

MAPPING IDEA & LITERATURE FORMAT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Mediating Role of Consumer Trust between Influencer Credibility and Emotional Brand Attachment among Skintific Consumers in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The beauty industry in Indonesia is experiencing significant growth, particularly in the skincare sector. Influencer marketing strategies are key to building emotional relationships with consumers. This study aims to analyze the effect of influencer credibility on emotional brand attachment, with consumer trust as a mediating variable among Skintific users in Yogyakarta. Using quantitative methods and a survey of 139 Generation Z respondents, data were analyzed with PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4. The results show that influencer credibility has a significant positive effect on consumer trust and emotional brand attachment. Consumer trust partially mediates this relationship, indicating that influencer credibility will be more effective in building emotional brand attachment when it first fosters trust. These findings confirm that influencer credibility serves as the initial foundation for the psychological mechanism of trust, which, in turn, creates long-term emotional brand attachment. The limitations of this study lie in the limited geographic scope of Yogyakarta. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the population reach to a national scale, adopt a longitudinal approach, and consider variables such as perceived authenticity and consumer engagement to yield more comprehensive results.

Keywords: Emotional Brand Attachment, Influencer Credibility, Consumer Trust.

I. Introduction

In Indonesia, the beauty sector has grown significantly over the last few years, driven by the rapid growth of the youth segment and increasing awareness of the importance of skin care (Efendi & Aminah, 2023). The sector's annual growth is over 4% with demand for skincare products increasing by over 10%, indicating strong consumer interest and increasingly fierce market competition (Silitonga & Soelasih, 2025). This rapid growth has driven intense competition among brands to capture consumer attention. One brand that has successfully demonstrated superior performance in the domestic market is Skintific. According to data from the nearly 2024 months on the Kompas Market Insight Dashboard, Skintific reported the highest sales value in the beauty care category, with total sales exceeding IDR 70 billion across various channels (Andini, 2024). This success stems not only from the quality of the product but also from an effective digital marketing communication strategy that leverages social media influencers (Mesita & Wahyudi, 2024).



Therefore, Skintific was chosen as the research object because it can represent the dynamics of digital marketing that successfully builds consumer trust and emotional attachment.

Skintific's success in leveraging digital channels aligns with the evolving competitive beauty industry, which demands that every brand adapt to changing consumer behavior, becoming increasingly digital and selective. This shift in consumption patterns is encouraging beauty brands to focus not only on product quality but also on building emotional connections through relevant and personalized communication strategies. Previous studies have shown that digital marketing strategies, particularly those leveraging social media platforms, play a significant role in shaping consumer trust and engagement among Generation Z. (Azmi et al., 2025). This reinforces the argument that influencer-based communication is crucial in a highly competitive digital marketplace. In this context, social media has become a primary channel for companies to engage younger customers, especially Generation Z, who are highly inclined to seek product information and recommendations on digital platforms. Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is often referred to as a digital native with extensive social media engagement and a keen interest in skincare trends and influencer content. (Sekar Arum et al., 2023). These profiles make Gen Z a prime segment to analyze how influencer credibility influences trust and emotional attachment to brands. In the context of modern marketing, brand performance is influenced not solely by product excellence but also by its ability to cultivate emotional connections with consumers. (Ghorbanzadeh, 2025). This form of emotional attachment embodies the psychological connection uniting consumers with a brand, incorporating a range of emotions and affective states towards it. (Nuraeni et al., 2023). In the beauty industry, one external factor that shapes emotional engagement is influencer credibility. Previous studies in the Indonesian context also showed that influencer-related attributes significantly influence consumer trust and engagement, particularly in the skincare industry, highlighting the strategic importance of influencer impact on consumer-brand dynamics relationships. (Fitriasari et al., 2025).

However, it is important to emphasize that the efficacy of influencer marketing is not solely dictated by an influencer's popularity or number of followers, but rather by their credibility. This research positions credibility as a construct encompassing trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity. (Isalman et al., 2023). Influencer credibility and social support influence trust in multi-channel channels, which act as mediating variables in the formation of emotional attachment to the brand. Similarly, influencer marketing combined with online trust mechanisms has been shown to have a substantial impact on consumer decision-making and brand perception in the digital marketplace. (Saputri & Huda, 2025). However, limitations in previous studies indicate the need to test mediating variables in a more specific context. (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023). This analysis overcomes these limitations by integrating the dimensions of influencer credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity) to understand how these mechanisms specifically build emotional bonds among Skintific users. In line with this thinking, findings (Basyirah et al., 2025) Reinforce the significant association between influencer trustworthiness and consumer trust in the context of digital marketing. Therefore, researchers are interested in further examining the association between influencer credibility and affective brand attachment, with consumer trust serving as an intervening variable. The urgency of this research stems from the fact that most previous studies still focus on consumer purchase intentions. (Octaviani & Selamat, 2023). However, very few have specifically examined how the psychological mechanisms of influencer credibility can transform trust into deeper emotional engagement. However, understanding this mediation pathway is crucial for marketers to develop strategies that not merely seek short-term sales but also cultivate an enduring emotional brand.

In light of this research gap, this analysis aims to offer a new perspective. In contrast to research that focused on the restaurant industry and multi-channel trust, this study seeks to expand on this by replacing the mediating variable with personal consumer trust to explore the direct and indirect relationships between influencer credibility and emotional brand attachment, particularly in the Indonesian skincare industry. This analysis was carried out among users of Skintific skincare products in Yogyakarta, employing a quantitative methodology that included survey techniques and data analysis via Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software. Data were obtained through distributing

questionnaires to Generation Z consumers who had purchased and used Skintific products after being exposed to influencer promotional content.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the literature on consumer behavior and digital marketing, particularly by examining how trust in influencers shapes emotional attachments to brands. In practice, findings from this analysis may provide valuable insights for beauty sector players in selecting influencers who are not only popular but also credible, thereby fostering trustworthiness and long-lasting relational ties with consumers. Based on the background and literature review, the research problem is formulated as follows:

1. Does influencer credibility have a positive and significant effect on emotional brand attachment among Skintific product users in Yogyakarta?
2. Does influencer credibility have a positive and significant effect on consumer trust among Skintific product users in Yogyakarta?
3. Does consumer trust have a positive and significant effect on emotional brand attachment among Skintific product users in Yogyakarta?
4. Does consumer trust significantly mediate the effect of influencer credibility on emotional brand attachment among Skintific product users in Yogyakarta?

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The conceptual underpinning provides a basis for explaining the relationship between variables. This study examines how influencer credibility, as an external stimulus, interacts with consumer trust to shape emotional brand attachment, particularly in the Indonesian beauty market, which has high consumer engagement. The significance within this analysis lies in its in-depth understanding of how local and global brands, including Skintific, can maintain emotional loyalty amidst saturated market competition through the use of credible social media influencers. The entire literature review and hypothesis development are systematically structured to answer a series of research questions regarding the direct influence of influencer credibility on emotional brand attachment, as well as its indirect influence through the mediating role of consumer trust. Based on the established research problem formulation, this section will examine the theoretical foundations connecting these three variables to provide valid scientific answers.

2.1. Influencer Credibility

Along with the rapid development of digital technology, social media is currently filled with various forms of product promotion by users, primarily through influencer strategies that leverage influence and credibility to convey brand messages more personally and effectively to target audiences. (Riadi et al., 2022). Theoretically, source credibility in influencers is conceptualized as the degree of believability and trust consumers place in online influencers who convey information to specific audiences, acting as opinion leaders who can influence consumer perceptions, preferences, and decisions regarding a brand or product. (Sokolova, K., & Kefi, 2020). In this research, the definition of influencer credibility is expanded to better align with the characteristics of the beauty industry. Influencer credibility is no longer viewed solely based on the number of followers or visual appeal. Given that Skintific is a skincare product with a high risk to skin health, expertise is a key indicator of credibility. Consumers not only look at who is promoting it, but also whether that person has sufficient literacy regarding the product's active ingredients, such as Ceramide for skin barrier repair or Hyaluronic Acid for hydration. By linking the definition of credibility directly to the competence of technical reviews of beauty products, this research strengthens its originality by distinguishing influencer influence in the beauty sector from that in the general retail sector, which carries a lower risk. While this context is specific to the beauty industry, the credibility mechanism based on expertise has strategic implications for other high-involvement industries, where technical validation is key to building universally effective marketing communications.

This line of thought aligns with the opinion. Istianandar & Oleo (2023) which states that influencer credibility is comprehensively formed through four main dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity. These four dimensions explain how the combination of personal character, technical ability, and the image displayed on social media collectively shapes a positive perception in the audience's eyes. The interrelationship between these dimensions then determines how strongly a promotional message is accepted as truth by consumers. Furthermore, research conducted by V I De Araujo et al., (2025) emphasizes that an influencer's effectiveness is determined not only by their formal credibility, but also by the psychological attraction and shared values between the influencer and their audience. Therefore, the Skintific brand's success in building long-term relationships depends heavily on selecting influencers who are not only technically credible but also able to represent the characteristics and needs of their target market. Therefore, influencer credibility plays a central role as a key pillar in shaping initial perceptions, fostering trust, and ultimately influencing consumers' emotional attachment to the promoted brand.

2.2. Emotional Brand Attachment

Emotional brand attachment is a psychological bond that connects consumers to a particular brand through emotional involvement. (Nuraeni et al., 2023). This concept is rooted in the attraction perspective, which explains that individuals can develop special emotional relationships with particular objects. (Hajjid et al., 2022). This concept is rooted in the attraction perspective, which explains that individuals can develop special emotional relationships with particular objects. (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023). The existence (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) Emotional brand attachment is an important determinant of loyalty, as it encourages consumers to commit to one brand despite the presence of many alternatives. (Aprilia, 2024). In the context of digital marketing, this bond-building process often occurs through indirect relationships, namely the trust that influencers build in the brands they promote. When consumers trust influencers, that trust tends to extend to the products or brands they review, creating emotional closeness and brand loyalty. (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023). Therefore, emotional brand attachment in this study can be seen as the result of the trust-building process triggered by influencer credibility.

2.3. Consumer Trust

Consumer trust in a product plays a vital role not only in establishing a solid relationship between consumers and the company but also in helping build a positive reputation in the public's eyes. (Suardhita et al., 2024). Conceptually, this trust is a form of belief and knowledge that consumers have regarding a product object and the benefits it offers (Rabbani, 2024). Therefore, consumer trust is a key factor in determining the success of influencers' marketing strategies. (Basyirah et al., 2025). Furthermore, (Fadlurahman et al., 2024) explained that consumer trust is formed through three main dimensions: ability (company capability), integrity (honesty), and benevolence (goodwill or kindness). Thus, these three dimensions illustrate that consumer trust is built not only through a company's functional performance but also through the moral and emotional values consumers feel in every interaction with the brand. In the context of digital marketing, consumer trust is a key variable because it plays a fundamental role in forming emotional brand attachment to products or brands promoted by influencers.

2.4. Hypothesis Development

2.4.1. The Influence of Influencer Credibility on Emotional Brand Attachment

Influencer credibility is not only about gaining people's trust, but it can also immediately make people feel emotionally close to a brand. Research (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) has empirically demonstrated the relationship between influencer credibility and emotional brand attachment. However, in this context, the influence was found to be mediated by trust in multichannel. This indicates that, in theory, there is a strong

connection between how consumers perceive the source of information (credibility) and how emotionally attached they feel to the brand. Although research (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) emphasizes the indirect pathway, researchers argue that influencer credibility still exerts a direct influence on consumers' affective responses. The findings support this argument (Isalman et al., 2023), showing that specific dimensions of credibility, such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and similarity, play a vital role in strengthening emotional connections. When these dimensions converge in an influencer, consumers can feel an instant psychological closeness (V. I. De Araujo et al., 2025). Researchers saw an opportunity to test this influence directly in the Skintific skincare industry. Unlike the restaurant industry studied (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023), **the** beauty industry relies heavily on self-image and emotional aspirations. Therefore, researchers sought to examine how credible influencers could directly create emotional bonds without lengthy mediation.

2.4.2. The Influence of Influencer Credibility on Consumer Trust

Influencer credibility plays a crucial role in building consumer trust in the product or brand being promoted. Influencers with a good reputation, high competence, and honesty in conveying information are more likely to be trusted by their audience. (Isalman et al., 2023). This trust arises because consumers perceive credible influencers as capable of providing authentic and unbiased opinions. Research conducted by (Nugroho et al., 2020) which shows that influencer credibility has a positive and significant influence on consumer trust in e-commerce, with a path coefficient (β) value of 0.557. These results confirm that the higher the perceived credibility, the stronger the consumer's confidence in the information provided. These findings align with research by (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) In the context of multichannel marketing, influencer credibility significantly enhances trust. Based on their structural model test, the relationship between influencer credibility and trust had a beta coefficient of 0.220 with a T-statistic of 4.239 ($P < 0.001$). These findings demonstrate that the effect is positive and stable across various sample conditions. Previous research by (Basyirah et al., 2025) demonstrated that credible, authentic, and skilled influencers can increase consumer trust, which in turn impacts overall positive attitudes toward the brand. Based on strong statistical evidence from previous research, researchers expect the same pattern to hold in the skincare industry. Therefore, researchers established consumer trust as a variable directly influenced by credibility to test its impact on Skintific users.

2.4.3. The Influence of Consumer Trust on Emotional Brand Attachment

In a study (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) Trust was identified as a psychological factor that plays a crucial role in shaping emotional brand attachment. Trust creates a sense of security and confidence that the brand can meet consumer needs and expectations, thus triggering emotional engagement. Based on the results of the structural model test in the study, trust was found to have a robust, significant direct influence on emotional brand attachment, with a beta coefficient of 0.590 and a T-statistic of 17.867 ($P < 0.001$). This high T-statistic indicates that when consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy, they tend to develop a more personal and deeper relationship. Trust not only strengthens functional relationships but also serves as the foundation for brand affection, brand passion, and self-connection between customers and brands. (Sokolova, K., & Kefi, 2020). In the context of the skincare industry, a high level of trust in a product's effectiveness and safety is an absolute requirement for consumers to engage deeply with the brand. Therefore, given that previous research has empirically demonstrated that trust has a highly dominant influence on emotional attachment, the researchers sought further to examine the consumer trust variable in this study. They intended to test whether this influence's consistency also applies to the beauty industry, particularly among Skintific users, where validation of product quality is a key bridge to emotional loyalty.

2.4.4. The Mediating Role of Consumer Trust in the Relationship Between Influencer Credibility and Emotional Brand Attachment

According to (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) Influencer credibility is the initial stimulus that shapes trust in a multichannel context, ultimately forming an emotional attachment to a brand. This research empirically confirms the important role of trust as a mediating variable, with an indirect path coefficient of 0.120, a standard deviation of 0.031, and a T-statistic of 3.891 ($P < 0.001$). These findings demonstrate that influencer credibility will not reach its full potential to create attachment unless it is first validated by consumer trust. Meskipun demikian, (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) emphasize that emotional brand attachment is a relatively new construct in the marketing literature. Therefore, they suggest integrating additional mediating variables and exploring different industrial sectors to broaden the generalizability of the findings. Although many studies have highlighted the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention (Octaviani & Selamat, 2023) There remains a research gap regarding the mechanisms underlying the formation of emotional loyalty. The focus on purchase intention tends to emphasize short-term transactions, whereas in the skincare industry, as in Skintific, long-term relationships rely heavily on psychological factors. Trust in influencers is crucial because the risks of using skincare products directly impact the skin; consumers are not just buying products; they are also "buying" recommendations based on the influencer's reputation and expertise.

Therefore, this study positions consumer trust as a psychological mechanism that bridges the influence of influencer credibility on emotional brand attachment. By incorporating trust as an intermediary, marketing strategies can be directed towards showcasing not only visually appealing influencers but also those capable of building integrity and goodwill to create lasting emotional commitment. Therefore, this mediation model is not only relevant to the Indonesian beauty market but can also be adapted by global brands in developing influencer-based marketing strategies that prioritize integrity to mitigate consumer perception risks across various industry sectors.

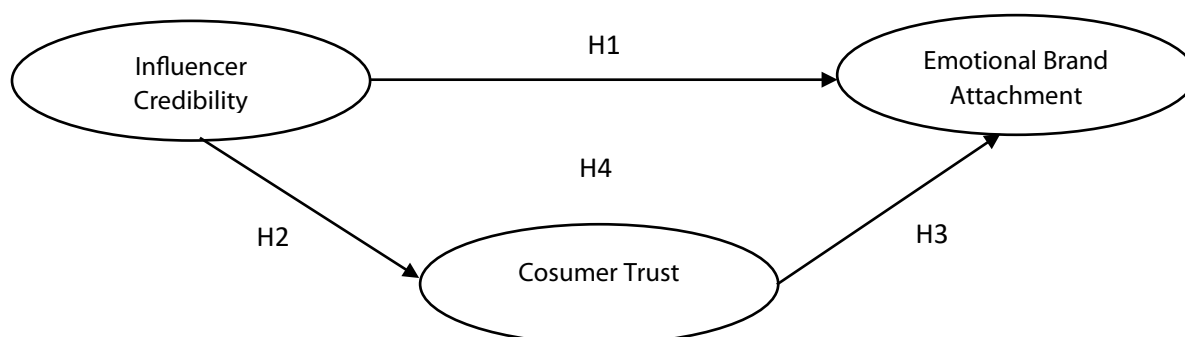


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the various research models discussed, the hypotheses in this study can be outlined as follows:

- H1: Influencer credibility has a positive and significant effect on emotional brand attachment
- H2: Influencer credibility has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust
- H3: Consumer trust has a positive and significant effect on emotional brand attachment
- H4: The Mediating Role of Consumer Trust in the Relationship Between Influencer Credibility and Emotional Brand Attachment

The series of hypotheses formulated above will then be tested empirically using a quantitative approach via Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), as explained further in the research methods section.

III. Research Method

The originality and methodological significance of this study lie in its use of a quantitative approach to empirically validate the psychological mechanisms underlying the link between influencer credibility and emotional brand attachment. Using multivariate analysis, this study makes a unique contribution to the digital marketing literature by examining consumer trust as a mediating variable in the context of the skincare industry, a phenomenon rarely addressed simultaneously in previous research.

3.1. Research Design and Data Collection

The data used in this study are primary data collected through an online questionnaire (Google Forms). The research instrument was constructed using statement items adapted from relevant prior research and tailored to the context of Skintific product users. The questionnaire was distributed via social media to Skintific users in Yogyakarta, with verification via a filter question at the beginning to ensure respondents met the research criteria.

3.2. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method in which respondents are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. (Nuralim et al., 2023). This technique was deliberately chosen to ensure that data were collected only from individuals with direct experience with the phenomenon under study (Skintific users), thereby increasing the accuracy of the mediation analysis. The respondent criteria were:

- Residing in the Special Region of Yogyakarta
- Included in the Generation Z category (aged 17 – 28 years). This demographic selection is based on market trends where Gen Z are digital natives and the largest consumer segment in the digital beauty industry today (Sekar Arum et al., 2023).
- Active on social media
- Has purchased and used Skintific skincare products

The research sample consisted of 139 respondents. This number was determined using the 10 Times Rule of Thumb, namely, 10 times the number of the most significant indicators in the model. (Ranatunga & Priyanath, 2020). Although this sample size was sufficient for PLS-SEM analysis, the researchers recognized the potential for sampling bias due to its non-probabilistic nature. Therefore, they increased the sample size to 139 (above the minimum threshold of 100) to minimize estimation error and improve statistical reliability. Furthermore, specifying inclusion criteria for one demographic segment (Generation Z) and one geographic region (Yogyakarta) served to control for confounding variables. By maintaining sample homogeneity, the researchers ensured that the variance in emotional brand attachment was truly driven by the model variables, not by differences across generations or contrasting regional backgrounds.

3.3. Measurement Variables and Indicators

Each variable is measured using a 5-point Likert scale with a value range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) in accordance with the measurement standards recommended by (Pranatawijaya et al., 2019). All instruments have undergone a measurement model evaluation to ensure data validity and reliability.

Table 1. Measurement Items

Variable	Indicator	Statement Item	Reference
Influencer Credibility	Trustworthiness	I believe that the influencers who promote Skintific products are	(Isalman et al., 2023)

Variable	Indicator	Statement Item	Reference
		honest and trustworthy in their opinions.	
	Expertise	I think the influencers who promote Skintific products have good knowledge and expertise in skincare.	
	Attractiveness	The appearance and style of the influencers promoting Skintific products caught my attention.	
	Similarity	I feel like the influencers who promote Skintific products have a lifestyle similar to mine.	
Consumer Trust	Ability (Company Capabilities)	I believe that Skintific's skincare products are of good quality and consistent with the information provided.	Fadlurahman et al., 2024)
	Integrity	I believe that Skintific provides honest, transparent product information through influencers who promote it.	
	Benevolence	I believe that Skintific cares about its consumers' needs and satisfaction.	
Emotional Brand Attachment	Brand Passion	I have a strong love for the brand Skintific	(Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2023)
	Brand Affection	I feel happy and comfortable when using Skintific products.	
	Self-Brand Connection	The Skintific brand reflects my values and personality.	

3.4. Analysis Method

The analytical method used in this study is Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software version 4.0. This method was chosen because of its ability to process latent variables through mediating variables simultaneously, without requiring a normal distribution (Sarstedt & Liu, 2024). The selection of this method is highly relevant to the research objective of accurately testing psychological mediation pathways, as PLS-SEM can handle complex structural models with high precision in validating the relationships among the latent variables under study. The analysis was conducted in two stages, using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. (Hamid & Anwar, 2020) as follows:

3.4.1. Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated to assess the validity and reliability of the research constructs. Convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, with criteria of loadings > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50. Discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell–Larcker criterion: the square root of each construct's AVE must be greater than the correlation between constructs. Furthermore, construct reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.70 indicating good internal consistency. (Hair & Alamer, 2022).

3.4.2. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Hypotheses were tested using path coefficients and significance (T-Statistic > 1.96; P-Value < 0.05) via bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. Model strength was assessed using the R-Square value, which indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. The strength of

the structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R-squared), which indicates the extent to which the independent variables explain the variance in the dependent variable. According to Hair & Alamer (2022), an R-squared value of 0.75 is categorized as strong, 0.50 as moderate, and 0.25 as weak. Furthermore, this study also measured the Effect Size (*f – squared value*) to assess the relative contribution of each predictor variable to the endogenous variable, with criteria of 0.02 (minor), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large). Furthermore, this analysis includes testing for direct and indirect effects to accurately validate the mediation pathway and understand how the Consumer Trust variable bridges the relationship between Influencer Credibility and Emotional Brand Attachment. The results of this PLS-SEM analysis are then interpreted to provide practical implications for the Skintific brand in designing its marketing communications strategy. The primary focus of these implications is to identify the dominant pathway by which influencer credibility is transformed into emotional attachment, enabling the company to allocate resources more effectively to build long-term loyalty rather than simply generating review reach or short-term sales.

IV. Discussion and Results

The results of this study present the main findings obtained from a comprehensive data analysis. The following discussion aims to interpret these results by linking them to theory and prior research.

4.1. Respondent Demographics

The predominance of respondents in Yogyakarta, with women (74.1%) and students (86.3%) dominating, reflects the key characteristics of the digital skincare market in Indonesia. The concentration of respondents in the 21–23 age range indicates that Generation Z is not simply a user population, but instead the most responsive segment to social media-based marketing narratives.

Table 2. Respondent Demographics

Measurement	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	36	25.9%
Female	103	74.1%
Total	139	100%
Age		
17–20	34	24.5%
21–23	96	69.1%
24 – 26	8	5.8%
≥ 28	1	0.7%
Total	139	100%
Domicile		
Yogyakarta City	56	40.3%
Sleman Regency	66	47.5%
Bantul Regency	14	10.1%
Kulon Progo Regency	2	1.4%
Gunungkidul Regency	1	0.7%
Total	139	100%
Occupation		
Student	120	86.3%
Civil Servant (PNS) / ASN	0	0
Private Employee	11	7.9%
Self-employed / Entrepreneur	1	0.7%
Freelance / Freelance Worker	4	2.9%
Housewife	3	2.2%
Total	139	100%

4.2. Measurement Model Evaluation Results (Outer Model)

Table 3. Convergent Validity Measurement Results

	Influencer Credibility	Emotional Brand Attachment	Consumer Trust
X1	0.876		
X2	0.850		
X3	0.729		
X4	0.801		
Y1		0.914	
Y2		0.890	
Y3		0.882	
M1			0.866
M2			0.864
M3			0.883

Convergent validity measures the extent to which an indicator represents its construct. Based on the analysis results, all loading factor values for the variables Influencer Credibility (0.729–0.876), Consumer Trust (0.864–0.883), and Emotional Brand Attachment (0.882–0.914) are above 0.70. This indicates that all indicators meet the criteria for convergent validity, so each indicator is considered capable of reflecting its construct.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Results (Fornell-Larcker)

Variable	Influencer Credibility	Emotional Brand Attachment	Consumer Trust
Influencer Credibility	0.699	0.612	0.816
Emotional Brand Attachment	0.660	0.895	
Consumer Trust	0.871		

The square root mean squared correlation (AVE) for each construct (Consumer Trust = 0.871, Emotional Brand Attachment = 0.895, and Influencer Credibility = 0.816) is higher than the correlation between the other constructs. This indicates that all variables exhibit good discriminant validity, indicating that each construct clearly measures a different concept.

Table 5. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Influencer Credibility	0.832	0.850	0.888	0.666
Emotional Brand Attachment	0.877	0.883	0.924	0.802
Consumer Trust	0.841	0.843	0.904	0.759

The analysis results indicate that all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, and AVE values above 0.50. With the value of Consumer Trust ($\alpha = 0.841$; CR = 0.904; AVE = 0.759), Emotional Brand Attachment ($\alpha = 0.877$; CR = 0.924; AVE = 0.802), and Influencer Credibility ($\alpha = 0.832$; CR = 0.888; AVE = 0.666), all variables are declared reliable and valid. This means that each construct exhibits good internal consistency, and the indicators accurately explain the variables.

4.3. Structural Model Evaluation Results (Inner Model)

Table 6. R Square Results

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Consumer Trust	0.488	0.484

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Emotional Brand Attachment	0.480	0.472

The R^2 values for Consumer Trust (0.488) and Emotional Brand Attachment (0.480) indicate that both variables have moderate explanatory power. This means that Influencer Credibility explains 48.8% of the variation in Consumer Trust, and that Influencer Credibility and Consumer Trust together explain 48.0% of the variation in Emotional Brand Attachment.

Table 7. Effect Size (f)

Variable	Consumer Trust	Emotional Brand Attachment
Influencer Credibility	0.954	0.085
Emotional Brand Attachment		
Consumer Trust		0.204

The analysis results show that the influence of Influencer Credibility on Consumer Trust ($f^2 = 0.954$) is significant, that of Consumer Trust on Emotional Brand Attachment ($f^2 = 0.204$) is medium, and that of Influencer Credibility on Emotional Brand Attachment ($f^2 = 0.085$) is small. This provides empirical evidence that influencer credibility is the most crucial determinant for Skintific to increase consumer trust in a remote market.

Table 8. Hypothesis Test Results

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample Means (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Influencer Credibility → Emotional Brand Attachment	0.294	0.308	0.138	2.121	0.034
Influencer Credibility → Consumer Trust	0.699	0.703	0.051	13.756	0.000
Consumer Trust → Emotional Brand Attachment	0.455	0.443	0.116	3.926	0.000

Based on the results of the hypothesis test, all relationship paths have p-values < 0.05 , so all hypotheses are accepted. The effect of influencer credibility on consumer trust ($\beta = 0.699$, $p = 0.000$), which means a significant positive effect. Consumer trust in emotional brand attachment was found to have a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.455$, $p = 0.000$). Then, the influence of emotional brand attachment on test results ($\beta = 0.294$, $p = 0.034$), indicating a significantly positive effect. This means that the higher the influencer's credibility, the higher the consumer's trust and emotional attachment to the brand.

Table 9. Specific Results of Mediation

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Influencer Credibility → Consumer Trust → Emotional Brand Attachment	0.318	0.310	0.078	4.066	0.000

The mediation path of influencer credibility on emotional brand attachment, with consumer trust as the mediating variable, yields a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant mediation effect.

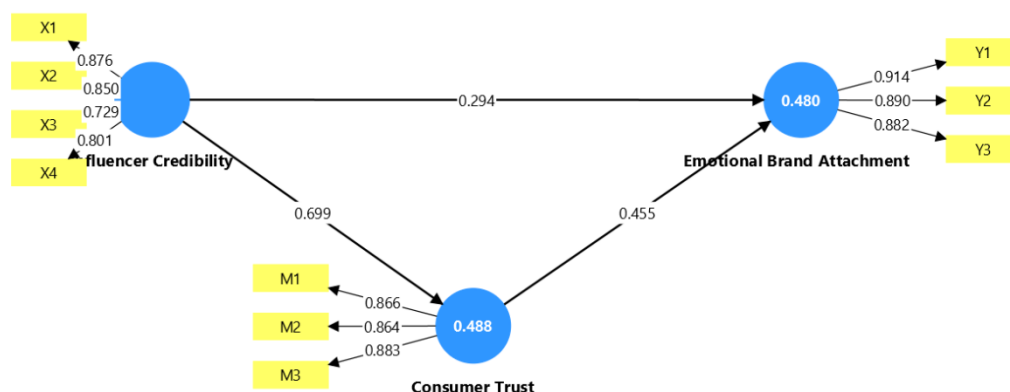


Figure 2. Bootstrapping Test Results for the Structural Model

4.4. Discussion

This research was developed with reference to studies on the influence of social media on consumer behavior. The originality of this research lies in testing a mediation model linking influencer credibility to emotional brand attachment in the skincare industry. Although these variables have been discussed separately, this study attempts to combine them into a comprehensive structural model for a specific brand, namely Skintific. To ensure originality and academic integrity, this research was compiled through a systematic literature review and tested for plagiarism using text-similarity detection software, ensuring that every argument and finding is original work free of plagiarism. This research extends the findings of several previous studies. Research by (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) demonstrated the importance of influencer influence, but that study was conducted on a more general scale. This study provides a more specific contribution by exploring the skincare industry, which has a very high level of consumer engagement. The fundamental difference lies in the placement of consumer trust as a mediating variable. While research by (Isalman et al., 2023) emphasized trust as the outcome, this study positions trust as a bridge or mediating variable that determines whether an influencer's credibility can truly translate into a deep emotional bond with consumers. The selection of Generation Z subjects in Yogyakarta further enhances the study's novelty. As a student city, respondents possess unique characteristics that are critical in validating product reviews. Focusing on this segment demonstrates the credibility model's effectiveness with an audience skeptical of conventional advertising. By integrating industry context, specific demographics, and trust mediation pathways, this study offers a new perspective to the digital marketing management literature.

4.4.1. The Influence of Influencer Credibility on Emotional Brand Attachment

The findings of this study demonstrate that influencer credibility directly shapes consumers' emotional attachment to the Skintific brand. This is a crucial point that fills a research gap in digital marketing literature. In previous studies by Abdul Aziz et al. (2023), this relationship was often viewed as a complex, indirect process, with credibility dimensions examined separately, without considering their strength as a unified construct. However, this study demonstrates that influencer credibility has transformative power, creating an immediate emotional bond in consumers' minds.

Further analysis of the indicators that make up this variable explains why this relationship is significant. The dimensions of expertise and trustworthiness play an intellectual role; Skintific consumers in Yogyakarta tend to validate influencers' technical knowledge of active ingredients such as Ceramide or Niacinamide. When influencers can explain product benefits objectively, a sense of admiration emerges, fostering attachment. On the other hand, the dimensions of attractiveness and similarity operate on a psychological-emotional level. Generation Z feels a personal connection when they see influencers with similar skin concerns or lifestyles to their own. This self-identification process causes the audience's positive

feelings toward the influencer to transfer (affect transfer) into an emotional attachment to the Skintific brand. This phenomenon demonstrates that, in the skincare industry, the person behind the screen (an influencer) is the most effective extension of brand identity for building effective relationships that go beyond mere sales transactions. These findings have significant implications for the skincare industry in determining endorsement strategies. Their significance suggests that skincare companies can no longer rely solely on celebrities with large followings; instead, they must prioritize "authority figures" with an organic connection to their audience. Given the personal nature of the skincare industry, the emotional brand attachment driven by influencer credibility creates a barrier to entry for competitors. When consumers feel emotionally connected to recommendations from trusted influencers, they tend to ignore price wars or discounts from competing brands. For the industry, this means shifting marketing budgets away from conventional mass media advertising and toward long-term partnerships with influencers whose values align with the brand's, to maintain consumer emotional stability amid a saturated skincare market.

4.4.2. The Influence of Influencer Credibility on Consumer Trust

The study's findings confirm that influencer credibility has a positive and significant impact on consumer trust. This finding reinforces the theoretical foundation established by (Nugroho et al., 2020) regarding the importance of credibility in the e-commerce ecosystem, but this study provides a more nuanced contribution to the beauty industry context. A fundamental difference is apparent when compared to (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) study, which focused on multichannel trust. This study demonstrates explicitly that an individual's credibility on social media can directly translate into trust in a corporate brand's integrity. This trust-building mechanism begins with indicators of attractiveness and similarity as attention triggers. However, the proper foundation of trust is laid in indicators of trustworthiness and expertise. In Yogyakarta, known as a student city with a highly digitally literate audience, an influencer's transparency, for example, by showing real-life results without excessive filtering, is seen as a reflection of Skintific's integrity. The influencer's in-depth knowledge of product safety also automatically enhances consumers' perceptions of the company's ability to conduct research and product development. Thus, the influencer acts not only as a messenger but also as a validator, convincing consumers that Skintific has benevolent intentions and is committed to providing solutions to their skin problems, rather than simply seeking profit.

These findings highlight that, in the post-truth era, trust is the most valuable commodity in the skincare industry. Because skincare products directly affect skin health and can cause irritation, consumers require a "social guarantee" before trying them. Influencers act as third parties who validate corporate promises. The implication for the industry is the importance of transparency. Brands like Skintific should encourage their influencers to provide honest reviews, including explaining side effects or suitability for specific skin types. The strategy of "fabricated perfect reviews" will actually damage credibility and undermine trust. The future skincare industry will be dominated by brands that dare to be transparent through influencers with high integrity, as this is the primary foundation of consumer loyalty on digital platforms.

4.4.3. The Influence of Consumer Trust on Emotional Brand Attachment

This study validates that consumer trust has a powerful direct influence on the formation of emotional attachment. This finding provides a new perspective on the argument. (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023). While previous research acknowledges the role of trust, this study places a deeper emphasis on consumer trust as a key predictor of emotional loyalty in high-involvement product categories. Operationally, each indicator of consumer trust contributes uniquely to the attachment dimension. Trust in the company's ability to consistently provide quality products creates a sense of security that fosters brand passion. Consumers not only use the products but also feel enthusiastic and excited every time Skintific launches an innovation. Furthermore, indicators of the company's honesty and benevolence are key to building brand affection. Brand affection arises when consumers perceive Skintific to be transparent about product content and responsive to their needs. At its deepest level, this accumulated trust creates a self-brand connection. Here, consumers

view Skintific as part of their identity—a brand that represents their values of honesty and quality. Significantly, these findings demonstrate that emotional brand attachment cannot be "bought" through aesthetic visual advertising alone, but must be "cultivated" through consistent quality that builds trust. In the skincare industry, trust is the bridge to consumer advocacy. The practical implication for industry players is the need to humanize the brand. Once trust in a company's capabilities and goodness is established, consumers will voluntarily become organic marketing agents (brand advocates). This is especially crucial in the Indonesian market, where word-of-mouth recommendations on social media hold tremendous influence. Companies must invest in customer service and ingredient transparency to maintain this trust, as once it is broken, emotional attachment collapses and is extremely difficult to rebuild.

4.4.4. The Mediating Role of Consumer Trust in the Relationship Between Influencer Credibility and Emotional Brand Attachment

As the core of this study's original contribution, it was found that consumer trust acts as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between influencer credibility and emotional attachment. This finding represents a significant distinction compared to previous literature. While previous research (Abdul Aziz et al., 2023) emphasized the indirect pathway through multichannel trust, this study more specifically demonstrates that consumer trust in brands is a more crucial bridge in the context of the skincare industry. Furthermore, while research (Octaviani & Selamat, 2023) Although limited to purchase intention, this study demonstrates a deeper psychological mechanism: the transformation of external stimuli into long-term emotional commitment. This mediation process explains that influencer credibility, which encompasses trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity, acts as an initial catalyst that attracts consumer interest. However, the results of this study confirm that to reach deep engagement stages, such as brand passion and self-brand connection, credibility must first be validated by internal trust in the brand. This means that an influencer's prowess will not be enough if consumers do not perceive the actual ability and integrity of Skintific products. In the context of the Yogyakarta skincare market, consumer trust serves as a bridge of validation; it distills influencer charm into rational and emotional beliefs about the brand.

The significance of this mediating role provides an answer to the phenomenon of why many viral influencer campaigns fail to build long-term loyalty. This clarifies the gap left by Abdul Aziz et al. (whose research demonstrated that without strong consumer trust in a brand, influencer credibility will never translate into emotional engagement. Marketing communication failures typically occur due to a broken link, namely a loss of trust in the brand, even if the influencer is highly popular. The broad implication for the skincare industry is that collaboration with influencers is only the first step (opening the door). Long-term success still depends on the brand's ability to substantiate influencer claims through consistent quality. Digital marketing strategies must be designed as a unified ecosystem where influencer credibility sparks interest, and product quality validates trust, ultimately locking consumers into a lasting emotional bond. This phenomenon becomes even more interesting when linked to the demographics of the respondents in this study, namely Generation Z in Yogyakarta. As an educational hub, audiences in this region have critical information consumption patterns. They often cross-check social media reviews with beauty databases before placing complete trust. The significance of this mediation finding suggests that for educated audiences, an influencer's visual appeal alone is not enough. They require logical validation (expertise), which then transforms into personal trust before ultimately committing emotionally to the Skintific brand. This provides a valuable lesson for the industry: marketing approaches in regions with high levels of education must prioritize education and transparency over mere visual entertainment.

V. Conclusion

This study concluded that all hypotheses were accepted. The strongest path was found to be the impact of influencer credibility on consumer trust, which then serves as a vital bridge to emotional brand attachment. These findings validate that an effective digital communication tactic must prioritize the integrity

and expertise of the messenger to build emotional engagement beyond functional transactions. This finding is limited to the Yogyakarta region and to Generation Z respondents. Given that Yogyakarta is known as a student city with high levels of digital literacy, these results may indicate higher levels of skepticism than in other Indonesian regions with different demographic characteristics. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of respondents, adopt a longitudinal design, and incorporate additional variables, such as perceived authenticity or consumer engagement, to achieve a deeper understanding of the processes underlying emotional attachment to brands.

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