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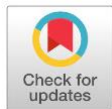
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The Mediating Role of Brand Trust in the Influence of Influencer Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumers' Purchase Decisions

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Article History



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JEL Classification

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of influencer marketing and electronic word of mouth on purchasing decisions for Timephoria beauty products while examining the role of brand trust as a mediating variable. Timephoria is an innovative makeup brand that entered the Indonesian market in April 2025 and simultaneously experienced two opposing digital phenomena which were a massive promotional campaign and a viral wave of critical community feedback. This research utilized a quantitative approach combined with an explanatory survey method. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to one hundred respondents who were actively exposed to both the promotional content and the related digital reviews. These respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on the Lemeshow formula. The data analysis employed the PROCESS Macro Model 4 methodology developed by Hayes (2022) alongside a bootstrapping technique of five thousand resamples. The results demonstrate that influencer marketing and electronic word of mouth each possess a positive and significant influence on brand trust and purchase decisions both directly and indirectly. Furthermore brand trust is proven to successfully mediate the influence of both independent variables on final consumer purchase decisions.

Introduction

Understanding the fundamental drivers of consumer behavior is paramount in contemporary market environments where purchasing decisions ultimately dictate the commercial survival of a product. The process of making a purchase is not a singular event but rather a complex sequence of evaluations wherein consumers weigh available options and construct specific brand preferences based on an intricate blend of internal motivations and external stimuli (Wardhana, 2024). Within the highly saturated digital landscape of today, external catalysts such as influencer marketing and electronic word of mouth have emerged as formidable forces shaping consumer economic behavior. The beauty industry serves as a prime arena for observing this phenomenon because potential buyers inherently lack the ability to physically test products online and thus rely profoundly on visual demonstrations and peer testimonials

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(Chen et al., 2025). Extensive investigations corroborate that these digital communication channels act as the primary engines driving product selection and brand loyalty among modern beauty enthusiasts (Hassan et al., 2021). Consequently, the validation provided by online communities fundamentally replaces traditional retail experiences and transforms how aesthetic products are evaluated and consumed (Filieri et al., 2023).

This transformation is further accelerated by the exponential expansion of the domestic beauty sector which mirrors the deepening internet penetration and ubiquitous social media engagement among younger demographics. The democratization of digital access has leveled the playing field and enabled a surge of independent and international cosmetic brands to bypass traditional retail barriers by adopting digital platforms as their primary marketing conduits (Yupelmi et al., 2023). As social commerce ecosystems become increasingly sophisticated, a fundamental shift in brand power dynamics occurs. Corporations no longer possess unilateral control over their own public narratives or reputational capital as market authority continuously transfers into the hands of the digital consumer.

A striking manifestation of this paradigm shift unfolded with the highly publicized entry of the innovative Chinese makeup brand Timephoria into the Indonesian market during April 2025. Marketing itself under the ambitious premise of Beauty Without Limits the brand aggressively targeted the youth demographic by unveiling a galaxy themed collection that promised advanced cosmetic technology engineered specifically for tropical climates. The official launch at Central Park Mall in Jakarta was accompanied by an aggressive digital rollout anchored by strategic partnerships with elite beauty influencers and respected makeup professionals. By leveraging the massive follower bases of these key opinion leaders the campaign swiftly saturated the market and propelled the product line to viral status across multiple leading digital platforms. This orchestrated visibility was designed to instantly manufacture market legitimacy and establish a robust consumer base overnight because brand reputation in this digital ecosystem is no longer unilaterally controlled by the company. Instead this reputation emerges entirely from the ongoing relationships established among the company the influencers and the consumer communities (Cooper et al., 2023). The success of such an expansive launch depends heavily on how the social dynamics of a brand evolve rapidly within the digital community space (Wu et al., 2022).

Yet the rapid ascent of Timephoria simultaneously exposed the extreme vulnerability of digitally manufactured brand equity when confronted with authentic community resistance. The carefully curated promotional narrative fractured when an independent content creator named Valery broadcasted a highly critical and unfiltered evaluation of the velvet lip balm product to her TikTok audience. The reviewer explicitly condemned the physical texture of the formula and equated the sensory experience to applying wall paint onto the skin. This devastating critique resonated instantly with the algorithm and sparked a massive wave of organic electronic word of mouth that completely overshadowed the paid promotional efforts. Research demonstrates that negative electronic word of mouth from influential community voices can significantly shape negative consumer attitudes toward a brand (Rialti et al., 2024). The viral backlash intensified as concerned users amplified suspicions regarding harsh chemical compositions and reported widespread allergic reactions. This high perceived risk directly undermines established brand trust and fundamentally inhibits purchase intentions across the digital market (Ramdhani, 2025). This severe ideological collision between polished influencer marketing and raw community dissent reveals a critical gap in current academic understanding regarding how opposing digital forces reconcile in the minds of consumers. This study therefore investigates this precise intersection to determine how trust acts as a crucial mediator in the relationship between social influence and consumer purchase intention (Wang et al., 2022) and ultimately dictates economic survival in the modern beauty industry.

Theoretical Framework

Influencer Marketing

Wibowo (2023) conceptualizes influencer marketing as a strategic effort leveraging highly visible individuals to disseminate brand messages and shape consumer choices. The effectiveness of this approach relies on relationship authenticity, brand fit, community relevance, and content quality (Wibowo, 2023). The VisCAP Model further evaluates this promotional effectiveness by measuring an influencer based on visibility, professional credibility, physical attractiveness, and persuasive power (Wardah & Albari, 2023). This practice operates far beyond basic advertising and acts as a sophisticated mechanism of social influence that actively drives consumer engagement (Patwa et al., 2025) and digital community validation (Wahyuningjati and Purwanto, 2024). The perceived credibility and social power of these digital figures constitute the primary psychological determinants of modern purchasing behavior (Wang & Huang, 2023) and consumer attitudes (Han & Balabanis, 2024). Consequently, this promotional framework remains fundamentally essential for cosmetic brands navigating the Indonesian digital market (Yusiana et al., 2023).

A substantial body of empirical evidence confirms the positive commercial impact of digital brand ambassadors. Research consistently proves that deliberate influencer marketing significantly elevates both brand awareness and actual purchase intentions (Evrianti et al., 2025) alongside positive consumer reviews (Dwidienawati et al., 2020). Similar investigations confirm that perceived source credibility directly translates into favorable buying decisions for digital beauty products (Ichtiar et al., 2025) and overall consumer purchase intention (Pratiwi et al., 2023). These positive outcomes are strongly supported by Asmirani & Islamiah (2025) and Carissa & Rodhiah (2025) who demonstrate direct empirical links between digital credibility and purchase intention. Koesuma & Kurniawati (2022) reinforce this by showing how influencer credibility reliably builds trust that precedes buying behavior. Conversely, some scholarly inquiries highlight critical boundaries within this strategy. Cabeza Ramirez et al. (2022) and Tabish et al. (2025) warn that certain influencer attributes can unexpectedly generate negative statistical effects on consumer intention when audiences perceive high transaction risks. Furthermore, digital credibility alone cannot stimulate actual purchases without the indispensable presence of brand trust as a mediating factor (Khairul Aini et al., 2025).

Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic word of mouth represents a transformative communication channel where consumers actively exchange product opinions and broadcast personal experiences across digital platforms (Chrismardani, 2023). Accurate measurement of this phenomenon evaluates the frequency of reading online reviews, the volume of negative comments, the expression of complaints, and the continuous sharing of relevant information (Chrismardani, 2023). Extensive research validates the capacity of positive digital peer reviews to drive commercial success. Favorable community feedback significantly amplifies consumer confidence and subsequent buying intentions (Ardana & Fikriah, 2025) alongside general purchase readiness (Ivana & Rohman, 2024). This positive trajectory is thoroughly corroborated by Falah & Isa (2025) and Kartika & Pandjaitan (2023) who document the systematic acceleration of digital commerce through peer validation. Vanessa & Keni (2025) along with Qadri et al. (2023) similarly conclude that favorable interactions substantially elevate purchase intentions across various online retail sectors. However, negative digital conversations possess a formidable ability to paralyze future purchasing behaviors and erode corporate image (Sani Santika et al., 2024). Sen et al. (2025) illustrate exactly how critical community voices systematically dismantle brand trust. Kadang & Berlianto (2022) provide additional evidence showing that

specific critical characteristics of online complaints exert a direct negative force on consumer transaction readiness.

Brand Trust

Brand trust functions as the fundamental psychological bridge connecting external digital stimuli to final consumer actions. Wardhana (2024) outlines the core indicators of this trust which encompass consistent product quality, informational honesty, beneficial consumer solutions, professional competence, and a highly stable user experience. Trust serves as a critical defense mechanism against severe market uncertainty. Ramdhani (2025) argues that digital peer reviews significantly influence perceived usefulness and thereby enhance consumer trust. Asad (2024) confirms that a strong corporate reputation acts as a vital buffer mitigating perceived hazards during unverified online transactions. The mediating capability of brand trust remains central to modern consumer psychology. Evelyn et al. (2025) emphasize that trust effectively connects social influence to ultimate purchase intentions. Wang et al. (2022) echo this conclusion by establishing trust as an indispensable structural mediator in social commerce environments. The necessity of this mediation process has been repeatedly validated across diverse economic sectors including the automotive market (Putri & Fauzi, 2023) and local fashion brands favored by younger demographics (Nurhaliza & Dwita, 2026).

Purchase Decisions

The culmination of the consumer journey is the actualization of a final commercial transaction. Wardhana (2024) defines this process as the definitive series of choices buyers navigate to satisfy their specific personal needs. To capture this variable accurately within a digital context, Wardhana (2024) details five foundational indicators encompassing behavioral intention, the underlying motivation to buy, general purchase readiness, deep decision confidence, and the establishment of strict brand preference. This comprehensive theoretical foundation directly supports the development of the structural mediation model proposed throughout this investigation.

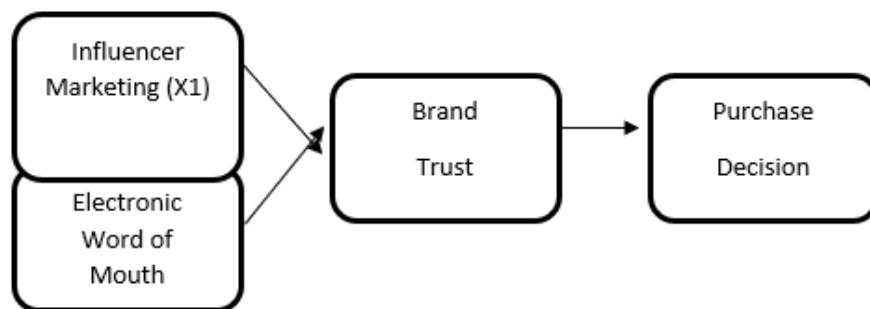


Figure 1. Image of Research Analysis Method

- H1: Influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.
- H2: Electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.
- H3: Brand trust has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.
- H4: Brand trust mediates the effect of influencer marketing on purchase decisions.
- H5: Brand trust mediates the effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions

Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach based on the philosophy of positivism, employing an explanatory survey research style that not only describes phenomena but also explains causal relationships between variables through statistical hypothesis testing (Sugiyono, 2024). This

approach was chosen because the study aimed to measure and analyze the influence of influencer marketing and e-WOM on purchase decisions for Timephoria beauty products, with brand trust as a mediating variable.

The subjects were consumers aged 17–35 who had been exposed to Timephoria influencer marketing content and e-WOM related to the product and actively consumed beauty content about the product on social media. These characteristics were selected based on the profile of Timephoria's primary target market. The research subjects included influencer marketing (X1), e-WOM (X2), brand trust (M), and purchase decisions (Y). This study was conducted from February to March 2026. Given that the subjects were spread out online without geographical boundaries, data collection was conducted online via Google Forms, enabling efficient reach to eligible respondents throughout Indonesia.

The research instrument was a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Sugiyono, 2024). The questionnaire was structured based on indicators for each variable: influencer marketing was measured by authenticity, brand fit, community, and content (Wibowo, 2023); e-WOM was measured by the frequency of reading reviews, negative comments, complaints, and information links (Chrisnardani, 2023); brand trust was measured by consistency of quality, honesty of information, profitable solutions, professionalism, and stable experience (Wardhana, 2024); and purchase decision was measured by behavioral intention, motivation to buy, purchase readiness, decision confidence, and brand preference (Wardhana, 2024). Before use, the instrument was tested for validity using Pearson correlation and reliability using Cronbach's Alpha (Sugiyono, 2024).

Since the population size cannot be known with certainty, the minimum sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula (Lemeshow et al, 1990): $n = Z^2 \alpha/2 \times P(1-P) / d^2$ With $Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$ (95% confidence), $P = 0.5$ and $d = 0.10$, $n = (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5) / (0.10)^2 = 3.8416 \times 0.25 / 0.01 = 96.04$, rounded up to 97 respondents. This study determined 100 respondents to increase data representativeness. The technique used was purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) consumers aged 17-35 years, (2) have seen Timephoria promotional content from influencers on social media, (3) are aware of negative reviews of Timephoria products on social media, and (4) reside in Indonesia (Sugiyono, 2024). Data were collected through an online questionnaire via Google Form distributed through social media using the snowball technique to expand the reach of respondents who met the criteria. Primary data was obtained directly from respondents' answers, while secondary data came from a review of relevant previous research literature.

Data analysis used PROCESS Macro Model 4 (simple mediation) developed by Hayes and operated through SPSS. This method was chosen because of its ability to test the total effect, direct effect, and indirect effect, as well as the mediation effect in one combined analysis model (Hayes, 2022), making it very suitable for e-WOM on purchase decisions. Mediation testing was carried out using the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 re-samples at a 97% confidence level; mediation is declared significant if the confidence interval does not include zero (Hayes, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The transition from theoretical proposition to empirical validation requires a systematic presentation of the collected data to fully understand the underlying consumer dynamics. The following section details the statistical outcomes regarding how digital promotional strategies and organic community feedback interact within the beauty market. The presentation of findings is structured to build a comprehensive picture of consumer behavior by first examining

the individual and combined impacts of the independent variables on the target outcomes. Specifically the analysis unpacks the direct influence that marketing campaigns and peer reviews exert on both the formation of brand trust and the final purchasing choices. Following this foundational evaluation the discussion progresses to the core of the proposed model by revealing the structural mediation pathways.

Partial Test Results

Table 1. Partial Test Results (t)

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Coeff	SE	T	P
Influencer marketing (X ₁)	Purchase Decision	0,8230	0,0800	10,3450	0,000
electronic word of mouth (X ₂)	Purchase Decision	0,165	0,065	2,516	0,013
brand trust (M)	Purchase Decision	1,081	0,091	11,920	0,000

Based on the analysis results presented in Table 1, it is known that influencer marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand trust. This is indicated by a coefficient value of 0.823 and a significance value (p-value) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the first hypothesis (H1), which states that influencer marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand trust, can be confirmed. This finding indicates that the more effective influencer marketing activities are, the greater consumer trust in the brand. Influencers perceived as having high credibility and relevance are able to foster consumer trust in the promoted brand, thus increasing consumer confidence in the quality and trustworthiness of the product or service offered.

Table 1 also shows the influence of influencer marketing on purchase decisions, with a coefficient value of 0.408 and a p-value of 0.006, which is less than 0.05. This means that influencer marketing has a direct positive and significant influence on purchase decisions. This aligns with the expectation that consumer exposure to influencer-driven content can directly drive purchase intentions. The test results for the effect of brand trust on purchase decisions showed a coefficient of 1.081 and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). This indicates that brand trust has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions, thus confirming the third hypothesis (H3), which states that brand trust has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions. These findings suggest that consumer trust in a brand is a crucial factor in driving purchase intentions. Consumers with high levels of brand trust tend to make purchase decisions more easily because they perceive lower risks and have greater confidence in the product.

These findings gain particular significance when considering the adjustment process associated with informational dissonance a phenomenon that arose when Timephoria's paid influencer campaign clashed with a viral wave of organic, negative e-WOM on social media. Wang et al (2022), in their meta-analysis of social commerce, emphasize that trust is the most critical factor influencing purchase intention; however, this trust is highly vulnerable to informational conflicts between structured influencer messages and organic validation from the consumer community. Rialti et al. (2024) demonstrate that negative e-WOM from major influencers can significantly shape negative consumer attitudes toward a brand. Meanwhile, Ramdhani (2025) proves that high perceived risk directly undermines trust and inhibits purchase intention. In the Timephoria case, this situation created a dual pressure: on one hand, campaigns featuring major influencers like Tasya Farasya and Michelle Halim sought to build brand trust; on the other, a viral critical review by influencer Valery generated cognitive dissonance that threatened to erode the very trust being cultivated.

Table 1 also shows the effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions, with a coefficient of 0.187 and a p-value of 0.003, which is less than 0.05. This means that electronic

word of mouth has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions directly. The coefficient value of brand trust on purchase decisions in the X2 analysis is 1.081 with p of 0.000 (<0.05), so that the fourth hypothesis (H4) is again proven and confirmed.

Simultaneous Test Results

Table 2. Simultaneous Test Results (F)

Variables	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
Influencer marketing (X ₁)	16,666	88,143	2,000	97,000	0,000
Electronic word of mouth (X ₂)	16,396	90,391	2,000	97,000	0,000

The results of the simultaneous test presented in Table 2 show that influencer marketing and brand trust variables jointly have a significant effect on purchase decisions, with an F-value of 88.143 and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). The R² value of 0.645 indicates that these two variables can explain 64.5% of the variation in the purchase decision variable.

In the X2 analysis, the results of the simultaneous test indicate that electronic word of mouth and brand trust variables jointly have a significant effect on purchase decisions, with an F-value of 90.391 and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). The R² value of 0.651 indicates that these two variables can explain 65.1% of the variation in purchase decisions. These results indicate that the developed model is fit and appropriate for explaining variations in consumer purchase decisions. This emphasizes the importance of considering influencer marketing strategies combined with efforts to simultaneously build brand trust to optimize consumer purchase intentions.

Total Effect, Direct Effect, and Indirect Effect

Table 3. Total Effect X1 and X2

Variables	Effect	SE	t	P
Influencer marketing (X ₁)	1,141	0,123	9,290	0,000
Electronic word of mouth (X ₂)	0,336	0,092	3,982	0,000

Table 3 shows that the total effect of influencer marketing on purchase decisions (both through and without brand trust) is 1.141 with a t-value of 9.290 and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05), which means it's significant. This value consists of a direct effect of 0.408 (Table 4) and an indirect effect of 0.733 (Table 5).

Table 4. Direct Effect X1 and X2

Variables	Effect	SE	t	P
Influencer marketing (X ₁)	0,408	0,146	2,798	0,006
Electronic word of mouth (X ₂)	0,187	0,061	3,091	0,003

Table 4 shows that the direct effect of influencer marketing on purchase decision is 0.408 with a p-value of 0.006 (<0.05), which is significant. This means that influencer marketing still has a significant direct impact on consumers' buying intentions, even though the indirect effect through brand trust is much larger.

Table 5. Indirect Effect X1 and X2

Variables	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Influencer marketing (X ₁)	0,733	0,180	0,380	1,086
Electronic word of mouth (X ₂)	0,178	0,080	0,050	1,359

Table 5 confirms the fourth hypothesis (H4) that brand trust mediates the effect of influencer marketing on purchase decisions. The indirect effect value of 0.733 is higher than the direct

effect of 0.408, which shows that the mediating role of brand trust is very dominant. This is reinforced by the BootLLCI confidence interval of 0.380 and BootULCI of 1.086, both of which do not include zero. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effect of influencer marketing on purchase decisions through brand trust is significant and statistically proven. In the X^2 analysis, Tables 3 and 4 show that the total effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions through brand trust is 0.336. This value consists of a direct effect of 0.187 and an indirect effect of 0.178 with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), which means it's significant. Table 5 confirms the fifth hypothesis (H_5) that brand trust mediates the effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions. This is supported by an indirect effect value of 0.178 and a BootLLCI interval of 0.050 and BootULCI of 1.359, which does not include zero. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions through brand trust is significant. Also, since the direct effect is significant ($p = 0.003$), the mediation that occurs is partial mediation, meaning that brand trust partially mediates the effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions.

Overall, these findings align with the idea that brand trust acts as a mediating factor that strengthens the relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' purchase intentions. A strong influencer marketing strategy not only has a direct impact on purchase decisions but also creates an even bigger impact by first building brand trust. This highlights the importance of choosing influencers who can be trusted and match the brand's values to boost consumer trust and ultimately increase purchase decisions.

If analyzed based on the size of the coefficient values in the partial test, it can be seen that each relationship between variables has different levels of influence. The study results show that the influence of brand trust on purchase decisions has the highest coefficient, which is 1.081. This value is much higher compared to the direct influence of influencer marketing on purchase decisions, which is 0.408, or the direct influence of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions, which only reaches 0.187. On the other hand, the relationship between influencer marketing and brand trust also shows a fairly strong influence with a coefficient value of 0.823. These findings confirm that brand trust is the factor with the most dominant and closest influence on the formation of consumer purchase decisions. So, boosting purchase decisions for Timephoria consumers should start with efforts to strengthen trust in the brand, both before and alongside implementing other marketing communication strategies. This finding supports the theory that brand trust acts as a mechanism that can reduce consumers' perception of risk and uncertainty before making a transaction. Therefore, the impact of brand trust on purchase decisions is bigger compared to the influence of influencer marketing or electronic word of mouth, which work more indirectly in affecting consumer behavior.

On the practical side, the results of this study have important implications, especially for beauty brands that are still in the development stage, like Timephoria, and have limitations like Timephoria in terms of resources. When budget and organizational capacity don't allow for all marketing activities to be carried out at once, it's recommended that companies prioritize building brand trust as the main strategy. This consideration is based on the significant direct contribution of brand trust to purchase decisions, as well as its role as a mediating variable that channels the influence of influencer marketing and electronic word of mouth on consumer buying behavior. Strengthening brand trust can be achieved through various efforts, such as maintaining consistent product quality, implementing open and transparent brand communication, and providing quick, professional, and honest responses to different reviews or customer complaints on digital media. Once consumer trust in the brand becomes stronger, companies can optimize their investments in collaborations with highly credible influencers and manage electronic word of mouth more actively. In this way, these two strategies act as

reinforcements to the trust that has already been established, rather than being the main factors driving consumers' purchasing decisions.

The findings of this study show that the coefficient of the effect of brand trust on purchase decision is 1.081, which is relatively higher compared to previous studies on similar topics. For comparison, the study by Putri & Fauzi (2023) on Toyota car consumers in Bandung found a path coefficient of brand trust on purchase decision of 0.460. Meanwhile, another study examining Instagram consumers of a clothing brand reported a beta (β) coefficient of 0.425. Nevertheless, both studies also identified brand trust as the variable that has the most dominant influence on purchase decisions. The difference in the magnitude of these coefficients can be understood through the different characteristics of the research subjects. Both Toyota and clothing brands that were the focus of previous research are brands that have been operating for a long time and have a strong reputation in the Indonesian market. This situation causes consumers to already have a relatively high initial level of trust in the brand, so the additional influence of brand trust on purchasing decisions becomes more limited. On the other hand, Timephoria is a Chinese beauty product brand that just entered the Indonesian market in April 2025, so its brand awareness, reputation, and track record in the eyes of consumers are still being established. This situation makes brand trust play a bigger role in influencing purchasing decisions.

In the context of a brand that is still developing, consumers tend to rely more on various trust indicators before deciding to buy a product. That trust is not only built through direct experience with the brand, but is also influenced by influencer recommendations, other users' experiences, and interactions happening across different digital platforms. Unlike brands that already have consumer loyalty and strong brand equity, new brands like Timephoria have to establish their legitimacy and credibility in a relatively short time to reduce consumer doubts about the products offered. Besides brand characteristics, the country-of-origin effect is also suspected to further emphasize the importance of brand trust in this study. Beauty products from China still often face skeptical perceptions from some Indonesian consumers, especially regarding product quality, raw material safety, and production standards. These perceptions make consumers need a higher level of trust before making a purchase decision. Therefore, brand trust acts as a mechanism that can reduce perceived risk while increasing consumer confidence, making its influence on purchase decisions greater compared to brands that already have a strong reputation and track record in the market.

Conclusion

This study successfully proved all of the proposed hypotheses, concluding that influencer marketing and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) each had a positive and significant influence on brand trust and purchase decisions, both directly and indirectly. Brand trust proved to have a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions and was the strongest predictor in this model, thus consumer trust in brands was proven to be the primary foundation driving beauty product purchase decisions. Furthermore, brand trust was shown to predominantly mediate the influence of influencer marketing on purchase decisions, with the indirect influence through brand trust far exceeding its direct influence. This indicates that influencer marketing works most effectively when it first successfully builds consumer trust in the brand. Meanwhile, brand trust was also shown to partially mediate the influence of e-WOM on purchase decisions, meaning e-WOM influences purchase decisions both directly and through the initial process of building brand trust. Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of brand trust as a core strategy for digital marketing of beauty products.

The findings of this study hold significant managerial implications within the context of social commerce. First, brand reputation in the digital ecosystem is not a static asset fully controlled by the company; rather, it is a concept that emerges from ongoing interactions among the company, influencers, and consumer communities. Social dynamics as evidenced by the Timephoria case can either bolster or erode a brand's economic value in a very short span of time. Wang & Huang (2023) assert that the various forms of social power wielded by digital influencers directly impact content engagement and consumer purchasing behavior; consequently, brand management must devise strategies that integrate influencer influence with comprehensive e-WOM governance. Second, given that brand trust serves as a cognitive buffer against perceived risk, beauty brands must look beyond short-term influencer campaigns and instead establish adaptive crisis communication defined as the ability to respond to negative e-WOM swiftly, transparently, and constructively as a long-term strategy for safeguarding brand value. Asad (2024) demonstrates that a strong brand reputation can reinforce consumer commitment and loyalty even amidst competitive pressures, underscoring the importance of sustained investment in building and maintaining brand trust as a strategic asset within the increasingly complex and dynamic social commerce ecosystem.

Suggestions for this research include conducting a long-term study to monitor the development of brand trust and purchase decisions as Timephoria's reputation develops in the Indonesian market. A longitudinal approach will help understand how consumer perceptions change over time, especially after brands respond to negative reviews circulating on social media. Future research could also consider adding other relevant moderating or mediating variables, such as brand image, perceived quality, or consumer involvement, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing beauty product purchasing decisions in the digital age. Beauty brands like Timephoria are advised to focus not only on short-term influencer marketing strategies but also on building more active e-WOM management. Responding quickly, transparently, and providing solutions to negative consumer reviews on social media is crucial for maintaining strong brand trust and ultimately driving sustainable purchasing decisions.

Declaration of AI Use

During the preparation of this work the authors used GPT 4o in order to refine the academic language and improve the overall readability of the manuscript. After using this tool the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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