The Influence of Influencer Marketing and Product Differentiation on Skincare Purchasing Decisions on Instagram Among Generation Z in Medan City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of influencer marketing and product differentiation on the decision to purchase skincare products among Generation Z who actively use Instagram in a major city, namely Medan. The method used is quantitative research with data collection through questionnaires distributed to respondents who meet the criteria of age, skincare user characteristics, and Instagram users. The results of the study indicate that both variables have a significant positive influence on purchasing decisions. Influencer marketing has been proven to be effective in building trust and influencing purchasing decisions, while unique and value-added product differentiation attracts consumers in a competitive market. The implications of these findings suggest that integrating influencer marketing strategies and product differentiation can be an effective approach for marketers in designing more focused and relevant campaigns, especially for young consumer segments that are highly influenced by social media. This research provides important insights into the development of marketing strategies in the dynamic digital era.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Product Differentiation, Purchase Decisions, Generation Z, Skincare, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, marketing has undergone significant transformation, especially with the emergence of social media such as Instagram. According to Kotler et al., (2022), digital marketing allows companies to reach consumers in a more personal and interactive way. Instagram, as a visual platform, is an effective medium for marketing strategies, including influencer marketing and product differentiation. This phenomenon is interesting to study, especially among Generation Z who are active on social media. Based on data from Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Medan (2025), the population at the beginning of 2025 was obtained based on age groups.

Kelompok Umur		2025	
Age Group	Laki-laki <i>Male</i>	Perempuan Female	Jumlah <i>Total</i>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
0 - 4	91.464	87.743	179.207
5 - 9	102.111	97.555	199.666
10 - 14	97.217	92.665	189.882
15 - 19	95.348	89.719	185.067
20 - 24	96.764	91.191	187.955
25 - 29	99.763	94.857	194.620
30 - 34	99.526	98.297	197.823
35 - 39	98.825	97.905	196.730
40 - 44	95.156	96.323	191.479
45 - 49	87.157	91.393	178.550
50 - 54	78.590	83.389	161.979
55 - 59	66.192	71.278	137.470
60 - 64	51.495	57.264	108.759
65 - 69	37.705	43.794	81.499
70 - 74	25.504	30.509	56.013
75+	20.605	30.989	51.594
MEDAN	1.243.422	1.254.871	2.498.293

Figure 1. Population of Medan City in 2025 Source: BPS Kota Medan, 2025

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Although William H. Frey's scientific article entitled Analysis of Census Bureau Population Estimates states that Generation Z or Gen Z are people born between 1997 and 2012, in this study the author uses the age range of 15-29 years.

Generation Z is a group that is highly connected to technology and the internet. They grew up in an environment filled with social media, which influences how they interact with brands and products. According to Ardiansah & Maharani (2020), social media is often used to build one's self-image or profile, and can also be utilized by companies as a marketing medium. This is supported by the results of a survey by APJII, which shows that the largest percentage of internet users in Indonesia in 2024 will be Generation Z, at 34.40%, followed by previous generations with smaller percentages (APJII, 2024).

Medan City, as one of the economic centers in North Sumatra. Based on data from the Medan City Statistics Agency, in 2024 the economic growth of Medan City increased by 0.03% from the previous year's 5.04%. The large number of Generation Z residents in Medan City and the high level of internet penetration and social media usage among Generation Z can serve as a means for the latest marketing trends. Therefore, Medan is suitable as a relevant market for examining the phenomenon of influencer marketing and product differentiation in influencing purchasing decisions. Existing research has focused more on traditional factors such as price and product quality in purchasing decisions, while the context of purchasing decisions among Generation Z has not been adequately explored. Therefore, this study will examine the interaction between content presented by influencers and product differentiation in influencing the purchasing decisions of Generation Z in the city of Medan.

According to Maryati M & Utami (2023), influencer marketing has revolutionized the way goods and services are marketed and used. Influencer marketing uses social media platforms to build trust and increase purchasing interest. In the context of skincare, influencers with credibility and a large following can influence the purchasing decisions of Generation Z. Previous research by Situmorang et al (2025) states that influencer marketing has been proven to be significant in the purchase of Aqua products. In previous studies, the product used was Aqua, a pioneer in bottled mineral water with a strong brand image that did not require influencer marketing. The influence of influencer marketing was only 13% with a sample size of 50 respondents. Therefore, this study focuses on the credibility, appeal, and power of influencer marketing among Generation Z in Medan in influencing their purchasing decisions on Instagram. This study also uses a larger sample size and is not limited to specific brands or trademarks.

Another important factor influencing purchasing decisions is product differentiation. Christ & Maryati M (2023) state that the differentiation of each product offered can influence the sustainability of a business and consumer purchasing decisions. Companies will differentiate themselves if they have something unique compared to their competitors that is valued more by consumers (Handayani et al., 2023). In this highly competitive industry, products with unique features or added value can be more attractive to consumers. Previous studies have focused more on how product differentiation affects service quality. Therefore, these studies explain how product differentiation affects service quality rather than how product capabilities affect consumer purchasing decisions. This study will highlight how skin care product differentiation can be tailored to the preferences and behavior of Generation Z on Instagram, and how these factors can be integrated with influencer marketing strategies to create greater appeal.

Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms alongside YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok. Instagram is a social media platform that presents visual content such as photos and videos. Instagram released various new features in June 2025, including creator controls, collaboration and community, and Al-driven content, with the aim of helping creators and brands in creating content. According to data from We Are Social and Meltwater, there were 103,000,000 Instagram users in

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Indonesia in January 2025, representing 36.3% of the total population. Based on this data, the author uses Instagram as the social media platform in this study.

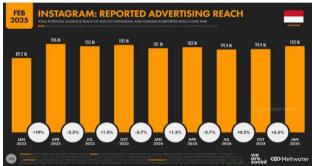


Figure 2. Instagram Users in January 2025 Source : Goodstats.id, 2025

With the increasing use of social media and changes in consumer behavior, it is important to understand how the two factors of influencer marketing and product differentiation can be effective strategies for influencing Generation Z's skincare purchasing decisions. Based on the phenomena described above, this study aims to determine the extent to which the combination of influencer marketing and product differentiation influences skincare purchasing decisions on Instagram among Generation Z in the city of Medan, as well as to provide insights for marketers in designing more effective strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Decision

Purchasing decisions are an important aspect because they can help companies generate profits. Purchasing decisions are the process of formulating various alternative actions in order to choose one specific alternative for making a purchase (Rezeki & Gustina, 2021). Purchasing decisions are a driving force for consumers in deciding to buy products according to their needs (Gultom et al., 2025). Based on the above definition, it can be concluded that purchasing decisions are the process by which consumers choose one of the alternatives offered for purchase. Thus, according to Sanjiwani & Suasana (2019), the indicators of purchasing decisions are the need and desire for a product, the desire to try the product, confidence in the quality of the product, and the decision to repurchase.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has become one of the most popular marketing strategies today. According to Cartwright et al (2022), social media influencers act as independent third parties who influence audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and other social media platforms. Influencer marketing is an individual strategy to promote products in order to influence followers to make decisions and ultimately use those products. There are three indicators in this variable, namely credibility, attractiveness, and power (Herman et al., 2023).

Product Differentiation

In facing business competition, product differentiation is one strategy to address this issue. According to Rezeki et al (2021), product differentiation is the process of adding important features to a product and having a value that distinguishes it from competing products. Product differentiation is a form of corporate excellence in creating uniqueness in products that provide added value to consumers in order to face business competition. The four indicators for product differentiation are form, quality, suitability, durability, and style (Handayani et al., 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is as follows:

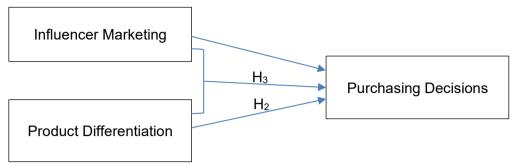


Figure 3 Theoretical Framework

Hypothesis

The hypothesis in this study is:

- H1:There is an influence of Influencer marketing on Skincare Purchasing Decisions on Instagram Among Generation Z in Medan
- H2: There is an influence of Product Differentiation on Skincare Purchasing Decisions on Instagram Among Generation Z in Medan City
- H3: There is an influence of Influencer Marketing and Product Differentiation on Skincare Purchasing Decisions on Instagram Among Generation Z in Medan City

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in Medan City from August 2025 to September 2025. The research method used was quantitative research, which is a research analysis activity that uses numbers in the calculation process (Veronica et al., 2022). The type and source of data used is primary data, which is data collected directly from research participants and processed independently by the researcher (Sihotang, 2023). The data collection method used was a questionnaire, in which the researcher asked questions and collected answers from respondents who met the research criteria. According to Adil et al (2023), a questionnaire is a data collection method that uses a list of questions for respondents. The population is a group of subjects or objects that become the source of sampling in accordance with the characteristics and quality of the research problem.

The Generation Z population in Medan City is 567,642 people aged 15-29 years. Sampling was conducted using Non-Probability Sampling with Purposive Sampling Technique. Purposive Sampling is a sample selected according to criteria set in a study (Sihotang, 2023). Based on calculations using the Slovin formula, a sample of 400 respondents was obtained. To obtain the answer values, a Likert scale was used to determine the answer values from the respondents. This study used multiple linear regression analysis to determine the extent of the influence of Influencer Marketing and Product Differentiation on Purchase Decisions. The following is the formula used for multiple linear regression analysis:

$$Y = a + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + e$$

Explanation:

Y = Purchase Decisions
X1 = Influencer Marketing
X2 = Product Differentiation

 $\beta 1,\beta 2$ = Independent variable regression coefficient

e = Standard Error = 5%

RESULTS

Based on the data obtained, there were 400 respondents. The characteristics of the respondents based on gender consisted of 247 female respondents (61.75%) and 153 male respondents (38.25%). The characteristics based on age range from 15 to 18 years old with 41 respondents (10.25%), 19 to 23 years old with 259 respondents (64.75%), and 24 to 29 years old with 100 respondents (25%). The characteristics of the respondents in this study were people living in Medan City, Instagram users, skincare users, and Generation Z.

Validity

Validity testing aims to measure the content and instrument of the questionnaire to determine whether the questionnaire is feasible or not (Darma, 2021). In validity testing, a comparison is made between the r_{count} and the r_{table} . In this study, the r_{table} value with a significance level of 0.05 and a sample size of 30 people is 0.361.

Table 1 Validity Test Result

Variable	9	R _{count}	R _{table}	Conclusion
	P1	0,737	0,361	Valid
	P2	0,698	0,361	Valid
Influencer	P3	0,822	0,361	Valid
Marketing	P4	0,701	0,361	Valid
	P5	0,817	0,361	Valid
	P6	0,655	0,361	Valid
	P1	0,713	0,361	Valid
	P2	0,616	0,361	Valid
	P3	0,686	0,361	Valid
Product	P4	0,486	0,361	Valid
Differentiation	P5	0,722	0,361	Valid
	P6	0,662	0,361	Valid
	P7	0,713	0,361	Valid
	P8	0,741	0,361	Valid
	P1	0,823	0,361	Valid
	P2	0,490	0,361	Valid
	P3	0,694	0,361	Valid
Purchase	P4	0,666	0,361	Valid
Decisions	P5	0,705	0,361	Valid
	P6	0,785	0,361	Valid
	P7	0,804	0,361	Valid
	P8	0,763	0,361	Valid

Source: Research Results, 2025

Based on the validity test results, all statements are valid because they have an r_{count} value greater than the r_{table} value. Thus, it can be concluded that all statements in the questionnaire are valid.

Reliability

Reliability testing is used to measure whether the statements produced have robust or reliable values (Darma, 2021). Reliability testing compares Cronbach's alpha values with the significance level. A statement is considered reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value obtained is greater than the significance level of 0.05.

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Table 2 Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Influencer Marketing	0,832	Reliable
Product Differentiation	0,824	Reliable
Purchase Decisions	0,864	Reliable

Source: Research Results, 2025

The results of this test show that Cronbach's alpha values for the independent and dependent variables are greater than the significance level. Therefore, it can be concluded that all instruments are reliable.

Normality Test

The normality test is also known as the Gaussian distribution, which is a uniform and symmetrical distribution of data where the curve has a bell shape (Setyawan, 2021). The type of normality test used is Kolmogorov-Smirnov, where the significance value must be greater than 0.05 for the data to be normally distributed.

Table 3 One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Result

	Unstandardized Residual	
N	400	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.089	

Source: Research Results, 2025

Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results above, a significance value of 0.089 greater than 0.05 was obtained. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data is normally distributed.

Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test aims to determine whether there is a linear correlation between independent variables (Nurcahya et al., 2023).

Table 4 Multicollinearity Test Result

	Coefficients ^a			
Collinearity Statistic		y Statistics		
Mod	lel	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)			
	Influencer Marketing	0.459	2.178	
	Product Differentiation 0.459 2.178			
a.Dependent Variable: Purchasing Decisions				

Source: Research Results, 2025

From the output above, the correlation value of influencer marketing and product differentiation variables shows a tolerance value of 0.459, which is greater than 0.10, and a VIF of 2.178, which is less than 10. Therefore, there is no multicollinearity in the influencer marketing and product differentiation variables.

Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test is used to determine the inequality in the residual value variance in all regression model observations. Homoscedasticity is a good regression model. Cross-sectional data generally contains heteroscedasticity because it combines data from various sizes (Nurcahya et al., 2023).

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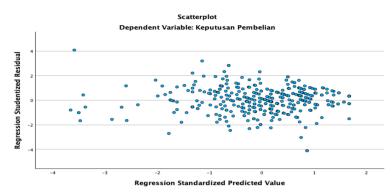


Figure 4 Scatterplot

Source: Research Results, 2025

Based on the distribution of points on the graph, which appear to be scattered randomly around the zero line on the Y-axis and do not form a clear pattern, it can be concluded that the residual variance tends to be constant and there is no heteroscedasticity problem.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 5 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Test Results

Coefficients ^a			
Unstandardized Coefficient			
Model	В	Std. Error	
1 (Constant)	6.084	0.970	
Influencer Marketing	0.433	0.057	
Product Differentiation	0.496	0.042	
a.Dependent Variable: Purchasing Decisions			

Source: Research Results, 2025

In this study, classical assumption tests have been fulfilled. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed using SPSS version 29. the following regression equation was obtained:

Purchasing Decisions = 6.084 + 0.433 Influencer Marketing + 0.496 Product Differentiation + e

A positive constant value of 6.084 indicates a direct influence from the independent variable. When the independent variable is zero, the Purchase Decision variable is 6.084. The Regression Coefficient values for the Influencer Marketing and Product Differentiation variables are positive at 0.433 and 0.496, indicating that if the Influencer Marketing and Product Differentiation variables increase or rise by one unit in a positive direction, then Influencer Marketing and Product Differentiation will increase by 0.433 and 0.496 units, respectively, in a direct relationship. Thus, it is known that Influencer Marketing and Digital Differentiation have an impact on the decision to purchase skincare products on Instagram among Generation Z in the city of Medan.

Hypothesis Test T Test (Partial Test)

The partial test is a correlation test with the aim of determining whether there is an influence between each independent variable and the dependent variable (Wijaya & Sari, 2020).

Table 6 Partial Test Result

Coefficients ^a			
Model		t	Sig
1	(Constant)	6.276	0,001
	Influencer Marketing	7.618	0,001
	Product Differentiation 11.761 0,001		
a.Dependent Variable: Purchasing Decisions			
t _{table} Value: 1.966			

Source: Research Results, 2025

The t_{table} value in this study is 1.966 and the significance value is 0.05. The table shows that the influencer marketing variable has a t_{count} (7.618) > t_{table} (1.966) with a significance level of 0.001 < 0.05, so it was found that there is a significant positive partial effect between Influencer Marketing and Skincare Purchase Decisions on Instagram among Generation Z in Medan City. For the product differentiation variable, the t_{count} (11.761) > t_{table} (1.966) with a significance level of 0.001 < 0.05. Thus, it was found that there is a significant positive partial influence between Product Differentiation and the decision to purchase skincare products on Instagram among Generation Z in Medan.

F Test (Simultaneous Test)

The F-test is an ANOVA test to test whether b1, b2, and b3 are equal to zero (Ghozali, 2021).

Table 7 Simultaneous Test

ANOVA ^a			
Model		F	Sig
1	Regression	357.313	0,001
a.Dependent Variable: Purchasing Decisions			
b.Predictors: (Constant), Product Differentiation, Influencer Marketing			

Source: Research Results, 2025

In this study, the F_{table} value was 3.018 and the significance was 0.05. The significance value was 0.001 < 0.05 and the F_{count} value was 357.313 > F_{table} 3.018. Thus, it was found that there is a simultaneous influence of Influencer Marketing and Product Differentiation on the decision to purchase skincare products on Instagram among Generation Z in Medan.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 8 Test Coefficient of Determination

Model summary ^b				
Model R R Square Adjusted R Square				
1	1 0.802 0.643 0.641			
a.Predictors: (Constant), Product Differentiation, Influencer Marketing				

Source: Research Results, 2025

Based on the results of the coefficient of determination test above, it is known that the R Square value or coefficient of determination obtained is 0.643, which explains that 64.3% of skincare purchase decisions on Instagram among Generation Z in Medan are influenced by influencer marketing and product differentiation, while the remaining 35.7% are influenced by other variables.

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DISCUSSION

The influence of influencer marketing on purchasing decisions

Based on the research results, H1 was accepted, indicating that the Influencer Marketing variable had a regression coefficient of 0.433 and the partial hypothesis test (t-test) had a t_{count} (7.618) > t_{table} (1.966) with a significance level of 0.001 < 0.05, indicating a positive direction, meaning that partially, the Influencer Marketing variable has a direct influence on skincare purchase decisions on Instagram among Generation Z in Medan. This is in line with the results of previous research by Nurniati et al (2023), which found that the influencer marketing variable has a significant and positive effect on the decision to purchase skincare products on e-commerce. With a path coefficient value of 0.518 and a t-statistic value of 4.652, which is higher than 1.96.

The influence of product differentiation on purchasing decisions

Based on the research results, it was found that H2 was accepted, indicating that the Product Differentiation variable had a regression coefficient of 0.496 and the partial hypothesis test (t-test) had a t_{count} (11.761) > t_{tabel} (1.966) with a significance level of 0.001 < 0.05, indicating a positive direction, meaning that partially, the Product Differentiation variable has a direct influence on skincare purchase decisions on Instagram among Generation Z in Medan. This is in line with the results of previous research by Bukit et al (2025), which found that the product differentiation variable has a significant and positive effect on skincare product purchase decisions on e-commerce. With a regression value of 0.272 and a t_{count} for product differentiation of 6.895 > t_{tabel} 1.987 and a sig value of 0.000 < 0.05.

The influence of influencer marketing and product differentiation on purchasing decisions

Based on the results of simultaneous hypothesis testing using the F-test, it is known that there is a significant influence between Influencer Marketing and Product Differentiation that has a direct effect on the decision to purchase skincare products on Instagram among Generation Z in Medan. This study is in line with research by Nurniati et al (2023) and Bukit et al (2025) with the research title "Word of mouth and Influencer Marketing strategy on Purchase Decision of Skincare Products in E -Commerce" and "The Influence of Price Perception, Product Differentiation, and Brand Image on the Purchase Decision of Wardah Skincare Products among Students of the Faculty of Economics, Methodist Indonesia," which states that the variables of influencer marketing and product differentiation simultaneously influence purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that influencer marketing and product differentiation significantly influence skincare purchasing decisions on Instagram among Generation Z in Medan. The analysis results show that influencer marketing, with a regression coefficient of 0.433, contributes positively to purchasing decisions, where the greater the influence of influencers, the more likely Generation Z is to make a purchase. In addition, product differentiation that has uniqueness and added value is proven to be important, with a regression coefficient of 0.496, which shows the attractiveness of different products in a competitive market. The F test shows that both influencer marketing and product differentiation have a significant simultaneous effect on purchasing decisions, with an F_{count} value that far exceeds the Ft_{able}. The R Square value of 0.643 indicates that 64.3% of purchasing decisions are influenced by these two factors, while the rest are influenced by other variables that need further research. These findings suggest that marketers should effectively utilize influencer marketing strategies and develop clear product differentiation to attract Generation Z's attention, as well as provide valuable insights for developing marketing strategies in the skincare industry.

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