

Utilizing Social Media Marketing to Influence Customer Purchase Intention and Trust in Influencers Who Also Act as Skincare Product Owners

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ABSTRACT

The skincare business presents a lucrative opportunity for revenue generation at both macro and micro levels. Influencers, with their large followings and social influence, have effectively leveraged this opportunity to establish skincare brands. This research aims to complement existing studies by examining how social media marketing conducted by influencers can impact consumer purchasing interest. The second objective is to propose effective marketing strategies via social media to enhance customer trust. Utilizing qualitative methods, the study applies netnographic data collection and literature reviews. The findings indicate that not all influencers with skincare businesses succeed in the competitive landscape of social media marketing. Influencers must develop strategic marketing plans, particularly focusing on the number of followers and engagement rates to build customer trust. Influencers with a unique appeal, such as celebrities, can be effective in boosting consumer interest in skincare products. This research emphasizes the importance of influencer selection and social media strategy in sustaining a skincare business.

Keywords: Customer Trust, Influencer, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing.



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INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms are increasingly used by consumers before they make purchasing decisions. Influencers, who have large followings on these platforms, can effectively market products to their audience. The skincare business, in particular, has seen rapid growth due to the advantages of marketing through social media, as noted by (Venciute et al., 2023). However, the intense competition in the skincare market, compounded by the influx of international products, requires businesses to implement strategic marketing to survive. One promising strategy is social media marketing, where influencers with hundreds of thousands or even millions of followers can serve as a potential target market. The right marketing strategy can influence purchasing interest and increase customer trust.

Sharon et al. (2019) emphasized that an important element in influencing consumer attitudes and behavior is the use of influencers in online advertising. Influencer marketing is a strategy that involves promoting brands, products, or services through popular figures known as influencers or opinion leaders (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). However, the existence of social media also presents a challenge. With the ease of obtaining information, competition has intensified, and consumers can easily compare products. Online advertising through digital platforms, such as social media or e-commerce apps, provides a means for businesses to directly communicate the value of their products to consumers.

The explosive growth of influencer marketing by over 800% in the last five years reflects the significant increase in companies' investments in influencers. Influencers create content that captures the attention of potential customers, leading them to assess and ultimately trust their chosen skincare products or explore new ones. Cherniavska & Kaznodii, (2023) note that innovative digital marketing tools play a crucial role in adapting to shifts in the digital landscape, enhancing competitiveness, and fostering strong customer relationships. If a customer decides to purchase a new product, the marketing strategy employed is effective in driving purchasing interest. However, if customers continue to trust and purchase from a brand they initially chose, the marketing strategy has succeeded in instilling trust.

The role of influencers is critical in this process, as their large following enables them to influence a wider audience (Simanulang & Amri, 2024). Jimenez et al. (2023) also highlight that influencer marketing has emerged as an effective way for brands to connect with consumers through social media influencers. While influencer marketing has attracted substantial research interest, little is known about influencer content and engagement strategies and their relationship to follower behavior.

A problem arises when influencers use ineffective digital marketing strategies, either as skincare business owners or as influencers with large followings, which can lead to business failure. Ideally, influencers who are widely known and influential should have a great opportunity to succeed in the skincare industry. However, some influencers have closed their businesses and opted to become brand ambassadors for other skincare brands. Many studies focus on the importance of the number of followers and the size of the audience in determining the success of influencer marketing. This study aims to complement previous research by examining how social media marketing carried out by influencers can influence customer purchasing interest. Additionally, the research will propose appropriate social media marketing strategies to increase customer trust. The expected benefit of this research is to contribute to the academic field of marketing management, especially in the modern digital era, and provide valuable insights for practitioners in determining effective marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Marketing

Social media is characterized as the use of digital devices and the internet to share and discuss information and experiences with others in a more efficient manner (Shareef et al., 2019). In the context of marketing, social media plays a key role in fostering strong connections between businesses and their customers, while offering companies easy access to their audience (Kelly et al., 2010). Social media marketing represents a contemporary element of a company's marketing approach, involving the promotion of products, services, information, and ideas through online platforms (Danhil et al., 2014). By generating relevant and valuable content, businesses can better forecast customer purchasing behaviors (Kim & Ko, 2012), and attract new customers (Michaelidou et al., 2011). Kim & Ko, (2012) identified five dimensions for evaluating social media marketing efforts: entertainment, interaction, trends, customization, and word of mouth (WOM).

Influencer

Influencers are well-known social media figures who gain a substantial following by developing a genuine online persona (Lou & Yuan, (2019). According to Ariasih et al., (2022) the definition of an influencer is an individual who is followed by a large number of other individuals on social media who can change a person's emotions, moods and feelings because of the bond with their followers. These individuals, who influence a significant number of followers through their lifestyle, values, or beliefs, establish strong psychological connections by sharing personal content related to their lifestyle and interests (Ladhari et al., (2020); Guo & Chen, 2022).

Social media users typically perceive influencers as authentic and relatable, viewing them as similar to themselves (Schouten et al., 2021). This positive perception makes the messages shared by influencers highly effective in achieving the desired brand impact (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer marketing capitalizes on the trust and relationships influencers establish with their followers, amplifying a brand's reach and influence on social media platforms (Enke & Borchers, 2021). Research on influencer marketing has explored various key topics, including product promotion (Lou & Yuan, 2019), influencer likability (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), influencer opinion leadership (Ladhari et al., 2020), and the effectiveness of influencers compared to traditional celebrities (Schouten et al., 2021).

Purchase Intention

Purchase interest is a strong feeling from within the consumer that expresses interest or desire to buy in a certain period. In line with Siwaporn (2021) who stated that purchase interest is behavior that is a response to a particular object and shows a desire to buy. Furthermore, according to Naruliza et al., (2020) there are indicators of purchase interest, namely: Attention, Interest, Desire and Action and define purchase interest as potential consumers who have not made a purchase at this time and are likely to buy in the future. Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that consumers will buy a specific product, reflecting their inclination towards it (Halder et al., 2016).

Purchase interest is intended as the potential for consumers to consider buying a particular brand; consumers with higher approval and brand sensory value are more motivated to buy a product (Trivedi & Sama, 2020). Purchase intention is a person's natural tendency to act towards a brand. Higher purchase intention indicates a higher probability of customers to buy a product (Wang & Sun, 2010). Purchase intention indicates the level of consumer feeling how confident they are to buy a product or service, (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). The higher the self-confidence, the stronger the desire to buy (Moslehpour et al., 2020). Consumers will decide to buy a product after searching for information first in the hope of buying the right product and according to their needs and desires.

Customer Trust

Consumer trust in a brand is based on the consumer's willingness to trust a brand based on the expectation that the brand will produce good results, Lau and Lee in, Amalina and Tiaravati (2016). Another explanation is given by Chatterjee and Cahudhuri in Ichsan (2017), brand trust is consumer trust that is built from credibility and can be trusted towards the brand. To trust a brand, you must be a true person and stand in the middle of society so that people can trust the brand and eventually use it. Trust has always been an important part of our personal and business lives, both offline and online (Warner-Söderholm et al., 2018).

Trust plays a crucial role in online shopping, particularly in transactions conducted on social media, where uncertainty is heightened due to the absence of direct, face-to-face interaction between buyers and sellers (Featherman & Hajli, 2016). It is the readiness to place confidence in others, even when real risks are involved (Christou, 2015). When it comes to brands, trust is the consumer's willingness to have faith in the brand's claimed qualities, (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research method, employing both a netnographic approach and a literature review. Qualitative methods aim to provide a detailed and comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon through observation and in-depth analysis. In addition, the literature review method, as defined by Khatiba (2011) in Dandanaja (2014), involves analyzing and processing information found in relevant literature sources to provide critical insights. This approach does not involve primary data collection but focuses on secondary data through the critical analysis of existing studies and materials.

For this research, the population consists of social media influencers who own skincare businesses, particularly those active on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The sample includes a selection of influencers from various follower categories, ranging from micro-influencers to those with millions of followers. These influencers are chosen based on their active involvement in promoting their own skincare brands and the visibility of their marketing strategies.

The netnographic approach will be used to observe and capture information from the selected influencers' social media platforms, focusing on their marketing strategies, content types, and engagement with followers. The literature review will complement this by analyzing existing studies and theories on influencer marketing, social media engagement, and consumer behavior. Together, these methods allow for a deeper understanding of how influencer marketing strategies are implemented in the skincare industry and their impact on customer trust and purchasing intentions. The integration of netnography provides real-time observations of marketing practices, while the literature review situates these findings within the broader context of existing academic research, offering a more robust and comprehensive analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Media Marketing

In addition to traditional advertising methods, the growing presence of social media in everyday life has opened up new opportunities for businesses to promote their products and leverage these platforms. Social media is not only used as a direct marketing tool through official brand accounts, but companies have also recognized the value of third-party content creators, commonly known as social media influencers. Currently, the way of communicating and behaving has been changed by technology, especially in the form of social media. These changes make organizations forget about market desires and are more interested in showing their superiority without considering market opinion. And directly authorize customers to review through social media such as the web, blogs, and social media networks. Furthermore, digital marketing strategies that can be used by business people or companies including social media are as follows:

- a. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) which is defined as the process of maximizing a website in order to occupy the first position in a search via the web. To run this strategy, you must know how the search system works. Examples of media that can implement this SEO marketing strategy are blogs, websites and infographics.
- b. Content Marketing is a digital media marketing strategy that uses content in the form of videos, writing or activities that aim to market products or services. Usually content marketing involves influencers who are widely known to the public and are used as role models.
- c. Marketing Automation is a digital marketing strategy that is automatically set to carry out campaign tasks, when posting or uploading content. This marketing method can be done using email, and social media.
- d. Pay-Per-Click is a marketing method that brings web visitors to pay when ads or content are clicked by visitors. Examples of this strategy are using Google AdWords, LinkedIn ad messages and Facebook ads

- e. Native Advertising is a type of marketing strategy that uses integrated media through special settings, for example, Instagram content marketing that can be set to be directly connected to a Facebook account at the same time.
- f. Affiliate Marketing is a digital marketing strategy by collaborating through other people's services and websites. An example is attaching a link or URL to the description box, so that visitors can go directly to the product or service being marketed.
- g. Social Media Marketing is a marketing strategy that uses social media influencers to introduce and market products by uploading content on social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. Marketing through social media is considered to be able to reduce time, reduce costs, and does not require a lot of manpower.

Social media is currently not only a communication instrument, but also an important part of marketing strategy in business (Öztamur & Karakadılar, 2014). They invite consumers to engage with the company's brand. As an increasing number of consumers engage with social media, and with its integration into business strategies, social media not only enables communication between consumers and companies but also serves as a space for consumers to connect with one another (Philips et al., 2016). This consumer-to-consumer interaction indirectly becomes an effective marketing tool for companies through word of mouth.

Social Media Influencer

Social media influencers are “Internet micro-celebrities who are well-known on various platforms and gather followers on social media and/or blogs through textual and visual narratives about their daily lives, personal lifestyles and monetize their followers by endorsing brands for a fee (e.g. paid testimonial ads)” Jimenez & Fernandez (2019). From this definition, it can be identified that social media influencers are very popular among their followers so they can be called “micro-celebrities”. Influencers gain popularity in terms of number of followers and high reach because of valuable and relevant content in a particular field or area (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In particular, Consumers depend on influencers, who have emerged as a significant influence on purchasing decisions and are believed to have a powerful effect on brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Social media influencers typically have expertise in a specific area and attract followers due to the specialized content they produce. Traditional celebrities can also become influencers if they consistently generate viral content on social media (Lou & Yuan, 2019). While celebrities gain fame through traditional media, social media influencers are often seen as ordinary individuals who rise to fame on social media due to their relatable, approachable nature, and authentic content (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). Influencers are categorized into various types, including celebrity influencers, mega influencers, macro influencers, micro influencers, and nano influencers (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). Other classifications also include celebrities, macro-influencers, professionals, micro-influencers, and nano-influencers. These classifications reflect differences in audience size and characteristics, which are crucial factors for brands when selecting influencers (Venciute et al., 2023).

DISCUSSION

On the other hand, skincare products are one of the products that are currently very popular and popular, especially on online shopping platforms, Simanulangg and Amri (2024). However, the use of social media must be right on target because Influencers must also be able to interpret the values inherent in their products. The following is a list of Influencers in Indonesia who also have skincare businesses and are widely known, which can be seen from the number of followers on social media.

Table 1. Public Figure

No	Nama Public Figure	Brand Skincare	Jumlah Followers (dalam satuan Juta)	Jumlah Followes Brand (dalam satuan ribu)
1	Luna Maya	NAMA Beauty	38,2	183
2	Falicya Angelista	Scarlett	22,4	5300
3	Maia Estianti	EMK Beverly Hills	23,3	-
4	Gisella Anastasia	Madame Gie	39	631
5	Ashanty	Ashanty Beauty Care	33,7	182
6	Ivan Gunawan	Ivan Gunawan Cosmetic	31,1	200
7	Nikita Willy	Dream by Nikita Willy	13,2	18
8	Nikita Mirzani	Nikita Mirzani Lip Serum	13,9	144
9	Bella Sofie	Dabe Beaute	2,4	260
10	Bunga Zainal	BUZA Skincare	2	25,3
11	Shandy Aulia	SA Naturel	7,5	-
12	Inul Daratista	Inul Beauty	20,1	-
13	Jessica Iskandar	Jedar Cosmetics	33,3	220
14	Cathy Sharon	SADA	1,1	76,8
15	Shandy Purnamasari	MS Glow	2,9	1800

Source: Data processed by the author

Based on the data, it is evident that influencers with large social media followings often have well-known brands. However, some brands still remain relatively unknown and lack dedicated social media accounts for their products. For example, the skincare business owned by influencer Felicya Angelista, with the Scarlett brand, has the highest number of followers, suggesting it may be the most in-demand influencer product among consumers. More than 10 influencers have skincare businesses and leverage social media as a marketing strategy. Given the significant influence of these individuals in society, marketing through social media seems like a natural choice. The large number of followers they have can be used strategically to boost product sales and engagement.

Despite this, the sheer size of an influencer's following does not guarantee success. Influencers, often referred to as celebrities or public figures, are typically ordinary social media users who gain recognition by creating engaging and authentic content (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Studies show that influencer marketing often attracts more consumer attention than traditional branded advertisements (Pereira et al., 2014). This is likely due to the authentic and organic nature of content produced by influencers, which directly engages with their audience.

However, the case of influencers like Maia Estianti, with 23.3 million Instagram followers, demonstrates that a large following does not guarantee business success. Despite her popularity, her skincare business, EMK Beverly Hills, is no longer visible on social media, and her personal account focuses on her career as a musician and lifestyle content. This example raises an important question: why does a large number of followers not always translate into success? One key factor is the trust and authenticity of the influencer's relationship with their audience. If there is a mismatch between the influencer's persona and the brand they promote, followers may lose interest. Maia Estianti, for example, has transitioned into other content that might not align with the expectations of her skincare brand's audience, leading to a loss of customer interest.

Similarly, other influencers like Inul Daratista (20.1 million followers) and Shandy Aulia (7.5 million followers) have faced challenges in their skincare businesses, despite their large followings. This further highlights that audience-brand mismatch where the influencer's personal brand doesn't align with the skincare products they promote can significantly impact the business's success. Influencers with large personal followings are not immune to failure if their marketing strategy lacks consistency or authenticity. This misalignment can erode consumer trust, which is crucial in the skincare industry, where product integrity is key.

Interestingly, even when these influencers close their skincare businesses, they do not lose their ability to influence consumer behavior. They continue to promote other products, showing that their influence remains intact, suggesting that trust in the influencer's personal brand might be separate from the success of the products they initially endorsed. This is a crucial point while influencers can generate trust, the failure of a specific brand does not necessarily mean the end of their influence.

On the other hand, some skincare businesses with smaller followings have survived longer, such as those owned by influencers with over one million followers, demonstrating that marketing success is not solely determined by the number of followers. Marketing strategy plays a pivotal role. Influencers who focus on cultivating trust, authenticity, and a genuine connection with their audience are more likely to sustain customer interest and build long-term brand loyalty.

Social media's interactive features enable consumers to make comparisons, and this consumer-to-consumer interaction enhances the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Products endorsed by social media influencers tend to be trusted more than those recommended by family or friends, as followers perceive influencers as more relatable and authentic. The relationship between influencers and their followers plays a crucial role in the success of influencer marketing campaigns.

For example, Scarlett's brand, despite having fewer followers than Maia Estianti's skincare brand, continues to thrive. This can be attributed to its focused marketing approach and strategic engagement with influencers who align with the brand's values. Felicya Angelista's social media account, though smaller in followers (5.3 million), maintains active and authentic content, creating a clear path for consumers to trust and engage with the brand. The link in her bio leads directly to a product-selling platform, fostering consumer action and reinforcing the authenticity of the product experience.



Figure 1. Scarlett Instagram Account
Source: explained

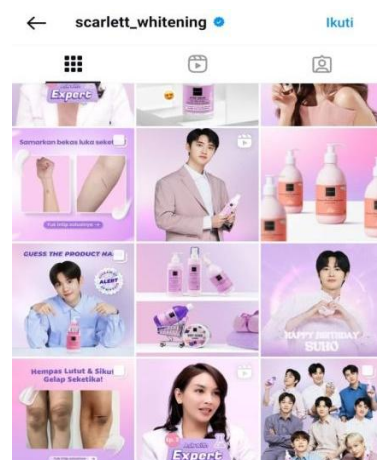


Figure 2. Scarlett Instagram Account
Source: explained

In addition to the link listed in the biography, there is also a product description explaining that the account is a beauty, cosmetic and personal care product. Scarlett's official account also includes a contact that can be contacted, so that customers feel closer if they want to connect personally. As for the content uploaded on Scarlett's social media, it shows that the owner, Felicya Angelista, is not active in marketing the skincare products she owns. As the owner, Felicya does not appear to be a marketing model in Scarlett's social media uploads. Based on these facts, it can be concluded that although the owner of the skincare product is also an influencer, she does not have a direct influence on the sustainability of her business.

The business strategy used in Scarlett's digital marketing is Social Media Influencer. Unlike traditional marketing strategies, content created by social media influencers is typically unscripted, with brands encouraging influencers to use their creativity to engage a wider audience (Hudders et al., 2021). Consequently, the quality and relevance of influencer-sponsored content also impact consumer behavior. Followers of these influencers trust their opinions, believing they possess significant expertise and experience in a particular field. As a result, the advice or opinions shared by influencers on their platforms can significantly influence their followers' actions or behaviors (Hudders et al., 2021). In essence, the views of social media influencers help shape the attitudes and opinions of their audience, and decision-making of their followers, so they are also referred to as opinion leaders, Lin et al (2018). The marketing strategy using influencers has a big impact on their followers and makes the marketing team more interested in utilizing that influence to reach a wider market share (Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

Using a social media marketing strategy by utilizing influencer marketing, aims to get brand mentions from influencers, which leads to brand awareness and increased sales (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In this case, Scarlett does marketing using influencers who do have a lot of influence. Scarlett even uses cross-country influencers, namely from Korea, to market its products. Considering that K-Pop culture is already very widespread in Indonesia, of course Scarlett takes advantage of this opportunity. Fans of Korean culture, most of whom are also of working age, who already have their own sources of income, are one of the most potential market shares targeted by Scarlett's marketing team. The digital marketing strategy carried out by Scarlett can be seen in social media posts involving many other influencers, one of which is a K-Pop idol as seen in the following picture.

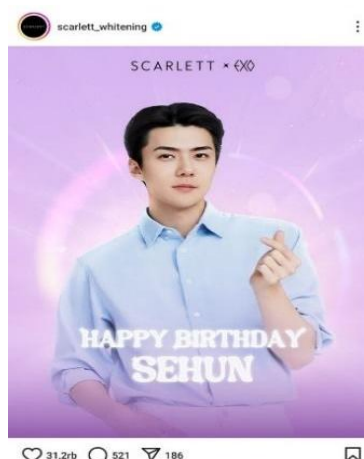


Figure 4. Scarlett Instagram Account

Source: explained

Seen in the picture is a birthday greeting for one of the K-Pop idols named Sehun who is a brand ambassador and has many fans in Indonesia. The indicator of marketing success with this strategy can be seen from the number of responses from fans totaling more than 31 thousand, and 521

comments and 186 shared via direct messages. Although there is no product being marketed in the post, Scarlet is considered by consumers as a product that cares about its brand ambassador. In addition, the birthday greeting attracted the attention of Sehun's fans who were not yet Scarlet customers. According to Sulistio et al., (2024), marketing using influencers has a significant effect on purchasing interest in a product. In line with the results of research conducted by Angelica et al., (2022) who looked at the influence of Influencer Tasya Farasya on purchasing interest, it showed that the influencer variable greatly influenced purchasing interest and the endorsement variable had no effect on purchasing interest.

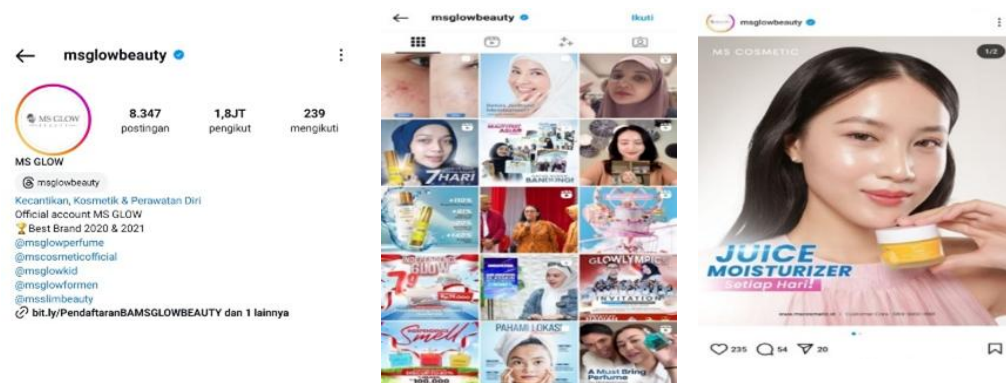


Figure 5. MSglow Instagram Account

Source: explained

Screenshots on Msglow's social media accounts show that the owner of skincare, Sandy Purnamasari, also does not appear active on Msglow's social media to carry out direct marketing. On the other hand, the owner chose a strategy by recruiting other influencers to market her products. In his study, Vencuite (2023) highlighted that influencer marketing has emerged as a vital tool for businesses and brands over the past ten years to boost awareness, sales, and brand image. Since consumers are drawn to brands and companies whose images align with their authentic or ideal identities, it can be concluded that they are more likely to favor influencers they can relate to. Therefore, the fit between consumers and influencers is very important in influencer marketing and can indicate whether the influencer can promote the product to the target audience in an interesting way. This is also done in the marketing strategies of MSglow and Scarlet. Each influencer has followers who make them role models and feel trustworthy, so that their followers will imitate what the influencer does. Choosing the right Influencer is very important in marketing on social media by adjusting the value of the product to be conveyed and the Influencer has followers according to their target market.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions that have been carried out, it can be concluded that social media is currently not only useful for communicating and socializing. The function of social media has developed to support business continuity, namely by becoming a medium for promotion. Skincare businesses owned by influencers also utilize social media as a marketing medium. However, not all influencers have succeeded in running a skincare business. It was observed that out of 15 skincare businesses owned by influencers, there were 3 businesses that were no longer found in cyberspace. Even for influencers with followers reaching millions with the skincare business they previously owned, it is now no longer there. On the other hand, for skincare businesses that are also owned by influencers, some are able to survive by using different marketing strategies. This proves that ownership of a skincare business by an influencer does not guarantee long-term survival.

A marketing strategy by utilizing other influencers on social media can be a very effective method for the sustainability of a skincare business. Choosing an influencer who can increase consumer interest and trust is one of the most important things to consider. The right influencer can establish an emotional connection with their followers, so that followers will believe whatever the influencer says. This study proves that marketing strategies using social media are quite effective by considering the reputation of the selected influencer and his/her followers on social media. Customer trust in the skincare brand owned by the influencer is not tied to the business owner, nor is it tied to the influencer who markets the product. Customer purchasing interest can be influenced by influencers who have followers with certain specializations.

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