



Determinants of Generation Z University Students' Purchase Intention for Cosmetic Products: The Roles of Influencer Credibility, Online Reviews, and Herding Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media and digital marketplaces has transformed the way consumers evaluate and purchase cosmetic products, particularly among Generation Z, a cohort highly embedded in digitally connected and peer-intensive environments. In this context, purchase intention may be shaped by multiple digital and social cues, including influencer credibility, online reviews, and herding behavior. This study therefore examines the effects of influencer credibility, online reviews, and herding behavior on purchase intention toward cosmetic products among Generation Z university students. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design was employed. Data were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire distributed to active university students in Bali who belonged to Generation Z, had previously purchased cosmetic products, and had been exposed to influencer-related cosmetic content. Using purposive sampling, a total of 112 valid responses were obtained and analyzed through multiple linear regression with SPSS. The findings reveal that influencer credibility did not significantly affect purchase intention. In contrast, online reviews and herding behavior were found to have positive and significant effects on purchase intention. The model also demonstrates strong explanatory power, indicating that purchase intention is shaped more strongly by consumer-generated evaluations and collective social cues than by influencer-related attributes. These findings highlight the growing importance of online reviews and social influence in understanding Generation Z's cosmetic purchase intention in digital environments.

Keywords: *Generation Z, Influencer Credibility, Herding Behavior, Online Reviews, Purchase Intention,*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed marketing communication practices, shifting promotional activities from conventional media to interactive digital platforms. Among these platforms, social media has emerged as one of the most influential channels because of its accessibility, interactivity, and broad reach, allowing firms to communicate with consumers more directly and efficiently (Maulana & Salsabila, 2020; Dewi et al., 2021). According to We Are Social (2023), Indonesia had 167 million active social media users in January 2023, equivalent to 60.4% of the total population. In such a highly connected environment, social media no longer functions merely as a communication channel, but also as a strategic marketplace in which consumer attitudes and purchase intentions are continuously shaped.

One of the industries most strongly influenced by this digital transformation is cosmetics. The prominence of cosmetic products in digital marketing is closely associated with the rapid expansion of the cosmetics industry in Indonesia. The number of cosmetics businesses increased from 819 in 2021 to 1,039 by the end of 2023, reflecting intensifying competition in the market (Ikm.kemenperin.go.id, 2024). These trends underscore that the cosmetics market is not only economically significant but also increasingly competitive, requiring firms to adopt more persuasive and socially embedded marketing approaches to influence consumer decision-making. In contemporary society, grooming is often associated with professionalism and social identity. Such awareness has been reinforced by wider exposure to beauty-related information, lifestyle content, and global consumption trends disseminated through social media (Pramana & Ismail, 2024).

Generation Z represents a particularly important market segment. Commonly defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, this cohort grew up in an environment strongly shaped by digital technology, the internet, and social media (BPS.go.id, 2025; Sakitri, 2021). In the cosmetics market, Generation Z is not only a major consumer segment but also a trend-sensitive group whose preferences are formed within digitally connected and peer-intensive environments, including higher-education settings, where online engagement and social interaction are highly prevalent. Previous studies have shown that Generation Z's cosmetic consumption behavior is shaped by multiple social, psychological, and technological factors, including peer influence, influencer credibility, and online content exposure (Yanti, 2025). Moreover, this generation tends to place greater trust in recommendations from micro-influencers and beauty content creators perceived as authentic and relatable than in conventional advertising (Sinolungan & Chan, 2025).

Influencer credibility has received considerable scholarly attention. Influencer marketing has become one of the most widely implemented promotional strategies in the cosmetics industry because influencers are able to introduce products, shape brand perceptions, and encourage purchase-related behavior (Nafiza & Khasanah, 2024; Gianthonove & Pratiwi, 2022). However, its effectiveness depends not merely on exposure or popularity, but largely on the credibility of the influencer. Influencer credibility refers to the extent to which an influencer is perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, honest, and attractive in communicating product-related information (Pratiwi & Pratikha, 2021; Nafiza & Khasanah, 2024). When consumers perceive an influencer as credible, they are more likely to accept the message and develop favorable attitudes toward the promoted product.

Another important factor is online reviews. Online reviews are consumer-generated evaluations shared through digital platforms such as e-commerce sites, social media, and websites, often containing information about product quality, satisfaction, service, price, and overall user experience (Chen et al., 2022; Wilis & Faik, 2022). In the cosmetics industry, where consumers often seek reassurance before trying a product, online reviews can reduce uncertainty and strengthen confidence in purchase decisions. The growing popularity of visual reviews, such as unboxing videos and product demonstrations, further illustrates consumers' preference for authentic and experience-based information. However, the increasing prevalence of manipulated or fake reviews raises concerns about the reliability of such information, making review credibility a critical issue in online purchasing environments.

A further relevant factor is herding behavior, which refers to the tendency of individuals to follow the actions or decisions of others without sufficient independent evaluation (Christanty & Herdinata, 2025). In the context of social media and digital consumption, herding behavior may occur when consumers become interested in a product simply because it is widely discussed, recommended, or purchased by peers, influencers, or other users. This tendency is particularly relevant to Generation Z, whose purchasing behavior is embedded in highly connected digital and social environments.

Several studies reported that influencer credibility has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention because credible influencers are perceived as more persuasive and relatable (Alwan & Alshurideh, 2022; Al Mamun et al., 2023; Wilis & Faik, 2022). However, Helbert and Ariawan (2021) found that influencer credibility did not significantly affect purchase intention. Similarly, while some studies found that credible and positive online reviews significantly increase purchase intention (Chen et al., 2022; Wilis & Faik, 2022; Yacoob et al., 2021), other studies reported that online reviews do not always exert a significant influence (Habib et al., 2022). Likewise, studies on herding behavior have produced differing conclusions. Some scholars found that herding behavior significantly encourages purchase intention and impulsive buying (Christanty & Herdinata, 2025; Salsabila & Arifin, 2024; Maulana et al., 2025), whereas others suggested that its effect may depend on individual characteristics, such as financial literacy and personal judgment (Chairunnisa & Dalimunthe, 2021).

These inconsistent findings indicate a clear research gap. First, existing studies have not reached a consistent conclusion regarding the effects of influencer credibility, online reviews, and herding behavior on purchase intention. Second, prior research has often examined these variables separately, even though consumers in digital environments are simultaneously exposed to influencer messages, peer-generated reviews, and social popularity cues. Third, limited attention has been given to the intersection of these three factors in the context of cosmetic products among Generation Z consumers, despite the rapid growth of the domestic cosmetics industry and the central role of social media in shaping this market. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effects of influencer credibility, online reviews, and herding behavior on purchase intention toward cosmetic products among Generation Z university students in Bali.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), is one of the most widely used frameworks for understanding and predicting individual behavior, including consumer behavior in purchasing contexts. TPB posits that an individual's intention to perform a particular behavior is determined by three main factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Hagger et al., 2022; Rueda-Barrios et al., 2022). Attitude toward the behavior refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular action. Subjective norms refer to perceived social pressure or expectations from significant others to perform or refrain from performing a behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they have the resources, abilities, and opportunities required to perform the behavior (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2021). TPB provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for explaining the formation of purchase

intention among Generation Z. Influencer credibility and online reviews may shape consumers' attitudes by enhancing trust and reducing uncertainty in purchasing environments, while herding behavior may represent the role of subjective norms, as consumers are often influenced by the opinions and actions of others in online settings. Therefore, TPB offers a relevant lens for explaining the effects of influencer credibility, online reviews, and herding behavior on purchase intention.

2.2. Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility refers to the extent to which audiences perceive an influencer as trustworthy, knowledgeable, honest, experienced, and consistent in conveying information or recommending products (Lavenia & Erdiansyah, 2022). It also reflects the degree to which audiences believe that the promotional messages delivered by influencers are truthful and reliable (Lengkawati & Saputra, 2021). In the context of social media marketing, influencer credibility is commonly associated with dimensions such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity (Nafiza & Khasanah, 2024). A highly credible influencer is more likely to build consumer trust and encourage favorable responses toward the promoted product in online environments.

2.3. Online Reviews

Online reviews refer to feedback and evaluations posted by customers regarding products or services on digital platforms, such as e-commerce websites, social media, and websites (Chen et al., 2022). These reviews generally cover aspects such as product quality, customer satisfaction, price, service, and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of a product. Online customer reviews play an important role in shaping potential buyers' perceptions because they are often regarded as a more objective source of information than advertisements or company-generated promotions (Wilis & Faik, 2022). The main indicators of online reviews include trustworthiness, accuracy, credibility, impartiality, and completeness (Su et al., 2022).

2.4. Herding Behavior

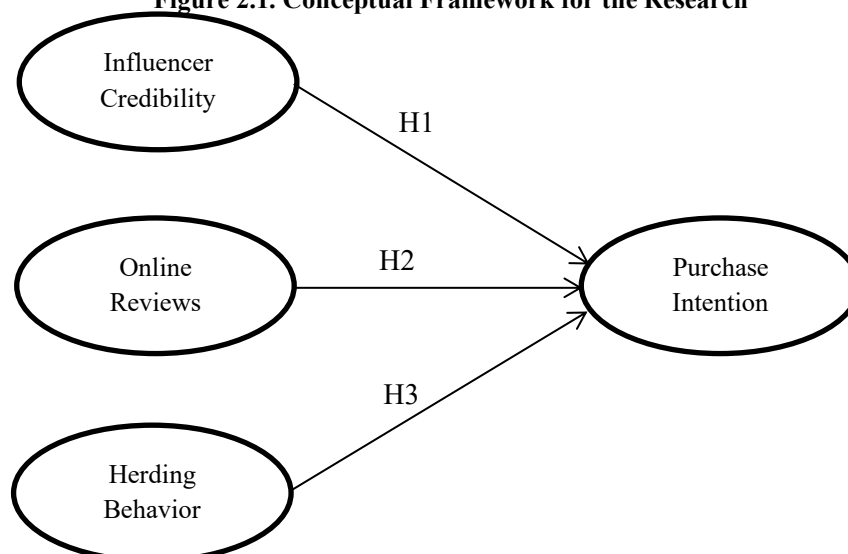
Herding behavior refers to the tendency of individuals to follow the decisions or actions of others without sufficient logical or independent consideration (Christanty & Herdinata, 2025). Also known as bandwagon behavior, herding behavior reflects a psychological and social phenomenon in which individuals imitate the actions, decisions, or preferences of others in a group without prior rational evaluation or in-depth analysis (Ali et al., 2021). Herding behavior may be reflected in the tendency to rely on peer recommendations, customer preferences, current trends, and influencer recommendations when making purchase-related judgments (Pertiwi & Panuntun, 2023).

2.5. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness or tendency to purchase a product or service through digital platforms in the future. Unlike purchase decision, which refers to the actual act of buying, purchase intention reflects a consumer's cognitive and motivational readiness to make a purchase. In marketing research, purchase intention is often used to indicate the likelihood that consumers will consider, search for, and eventually purchase a product through digital channels (Xu et al., 2024; Yacoob et al., 2021). Regarding to the research topic, purchase intention may be reflected in consumers' willingness to buy cosmetic products, recommend by the online brand or seller to others, and seek further information about products before making an purchase (Wang et al., 2023).

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework for the Research



2.6 Research Hypothesis

2.6.1 The Influence of Influencer Credibility on Purchase Intention

Influencer credibility is expected to positively affect purchase intention because consumers are more likely to trust product recommendations delivered by influencers who are perceived as knowledgeable, honest, and authentic. When an influencer is considered credible, audiences tend to perceive the recommendation not merely as a promotional message but as information grounded in valid experience and expertise. Prior studies have demonstrated

that influencer credibility has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Al-Mamun et al., 2023; Alwan & Alshurideh, 2022; Yacoob et al., 2021; Putri & Wulandari, 2024). However, Helbert and Ariawan (2021) found that influencer credibility did not significantly influence purchase intention. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Influencer credibility has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention for cosmetic products

2.6.2 The Influence of Online Reviews on Purchase Intention

Online reviews play an important role as part of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and significantly influence consumer decision-making, particularly in digital markets where direct product experience is limited. In such contexts, the quantity, credibility, and sentiment of reviews may shape consumers' perceptions of product quality and reduce uncertainty. Reviews that are detailed, balanced, and experience-based are more likely to be perceived as persuasive and informative, thereby increasing consumers' intention to purchase products. Previous studies have shown that online reviews positively and significantly affect purchase intention (Chen et al., 2022; Wilis & Faik, 2022; Yacoob et al., 2021). Similarly, Park et al. (2021) found that detailed and well-articulated reviews, especially those including comparisons and personal experiences, tend to be more persuasive. However, Habib et al. (2022) reported that online reviews did not significantly influence purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Online reviews have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention for cosmetic products

2.6.3 The Influence of Herding Behavior on Purchase Intention

Herding behavior is expected to influence online purchase intention because individuals are often affected by the opinions, actions, and preferences of others when making online consumption-related decisions. In digital and social media environments, consumers may perceive products as more desirable or trustworthy when they observe that such products are widely recommended, discussed, or purchased by others. This tendency is especially relevant among Generation Z, whose consumption patterns are strongly embedded in social and digital interactions. Previous studies have shown that herding behavior has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Maulana et al., 2025; Christanty & Herdinata, 2025; Salsabila & Arifin, 2024). Likewise, Pertiwi and Panuntun (2023) found that consumers' purchase-related intentions may be influenced by recommendations from others and by the social environment, which may encourage impulsive buying tendencies. However, Chairunnisa and Dalimunthe (2021) found that herding behavior did not significantly affect purchase intention. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Herding behavior has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention for cosmetic products

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, allowing data to be collected at a single point in time to examine the relationships among variables. The population of this study comprised active university students in Bali who belonged to Generation Z, had previously purchased cosmetic products, and had been exposed to influencer-related cosmetic content. The sample was determined using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) being actively enrolled at a higher education institution in Bali, (2) belonging to Generation Z, (3) having prior experience purchasing cosmetic products, and (4) having been exposed to influencer content related to cosmetics. Since the exact population size was unknown, the minimum sample size was estimated using the rule of thumb proposed by Hair et al. (2021), which recommends 5 to 10 observations for each measurement indicator. As this study employed 16 indicators, the minimum required sample size was calculated as 112 respondents (16×7). The multiplier of 7 was selected because it falls within the recommended range and was considered adequate to support the statistical analysis.

Data were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire. To ensure the validity and reliability of the measurements, each variable was conceptually defined, and the measurement items were adapted from prior studies to fit the context of this research. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section provided an introduction explaining the purpose of the study, addressing respondents' potential concerns, and helping them recall their cosmetic purchase experiences. The second section gathered demographic information, including gender, age, occupation, and purchase frequency. The third section contained the items used to measure influencer credibility, online reviews, herding behavior, and purchase intention. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis with the assistance of SPSS software.

IV. RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Research Result

Based on Table 4.1, the demographic characteristics of the respondents reveal a predominance of female participants (90.2%), reflecting the higher level of cosmetic consumption among women compared to men (9.8%). In terms of age distribution, the majority were between 23–28 years (48.2%), followed by those aged 18–22 years (41.1%), suggesting that cosmetic purchasing behavior is largely driven by young adult consumers representing Generation Z. Regarding occupation, although all respondents were university students, differences in employment status were observed: the majority were students not yet employed (53.6%), followed by private-sector employees (34.8%), civil servants (3.6%), self-employed individuals (4.5%), and housewives (3.6%). This variation indicates that cosmetic usage among students encompasses both financially independent individuals and those reliant on

external support. Moreover, purchasing frequency data show that most respondents buy cosmetic products 1–2 times per month (75.0%), highlighting moderate yet consistent consumer engagement with beauty products. Collectively, these findings underscore the strong participation of young, economically active women in Bali's cosmetic market, aligning with current demographic trends in Generation Z purchasing behavior.

Table 4.1. Respondent Characteristics

Criteria	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	11	9,8%
	Female	101	90,2%
	Total	112	100,0%
Age	< 18 years old	12	10,7%
	18 – 22 years old	46	41,1%
	23 – 28 years old	54	48,2%
Total		112	100,0%
Occupation	Students	60	53,6%
	Private Employees	39	34,8%
	Civil Servants	4	3,6%
	Self-Employed	5	4,5%
	Housewives	4	3,6%
Total		112	100,0%
Frequency of Cosmetic Purchases per Month	1-2 times	84	75,0%
	3-5 times	22	19,6%
	>5 times	6	5,4%
Total		112	100,0%

Source: Data Processed (2025)

The results presented in Table 4.2 indicate that influencer credibility did not significantly affect purchase intention for cosmetic products ($B = -0.094$, $t = -1.589$, $p = 0.115$), suggesting that Hypothesis 1 was not supported. This finding implies that the perceived credibility of influencers may not be a decisive factor in shaping respondents' intention to purchase cosmetic products. By contrast, online reviews showed a positive and statistically significant effect on purchase intention ($B = 0.459$, $t = 9.933$, $p < 0.001$), confirming Hypothesis 2. This result highlights the important role of consumer-generated information in influencing purchase decisions. Herding behavior also had a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ($B = 0.211$, $t = 3.470$, $p = 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 3 and indicating that respondents' purchase intention tended to increase when they were influenced by the behavior or choices of others. Overall, the findings demonstrate that online reviews and herding behavior were significant determinants of purchase intention, whereas influencer credibility was not.

Table 4.2. t-Test

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.409	.732		1.926	.057
	IC	-.094	.059	-.119	-1.589	.115
	OR	.459	.046	.758	9.933	.000
	HB	.211	.061	.246	3.470	.001

Source: Data Processed (2025)

As presented in Table 4.3, the independent variables included in this study: influencer credibility, online reviews, and herding behavior, demonstrate substantial explanatory power with respect to Generation Z's purchase intention for cosmetic products. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.727 indicates that 72.7% of the variance in purchase intention is explained by the proposed model, whereas the remaining 27.3% may be attributed to other variables outside the scope of this study. This result suggests that the model provides a strong explanation of the factors underlying purchase intention

Table 4.3. Coefficient Determination Test

Model Summary				
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE
1	0,857	0,735	0,727	1,309

Source: Data Processed (2025)

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1 The Influence of Influencer Credibility on Purchase Intention

The findings indicate that influencer credibility did not have a significant effect on purchase intention for cosmetic products. This result suggests that, among Generation Z university students, the perceived credibility of influencers is not a decisive predictor of purchase intention. In other words, although influencers may remain visible in digital marketing communication, their credibility alone does not appear sufficient to directly stimulate consumers' intention to purchase cosmetic products. One possible explanation is that Generation Z consumers, as digital natives, are highly familiar with sponsored content and increasingly capable of recognizing persuasive intent in influencer promotions. Consequently, they may evaluate influencer-related messages more critically and may not automatically translate perceived credibility into purchase intention. In the context of cosmetic products, consumers may place greater emphasis on more experience-based and verifiable information before forming purchase intention.

This finding is consistent with Helbert and Ariawan (2021), who also found that influencer credibility did not significantly affect purchase intention. However, it contrasts with the findings of Al-Mamun et al. (2023), Alwan and Alshurideh (2022), Yacoob et al. (2021), and Putri and Wulandari (2024), which reported a significant positive effect of influencer credibility on purchase intention. This inconsistency suggests that the role of influencer credibility may be context-dependent, varying across product categories, consumer segments, and digital environments. In the present study, purchase intention appears to be shaped less by influencer-centered persuasion and more by other forms of informational and social validation.

4.2.2 The Influence of Online Reviews on Purchase Intention

The results show that online reviews had a positive and significant effect on purchase intention for cosmetic products. This finding confirms that online reviews play an important role in shaping purchase intention of Generation Z university students in Bali. In online purchasing settings, where direct product evaluation is limited, reviews function as an important source of consumer-generated information that helps reduce uncertainty and supports purchase-related judgments. This result may be explained by the nature of cosmetic products, which often involve considerations related to product suitability, effectiveness, and user experience. Under such circumstances, online reviews provide practical and experience-based information that consumers may perceive as more relevant than promotional claims. For Generation Z consumers, who are highly engaged with digital platforms, online reviews may therefore serve as a credible basis for evaluating products prior to purchase.

This finding is in line with Chen et al. (2022), Wilis and Faik (2022), and Yacoob et al. (2021), all of whom found a positive and significant relationship between online reviews and purchase intention. It also supports Park et al. (2021), who emphasized that detailed and experience-based reviews tend to be more persuasive in influencing consumers' decisions. However, the present result differs from Habib et al. (2022), who reported no significant effect. Such differences may reflect variation in product type, consumer characteristics, or platform context. In this study, online reviews appear to play a particularly influential role because they provide informational reassurance in a product category associated with relatively high subjective evaluation.

4.2.3 The Influence of Herding Behavior on Purchase Intention

The findings further reveal that herding behavior had a positive and significant effect on purchase intention for cosmetic products. This suggests that Generation Z consumers are likely to be influenced by the opinions, choices, or behaviors of others when forming their own purchase intention. In online shopping environments, herding behavior may function as a social cue that helps consumers make decisions under conditions of uncertainty. A possible explanation for this result is that cosmetic purchases often involve perceived risk, particularly because product outcomes may vary across individuals. In such situations, observing the behavior or preferences of other consumers may provide a sense of reassurance and reduce uncertainty. For Generation Z consumers, who are deeply embedded in digitally connected environments, collective signals such as others' evaluations and purchasing patterns may serve as a form of social validation that strengthens purchase intention.

This finding is consistent with Maulana et al. (2025), Christanty and Herdinata (2025), and Salsabila and Arifin (2024), who demonstrated a positive and significant effect of herding behavior on purchase intention. Similarly, Pertiwi and Panuntun (2023) found that consumers' intentions can be shaped by recommendations from others and by the surrounding social environment. However, the present finding differs from Chairunnisa and Dalimunthe (2021), who found no significant effect of herding behavior on purchase intention. This discrepancy may indicate that the influence of herding behavior varies depending on the product category and the extent to which collective consumer cues are visible in the purchasing environment. In the context of online cosmetic purchases, such cues appear to play a meaningful role in encouraging buying interest.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that influencer credibility did not significantly predict Generation Z university students' purchase intention for cosmetic products, suggesting that the persuasive role of influencers may be limited in this context. In contrast, online reviews and herding behavior emerged as significant positive predictors of purchase intention. This implies that Generation Z consumers tend to place greater reliance on review-based information and socially shared consumption cues when forming their purchase intention. The findings therefore highlight the dominant role of consumer-generated content and collective influence in shaping cosmetic purchase intention, whereas influencer credibility appears to play a comparatively weaker role.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed for future research. First, future studies should broaden the research model by incorporating additional determinants of purchase intention, particularly brand- and product-related variables such as brand equity, perceived price fairness, product quality, and trust, as purchase intention is likely influenced by factors beyond those included in the present model. Second, future research should employ broader and more heterogeneous samples, including non-student Generation Z consumers, respondents from different geographic areas, and more varied age groups, to improve the generalizability of the findings. Third, further studies are encouraged to examine more specific cosmetic market contexts, such as local brands, MSMEs, skincare products, or premium beauty brands, in order to assess whether the relative effects of influencer credibility, online reviews, and herding behavior differ across market segments.

From a managerial perspective, cosmetic marketers should place greater emphasis on strengthening credible online review systems and encouraging authentic consumer-generated content, as online reviews emerged as the strongest predictor of purchase intention in this study. In addition, firms should strategically manage social proof by fostering sustainable user communities, peer testimonials, and visible customer engagement, as herding behavior was found to positively shape purchase intention. Given that influencer credibility did not show a significant effect, managers should avoid relying excessively on influencer image alone and instead integrate influencers into broader strategies centered on authenticity, verified consumer feedback, and community-based trust building.

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