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INFLUENCER ATTRACTIVENESS AND TRUSTWORTHINESS AS PREDICTORS OF PURCHASE INTENTION FOR BODY LOTION PRODUCTS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND TRUST AMONG MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

Yessi Fadhilla Prastiwi¹, Fery Setiawan², Titis Purwaningrum³, Eka Destriyanto Pristi Ayuningtyas⁴

Management, Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, Ponorogo, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4}

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Abstract

The rapid growth of social media has increased the role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer purchase intention. This study, grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory, examines the effects of Influencer's Attractiveness and Influencer's Trustworthiness on Purchase Intention through Brand Trust. A quantitative approach was employed using purposive sampling of 100 Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. Data were analyzed using SEM-PLS with SmartPLS 4. The results indicate that Influencer's Attractiveness and Influencer's Trustworthiness positively influence Brand Trust. Influencer's Trustworthiness and Brand Trust significantly affect Purchase Intention, while Influencer's Attractiveness has no direct effect. Brand Trust also mediates the relationship between influencer characteristics and Purchase Intention.

Correspondence Address : Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo

Institution Address : JL Budi Utomo No. 10 Siman, Ponorogo 63471

E-mail : yessifadhilap@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology has drastically shifted marketing from traditional media to more interactive and extensive digital platforms. In Indonesia, the surge in social media users can no longer be ignored as online channels have become the primary arena of business competition. According to data from the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers APJII (2025), internet users in Indonesia have reached 229.4 million people or approximately 79.5% of the total population, with an average internet usage time of more than 7 hours per day. TikTok leads as the most accessed platform with a 35.17% share, making social media the primary space for companies to reach consumers through influencer marketing (APJII, 2025). This condition causes influencers to increasingly serve as information sources because they are considered closer to the audience than conventional advertising (Nurhakim, 2025). Within the framework of Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974 in Zhou & Tong, 2022), influencer characteristics such as attractiveness and trustworthiness serve as external stimuli that influence consumers' internal psychological conditions in the form of Brand Trust as the organism, which subsequently drives the formation of Purchase Intention as the response. This confirms that the influence of influencers does not work automatically, but rather through consumers' internal evaluation process before producing a response in the form of purchase intention.

This study selects Vaseline Body Lotion as the research object because it is one of the body care brands that has long been recognized by Indonesian consumers and is actively promoted through social media. Vaseline secured the highest market share of 10.68% among body lotion brands on Shopee Indonesia in the fourth quarter of 2025, demonstrating its strength and consistency as the most dominant brand in the Indonesian body lotion market (Kompas, 2026). Vaseline's total sales in Indonesia reached 56,600 units with revenue of IDR 3.7 billion, capturing a market share of 18.30%, which makes it frequently become the subject of influencer reviews and recommendations on social media (GoodStats, 2025). This strong market position makes it relevant to examine how influencer characteristics affect consumers' Brand Trust and Purchase Intention. Unlike facial care products that have been more extensively studied, body lotion represents a product category that currently floods the market with diverse beauty claims, yet many are questioned in terms of safety and quality. This condition encourages consumers, particularly students, to seek more in-depth information before making purchases, including through influencer recommendations on social media that are considered more authentic and trustworthy.

The variables in this study are structured based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theoretical framework, which explains that external stimuli influence consumers' internal psychological states, which in turn shape behavioral responses. Influencer's Attractiveness, defined as the aesthetic and personal appeal of influencers that captures consumer attention, and Influencer's Trustworthiness, defined as the audience's perception of the influencer's honesty and credibility in providing product recommendations (Abbas & Salim, 2023), serve as the stimulus variables in this model. These two dimensions of influencer credibility are hypothesized to shape Brand Trust as the organism, representing consumers' internal psychological evaluation of the brand formed through exposure to influencer content. Brand Trust subsequently functions as the mechanism that converts credibility perceptions into behavioral intentions, ultimately driving the formation of Purchase Intention as the response variable. This sequential

pathway is grounded in the premise that the influence of influencer characteristics on purchase intention does not operate directly, but is mediated through the formation of brand trust as a psychological intermediary (Muhammad et al. 2024). The more attractive and trustworthy an influencer is perceived, the stronger the brand trust formed, and consequently, the higher the likelihood of purchase intention emerging among consumers.

Although previous other hand, Sutrantiyas et al. (2025) found that influencer Attractiveness positively affects Purchase Intention, whereas Azzahra & Roslina (2025) showed that Attractiveness does not significantly affect Purchase Intention. These inconsistent findings indicate that the effect of influencer attractiveness on purchase intention requires further investigation.

Based on these research gaps, The novelty of this study lies in three specific contributions. First, this study decomposes influencer credibility into two distinct constructs, namely Influencer's Attractiveness and Influencer's Trustworthiness, and positions them as separate independent variables rather than treating them as a unified credibility construct as commonly done in prior studies have extensively examined the relationship between influencer credibility and Purchase Intention, the findings remain inconsistent. AlFarraj et al. (2021) and Wiedmann & von Mettenheim (2021) examined Attractiveness and Trustworthiness, but both dimensions were still positioned as part of the overall influencer credibility construct rather than as separately analyzed independent variables. Khairul Aini et al. (2025) found that influencer credibility does not directly affect Purchase Intention and its effect only emerges through Brand Trust. On the studies (AlFarraj et al. 2021; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021).

This decomposition allows for a more nuanced examination of which specific credibility dimension exerts stronger influence on Brand Trust and Purchase Intention. Second, this study provides empirical evidence on the mediating role of Brand Trust in the Indonesian body lotion market, a product category that has received limited attention compared to facial skincare despite its rapid market growth. Third, this study contributes to the application of S-O-R Theory in the context of influencer marketing on social media platforms in Indonesia, offering a theoretically grounded explanation of the psychological mechanism through which influencer characteristics translate into consumer purchase intention via brand trust formation. The subjects selected are Management Study Program students at UMPO from the class of 2022–2025, who possess business and marketing knowledge that makes them more critical in evaluating promotional content. This study is beneficial in providing strategic guidance for brand owners in selecting the right influencers and designing effective influencer marketing strategies. The objective of this study is to analyze the effect of Influencer's Attractiveness and Influencer's Trustworthiness on Purchase Intention for Vaseline Body Lotion products through Brand Trust as a mediating variable among social media-using management students at UMPO.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an associative causal research type. According to Sugiyono (2023), the quantitative method is based on positivism philosophy to test hypotheses through statistical analysis. Primary data were collected through questionnaires distributed online and offline to Management Study Program students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo from the class of 2022–2025.

The research population consists of 605 active students of the Management Study Program at UMPO from the class of 2022–2025, based on data obtained from the Academic Administration Bureau (BAAK) of Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo.

The sampling technique uses purposive sampling with criteria including active Management students at UMPO from the class of 2022–2025, active social media users, having seen Vaseline Body Lotion promotional content from influencers, and having interest or experience in using body lotion products. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% error rate as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{605}{1 + 605(0.1)^2} = \frac{605}{7.05} = 85.82$$

To anticipate incomplete questionnaires and meet the recommendation of Hair et al. (2022) for SEM-PLS analysis with mediating variables, the sample was set at 100 respondents. The research instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data analysis uses the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method with SmartPLS 4.0 software. This approach was chosen because it does not require normally distributed data, is effective in handling complex models with mediating variables, and is flexible for medium sample sizes (Hair et al. 2022). The analysis process is carried out through two stages, namely the evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model) to test validity and reliability, and the evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model) to test relationships between variables and hypotheses.

This study employs four latent constructs measured using reflective indicators adapted from established literature. The operationalization of each construct is presented as follows.

Influencer's Attractiveness is defined as the aesthetic and personal appeal demonstrated by influencers through their physical appearance, presentation style, and visual representation that has the potential to captivate audience attention and enhance the acceptance of marketing messages (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). This construct is measured using 4 measurement items adapted from AlFarraj et al. (2021), namely: (1) Attractive, (2) Charismatic, (3) Physical Makeup is Admirable, and (4) Beautiful.

Influencer's Trustworthiness is defined as the audience's perception of the level of honesty, integrity, and credibility of influencers in providing product information and recommendations (Abbas & Salim, 2023). This construct is measured using 4 measurement items adapted from Abbas & Salim (2023), namely: (1) Honest, (2) Dependable, (3) Reliable, and (4) Sincere.

Brand Trust is defined as the consumer's belief in the reliability and integrity of a brand so that consumers feel safe when using products from that brand (Kemec & Yuksel, 2021). This construct is measured using 3 measurement items adapted from Kemec & Yuksel (2021), namely: (1) Reliability, (2) Safety, and (3) Brand Credibility.

Purchase Intention is defined as the mental readiness and internal commitment of consumers to purchase a product as the final outcome of cognitive and affective processes toward influencer stimuli, encompassing the likelihood of purchasing both in the present and in the future (Abbas & Salim, 2023). This construct is measured using 5 measurement items adapted from Abbas & Salim (2023), namely: (1) Interest, (2) Desire, (3) Consideration, (4) Willingness to Purchase, and (5) Future Purchase Intention.

All items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The total number of measurement items used in this

study is 16 items across four constructs, which satisfies the minimum sample size requirement for SEM-PLS analysis recommended by (Hair et al. 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 100 respondents who are active students of the Management Study Program at UMPO from the class of 2022–2025. Based on gender, the majority of respondents are female with 84 people (84%) and male with 16 people (16%). The dominance of female respondents is relevant to the characteristics of body lotion products which are more widely used by women as part of their daily self-care routine. Based on class, respondents are dominated by the class of 2022 with 49 people (49%), followed by the class of 2024 with 18 people (18%), the class of 2023 with 17 people (17%), and the class of 2025 with 16 people (16%). Based on the frequency of viewing body lotion promotional content on social media, 31 people (31%) view content 3–5 times per week, 27 people (27%) daily, 26 people (26%) 1–2 times per week, and 16 people (16%) rarely.

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The outer model evaluation was conducted through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability tests. The outer loading test results show that all indicators have loading factor values above 0.70, with the lowest value of 0.750 (X2.2) and the highest of 0.898 (Y5), so all indicators are declared valid. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test results show values above 0.50 for all constructs, namely Influencer's Attractiveness (0.645), Influencer's Trustworthiness (0.648), Brand Trust (0.711), and Purchase Intention (0.700), so convergent validity is fulfilled.

Discriminant validity was tested using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion with all values below 0.90. The highest HTMT value is found in the relationship between Influencer's Trustworthiness and Brand Trust at 0.867, which is still below the recommended threshold, so discriminant validity is fulfilled (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 1. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Status
Influencer's Attractiveness	0.817	0.879	Reliabel
Influencer's Trustworthiness	0.818	0.880	Reliabel
Brand Trust	0.797	0.881	Reliabel
Purchase Intention	0.893	0.921	Reliabel

Source: Processed data (2026)

The reliability test results show that all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, so all instruments are declared reliable (Hair et al., 2022).

Structural Model (Inner Model)**Table 2.** R-Square Values

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand Trust	0.556	0.547
Purchase Intention	0.584	0.571

Source: Processed data (2026)

The R-square value of Brand Trust at 0.556 indicates that Influencer's Attractiveness and Influencer's Trustworthiness are able to explain 55.6% of the variation in Brand Trust. The R-square value of Purchase Intention at 0.584 indicates that the three independent variables are able to explain 58.4% of the variation in Purchase Intention. Both values fall into the strong category based on Hair et al. (2022) criteria.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results (Path Coefficient)

	<i>Original sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P values</i>
X1 -> M	0.327	0.331	0.102	3.207	0.001
X2 -> M	0.486	0.488	0.114	4.271	0.000
X1 -> Y	0.204	0.208	0.137	1.486	0.137
X2 -> Y	0.354	0.342	0.115	3.070	0.002
M -> Y	0.300	0.305	0.106	2.822	0.005

Source: Processed data (2026)

Table 4. Mediation Test Results (Indirect Effect)

	<i>Original sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P values</i>
X1 -> M -> Y	0.098	0.098	0.041	2.378	0.017
X2 -> M -> Y	0.146	0.153	0.073	1.986	0.047

Source: Processed data (2026)

DISCUSSION**The Effect of Influencer's Attractiveness on Brand Trust**

Influencer's Attractiveness is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust with a path coefficient of 0.327. This finding occurs because students, as visually-oriented consumers who actively engage with social media content, tend to associate an influencer's attractive appearance with positive qualities of the brand being promoted through the halo effect mechanism, where admiration for the influencer's physical appeal unconsciously transfers to perceptions of the brand's quality and credibility. In the context of body lotion products where physical results are the primary outcome, an attractive influencer serves as living proof of the product's efficacy, making the brand appear more reliable in students' eyes. This psychological process is particularly strong among students who consume short-form visual content rapidly on social media, where first impressions formed within seconds become the foundation of brand

perception. This finding is consistent with Kemec & Yuksel (2021) who proved that attractiveness as a sub-dimension of influencer credibility has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust, and Rahma & Suparna (2025) who showed that attractiveness becomes the indicator with the highest score in forming Brand Trust among cosmetic product consumers.

The Effect of Influencer's Trustworthiness on Brand Trust

Influencer's Trustworthiness is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust with the highest path coefficient in the entire model at 0.486. The dominance of this effect occurs because students as educated consumers with marketing knowledge are more selective and critical in evaluating influencer content compared to general consumers. When an influencer consistently demonstrates honesty, such as acknowledging product limitations or disclosing paid partnerships, students perceive this transparency as a signal of genuine credibility rather than commercial motivation. This credibility signal is then projected onto the brand itself, strengthening Brand Trust because students reason that a trustworthy influencer would not risk their reputation by promoting a low-quality product. The mechanism behind this finding aligns with Source Credibility Theory, where trustworthiness as the most fundamental credibility dimension directly shapes how consumers evaluate not only the source but also the product and brand being endorsed. This finding is consistent with Kemec & Yuksel (2021) and Muhammad et al. (2024) who found a strong positive effect between influencer Trustworthiness and Brand Trust.

The Effect of Influencer's Attractiveness on Purchase Intention

Influencer's Attractiveness does not have a significant direct effect on Purchase Intention with a path coefficient of 0.204. This occurs because body lotion, unlike impulse-purchase products, involves a higher level of perceived risk related to skin safety and ingredient compatibility, making students reluctant to make purchasing decisions based solely on visual appeal. Students recognize that an attractive appearance on social media can be influenced by lighting, filters, and editing, which reduces the perceived reliability of attractiveness as a direct predictor of product performance. Furthermore, as students with business and marketing backgrounds, they are aware of the persuasive intent behind influencer content, causing them to apply more cognitive scrutiny before developing purchase intention. This finding is inconsistent with Dausat & Muthohar (2023) who found Attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, but consistent with (Azzahra & Roslina, 2025). The difference may occur due to product category differences, where body lotion requires functional trust rather than aspirational identification alone. These results can be explained through S-O-R Theory, where the stimulus of attractiveness must first be processed through the internal organism of Brand Trust before generating the purchase intention.

The Effect of Influencer's Trustworthiness on Purchase Intention

Influencer's Trustworthiness is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention with a path coefficient of 0.354. This direct effect occurs because trustworthiness operates through a fundamentally different psychological pathway than attractiveness. When students perceive an influencer as honest and reliable in reviewing Vaseline Body Lotion, the information provided is cognitively processed as credible evidence rather than mere promotion. This reduces the perceived risk of making a wrong

purchase decision, lowers psychological barriers to commitment, and activates consumer willingness to act on the recommendation. The mechanism is particularly effective for body lotion because students are concerned about ingredient safety and skin compatibility, making the honesty of the information source a critical factor in their decision-making process. Unlike Attractiveness, which requires Brand Trust as a mediator, Trustworthiness carries sufficient persuasive weight to independently trigger purchase intention because it directly addresses the core consumer concern of whether the product actually delivers what is claimed. This finding is consistent with (Abbas & Salim, 2023; Adyuta et al., 2025; Sutrantiyas et al., 2025).

The Effect of Brand Trust on Purchase Intention

Brand Trust is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention with a path coefficient of 0.300. This effect occurs because trust functions as a risk-reduction mechanism in digital purchasing environments where consumers cannot physically inspect or test products before buying. When students have built trust toward Vaseline Body Lotion through repeated exposure to influencer content on social media, cognitive uncertainty about product quality, ingredient safety, and value for money is substantially reduced. This reduction in perceived risk lowers the psychological cost of committing to a purchase, making students more willing to translate their interest into concrete buying intention. Vaseline's established brand reputation further amplifies this effect, because students who already hold baseline trust in the brand require less persuasion to develop purchase intention compared to consumers evaluating an unknown brand. This finding is consistent with Kemec & Yuksel (2021) and Falah et al. (2022) who found that Brand Trust drives positive consumer tendencies that ultimately lead to Purchase Intention.

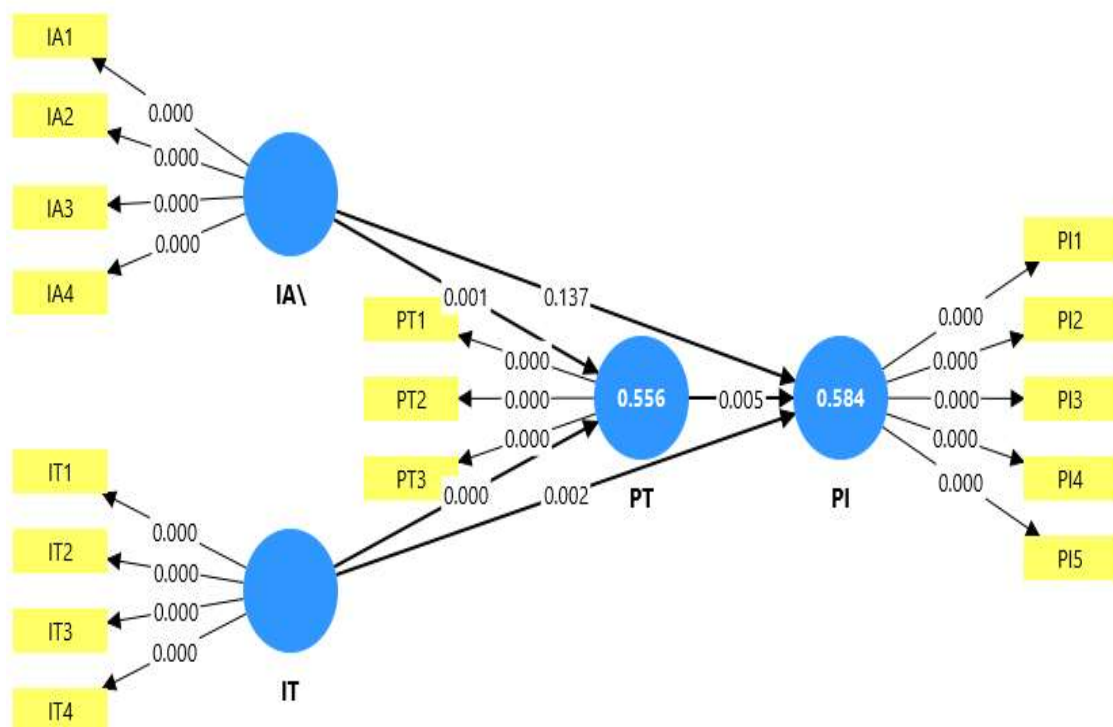
The Mediating Role of Brand Trust on the Effect of Attractiveness on Purchase Intention

Brand Trust is proven to fully mediate the effect of Influencer's Attractiveness on Purchase Intention through an indirect-only mediation pattern based on Zhao et al. (2010). This pattern occurs because attractiveness alone lacks the functional credibility necessary to directly motivate body lotion purchases among educated students. The pathway through which attractiveness influences purchase intention requires an intermediate cognitive step: students must first interpret the influencer's attractive appearance as evidence of brand quality and reliability, forming Brand Trust, before that trust can mobilize purchase intention. This mediation pattern is theoretically important because it reveals that attractiveness is not a superficial variable, but rather an entry point that initiates a chain of psychological evaluations culminating in purchasing behavior. The reason why Vaseline particularly benefits from this mechanism is that its long-standing brand reputation provides a credible foundation that students can confidently trust once attracted by the influencer, making the journey from attention to purchase intention more seamless. This finding is consistent with Muhammad et al. (2024) and (Khairul Aini et al., 2025).

The Mediating Role of Brand Trust on the Effect of Trustworthiness on Purchase Intention

Brand Trust is proven to partially mediate the effect of Influencer's Trustworthiness on Purchase Intention through a complementary mediation pattern, where both direct and indirect effects are significant and operate in the same direction. This complementary pattern occurs because Trustworthiness is sufficiently powerful to influence purchase intention through two simultaneous channels. In the direct pathway, the influencer's perceived honesty directly reduces consumer uncertainty and increases willingness to purchase without requiring brand trust as an intermediate step. In the indirect pathway, trustworthiness simultaneously builds deeper and more enduring Brand Trust, which then provides an additional and independent motivation for purchase intention. The coexistence of both pathways explains why Trustworthiness emerges as the most influential variable in this model, because its impact is not confined to a single mechanism but diffuses across multiple psychological routes, creating a compounding effect on purchase intention for Vaseline Body Lotion. This complementary mediation pattern distinguishes Trustworthiness from Attractiveness and highlights its superior role in influencer marketing effectiveness, consistent with findings from (Kemec & Yuksel, 2021).

Figure 1. Bootstrapping



Source: processed data (2026)

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study demonstrates that influencer credibility plays an important role in shaping consumers' purchase intention through Brand Trust. While both Influencer's Attractiveness and Influencer's Trustworthiness strengthen Brand Trust, only Trustworthiness has a direct influence on Purchase Intention. This indicates that consumers are more likely to purchase products recommended by influencers they perceive as honest and reliable rather than merely attractive. Furthermore, Brand Trust serves as a key mechanism linking influencer characteristics to Purchase Intention. It fully mediates the effect of Influencer's Attractiveness and partially mediates the effect of Influencer's Trustworthiness, highlighting that consumers' trust in the brand is essential in transforming positive perceptions of influencers into purchase intention. These findings emphasize the importance of selecting credible influencers who can build consumers' trust and enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies.

Theoretically, this study contributes to validating S-O-R Theory in the context of influencer marketing on Indonesian social media, particularly by separating the dimensions of Attractiveness and Trustworthiness as separately analyzed independent variables. Practically, brand owners are advised to prioritize selecting influencers with high trustworthiness since it is proven to have the strongest impact in forming both Brand Trust and Purchase Intention. Authentic and honest content is more effective in building consumer trust compared to content that only relies on visual appeal.

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research object is limited to Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo from the 2022–2025 cohort, so the findings may not fully represent consumers from different educational backgrounds, age groups, regions, or broader populations. Second, this study focuses only on the context of Body Lotion Vaseline, meaning that the results may differ when applied to other skincare brands or product categories with different levels of brand familiarity and consumer involvement. Third, this research examines influencer characteristics through two dimensions, namely attractiveness and trustworthiness, while other influencer-related factors such as expertise, content quality, engagement level, and influencer–brand congruence were not included in the research model. Fourth, this study does not distinguish between different social media platforms used by respondents, even though each platform has different characteristics that may influence consumer perceptions and purchase intention. Finally, the use of a quantitative approach with purposive sampling limits the depth of understanding regarding consumers' personal experiences and perceptions toward influencer marketing.

Based on these limitations, future research is suggested to expand the research scope by involving respondents from various demographic backgrounds and different regions. Future studies may also consider other variables related to influencer marketing, such as expertise, content quality, engagement, or electronic word of mouth, and compare the influence of influencers across different social media platforms. Furthermore, qualitative or mixed-method approaches can be applied to obtain deeper insights into consumer behavior and the psychological processes underlying purchase intention.

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