneous F-test is utilized to examine whether one or more independent variables collectively have a significant impact on the dependent variable within a model. In the context of regression analysis, the simultaneous F-test tests the hypothesis that at least one independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable. A significant result from the simultaneous F-test indicates that at least one independent variable contributes significantly to the variability of the dependent variable in the regression model. In this case, since the calculated F-value (478.440) exceeds the critical F-value (3.07), according to the decision-making basis in the F-test, the conclusion is to fail to reject the null hypothesis (H₀). In other words, it can be inferred that both Variable X1 and Variable X2 collectively influence Variable Y. The null hypothesis (H₀) states that Variable X1 and Variable X2 simultaneously have an impact on Variable Y.

Table 3. Simultaneous f test

Model		ANOVA ^a				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1.	Regression	3322.277	2	1661.139	478.440	0.000 ^b
	Residual	406.223	117	3.472		
	Total	3728.500	119			

Coefficient of determination (r²)

The testing of the coefficient of determination is conducted to measure the model's ability to explain how much influence the independent variables collectively (simultaneously) have on the dependent variable, as indicated by the adjusted R-squared. The model is considered strong when the adjusted R-squared is greater than 0.67. The table shows the magnitude of the coefficient of determination, or the influence of micro influencers on purchase intention, indicated by the R-squared value, which is 0.891. This means that the contribution of the micro influencer variable (X) plays a role in influencing each purchase intention variable (Y) by 89.1%. This influence is positively valued. It implies that the stronger the micro influencer strategy applied to Marina products, the more it will affect the purchase intention of Marina product consumers in Bandar Lampung. Assuming perfect influence is valued at 100%, there is a remaining 11.9% influenced by other factors.

Table 4. Coefficient of determination

Model	Model Summary			
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.944 ^a	0.891	0.889	1.863

Discussion

The results from the respondent profile of this study show that the majority of respondents are female and aged between 21 to 25 years old. This is attributed to Marina's target consumer group, which comprises teenagers and college students. The findings indicate that out of 120 respondents, 119 are female and only 1 is male. Females constitute the majority as skincare enthusiasts in Bandar Lampung are predominantly female, and micro influencers endorsing Marina products are also skincare enthusiasts. The regression coefficient test results indicate that the micro influencer variable (X1) has a β value of 0.632, signifying a positive influence on purchase intention (Y). This implies that the micro influencer's effective performance and ability to convey product messages can generate purchase intentions among consumers of Marina products in Bandar Lampung. The expertise possessed by micro influencers has become a crucial factor in influencing consumer opinions about the represented products. These findings align with previous research (Hersa Muhammad, 2022).

Additionally, the regression coefficient test results show that the authenticity variable (X2) has a β value of 0.327, indicating a positive influence on purchase intention (Y). This suggests that authenticity in Marina products has a significant impact, with consumer desires to try Marina products increasing due to the growing product variety meeting the needs of Generation Z in Bandar Lampung. When influencers endorse products, they can instill trust in consumers. One of the most influential indicators is the Micro Influencer, as evidenced by the many respondents who agree that micro influencers are liked, admired, and honest in promoting skincare products, leading to positive impacts on products represented by micro influencers. Purchase intentions for Marina products in Bandar Lampung are created because consumers choose to purchase products endorsed by micro influencers, consistent with previous research (Abednego et al., 2021). Influencers with a high rating from consumers regarding their image will persuasively sway consumers to develop positive purchase intentions compared to influencers with only good skills but lacking a positive image as endorsers.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion presented earlier, it can be concluded that micro influencers, comprising micro influencer (X1), and authenticity perception (X2) have a significant positive influence on purchase intention for Marina's Hand Body Lotion products in Bandar Lampung, as indicated by the accepted hypothesis. The research

findings demonstrate that the presence of micro influencers and perceptions of product authenticity have a considerable impact on influencing consumer purchasing decisions regarding Marina's Hand Body Lotion products in the Bandar Lampung market. This suggests that recommendations or product promotions conducted by micro influencers exert a strong appeal to consumers, driving them to consider and purchase the products. In today's digital era, it is evident that these influencers can influence Generation Z, and Marina's product strategy indeed targets Generation Z respondents in this study, specifically college students who have unstable incomes and are attracted to affordably priced products. Additionally, the endorsement from influencers renowned in the beauty industry further enhances consumer trust, thus fostering purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the study findings reveal that the perception of product authenticity has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase intention. When consumers perceive Marina's Hand Body Lotion products as authentic and aligned with promised values, they are more inclined to purchase them. This perception of product authenticity creates a strong sense of trust and belief among consumers, subsequently boosting their motivation to make purchases. Therefore, authenticity in Marina products can instill consumer confidence, thereby sustaining consumer purchase intentions. Consequently, this research provides a deeper understanding of the factors influencing consumer purchase intentions for Marina's Hand Body Lotion products in Bandar Lampung. Collaborating with micro influencers and strengthening perceptions of product authenticity can be effective strategies for the company to enhance product sales in this market. Thus, both hypotheses proposed—namely the positive and significant influence of micro influencers (X1) and authenticity perceptions (X2) on purchase intentions for Marina's Hand Body Lotion products in Bandar Lampung—are accepted, underscoring their importance for marketing planning and future sales strategies.

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