

## THE IMPACT BETWEEN BEAUTY INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY AND BUYING INTEREST MEDIATED BY BRAND IMAGE (STUDY ON MS GLOW)

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** This research study aims to explain and analyze the impact between beauty influencer credibility and brand image with buying interest as a mediating variable.

**Methodology:** This research is quantitative research and uses an online questionnaire in collecting data. The population were 130 consumers who had visited at least 1 Industrial Thematic Cafe. This study uses non-probability sampling with purposive sampling. The data analysis technique was used is PLS-SEM.

**Results:** The results were showed by brand image becomes a partial mediation between the confidence level of beauty influencers on purchase intention. However, beautiful and graceful indicators are the most dominant indicators in shaping the attractiveness of beauty influencers. Based on some results of the mediation test, Sincere and trustworthy indicators are the most dominant indicators in shaping the level of trust in beauty influencers.

Keywords: beauty influencer, credibility, buying interest, brand image

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### INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on several industries in Indonesia. One of the industries that has been able to survive and thrive in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic is the beauty industry as evidenced by the positive growth in demand. Beauty trends cannot be abandoned by women in Indonesia. This trend will continue to move from one generation to another following the pace of development of the times. Based on the results of the BPS survey, that most of the population in Indonesia are women, namely 49.42% or 133.54 million women so that Indonesia is a potential market for beauty products (Tempo, 2021).

MS Glow is the oldest company that was founded in 2013 and has grown to become the best-selling skincare in this period with sales reaching 38.5 billion. MS Glow was first established in the city of Malang before successfully spreading to 13 other major cities in Indonesia, including Malang, Surabaya, Jakarta, Bali, Bandung, Bintaro, Sidoarjo, Makassar, Semarang, Depok, Bekasi, Medan, and Bogor. MS Glow's hometown is believed to have an influence on MS Glow's current success. As a tourist destination as well as an educational city in East Java province, the population in Malang City is very large which allows business actors to reap maximum profits.

After being successful in the skincare product category, MS Glow innovates to create beauty products for the whole body, from facial skin, body to feet. MS Glow also provides products for men and specifically for children's skin care. In addition to innovating in its product line, MS Glow also collaborates with celebrities, beauty bloggers, top artists, and other influencers to collaborate in expanding its market share.

However, in December 2021, many videos from consumers circulated showing the before and after using MS Glow products. The video does not show a positive change but rather a failure in using MS Glow products. This trend has become very viral, which triggers consumers who feel disadvantaged after using MS Glow to do the same, making videos and going viral through social media.

This problem turned out to have a huge impact on resellers and distributors. Their sales suddenly dropped drastically (Latest Artist, 2021). The growth of skincare business actors, to differentiate similar products, branding as an important competitive factor for a business to form a perspective in the minds of consumers and make products more attractive. Companies that can determine the minds of consumers have an exclusive position in the minds of consumers and successfully identify the characteristics of their business. Research conducted by Seo and Park (2018) reveals that brand image will form a physical structure in the minds of consumers and will be able to become the main marketing element.

A survey conducted by eMarketer (2019) on how the role of influencers in influencing purchase interest and shaping customer perceptions of brands that 42% of respondents want a number of brands to collaborate with influencers, 41% of respondents feel attracted to a brand when influencers promote, 39% of respondents rely on influencers to look for new brands, and 38% of respondents feel that influencers can influence thinking about a brand. However, this statement is in contrast to the survey conducted by the ZAP Beauty Index (2020) that there is an empirical gap related to the effectiveness of influencers as a source of information in increasing consumer buying interest

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Marketing Theory

Kotler et al. (2018) explained that, marketing must be understood not in the old sense of making sales, 'telling and selling', but in the new sense of satisfying customer needs. Sales only occur after a product is produced. In contrast, marketing begins long before the company owns the product.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) American Association of Advertising Agencies in the book Kotler, et al., (2017) discussed about Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is a marketing communication planning concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan. Such a plan evaluates the strategic role of various communication disciplines for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum impact through seamless message integration.

### Social Media

Kotler & Keller (2017) assumed that in their book entitled Marketing Management: An Asian Perspective, explained that an important component of digital marketing is social media. Social media is a means for consumers to share text, image, audio, and video information with each other, many companies, and vice versa. Social media allows marketers to build a public voice and presence online.

Some of the most popular social media websites, with over 100 million registered users, include Facebook (and associated Facebook Messenger), TikTok, WeChat, Instagram, QZone, Weibo, Twitter, Tumblr, Baidu Tieba, and LinkedIn. Depending on interpretation, other popular platforms that are sometimes referred to as social media services include YouTube, QQ, Quora, Telegram, WhatsApp, Signal, LINE, Snapchat, Pinterest, Viber, Reddit, Discord, VK, Microsoft Teams, and many more.

### Influencer Marketing

According to Kotler (2018) stated that an influencer is someone whose views or suggestions have weight in making the final purchase decision; they often help define specifications and also provide information for evaluating alternatives.

Most marketing messages are blocked by walls of indifference (Brown and Hayes, 2008). Influencer audiences receive too many messages that sound the same, and even if influencers sound different, they won't believe it. People rarely buy just because it is marketed. Marketing messages are carried, amplified, enhanced, and personalized through impactful WOM.

### Source Credibility Model

Source credibility is the trustworthiness of an endorser, spokesperson, or individual in an advertisement (Schiffman, et al., 2017). Spokespeople can be actual customers, company employees, celebrities, or models.

Solomon (2019) reveals source credibility refers to the expertise, objectivity, or trustworthiness of the communicator. This dimension relates to the consumer's belief that this person is competent and that he or she will provide the necessary information we need when we evaluate a competitor's product.

### Attractiveness

According to Erdoan (1999), attractiveness refers not only to physical attractiveness but also attributes such as intellectual skills, personality traits, lifestyle or athletic strength that consumers consider in endorsers. The findings of the research conducted by Osei-Frimpong et al. (2019), revealed that celebrity attractiveness has a positive influence on quality perceptions and consumer purchase intentions. This is in line with research by Kahle and Homer (1985) that attractiveness is the main factor for the impact of celebrity endorsements on consumer buying behavior.

### Skill

Shimp (2013) explains that expertise refers to the knowledge, experience, or skills possessed by the source. Becoming an expert requires hard work, long-term training, experience and/or practice. Individuals recognize the difference between skill and average or low performance in any domain by considering what the expert knows as well as what he or she has done or accomplished (Bourne et al., 2014; Garrett et al., 2009).

### Level of confidence

In this study, trust will be considered to answer the question of whether influencers judge brands objectively or are biased by financial/material rewards. Offered by the brand in exchange for positive endorsement.

## **Brand Image**

Schiffman, et al., (2017), products and brands have symbolic images and values for consumers based on the unique benefits claimed by these products. The desired result of effective positioning is a distinct "position" (or image) that a brand occupies in consumers' minds.

## **Consumer behavior**

According to the American Marketing Association (1960) in Hutchison (2010), consumer behavior is defined as "the dynamic interaction of influences and cognitions, behaviors, and environmental events in which humans exchange aspects of their lives." One of the constructs of consumer behavior is the effect hierarchy model that combines involvement and left-right brain processing to determine the process that consumers go through in making purchasing decisions.

## **Buying Decision**

Purchasing decision is an attitude in buying or using a product that according to consumers provides satisfaction or risks that may occur. According to (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2015) purchasing decisions are the selection of two or more alternative purchasing decision options, meaning that a person can make a decision, several alternative choices must be available.

## **Purchase Interest**

According to Ferdinand A (2014), buying interest can be seen from several indicators, including:

1. Transactional interest. The tendency of a person to buy a product.
2. Referential interest. The tendency of a person to refer the product to others.
3. Preferential interests. Interests that describe the behavior of someone who has a major preference for the product.
4. Exploratory interests. The behavior of someone who is always looking for information about the product he is interested in and looking for information to support the positive characteristics of the product.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The approach used in this study is a positivist (quantitative) approach, which is a research approach using data in the form of numbers, data in the form of numbers, analyzed using statistics to answer questions or test research hypotheses and to predict that a certain variable affects other variables or it can also be referred to as explanatory research (Creswell, 2010).

This research was conducted in Malang City, East Java with the following considerations:

1. MS Glow which is the object of this research is from Malang City.
2. People in Malang City are considered to have a higher understanding of MS Glow than people in other cities. This is because there are many clinics and MS Glow advertisements spread across Malang City.
3. The population of Malang City is dominated by Millennials and Generation Z as many as 26% and 25% or as many as 219,390 and 210,952. The two generations were used in this study on the basis of the large number of social media users based on the ZAP survey (2020).

The population of this research is Instagram users in the Millennial generation and Generation Z in Malang City.

The criteria used in this study are as follows

1. A woman who lives in the city of Malang.
2. Women from the Millennial generation or Z aged 17 - 40 years. This age range is considered to have known and understood the skincare functions they used. This consideration is based on the fact that the majority of skincare users are Millennials and Generation Z (ZAP, 2020), and in this age range they are considered mature enough and able to provide their views on the credibility of beauty influencers (attractiveness, level of trust and expertise), brand image, and purchase interest.
3. Is an active user of skincare products and has knowledge of MS Glow and skincare functions.
4. Is an active user of social media and has at least one social media account, namely an account on Instagram.

5. Knowing about influencer marketing activities carried out by MS Glow through social media, especially Instagram.
6. Have never purchased or used a product from MS Glow. This is based on the variable selected in this study, namely purchase intention.

The data in this study were obtained from primary data and secondary data using questionnaires, interviews, and documentation.

## RESULTS

### **The Effect of Beauty Influencer Attractiveness on Brand Image**

The results of this study indicate that the attractiveness of beauty influencers has a significant positive effect on brand image. This means that the higher the attractiveness of a beauty influencer, the more positive the brand image will be. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Wiedmann, K.-P., & von Mettenheim, W. (2020), Malshan and Weerasiri (2016) and Lomboan, S. (2013) which focused on fashion brands that the attractiveness of an influencer can positively affect brand image.

### **The Effect of Beauty Influencer Expertise on Brand Image**

Beauty influencers who have expertise in other words have knowledge and experience about skincare used by MS Glow have not succeeded in building a strong brand image. Based on observations made by researchers, the beauty influencers used by MS Glow tend to be more not so expert in skincare. In fact, those who become brand ambassadors are not influencers from experts, but influencers who are going viral at certain times.

Based on the research results of Speck et al., 1988; Ohanian, 1991; Amos et al., 2008 revealed that when a consumer perceives that a celebrity endorser has a high level of expertise, the audience is more likely to be persuaded by the message in the advertisement.

### **The Effect of Beauty Influencer Trust Level on Image Brand**

In the research of Wiedmann, K.-P., & von Mettenheim, W. (2020), Smith (2001), Lomboan, S. (2013) also shows that the level of trust has a significant effect on brand image. The conclusion is that if the level of trust in beauty influencers is increased through the selection of sincere and trustworthy beauty influencers, the brand image will also be stronger in the minds of the audience.

### **Brand Image as Mediation between Beauty Influencer Attractiveness and Purchase Interest**

The results in this study are in line with the research of Engel et al., (1995) which revealed that there are three types of purchase intention, namely unintended purchases, partially intended purchases and fully intended purchases. These three types of buying behavior can be influenced by the level of awareness and strength of the brand image.

that beauty influencers who have beautiful and elegant appeals give memory to the audience where it creates awareness and strong brand personality so as to generate strong buying interest as well.

### **Brand Image as Mediation between Beauty Influencer Expertise and Purchase Interest**

Based on the results of data analysis conducted in this study, it was found that brand image could not mediate the relationship between the influence of beauty influencer expertise on purchase intention. This can be interpreted that the higher the expertise of a beauty influencer will not have a significant effect on increasing purchase intention even though it is mediated by brand image. The results of this study are in line with the research of Haron et al. (2016) which stated that the expertise of an influencer has no effect on purchase intention.

Solomon (2017) said that influencers tend to provide product information informally and not persuasively, and this cannot be controlled by the company. So that it has an impact on receiving information which can be negative, normal, or positive.

### **Brand Image as Mediation between Beauty Influencer Trust Level and Purchase Interest**

Based on the results of data analysis conducted in this study, it was found that brand image can partially mediate the relationship between the level of trust of beauty influencers on purchase intention. Partial mediation occurs because there is a significant influence between the level of trust in beauty influencers with brand image, and brand image with purchase intention. This can be interpreted that the higher the level of trust of a beauty influencer will significantly affect the increase in purchase intention with or without a brand image.

According to Shimp (2013), if consumers believe that an endorser motivates purely out of personal interest, then the endorser is less persuasive, and vice versa (Shimp, 2013). Therefore, trust is a very important indicator to influence consumer interest.

### Research Implication

This research contributes to closing the research gap in previous research. The results of this study have implications for knowledge through theoretical and practical implications. The subject of this research is MS Glow. The object of this research is the attractiveness, expertise, level of trust, brand image, and buying interest. Theoretical implications relate to the development of research results for researchers related to attractiveness, expertise, level of trust, brand image, and purchase intention. Practical implications of making a managerial contribution to MS Glow marketing managers through beauty influencers in influencing buying interest through brand image

### Research Limitations

This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, so the results of the study cannot be generalized to a non-pandemic period. Research with this topic can be re-examined by further researchers when it is not a pandemic.

The research subject is limited to the types of beauty products, more specifically skincare or facial care from one of the beauty companies in Indonesia, namely MS Glow. So, further research can use other subjects as research development on this topic.

Most of the questionnaires distributed in this study used Google Forms and were distributed through social media such as Instagram and Whatsapp due to the pandemic that used closed questions, thus limiting respondents' opinions, which means that the answers given by respondents did not fully reflect their answers.

### CONCLUSION

1. The attractiveness of beauty influencers has an influence on brand image. The higher the attractiveness of a beauty influencer, the more positive the brand image will be. Beautiful and graceful indicators are the most dominant indicators in shaping the attractiveness of beauty influencers.
2. The expertise of the beauty influencer does not affect the brand image. The higher the expertise of a beauty influencer will not significantly affect the improvement of brand image.
3. The level of trust in beauty influencers has an influence on brand image. The higher the level of trust from a beauty influencer, the more it affects the brand image positively. Sincere and trustworthy indicators are the most dominant indicators in shaping the level of trust in beauty influencers.
4. Brand image is a partial mediation between the attractiveness of beauty influencers and purchase intention. The higher the attractiveness of a beauty influencer will have a significant effect on increasing purchase intention with or without a brand image
5. Brand image does not mediate the relationship between beauty influencer expertise and purchase intention. The higher the expertise of the beauty influencer will not affect the purchase intention either with or without a brand image.
6. Brand image becomes a partial mediation between the confidence level of beauty influencers on purchase intention. The higher the level of trust of a beauty influencer will significantly affect the increase in purchase intention with or without a brand image.

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