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SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER, TRUST, AND RELIABILITY ON CONSUMER BRAND PERCEPTION

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Abstract

Increasing demand for understanding landscape of Indonesia consumer brand perceptions motivates this study. This study aims to examine the influence of social media influencers, trust, and reliability in regards to consumer brand perception in Indonesia. As well as providing another perspective toward several contradicting research such as implication that some variables might not affect consumer brand perception. By understanding the correlation in hopes of understanding further its effect on local consumers and the market. A quantitative approach was taken by collecting online survey from 219 respondents. Survey is spread through social media, correlating with respondents' active habit on social media, with confirmed familiarity with Indonesia's consumer brands by showcasing several general brands that exist in Indonesia market. Statistical analysis indicates that social media influencers, trust, as well as reliability having a positive effect on consumer brand perception. Implicating the correlating effect as well as several recommendations relating to the results. One of the main recommendations is maintaining and increasing consumer perception in a positive light with social media influencers. Further research on specific social media, age group, or demographics should be put to consideration as narrowing the study will help in understanding several dominant or even niche markets locally.

Keywords: *influencer, trust, reliability, consumer brand perception*

1. INTRODUCTION

Digitalization has fundamentally reshaped Indonesian consumer market, with it's estimated penetration of 212 million individuals by early 2025 (We Are Social, 2025a). Social media has become a part of daily life in Indonesia with average user spending over three hours per day across an average of 7.7 different platforms (Tewu et al., 2025). According to We Are Social (2025b) three in five Indonesians now utilize social media for researching brands online, which highlight the involvement of social media evolving from networking to brand discovery as well as decision making. Within the ecosystem, Indonesia social media influencers (SMI) have been ranked 6th globally for the number of its Instagram influencers (Anestia, 2024). Showcasing that social media influencers are among the most widely used promotional tools to influence consumer brand awareness(Andreani et al., 2021). Based on the increasing popularity of social media marketing, specifically social media influencers in Indonesia where 68% of consumers report purchasing products based on whether it was endorsed by an influencer (Ratnasari et al., 2024). One of Indonesia local brand has shown one of the successes in marketing that focus on major influencer collaboration and achieved a tenfold increase in sales (Susilo et al., 2023). In another perspective influencer marketing ad spend in Indonesia has show rapid growth by 14.4% annually We Are Social (2025b). Despite showing growth, a significant research gap persist, current literature presents several contradictory findings. Alam & Mubarak (2025) study shows that social media doesn't affect consumer brand perception in digital markets, which contradicts researcher such as Sijabat et al. (2023), indicating that social media, specifically social media influencers, affect consumer brand perception. Indonesia's consumer collective

and high context culture is heavily influenced by social validation and emotional identification (Gaspersz et al., 2024). According to Susilo et al. (2023) despite the surge in digital activity, local Indonesian brands still suffer from low consumer purchase intention due to sub-optimal marketing strategies. Which align with Arya et al. (2022) Indonesia high demand towards the effective social media influencers promotion as well as well as conveying brand message increase the urgency of the topics. Brands that perceived well by consumer in regards of reliability and trust has shown correlation towards brand images in market(Setiawan & Patricia, 2022; Tahir et al., 2024; Tran et al., 2022). This research aims to address contradictions by investigating the correlation between social media, specifically influencers, to consumer brand perception, as well as how reliability and trust affect consumer brand perception.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Semiotics theory explains the significance of clear communication in creating the desired perception for consumers. Brands will utilize specific symbols, shapes, or even packaging to convey messages and evoke a sense of desire. Perception is a big factor regarding consumer brand attachment. This influences consumers' emotional connection, which can be utilized to the company's advantage, including visibility within its market(Agarwal, 2024). Perception also fosters brand attachment and identification (Peng et al., 2014). According to (Kotler et al., 2021) marketing can be defined as identifying and satisfying human (as consumers) needs as well as social needs for the company's profitability. It can be defined as "the art and science of choosing target markets and getting, keeping, and growing consumers through creating, delivering, and communicating superior consumer value". There are three key activities in marketing such as informative, strategic, and operational.

Digitalization has shown a significant impact on marketing and other business functions (Almada-Lobo, 2015). We've come a long way since Web 1.0, and social media has evolved to adapt to Web 4.0. Adaptation of it shows how far we've come regarding social media presence on the World Wide Web (Patil & Surwade, 2018). Currently, research has shown consumer preference in online shopping as form of digitalization (Clara & Beni, 2023). Digitalization of marketing has had an impact beyond the surface, which includes manufacturing processes as well as direct-to-consumer sales. Highlighting the importance of digitalization within marketing as well as its impact (Conti et al., 2023). Marketing 5.0 can be defined as human-mimicking technologies to communicate and deliver value for the overall consumer experience (Kotler et al., 2021). Emphasizing balance for human-centric approaches, leveraging advancements from the Internet of Things (IoT). To create a compelling consumer experience while keeping humanity as the core of marketing efforts. According to (Maseke, 2022), there are several categories of social media, including informal, formal, and entertainment types. Social media has been linked to consumer brand engagement, as well as affecting purchase intention (Panangian & Masnita, 2024). A few of the common social media used globally, such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, have been proven to affect on everyday life, affecting purchase intention, perception of brands, and even signs of parasocial relationships with (Arya et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Simanjorang & Nawawi, 2022).

In the context of digitalization, consumer trust has been defined as consumer willingness to believe in what the brand conveys (Nosi et al., 2022). Studies regarding consumer trust have shown to be an added value to a company (Roosdhani & Komaryatin, 2021). Consumer trust in a brand digitally has been proven to affect offline trust and vice

versa. It has also been proven that digital and offline trust have affected perception as well as purchase intention. As such, this highlights the importance of trust to brand perception (Nosi et al., 2022; Roosdhani & Komaryatin, 2021; Vannucci & Pantano, 2020). Another aspect in shaping consumer brand perception is brand reliability. Integration within marketing itself to social media, blockchain, and even virtual realities (Cham et al., 2022).Digital reliability affects brand performance within the market (Li et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2022).

Based on the literature review, three variables related to consumer brand perception have been selected: social media influencer, reliability, and trust. A conceptual framework has been developed by the author in Figure 1.

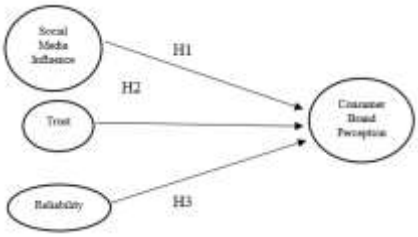

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*

According to Zhang et al. (2026) there are correlation between social media influencers involvement in driving consumer drive and desire. Social media influencers has shown significant impact on consumer engagement and purchase intention, more effective than other form of promotion (Barari et al., 2025). Social media influencers that are able to convey brand's message well such as product's features, quality, as well as personal significant will be perceived by target consumer as trusted information (Liu & Zheng, 2024). Influencers have been shown to affect the decision-making or purchase intention of consumers (Agarwal, 2024). Therefore, the hypothesis is defined as:

H1. Social Media Influencer has a positive impact on consumer brand perception

Trust playout throughout numerous interactions within digitalized marketing(Ali et al., 2025). Having a secure online trust affects consumer optimism for brands (Tran et al., 2022). In a sense, secure online experiences affect the communication of the brand both online and offline. Digital trust improves sales indirectly, indirectly showing its significance (Nosi et al., 2022; Roosdhani & Komaryatin, 2021; Vannucci & Pantano, 2020). Therefore, the hypothesis proposed is:

H2. Trust has a positive impact on consumer brand perception

The shifting of digitalization of the brand shows dependability and sensitivity of the process(Ali et al., 2025). Brands are committed to conveying or communicating better towards consumers, which places reliability in the message as be utmost importance(Tahir et al., 2024) . Digitalization of marketing brings concerns and problems, including trust, product accuracy, such as consistency, and quality of information (Setiawan & Patricia, 2022). Digital reliability plays a significant role; therefore, to determine its effect, the author proposed the hypothesis:

H3. Reliability has a positive impact on consumer brand perception

3. RESEARCH METHODS

According to Hardani et al. (2020), quantitative research is based on the identification of variables, random selection of subjects, as well as comparison between statistical results. The main purpose of quantitative-based research is to test out the hypotheses of the research. The core of quantitative research is reductionist; by definition, it sets limits on each variable to highlight the focus of the research. The indicators were taken from previous studies (Al-Bashayreh et al., 2022; Dang & Pham, 2018; Nosi et al., 2022). The data collection for the research will use a digital survey, with assessment questions. The survey being conducted is anonymous, with respondents giving only gender and age as general information. The first point of confirmation for a participant is a social media user is by asking the question "Are you an active user of one or more types of social media?" including social media names such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Before the survey begins, there will be images of several social media influencer partnerships with brands on different platforms, as well as several common consumer brands in Indonesia, to establish a general picture of influencers and consumer brands. The questionnaire will consist of 3 indicators for each variable, as shown in the table below. Based on the Likert scale, respondents will be choosing 5 scales for each indicator, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Sample sizing according to (Hair, Black, et al., 2019) recommended 10 times of indicators. In this survey, 12 indicators lead to a minimum sample size of 120.

Table 1. ***Measurement Variable***

Variables	Indicators
Social Media Influencer (SMI)	I follow the activity of social media influencers.
	I am aware of the aspect of social media influencers that I follow.
	I perceive brands based on influencers who collaborate with them.
Trust (T)	I have trust in the brands.
	I am happy with the standards of how this brand is operating.
	I believe in the statements of these brands.
Reliability (R)	I can rely on the quality of the product from these brands.
	The products are represented accurately.
	The products I received match the description.
Consumer Brand Perception (CBP)	I understand the information from brands.
	Overall, I am satisfied with the products from brands.
	I will repurchase products from brands.

Source: Authors, 2026

In this study, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) has been used to analyse its data. The study first goes through validity and reliability testing with several requirements. Validity testing with loading factors > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50 (Chin & Dibbern, 2010). The requirements for discriminant validity, HTMT < 0.90, are also taken into consideration (Hair, Risher, et al., 2019). For the reliability of the survey, this study will use the measurement from its Cronbach's Alpha as well as Composite Reliability, both with the testing criteria of > 0.70 (Chin & Dibbern, 2010). After the validity and reliability test, the data that match the testing criteria will then be tested for hypothesis testing based on the framework.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The number of participants is 219, but several participants submitted incomplete answers; therefore, the final data is 214 participants. The survey resulted in 123 or 57.48% survey respondents being female. While the majority age that dominate of the surveyors age group 26-30, or 47.19% with the least, 2.82% participants in the age group above 35 years old, as stated in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent Demographics

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Man	91	42.52%
Woman	123	57.48%
<20 years old	14	6.54%
21-25 years old	77	35.98%
26-30 years old	101	47.19%
31-35 years old	16	7.47%
>35 years old	6	2.82%

Source: Authors, 2026

Table 3 shows the results of the validity and reliability test. With the highest result of outer loading on indicator T1, and the lowest, at 0.721 on indicator T3. For outer loading > 0.70, indicating data usability for other testing. As stated,> 0.70 of Cronbach's Alpha (CR) and Composite Reliability (CR), indicating a good reliability of data. With the highest results of CA on the social media influencer variable, and the lowest at 0.767. Other test results, such as AVE or Average Variance Extracted and CR, also show that Trust is the lowest. The highest mean result is on SMI1 and SMI2, with both resulted in means of 4.237. While the lowest mean is T3. This shown that many of the participant having a highest positivity in regards of social media influencers specifically regarding how closely participants follow and understand their support to the influencers that they followed. Standard Deviation highest on T3, which is 0.902. While CBP2 having the lowest Standard Deviation of 0.721. These results indicate that the score given by participant is more spread out on CBP2.

Table 3. Outer Loading and Mean

Variable	**Indicator**	**Outer Loading**	**Mean**
Social Media Influencer	SMI1	0.873	4.237
	SMI2	0.867	4.237
	SMI3	0.835	4.070
Trust	T1	0.875	4.042
	T2	0.876	4.074

	T3	0.721	3.926
Reliability	R1	0.875	4.065
	R2	0.850	4.060
	R3	0.855	4.098
Consumer Brand Perception	CBP1	0.838	4.181
	CBP2	0.823	4.307
	CBP3	0.865	4.028

Source: Authors, 2026

Table 4. CR and AV

Indicator	SD	CA	CR	AVE
SMI1	0.774			
SMI2	0.798	0.822	0.894	0.737
SMI3	0.857			
T1	0.797			
T2	0.737	0.767	0.789	0.685
T3	0.902			
R1	0.750			
R2	0.808	0.824	0.827	0.739
R3	0.780			
CBP1	0.722			
CBP2	0.721	0.795	0.798	0.709
CBP3	0.789			

Source: Authors, 2026

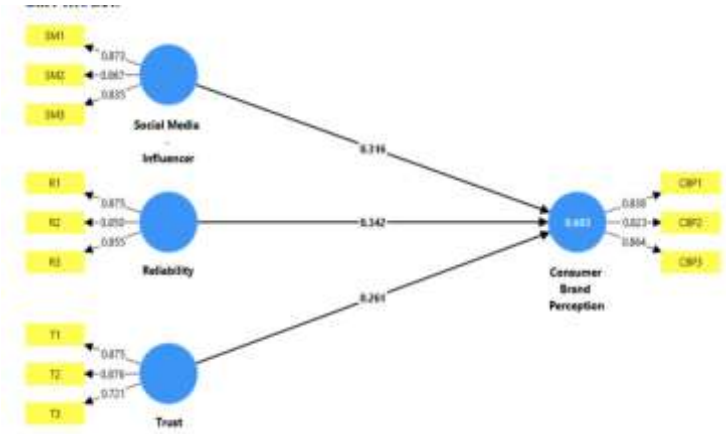

Figure 2. *Result of Data*

Table 5 can be interpreted as variables within the study, such as Reliability, Trust, and Social Media Influence, which collectively explain around 60.3% of Consumer Brand Perception. Table 5 indicates that Social Media Influencer and Reliability have a medium effect on Consumer Brand Perception. While Trust has a low effect on Consumer Brand Perception.

Table 5. R Square and R Square Adjusted Output

Model	R Square	R Square Ad
Consumer Brand Perception	0.603	0.597

Source: Authors, 2026

Table 6. F Square Output

Variable	Consumer Brand Perception
Social Media Influencer	0.152
Trust	0.104
Reliability	0.165

Source: Authors, 2026

H1, testing the social media influencer effect on consumer brand perception, showed a value of 0.316 with a t-value of 3.841, indicating that there's a positive influence. H2, testing the trust effect on consumer brand perception, showed a value of 0.261 with a t-value of 4.303, indicating a positive influence. H3, testing reliability with consumer brand perception, resulted in 0.342 with a t-value of 5.239, indicating a positive influence.

Table 7.Hypothesis Testing

	Independent Variable	Original Sample	t-value	p-value
H1	SMI → CBP	0.316	3.841	0.000
H2	T → CBP	0.261	4.303	0.000
H3	R → CBP	0.342	5.239	0.000

Source: Authors, 2026

A positive and significant effect shows that increasing social media influencers' partnership will have a corresponding exposure for brands in regards to consumer brand perception. In other words, consumers will perceive the brands online or even offline, depending on which influencers. As consumers perceive brands in a certain way, it will indefinitely affect consumers' decision-making in regards of purchase intention (Agarwal, 2024). The impact of it causes the necessity and sensitivity of brands toward social media influencers. Consumers might view brands in a negative light if the social media influencers selected for the partnership are being viewed in a negative light. As consumers perceive brands based on which social media influencer represents or promotes them. Vice versa, if the social media influencer has a great consumer perception, partnering with a less positive brand. It might shift consumer perception of the brands involved into a more positive light. This aspect shows that when partnering with social media influencers, brands need to be on the lookout regarding the influencers' public perception as well as the effect of the partnership. Especially on the accountability that in the current condition of the survey, the massiveness of following some social media influencers.

Consumer trust in regards of brands can affect how the brand is perceived. Trust in communication and delivery of said trust is an important thing both offline and online. Having a high belief in consumer needs is being understood by a brand gives consumers a positive perception of the brand. This indicates the need for brands to actively listen to consumers in regards of their needs. Consumers also perceive brands based on how they operate. This means consumer trust doesn't stay in a constant state. If consumers start to lose trust in how the brand is operating, then the perception of the brand will also be affected negatively. Lastly, in this study, one of the lowest points of the indicators relates to the statement of the brand itself. This indicates that publicly, consumers are less inclined to believe in brand statements/authenticity in their promotion. Brands should focus on gaining consumer trust by having a consistent message as well as a consistent delivery of products. An optimism of trust from consumers will greatly affect how a brand is perceived in the market.

Having good reliability in the sense that the consumer is able to rely on consistent quality delivered by brands through product, representation, as well as description. A reliable quality product delivery will have a significant effect on how a brand is perceived within the market. Consistency is key in regards to reliability. This highlights the importance of deliverance from brands to consumers.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study yielded results regarding how social media influencers, trust, and reliability affect consumer brand perception. It also indirectly highlights the importance and ways of maintaining consumer brand perception. Previous studies and theories in this study offer a perspective on the importance of consumer brand perception, such as an increase in sales and willingness to adapt to new products. The author acknowledges there are several drawbacks, such as participants are not sorted based on the social media they use daily. The survey is spread locally, but there is no indicator of the current location, which might be difficult for implementation in a specific market..

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