THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING AND TIKTOK CONTENT STRATEGIES ON PURCHASING DECISIONS WITH TRUST AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE IN ELFORMULA SKINCARE PRODUCTS
Case Study of Jambi University Students

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the influence of influencer marketing and TikTok content strategy on purchasing decisions for Elformula skincare products, with trust as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected from 118 respondents through a questionnaire designed using a Likert scale. The analysis method involved multiple linear regression and mediation test. The results showed that influencer marketing and TikTok content strategy significantly influenced trust and purchase decision. Furthermore, trust was shown to partially mediate the influence of influencer marketing on purchase decisions, as well as partially mediate the influence of TikTok content strategy on purchase decisions. These findings confirm the importance of brands' collaboration with credible influencers and development of authentic and engaging content strategies on TikTok, not only to drive direct purchases but also to build and maintain consumer trust. This research provides important insights for brands in optimising their digital marketing strategies in the competitive skincare market.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, Content Marketing, trust,Purchase Decision

Introduction

The rapid development of information technology in the digital era has significantly transformed marketing practices, shifting from conventional approaches toward faster, more interactive, and measurable digital strategies (Kotler et al., 2021). Social media has emerged as a dominant marketing channel that enables businesses to reach consumers, disseminate information, and build long-term relationships more effectively (Chen & Lee, 2021). This transformation has also encouraged the growth of e-commerce and social commerce, where purchasing activities are increasingly integrated into social media platforms (Chaudhary et al., 2024).

TikTok is one of the fastest-growing social media platforms and has become an important driver of social commerce development. Its algorithm-based content distribution system allows content to be tailored to users' interests, increasing engagement and the potential for content virality (Chaudhary et al., 2024). The high level of user engagement on TikTok positions the platform as a strategic medium for digital marketing, particularly through short-form videos and live streaming features that combine entertainment and commerce (Chen & Lee, 2021).

Within the TikTok marketing environment, influencer marketing has emerged as a widely used promotional strategy, especially in the beauty and skincare industry. Influencers are considered opinion leaders who possess credibility, expertise, and persuasive power that can influence audience perceptions (Freberg et al., 2011). Several studies have found that influencer marketing can shape consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior, particularly in cosmetic and skincare products promoted on social media platforms (Hidayatullah et al., 2023).

Trust plays a critical role in online purchasing decisions, as it helps reduce perceived risk and uncertainty associated with digital transactions (Lou & Yuan, 2020). In the skincare industry, trust is especially important because consumers are concerned about product safety, effectiveness, and suitability (Nabilah et al., 2023). Influencer credibility, which includes expertise, honesty, and attractiveness, has been shown to significantly influence brand trust and subsequently affect consumers' purchase intentions (Kemeç & Yüksel, 2021; Rachmawati & Sari, 2019).

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the influence of influencer marketing and TikTok content strategy on purchase decisions, with trust as a mediating variable. Focusing on Elformula skincare products, this research emphasizes the importance of trust in linking digital marketing activities to consumer purchasing behavior in the social commerce context (Lou & Yuan, 2020; Jimenez-Castillo & Heras-Pedrosa, 2021).

Literature Review

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a digital marketing strategy that involves individuals with strong social media influence to promote products through credible and engaging content (Agustin & Amron, 2020). Influencers play an important role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions through credibility, expertise,

and content authenticity (Imelda & Riofita, 2024). The effectiveness of influencer marketing depends heavily on source credibility, including trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, which contribute to the formation of consumer trust (Lou & Yuan, 2020) and function as quality signals in online environments (Ki et al., 2020).

Furthermore, alignment between brand and influencer values strengthens brand congruence and increases consumer acceptance of product recommendations (Pradana & Rachmawati, 2019). From a social identity perspective, followers tend to identify with influencers, making them more receptive to promotional messages (Jimenez-Castillo & Heras-Pedrosa, 2021). On platforms such as TikTok, authentic and engaging influencer content effectively generates positive engagement and trust, which subsequently influences purchase decisions, often through trust as a mediating variable rather than direct persuasion (Emerald Insight, 2024).

Content Marketing

TikTok content strategy plays a crucial role in attracting consumer attention and shaping purchase decisions, particularly for skincare products. As a short-video platform, TikTok enables brands to deliver messages creatively, emotionally, and efficiently, which increases engagement and audience interest (Krisdanu & Sumantri, 2023). Creative, informative, and entertaining content has a higher potential to generate organic buzz and enhance consumer interest (Lestari & Purnamasari, 2018), while consistent and value-driven content strengthens brand perception and message effectiveness (Komariah & Jhoansyah, 2020).

Moreover, TikTok content effectiveness is closely related to trust formation. Authentic and consistent content functions as a signal of product quality, reducing consumer uncertainty and perceived risk (Krisdanu & Sumantri, 2023). Collaboration with influencers further increases content credibility and relevance, as influencers deliver messages in a more natural and relatable manner (Prasetyo & Widodo, 2021). Several studies indicate that content which successfully builds trust significantly influences purchase decisions, especially for high-involvement products such as skincare (Andini & Sari, 2019; Lestari & Purnamasari, 2018).

Trust

Trust refers to a consumer's willingness to rely on a brand, seller, or communicator perceived as credible, honest, and reliable (Ishak & Zhafitri, 2011). Consumer trust is shaped by knowledge, perceptions, and experiences related to product attributes and benefits obtained from information exposure, content, and reviews (Sunarto, 2009). In purchasing contexts, trust reduces uncertainty and perceived risk, thereby strengthening long-term consumer–brand relationships (Lita, 2009).

In digital environments, trust is built through perceptions of security, transparency, and integrity of information sources (Chen & Dhillon, 2003). According to Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), trust is formed based on ability, benevolence, and integrity, which reflect competence, goodwill, and honesty in delivering product information. High levels of trust encourage consumer confidence and increase the likelihood of purchase decisions, particularly for high-involvement products such as skincare.

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is the final stage of the consumer decision-making process, where consumers choose a product based on perceived value, trust, and available information (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). In the skincare industry, purchase decisions are strongly influenced by brand trust, perceived product quality, and the credibility of information conveyed through influencer marketing and digital content (Rachmawati & Sari, 2019).

Furthermore, transparent and engaging content enhances consumer confidence and purchase intention by reducing uncertainty and increasing emotional involvement (Prabowo & Utami, 2020). Promotional offers, interactive communication, market trend adaptation, and consumer reviews also serve as important stimuli that reinforce purchase decisions, particularly when delivered through TikTok-based marketing strategies (Lestari et al., 2019).

Methods

According to Hair et al. (2015), quantitative research is a systematic approach to measuring phenomena objectively through numerical data analysis, one of which is using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) that functions to analyze cause-and-effect relationships between variables in complex models through outer model and inner model testing (Hair et al., 2017). Outer model testing includes convergent and discriminant validity, where convergent validity is assessed from the factor loading value (≥ 0.70 or ≥ 0.50 for exploratory research) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50, which indicates the ability of the construct to explain its indicators (Hamid & Anwar, 2019; Savitri et al., 2021). Meanwhile, discriminant validity ensures differences between constructs through cross loading criteria, low correlations between latent variables, and the Fornell–Larcker criteria, namely that the AVE square root value must be greater than the correlation between other constructs, so that each construct has good discriminatory power (Haryono, 2016; Budhi, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Based on the data collected, the respondent profile in this study was dominated by women, with 107 people (90.7%), while men numbered 11 people (9.3%). In terms of age, the 21-year-old group was the largest with 46 people (39.0%), followed by 20-year-olds (25.4%) and 22-year-olds (20.3%). This shows that the majority of respondents were in young adulthood. In terms of faculty, the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) had the highest number of respondents, namely 63 people (53.4%). The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) was in second place with 37 respondents (31.3%). Interestingly, all respondents reported having the TikTok app, and 100% of respondents also stated that they had purchased Elformula products from an influencer. All respondents had made their last purchase of Elformula products within the last six months.

Convergent Validity Outer Loadings

Tabel 1. External Load Factor Results Convergent Validity Test

Variable	Influencer Marketing	Purchase Decision	Content Marketing	Trust	Result
X1.1	0.720				Valid
X1.2	0.765				Valid
X2.1	0.813				Valid
X2.2	0.799				Valid
X3.1	0.792				Valid
X3.2	0.837				Valid
X4.1	0.810				Valid
X4.2	0.780				Valid
X5.1			0.847		Valid
X5.2			0.874		Valid
X6.1			0.805		Valid
X6.2			0.839		Valid
X7.1			0.820		Valid
X7.2			0.852		Valid
X8.1			0.880		Valid
X8.2			0.714		Valid
Y1.1		0.849			Valid
Y1.2		0.879			Valid
Y2.1		0.850			Valid
Y2.2		0.873			Valid
Y3.1		0.886			Valid
Y3.2		0.794			Valid
Y4.1		0.904			Valid
Y4.2		0.842			Valid
Y5.1		0.823			Valid
Y5.2		0.866			Valid
Y6.1		0.863			Valid
Y6.2		0.754			Valid
Z1.1				0.829	Valid
Z1.2				0.844	Valid
Z2.1				0.816	Valid
Z2.2				0.866	Valid
Z3.1				0.881	Valid
Z3.2				0.805	Valid

From the table above, we can see that the outer loading factor values for all statements related to influencer marketing, TikTok content strategy, purchasing decisions, and trust are greater than 0.70, meaning that all are valid. This indicates that the indicators/statements used successfully measure the correlation between the indicator/statement scores and their constructs/variables, thereby supporting the construct validity of the measurement model.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The output of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) estimation can be seen in Table 2. A variable is considered valid if it has an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value > 0.50.

Table 2. AVE results of convergent validity test

Variable	AVE	Result
Influencer Marketing	0,624	*Valid*
Content Marketing	0,722	*Valid*
Purchase Decision	0,689	*Valid*
Trust	0,706	*Valid*

The AVE values for each variable are influencer marketing 0.624, TikTok content strategy 0.722, purchase decision 0.689, and trust. These four variables have values ≥ 0.50, meaning that all four variables are categorized as valid.

Discriminant Validity

Tabel 3. Cronbach's Alpha Value

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Result
Influencer Marketing	0.914	Reliabel
Purchase Decision	0.965	Reliabel
Content Marketing	0.935	Reliabel
Trust	0.917	Reliabel

The results of the analysis in Table 3 show that Cronbach's alpha values for the constructs/variables of influencer marketing are 0.914, purchase decisions 0.965, TikTok content strategy 0.935, and trust 0.917. All Cronbach's alpha values are > 0.70. Thus, all variables have good reliability.

Composite Reliability

Table 4. Composite Reliability value

Variable	Composite reliability	Result
Influencer Marketing	0.930	Reliabel
Purchase Decision	0.969	Reliabel
Content Marketing	0.947	Reliabel
Trust	0.935	Reliabel

The results of this analysis show that the composite reliability value for the influencer marketing construct/variable is 0.930, the purchase decision is 0.966, the TikTok content strategy is 0.947, and trust is 0.935. All composite reliability values are > 0.70, so all variables have good reliability.

R-Square (R^2) Test Results

Table 5. R-Square (R^2) Test Results Value

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Purchase Decision	0.871	0.868
Trust	0.858	0.855

The analysis results show an R-square value of 0.871 for the purchase decision variable and 0.858 for the trust variable, which means that each variable can be explained by the model by 87.1% and 85.8%, respectively, so that the relationship between variables in the model is very strong.

Hypothesis Testing

The bootstrapping results for the direct effect can be seen in Table 6 as follows:

Table 6. Path Coefficient Bootstrapping Direct Effect

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	Result
Influencer Marketing -> Purchase Decision	0.035	0.042	0.115	0.308	0.758	Reject
Influencer Marketing -> Trust	0.572	0.571	0.095	6.036	0.000	Accepted
Content Marketing -> Purchase Decision	0.669	0.665	0.109	5.955	0.000	Accepted
Content Marketing -> Trust	0.375	0.375	0.097	3.884	0.000	Accepted
Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.206	0.200	0.107	2.893	0.004	Accepted

The test results show that influencer marketing does not have a significant effect on purchasing decisions because it has a T-statistic value of 0.308 and a P-value of 0.758 (> 0.05), but it has a significant and positive effect on trust with a T-statistic of 6.036 and a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). Furthermore, the TikTok content strategy was proven to have a significant and positive effect on both purchasing decisions (T-statistic of 5.955; P-value of 0.000) and trust (T-statistic of 3.884; P-value of 0.000). In addition, trust also has a significant and positive effect on purchasing decisions with a T-statistic value of 2.893 and a P-value of 0.027, so it can be concluded that trust plays an important role in driving purchasing decisions.

Bootstrapping Results of Indirect Effects

The results of bootstrapping indirect effects can be seen in Table 7 below:

Table 7. Path Coeffiecient Bootstrapping Indirect Effect Value

Indicator	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	Result
Influencer Marketing -> Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.166	0.169	0.072	2.303	0.021	Accepted
Content Marketing -> Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.110	0.105	0.040	2.725	0.006	Accepted

The analysis results show that influencer marketing and TikTok content strategy have a significant indirect effect on purchasing decisions through trust, where influencer marketing has a coefficient of 0.166 with a T-statistic of 2.303 and a P-value of 0.021, while TikTok content strategy has a coefficient of 0.110 with a T-statistic of 2.725 and a P-value of 0.006, all of which meet the significance criteria.

Discussion

The influence of influencer marketing and TikTok content strategies on consumer purchasing decisions shows that not all digital marketing strategies have a direct impact. The results of this study indicate that influencer marketing does not have a significant direct effect on purchasing decisions, suggesting that influencer recommendations do not necessarily encourage consumers to make immediate purchases. These findings are in line with De Veirman et al. (2020) and Sokolova and Kefi (2020), who state that the influence of influencers is more prevalent in the early stages of the consumer decision-making process.

Qualitatively, the influence of influencer marketing is greatly affected by consumers' level of digital literacy. Consumers who are more critical tend to be able to distinguish between authentic recommendations and paid promotional content, so they do not immediately trust or follow influencers' calls to purchase. Lim et al. (2022) emphasize that influencers play a more dominant role in shaping brand perception and awareness than in directly driving purchasing decisions.

Although it does not directly influence purchasing decisions, influencer marketing has been proven to have a significant and positive effect on consumer trust. Influencers are perceived as a more personal and credible source of information than conventional advertising, thereby building trust when they demonstrate authenticity and consistency in their messages. This finding is in line with Gabrielle and Erdiansyah (2022) and Hansopaheluwakan et al. (2025), who state that the credibility and interaction of influencers play an important role in shaping consumer trust.

The TikTok content strategy in this study has been proven to have a significant and positive influence on purchasing decisions. Content that is creatively packaged, informative, and in line with the characteristics of the platform can increase audience engagement and encourage consumer interest in purchasing. These findings are supported by Harahap et al. (2024) and Salsabila and Syafitri (2025), who show that the appeal of TikTok content contributes significantly to user purchasing behavior.

In addition to influencing purchasing decisions, TikTok content strategies also have a significant effect on consumer trust. Transparent, consistent content that showcases product usage experiences can reduce consumer uncertainty and increase brand confidence. This is in line with Handayani et al. (2025) and Putra et al. (2024), who emphasize that the quality and credibility of digital content play an important role in building consumer trust.

Trust in this study was proven to have a significant and positive influence on purchasing decisions. Consumers with high levels of trust tend to feel more secure and confident about product quality and credibility, thereby being more inclined to make a purchase. This finding is in line with Siregar and Purba (2024), Anggraeni and Hasibuan (2025), and Oktaviani et al. (2025), who state that trust is a key factor in purchasing decisions in the digital environment.

Overall, influencer marketing and TikTok content strategies indirectly influence purchasing decisions through trust as a mediating variable. Trust has been proven to be a connecting factor that strengthens the influence of both marketing strategies on purchasing decisions. These findings are in line with Putri and

Handayani (2025), Rahmawati et al. (2024), and Pratama and Salsabila (2025), who emphasize that trust is a crucial stage before consumers make purchasing decisions.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that influencer marketing has not had a significant direct impact on purchasing decisions for Elformula skincare products. These findings show that the presence of influencers does not automatically encourage consumers to make purchases, as consumers have increasingly better digital literacy and tend to view influencers as a source of initial information rather than as a determining factor in purchasing decisions. However, influencer marketing has been proven to have a significant and positive effect on consumer trust in Elformula skincare products. Influencers who are perceived as honest, consistent, and authentic are able to build consumer confidence in the brand. This trust forms the basis for building positive consumer attitudes, even if it does not always lead directly to purchases.

In addition to influencer marketing, TikTok content strategies have shown a significant and positive influence on purchasing decisions for Elformula skincare products. Creative, informative content that is tailored to the platform's characteristics is able to attract consumer attention, increase product understanding, and encourage emotional engagement that leads to purchasing decisions. TikTok content strategy also plays a significant role in building consumer trust. Consistent, transparent content that showcases real-life product experiences can reduce consumer uncertainty about product quality and credibility, thereby strengthening trust in the brand.

The results of the study also confirm that trust has a significant and positive influence on the decision to purchase Elformula skincare products. Consumers who have a high level of trust tend to feel more confident about the quality and safety of the product, thereby minimizing risk perception and making the purchase decision easier. Trust has been proven to play an important role as a mediating variable in the relationship between variables. Influencer marketing and TikTok content strategies do not directly drive purchases, but rather build consumer trust first, which then strengthens purchasing decisions. Thus, the success of digital marketing strategies is highly dependent on their ability to build and maintain consumer trust on an ongoing basis.

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