
**THE INFLUENCE OF BEAUTY INFLUENCER MARKETING AND
POSITIVE ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (E-WOM) ON KOREAN
SKINCARE BRAND PURCHASE DECISIONS MEDIATED BY BRAND
TRUST**

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of Beauty Influencer Marketing and Positive Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on purchasing decisions for Korean skincare brand products, both directly and indirectly through Brand Trust as a mediating variable. The research method uses a quantitative approach by distributing questionnaires to 129 respondents who are users of Korean skincare brands. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Square (PLS). The results show that Beauty Influencer Marketing and Positive E-WOM do not have a direct effect on purchasing decisions, but both have a significant effect on Brand Trust. In addition, Brand Trust is proven to have a positive effect on purchasing decisions, as well as mediating the influence of Beauty Influencer Marketing and Positive E-WOM on purchasing decisions. These findings confirm that the role of brand trust is very important in encouraging consumers to make purchases, especially for imported skincare products that are classified as high involvement.

Keywords: Beauty Influencer Marketing, Positive E-WOM, Brand Trust, Purchase Decision, Korean Skincare

INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry, particularly skincare products, has experienced significant growth along with changes in consumer lifestyles that increasingly emphasize skin health and appearance. Beauty products are no longer viewed as secondary needs but have become an integral part of lifestyle and a means of self-expression, especially for women (Xiao et al., 2016). Women tend to use skincare products more intensively as a form of concern for skin health and beauty (Anugrah et al., 2024). In line with this trend, the Indonesian Ministry of Industry reports that the cosmetic market in Indonesia has grown by 4.86 percent annually, reflecting high demand and the continuously expanding potential of the beauty industry market (Komdigi, 2024).

The rapid growth of the skincare industry, including Korean skincare brands, has intensified market competition. One of the main challenges faced by brands is influencing the purchase decisions of consumers who are becoming increasingly informed and selective. Today's consumers have broad access to brand-related information that shapes their perceptions during the decision-making process (Luan et al., 2019). Advances in information technology allow consumers to obtain product information from various sources, both online and offline, making an understanding of the factors influencing purchase decisions increasingly important for marketers (Laraswanti, 2023).

Purchase decisions represent a complex process involving a series of considerations, such as brand selection, place and timing of purchase, quantity, and payment method, all of which are influenced by information provided by marketers to assist consumers in product evaluation (Hanaysha, 2018). These decisions are affected by various factors, including social influence, perceived quality, and emotional appeal (Sahadah et al., 2024). In the digital era, social media has become a dominant factor that significantly influences consumer attitudes and purchase decisions (Latief & Rizal, 2024; Yang, 2024).

The development of social media has driven the emergence of influencer marketing as an effective marketing strategy, particularly in the beauty industry. Influencer marketing leverages individuals with influence to deliver brand messages to a broader audience (Gelati & Verplancke, 2022). This strategy has grown rapidly and gained popularity because influencers are perceived as capable of building strong and credible relationships with their followers (Ancillai et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2021; Vo, 2023). In the beauty industry, influencers who focus on beauty products are known as beauty influencers, namely individuals who provide information, reviews, and recommendations related to skincare products (Ningrum & Ruspitasari, 2022).

Beauty influencers play an important role in shaping consumer perceptions because they are considered trustworthy sources of information. Consumers tend to follow influencers in the fashion and beauty sectors and trust the recommendations they provide, which can influence their purchase decisions regarding beauty products (Hermanda et al., 2019; Nafees et al., 2021; Rachman, 2024). In Indonesia, several beauty influencers such as Nanda Arsynta, Abel Chyntia, and Tasya Farasya are widely recognized for reviewing Korean skincare products, which has been shown to increase consumer interest and sales of various brands such as D Seoul, Anua, Sulwhasoo, and Skin1004.

In addition to influencer marketing, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is also an important factor in shaping purchase decisions. Consumers are increasingly active in

sharing their experiences and evaluations online, which serve as references for other consumers (Liang & Turban, 2011). E-WOM includes both positive and negative statements made by consumers regarding a product or brand (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Positive e-WOM, in particular, can shape favorable perceptions of products and encourage consumer purchase decisions (Cheung et al., 2012), and it spreads rapidly and widely, exerting a strong influence on the consumer decision-making process (Abd-Elaziz et al., 2015).

In the context of Korean skincare brands, perceived quality is a key factor in building brand trust. Korean skincare products are widely recognized for technological innovation, attractive packaging, and a strong global image driven by the Korean Wave. However, the limited presence of physical stores in Indonesia makes consumers highly dependent on digital information. Beauty influencer marketing and positive e-WOM play a crucial role in shaping perceived quality through trusted reviews, product demonstrations, and testimonials (Nanda & Nilowardono, 2022). This positive information subsequently builds brand trust, which is essential in encouraging purchase decisions, particularly for imported products that are not easily accessible physically (Then & Agustin, 2024; Komara & Kusumawardhani, 2023).

Several previous studies have examined the relationships among beauty influencer marketing, e-WOM, brand trust, and purchase decisions; however, inconsistencies and limitations remain. Halim and Heryanto (2021) found that beauty influencers influence brand trust and purchase intention but did not examine actual purchase decisions and did not focus on Korean skincare products. Rosidah and Apriani (2020) examined e-WOM and brand trust but did not distinguish positive e-WOM and focused on other sectors. Cahyono et al. (2022) investigated the effects of beauty influencers and e-WOM on purchase decisions but did not position brand trust as a mediating variable. Meanwhile, Susanti and Wijaya (2020) examined brand trust and purchase decisions in the context of local brands.

Based on the inconsistencies in previous research findings and the identified research gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of beauty influencer marketing and positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on purchase decisions of Korean skincare brands, with brand trust as a mediating variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is also supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991), which states that individual behavior is influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, which subsequently shape behavioral intention. Beauty influencer marketing plays a role in shaping subjective norms, as it represents social influence derived from influential figures. Positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) provides informational influence that strengthens positive attitudes toward the product. Meanwhile, brand trust functions as a psychological factor that reinforces intention, as trust reduces perceived risk and increases consumer confidence in making a purchase.

Beauty influencer marketing is a promotional strategy that utilizes public figures on social media to shape consumer perceptions. Influencers are considered more credible due

to the emotional closeness and authenticity of the experiences they share (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). In the skincare context, influencer recommendations often serve as the initial stimulus that generates consumer interest. However, for these recommendations to truly influence behavior, consumers require a trust-related factor toward the brand.

Positive e-WOM refers to favorable reviews shared by consumers regarding their product usage experiences through online media. These reviews function as social proof, reducing consumer uncertainty about product quality (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). For skincare products, which are categorized as high-involvement products, positive reviews play an important role; however, their influence is often limited to shaping perceptions and beliefs rather than directly triggering purchase behavior.

Brand trust is defined as consumers' belief that a brand is capable of fulfilling its promises regarding quality, safety, and consistency (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust serves as a psychological mechanism for reducing risk. In the case of imported skincare products, brand trust becomes particularly important because consumers cannot directly verify product quality and safety. Therefore, brand trust acts as a mediating variable that bridges the influence of influencer marketing and e-WOM on purchase decisions.

Purchase decision represents the final stage of consumer behavior in which individuals choose one product from several alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In skincare products, this decision involves high risk evaluation, making trust a crucial requirement for transforming marketing stimuli (influencer marketing and e-WOM) into actual purchasing behavior.

Previous studies support that influencer marketing affects brand trust, which subsequently increases purchase intention (Jin & Phua, 2014). Positive e-WOM also enhances brand trust, which in turn influences purchase decisions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). These findings align with the TPB framework, where trust strengthens the pathway from external stimuli to actual behavior.

Prior research indicates a relationship between beauty influencer marketing and consumer purchase decisions (Liu, 2023; Rachman, 2024; Ningrum & Ruspitasari, 2022). Based on this explanation, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: The more positive the beauty influencer marketing, the greater its influence on the purchase decisions of Korean skincare products.

Positive e-WOM can encourage potential consumers to make purchases without hesitation (Utami & Juanda, 2022) and plays an increasingly important role in purchase decisions (Kaliey et al., 2025; Mamoto & Gunawan, 2023; Perera et al., 2019). This indicates that e-WOM plays a significant role in influencing consumer purchase decisions. Therefore, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: The higher the level of positive e-WOM, the stronger its influence on the purchase decisions of Korean skincare products.

Influencers are individuals who have built extensive social networks with their followers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Previous studies have identified a relationship between beauty influencer marketing and purchase decisions (Amelia, 2023; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Based on this explanation, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H3: The more positive the beauty influencer marketing, the stronger its influence on brand trust in Korean skincare products.

Positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) from internet users shapes consumer perceptions, which subsequently influence brand trust (Sari et al., 2021). Several studies confirm the relationship between e-WOM and consumer trust in brands (Hasan & Elviana, 2022; Sari et al., 2021). Accordingly, the fourth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H4: The higher the level of positive e-WOM, the stronger its influence on brand trust in Korean skincare products.

Brand trust is a crucial factor in building long-term relationships between consumers and brands. As explained by Sari et al. (2021), consumer trust in a brand has a significant influence on purchase decisions (Esmail, 2020; Hanaysha, 2022; Putri, 2021). Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H5: The higher the brand trust, the stronger its influence on the purchase decisions of Korean skincare products.

Previous studies have identified the relationship between beauty influencer marketing and brand trust (Hasan & Elviana, 2022; Sari et al., 2021). In addition, studies by Esmail (2020), Hanaysha (2022), and Putri (2021) indicate that consumer trust in a brand significantly influences purchase decisions. Accordingly, the sixth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H6: Beauty influencer marketing has a positive influence on purchase decisions through brand trust in Korean skincare products.

Studies by Amelia (2023) and Lou and Yuan (2019) reveal a relationship between positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and brand trust. Furthermore, Esmail (2020), Hanaysha (2022), and Putri (2021) confirm that brand trust significantly influences purchase decisions. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H7: Positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a positive influence on purchase decisions through brand trust in Korean skincare products.

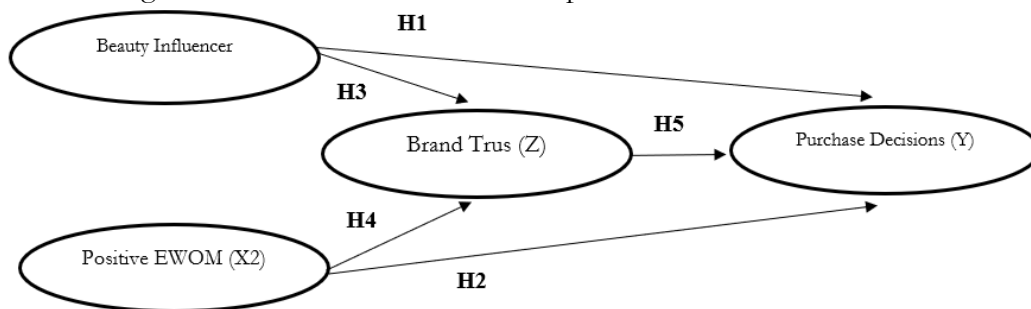


Figure 1.
Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, which emphasizes the measurement and analysis of data using statistical techniques to test hypotheses and examine relationships among variables within a specific population and sample (Hair et al., 2018). The type of research employed is causal research, which aims to explain cause-and-effect relationships between two or more variables, particularly how changes in one variable influence changes in another. In this study, the causal relationship examined involves beauty

influencer marketing and positive electronic word of mouth as independent variables influencing purchase decisions as the dependent variable, with brand trust serving as a mediating variable.

The research was conducted in Indonesia and involved female respondents who use Korean skincare brands across various provinces. The population of this study consists of women who use Korean skincare brands and actively use social media in Indonesia. Population is defined as the entire set of elements that share similar characteristics and become the focus of a study (Sekaran, 2016; Hair, 2021).

Sample selection was carried out using a non-probability sampling method with a purposive sampling technique. This approach was chosen because not all members of the population have an equal opportunity to be selected as respondents; instead, the sample is limited to individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sekaran, 2016; Hair, 2021). The criteria applied in this study include: (1) women who have watched promotional videos of Korean skincare products endorsed by beauty influencers, (2) women aged at least 17 years, and (3) women who have purchased Korean skincare products. The sample size was determined based on the recommendation of Hair et al. (2018), which suggests a minimum of 5–10 respondents per indicator. With a total of 12 indicators, the minimum required sample size was 120 respondents.

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly from respondents through a questionnaire as the main data collection instrument (Sekaran, 2016). The questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms through social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp. Secondary data were obtained from supporting sources, including books, academic journals, documents, and other relevant publications related to the research topic (Sekaran, 2016).

Data collection was conducted using a survey method with a structured questionnaire. Respondents' answers were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," to assess the level of respondents' agreement with the statements provided (Sekaran, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

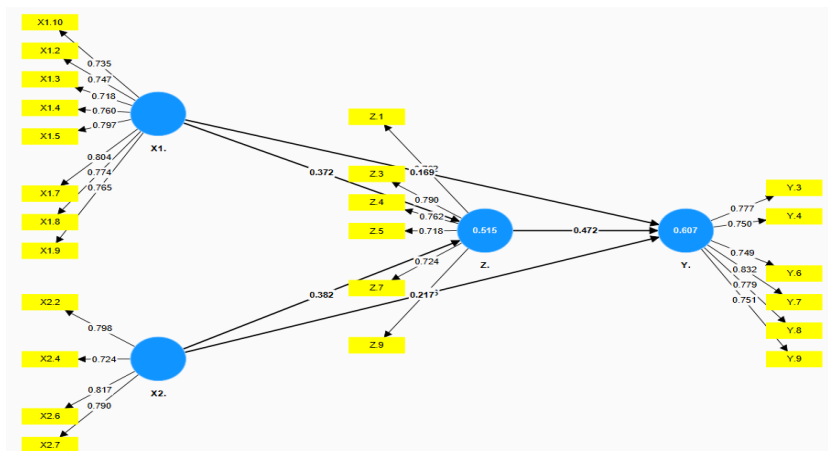


Figure 2. Outer Loading

Based on the data above, it can be seen that the value of all statement items after being retested for each variable is > 0.7 (above 0.7) so that the construct for all variables has been declared valid from the model, to then be included in the analysis using the SmartPLS application.

Table 1
Average Variant Extracted (AVE)

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Beauty Influencer Marketing (X1)	0.582
Positive Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	0.613
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.599
Brand Trust (Z)	0.571

This test is conducted to determine the extent of the differences between variables. The value used in this test is the average variance extracted (AVE). Overall, all variables obtained as estimated results have a value > 0.50 , thus being considered valid. To prove the discriminant validity of a model, the AVE value must be > 0.50 or higher (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 2
Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Rule of Thumb	Model Evaluation
Beauty Influencer Marketing (X1)	0.897	0.918	> 0.70	Reliable
Positive Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	0.791	0.864		Reliable
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.866	0.899		Reliable
Brand Trust (Z)	0.850	0.889		Reliable

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that the constructs for all variables meet the reliability criteria. This is indicated by the Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values obtained from the SmartPLS estimation results. All values exceed 0.70, in accordance with the recommended criteria.

Table 3
R-Square Value

Variable	R Square
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.607
Customer Trust (Z)	0.515

Based on the table, the R-square value for the Purchase Decision (Y) variable is 0.607, while for the Customer Trust (Z) variable it is 0.515. This indicates that 60.7% of the variance

in purchase decisions can be explained by the predictor variables in the model, namely Beauty Influencer Marketing (X1), Positive e-WOM (X2), and Customer Trust (Z). Meanwhile, 51.5% of the variance in Customer Trust can be explained by Beauty Influencer Marketing (X1) and Positive e-WOM (X2). According to the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2021), R-square values above 0.50 fall into the moderate to substantial category, indicating that this research model has good predictive capability. The remaining unexplained variance may be influenced by other factors such as price perception, product quality, brand image, or usage experience, which may serve as potential directions for future research. Overall, these results confirm that the model is able to adequately explain the formation of Customer Trust and Purchase Decisions in the context of Korean skincare brands.

Table 4
Hypothesis Testing

Variable Relationship	T Value	P Value	Result
Beauty Influencer Marketing → Purchase Decision	1.389	0.165	Rejected
Positive e-WOM → Purchase Decision	1.785	0.074	Rejected
Beauty Influencer Marketing → Brand Trust	3.304	0.001	Accepted
Positive e-WOM → Brand Trust	3.302	0.001	Accepted
Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	5.439	0.000	Accepted
Beauty Influencer Marketing → Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	2.771	0.006	Accepted
Positive E-WOM -> Brand Trust -> Purchase Decision	2.734	0.006	Diterima

Hypothesis 1 (H1) states that Beauty Influencer Marketing has a positive effect on Purchase Decision. The test results indicate that this hypothesis is rejected. The T-statistic value of 1.389 (< 1.96) and a p-value of 0.165 (> 0.05) suggest that the effect is not statistically significant, despite the positive direction of the relationship. This implies that the presence of beauty influencer marketing is not yet able to directly drive consumers' purchase decisions. Consumers still tend to consider other factors such as price, product quality, or brand trust before deciding to make a purchase. This finding indicates that the role of influencers is stronger at the awareness or interest stage, but insufficient to influence the final purchase decision.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) proposes that Positive e-WOM has a positive effect on Purchase Decision. This hypothesis is also rejected, with a T-statistic value of 1.785 (< 1.96) and a p-value of 0.074 (> 0.05). Although the direction of the relationship is positive, the effect is not statistically significant. This suggests that positive consumer reviews on online platforms are not yet able to directly encourage consumers to make purchase decisions. Consumers appear to require a stronger level of trust in the brand before using e-WOM as a basis for their decision-making.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) states that Beauty Influencer Marketing has a positive effect on Brand Trust. This hypothesis is accepted. The T-statistic value of 3.304 (> 1.96) with a p-value of 0.001 (< 0.05) indicates a significant effect. This means that the more intensive and credible the promotions conducted by beauty influencers, the higher the level of consumer trust in the brand. This finding confirms the important role of influencers in building a positive brand image and consumer trust.

Hypothesis 4 (H4) proposes that Positive e-WOM has a positive effect on Brand Trust. This hypothesis is accepted, with a T-statistic value of 3.302 and a p-value of 0.001, both indicating statistical significance. Positive consumer reviews, whether in the form of testimonials or online reviews, are proven to strengthen trust in the brand. This supports the view that e-WOM is one of the most credible sources of information for consumers.

Hypothesis 5 (H5) states that Brand Trust has a positive effect on Purchase Decision. This hypothesis is accepted, with a very high T-statistic value of 5.439 (> 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000. This finding confirms that the greater the consumer trust in a brand, the stronger their tendency to make a purchase decision. Brand trust thus becomes a key variable in mediating the influence of marketing strategies on consumer decisions.

Hypothesis 6 (H6) proposes that Beauty Influencer Marketing has an effect on Purchase Decision through Brand Trust. This hypothesis is accepted, with a T-statistic value of 2.771 and a p-value of 0.006. This indicates that although beauty influencer marketing does not directly affect purchase decisions (see H1), its influence becomes significant when mediated by brand trust. In other words, consumers do not immediately make purchases because of influencers, but influencers are able to increase trust, which ultimately drives purchasing behavior.

Hypothesis 7 (H7) states that Positive e-WOM has an effect on Purchase Decision through Brand Trust. This hypothesis is also accepted (T-statistic = 2.734, p-value = 0.006). These results show that e-WOM does not directly encourage purchase decisions (see H2), but its effect becomes significant when mediated by brand trust. Positive consumer reviews create trust, which subsequently strengthens purchase intentions.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the effect of Beauty Influencer Marketing and Positive Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on purchase decisions of Korean skincare products, with Brand Trust serving as a mediating variable.

The results show that Beauty Influencer Marketing and Positive e-WOM do not have a direct effect on purchase decisions. This indicates that consumers do not immediately make purchases solely due to exposure to influencer promotions or positive reviews. However, both variables have a significant effect on Brand Trust, which in turn has a positive influence on purchase decisions. Thus, Brand Trust acts as a key mediator that bridges the influence of Beauty Influencer Marketing and Positive e-WOM on purchase decisions.

These findings emphasize that in the context of Korean skincare products, which fall into the high-involvement category, trust in the brand is the primary factor that transforms digital marketing stimuli into actual purchase decisions. Marketing strategies that focus on the

use of beauty influencers and the utilization of e-WOM will be more effective when they are directed toward building and strengthening Brand Trust.

From a practical perspective, the results imply that Korean skincare companies need to emphasize efforts to enhance credibility, maintain consistent product quality, and ensure transparency of product information in order to foster consumer trust, which ultimately will encourage purchase decisions.

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