

The Influence of Influencer Authenticity and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on Brand Trust: Empirical Evidence from N-Pure Skincare Consumers

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of influencer authenticity and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on brand trust in the context of N'Pure skincare consumers in Indonesia. The increasing dominance of digital marketing has transformed how consumers evaluate brands, with trust increasingly shaped by social media interactions and influencer communication. However, issues such as fake reviews, paid endorsements, and a lack of transparency have raised concerns regarding declining consumer trust. The objective of this research was to analyze the effect of influencer authenticity and e-WOM on brand trust. A quantitative approach was employed using a survey method, with data collected from 180 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software to test the proposed hypotheses. The results indicated that both influencer authenticity and electronic word-of-mouth had a positive and significant effect on brand trust. Influencers perceived as honest, consistent, and transparent were more likely to increase consumer confidence in a brand. Similarly, positive and credible e-WOM strengthened consumer trust through shared experiences and recommendations. In conclusion, influencer authenticity and e-WOM play crucial roles in shaping brand trust. This study highlights the importance of selecting credible influencers and managing online consumer feedback to strengthen the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of social media as a means of communication and digital marketing has brought significant changes to consumer behavior, particularly in the beauty industry in Indonesia (Bakri, 2023; Nurfadhila, 2024; Ridiarsih et al., 2024; Saparuddin et al., 2025; Yosita et al., n.d.; Yusiana et al., 2023). The local brand N'Pure is one of the prominent examples, known for its "Healthy Skin Generation" concept and natural, hazard-free products that are BPOM-registered and halal-certified. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest provide powerful channels for building communities, interacting with customers, and promoting products (Utommo Budi Sulistyo et al., 2024). To ensure that customers experience consistent and seamless interactions across all touchpoints, social media has evolved from a mere communication tool into a core component of digital marketing strategies that require strong organizational commitment (Widiya, Nugroho, & Lestari, 2025). Influencer marketing has become one of the fastest-growing marketing strategies (Andonopoulos, 2021). Influencer authenticity is increasingly trusted by consumers,

particularly when influencers demonstrate honesty, friendliness, and transparency in product-related communication (Khalfallah & Keller, 2025). Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on social networking sites (SNS) plays a crucial role in influencing online consumer purchasing decisions beyond influencer authenticity. This highlights consumers' growing reliance on user-generated content shared through social media recommendations (Ngo et al., 2024).

The high level of virality in promotional content also creates new challenges, such as increased risk of misinformation, non-transparent endorsements, and concerns regarding the authenticity of products circulating on social media. Cases such as fake reviews, the use of AI beauty filters, and undisclosed paid endorsements have contributed to a decline in consumer trust in both brands and the influencers promoting them (J. L. A & B, 2024). Putri & Fauzi (2023) found that brand trust may decline when e-WOM messages are perceived as manipulative, irrelevant, or driven solely by paid collaborations without genuine user experience. This is a critical concern for skincare businesses, as brand trust remains a fundamental factor determining the sustainability of consumer-brand relationships.

Stemming from this phenomenon, this study was designed to examine how influencer authenticity and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) affect brand trust among N'Pure skincare consumers in a volatile and competitive online marketplace. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute both empirical and theoretical advancements to the literature on digital marketing strategies, particularly those emphasizing consumer trust. Conceptually, this study is grounded in Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1952), which emphasizes the importance of source credibility in determining the effectiveness of communication messages. The integration of these concepts produces a framework in which trust is positioned as a synergistic outcome of influencer authenticity and social interaction in digital media.

In the skincare industry, particularly in emerging markets such as Indonesia, digital platforms have become primary channels for brand communication and consumer engagement. The local brand N'Pure represents a notable case, positioning itself through natural-based skincare products and leveraging influencer-driven campaigns to strengthen brand identity. However, increased exposure to digital promotion also introduces challenges such as information overload, credibility concerns, and growing consumer skepticism toward online promotional content.

Previous studies have consistently shown that influencer authenticity plays a crucial role in shaping consumer trust. Authentic influencers are perceived as more honest, consistent, and transparent in communicating product experiences, thereby strengthening emotional connection and perceived credibility among audiences. Similarly, influencer expertise and alignment with brand values have been identified as key determinants of trust formation in digital marketing contexts.

In parallel, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has been widely recognized as a powerful driver of brand trust. Consumer-generated reviews, recommendations, and shared experiences often carry greater perceived objectivity than firm-generated messages. Empirical findings also suggest that positive e-WOM significantly enhances brand credibility, reduces perceived risk, and increases consumer confidence in purchasing decisions, particularly in online environments where physical product evaluation is limited.

Despite these advancements, a clear research gap remains regarding the combined effect of influencer authenticity and e-WOM on brand trust, particularly within the Indonesian

skincare market. Most prior studies have examined these variables separately or focused on related outcomes such as purchase intention or brand loyalty, rather than positioning brand trust as the central dependent variable. Furthermore, limited research has explored this relationship in the context of local beauty brands that heavily rely on influencer ecosystems and user-generated content.

The urgency of this study is reinforced by increasing concerns over digital misinformation, including fake reviews, manipulated endorsements, and the use of AI-enhanced visual content that may distort consumer perceptions. These issues have contributed to declining consumer trust and heightened skepticism toward influencer marketing practices. As a result, understanding the mechanisms that build or weaken brand trust has become essential for sustaining competitive advantage in digital markets.

This research introduces novelty by integrating influencer authenticity and e-WOM within a unified conceptual framework, focusing specifically on brand trust as the primary outcome variable. Unlike previous studies that emphasize indirect effects or alternative mediating constructs, this study positions authenticity and digital social interaction as core determinants of trust formation. In addition, this study provides a context-specific contribution by focusing on Indonesian consumers of N'Pure skincare products, thereby enriching empirical evidence from an emerging market perspective.

The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of influencer authenticity and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on brand trust among N'Pure skincare consumers. Specifically, it aims to examine both the individual and simultaneous effects of these variables using a quantitative approach supported by Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). This approach allows for rigorous testing of causal relationships within the proposed conceptual model.

The contribution of this research is expected to be both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it extends the application of Source Credibility Theory by integrating digital interaction mechanisms into trust formation models. Practically, the findings provide strategic insights for companies in selecting credible influencers and managing online consumer communication effectively. Ultimately, this study highlights that strong brand trust can be developed through a combination of authentic influencer communication and positive electronic word-of-mouth interactions, offering actionable implications for optimizing digital marketing strategies.

RESEARCH METHODS

Type of Research

This study used a causal explanatory research design with a quantitative approach. The study examined the effect of influencer authenticity (X1) and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (X2) on brand trust (Y). Lanting (2018) stated that quantitative research is used to test theories by measuring relationships among variables and analyzing them using statistical techniques.

Research Object

The object of this study is N'Pure skincare consumers in Cirebon City who have purchased N'Pure products and know the influencers who promote them. The study focuses on consumer perceptions of influencer authenticity and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and

their influence on brand trust in N'Pure skincare products.

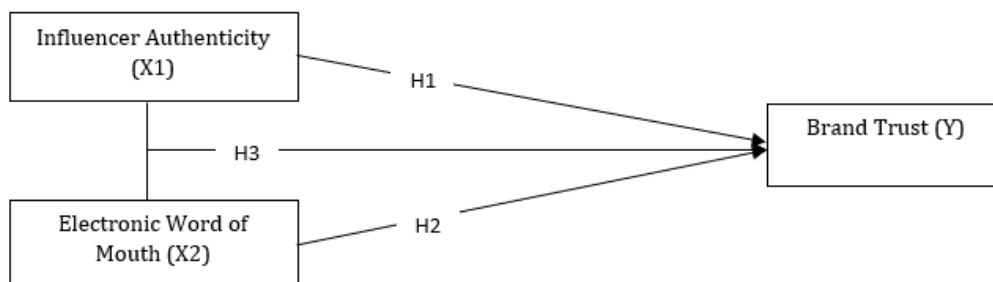
Population and Sample

This study focuses on all consumers of N'Pure products in the city of Cirebon as its population. As the precise population number was unknown, a non-probability sampling technique called purposive sampling was used, in which participants were selected based on predetermined standards: (1) prior use of N'Pure skincare products, and (2) residence in Cirebon. In line with the guidelines from (Haryono, 2016) for PLS-SEM analysis, a sample size of 5-10 times the number of indicator is suggested. Therefore, the minimum number of respondents used with 18 indicators is 180 people.

Measurement Scale

Data Analysis Technique

For data analysis, this study used Partial Least Square (PLS)-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), made possible by SmartPLS 4.0 software. As noted by (Hatta Setiabudhi, S.E et al., 2025), PLS-SEM is an appropriate analytical method for studies involving intricate models, modest sample sizes, and non-normally distributed data. The measurement model (outer model), which evaluated the constructs' validity and reliability and the structural model (inner model), which looked at the causal relationships between variable and tested the hypotheses, were the two stages of the study. This approach makes it possible to investigate the direct and indirect effects of influencer authenticity and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) on brand trust among NPure skincare costumers.



Picture 1. Kerangka Pemikiran

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 180 respondents who were selected as research subjects to represent the characteristics of the population under study. To provide an overview of the demographic profile of the data source, respondents were categorized according to their age, gender, and educational attainment. This classification is important to ensure that the data obtained reflects the diversity of respondents and is relevant to the research objectives, so that the analysis can provide more comprehensive and accurate results in accordance with the characteristics of the respondents involved.

Tabel 1. Respondent Identity

Respondent	Category	Number of	Percentage
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Characteristics		People	(%)
Gender	Man	67	37%
	Woman	113	63%
	Total	180	100%
Age	13-17 Year	14	8%
	18-22 Year	92	51%
	23-27 Year	74	41%
	Total	180	100%
Education	Student	14	8%
	College	94	52%
	Worker	68	38%
	The outhers	4	2%
	Total	180	100%

Based on Table 1, female respondents dominated this study, numbering 113 (63%), while male respondents numbered 67 (37%). The dominance of female respondents may have been influenced by the characteristics of the target population and the tendency of women to be more responsive in participating in research surveys. In terms of age, most responders were between the ages of 18-22, numbering 92 people (51%), followed by those aged 23–27, numbering 41%, and those aged 13–17, numbering 8%. This shows that most respondents were in the early productive age phase, which has a good level of involvement and understanding of the research topic.

Regarding educational attainment, the participants were predominantly by university students, numbering 94 people (52%), followed by workers at 38%, students at 8%, and other categories at 2%. The dominance of students indicates that this group is the largest part of the population studied and has an adequate level of literacy in understanding the research instruments, so they are considered capable of providing relevant and quality data to support research analysis.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity, as outlined by Hatta Setiabudhi, S.E et al. (2025), is assessed by examining outer loading values, construct reliability, and the degree to which latent concept variance is explained by indicators. Each indicator is considered good if its average variance extracted (AVE) value is greater than 0.50, its outher loading is greater than 0.70, and its Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores are at least 0.70. Fulfillment of these thresholds demonstrates that the indicators effectively capture the underlying constructs and exhibit strong internal consistency. The findings from the convergent validity assessment in this research, derived from data analysis conducted with SmartPLS, are detailed in the subsequent table.

Table 2. Outer Loadings Analysis Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loadings	AVE	Information
Influencer Authenticity	X1_1	0.185	0.742	Valid
	X1_2	0.204		Valid
	X1_3	0.194		Valid
	X1_4	0.196		Valid
	X1_5	0.182		Valid
	X1_6	0.200		Valid

Electronic Word of Mouth	X2_1	0.192	0.752	Valid
	X2_2	0.182		Valid
	X2_3	0.186		Valid
	X2_4	0.201		Valid
	X2_5	0.198		Valid
	X2_6	0.194		Valid
Brand Trust	Y1	0.202	0.751	Valid
	Y2	0.197		Valid
	Y3	0.199		Valid
	Y4	0.176		Valid
	Y5	0.192		Valid
	Y6	0.188		Valid

As indicated in Table 2. All indicators utilized to evaluate the variables X1, X2, and Y have outer loading values that meet the minimum criteria, so all statement items are declared valid. Variable X1 is measured using 6 indicators X1_1 to X1_6, each of which has an outer loading value above the required limit and is supported by an AVE value of 0.742, indicating that these indicators are able to represent variable X1 well.

Additionally, with 6 indicators X2_1 to X2_6 that meet the validity standards, variable X2 has an AVE value of 0.752. This result shows that when evaluating the underlying notion, the indicators for variable X2 show excellent consistency and correlation. Likewise, variable Y is evaluated using 6 indicators Y1 to Y6, with an AVE value of 0.751, confirming that it also fulfills the convergent validity standards. Consequently, all indicators in this research are deemed appropriate for subsequent analytical procedures.

Discriminant Validity

The degree to which a construct may be experimentally differentiated from other construct is known as discriminant validity. In this study, discriminant validity was evaluated using multiple methods, including cross loading analysis and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The outcomes of these discriminant validity assessments are outlined and analyzed in the subsequent section. The findings from the discriminant validity evaluation employing the cross loading method are summarized as follows:

Tabel 3. Discriminant Validity Analysis Results with Cross Loadings Method

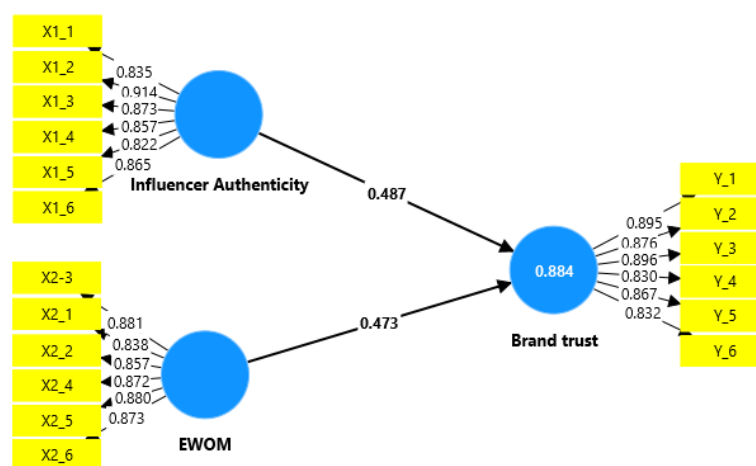
	Influencer Authenticity	E-WOM	Brand Trust
X1_1	0.835	0.761	0.759
X1_2	0.914	0.854	0.835
X1_3	0.873	0.797	0.794
X1_4	0.857	0.777	0.804
X1_5	0.822	0.741	0.745
X1_6	0.865	0.807	0.821
X2_1	0.755	0.838	0.754
X2_2	0.770	0.857	0.769
X2_3	0.804	0.881	0.798
X2_4	0.826	0.872	0.833
X2_5	0.828	0.880	0.822
X2_6	0.787	0.873	0.805
Y1	0.845	0.826	0.895
Y2	0.825	0.806	0.876

Y3	0.833	0.816	0.896
Y4	0.710	0.751	0.830
Y5	0.790	0.802	0.867
Y6	0.777	0.778	0.832

According to Table 3, the discriminant validity assessment utilizing the cross loadings method indicates that each indicator demonstrates its strongest loading on the construct it is designed to evaluate, outperforming loadings on alternative constructs. It may be inferred that all of these indicators consistently and reliably represent the influencer authenticity construct since indicators X1_1 to X1_6 exhibit the greatest loading values on the influencer authenticity variable. Additionally, when compared to other variables, indicators X2_1 to X2_6 had the largest loading values on the electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) variable, indicating that these indicators are able to accurately measure the e-WOM construct. In addition, indicators Y_1 to Y_6 show the highest loading values on the Brand Trust variable, so it can be concluded that these indicators are valid and reliable in representing the brand trust construct. Consequently, the outcomes of the cross-loading test demonstrate that all indicators fulfill the discriminant validity requirements, as each one more accurately represents its designated construct than alternative constructs.

R-squared analysis

The percentage of variance in endogenous variable that can be ascribed to the influencer exogenous factors in the study framework is measured by the coefficient of determination (R^2). It offers a measure of the structural model's predictive capability. The outcomes of the coefficient of determination (R^2) assessment in this study are detailed as follows.



Picture 2. Structural Model Assessment

Tabel 4. Results of R Square Analysis

	R-square	R_square adjusted
Brand Trust	0.884	0.882

The brand trust variable yields a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.884, as shown in Table 4. This means that the influencer authenticity and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) variables together account for 88.4% of the variance in brand trust, with external factors not

included in the research model accounting for the remaining 11.6%. This R^2 value underscores the model's substantial predictive strength, positioning it as robust in PLS-SEM analysis (Setiabudhi et al., 2024).

Structural Model Assessment

Structural Model Evaluation (EMS) is an analysis stage that aims to evaluate the model's capacity for prediction as well as the strength of the study's latent variable relationships. Setiabudhi et al. (2024), state that the bootstrapping approach is used in PLS-SEM structural model testing to determine the relevance of the association between constructs. The influence of a latent variable on other latent variables is determined through t-statistic and p-value analysis. A relationship is deemed significant when an exogenous variable exhibits a t-statistic exceeding 1.96 and a p-value below 0.05, signifying its impact on the endogenous variable.

Tabel 5. Results of Structural Model Assessment

	Original sample (O)	T-Statistics	P-Value
X1 -> Y	0.487	7.131	0.000
X2 -> Y	0.473	6.689	0.000

Table 5. shows that influencer authenticity has a positive effect on Brand Trust (H1 upheld), as indicated by a p-value of 0.000 below 0.05, a t-statistic of 7.131 exceeding the 1.96 threshold, and an original sample value of 0.487 indicating a positive coefficient. These outcomes reveal that Influencer Authenticity considerably affects Brand Trust.

With an original sample value of 0.473, a t-statistic of 6.689 above 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000 beneath 0.05, the electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) variable also shows a positive and significant influence on brand trust (H2 upheld). Therefore, the evidence confirms that e-WOM substantially shapes Brand Trust in this research model.

The Impact of Influencer Authenticity on Brand Trust

Influencer authenticity demonstrates a positive influence on brand trust because the authenticity displayed by influencers can build perceptions of honesty, consistency, and sincerity in the eyes of consumers. Influencers who are considered authentic tend to convey information transparently and in line with their personal experiences, so that the messages conveyed are more easily trusted by the audience. This trust then encourages consumers to rate the promoted brand as credible and reliable. Thus, consumers are more confident in the brand they support when an influencer is more authentic.

findings of this research reveal that influencer authenticity positively influences brand trust, aligning with the result reported by (Kim et al., 2024), which state that the credibility, honesty, and parasocial relationships built by influencers can increase consumer trust in the recommended brand. These findings are reinforced by research (Kukreja, 2024) which confirms that the authenticity and transparency of influencers in delivering promotional content provides a positive experience for the audience, thereby strengthening brand trust.

The Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Trust

The findings of this research demonstrate that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) positively affects brand trust, given that information circulated through online reviews, comments, and recommendations is perceived as a reliable source grounded in genuine consumer experiences. Consumers tend to trust the opinions of other users because they are considered more objective than corporate marketing communications. Positive information

disseminated through E-WOM can strengthen perceptions of brand quality and reputation, thereby increasing consumer trust in the brand.

The outcomes of this investigation are corroborated by prior research. (Sari et al., 2021) demonstrate that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) positively and significantly influences brand trust, as online reviews and consumer experiences contribute to shaping consumer confidence in a brand. This result aligns with (Wulandari & Susanti, 2021), who found that E-WOM plays a key role in fostering brand trust, because credible information and recommendations from other consumers increase consumer security and confidence in trusting the brand, especially in the digital context.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analytical results and discussion, this study concluded that influencer authenticity had a positive and significant effect on brand trust. These findings indicate that consumers tend to place higher trust in brands when the influencers delivering marketing messages are perceived as authentic, honest, and consistent. Influencer authenticity contributes to building perceptions of brand credibility and reliability, thereby strengthening sustainable consumer trust.

In addition, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) was also found to have a positive and significant influence on brand trust. Information conveyed through reviews, recommendations, and consumer discussions on digital platforms serves as an important reference in brand evaluation. Consumers tend to trust brands that have a positive digital reputation; therefore, the intensity and quality of e-WOM are key determinants in building brand trust. These empirical findings confirm that brand trust formation is not only shaped by one-way marketing communication but is also influenced by the authenticity of communicators and interactions among consumers in digital media. Thus, marketing strategies that emphasize the selection of authentic influencers and effective e-WOM management are crucial for building and maintaining consumer trust. The importance of digital marketing strategies that prioritize credibility and long-term consumer relationships is further supported by these findings.

The results of this research provide valuable contributions to digital marketing practice, confirming that influencer authenticity and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) act as pivotal elements in the development of brand trust. The findings show that consumer perceptions of influencer authenticity—reflected in honesty, consistency, and alignment between messages and real experiences—can increase trust in the brands they represent. Therefore, companies need to consider authenticity as a key criterion in selecting influencers to ensure effective marketing communication aimed at building long-term trust.

In addition, the findings highlight the important role of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in strengthening brand trust through the dissemination of information among consumers on digital platforms. Positive, relevant, and credible reviews and recommendations can reduce consumer uncertainty and increase confidence in decision-making. The practical implications of these findings emphasize the importance of strategically managing online communication, encouraging consumer participation in providing reviews, and responding to feedback professionally to maintain brand reputation and trust.

From an academic perspective, this study expands empirical understanding of brand trust formation mechanisms in digital marketing by positioning influencer authenticity and e-WOM

as key determinants. These findings may serve as a foundation for future research to develop a more comprehensive conceptual model, including the examination of mediating or moderating variables in the relationship between digital marketing communication and brand trust.

This study is limited by the context and demographic characteristics of the respondents; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized broadly to all consumers or other industry sectors. The results reflect respondents' perceptions of influencer authenticity and the impact of e-WOM on brand trust within a specific digital marketing context. Accordingly, future research is recommended to expand the scope of samples and respondents across industries and regions to improve generalizability and external validity. This study also employed a prediction-oriented PLS-SEM approach, which has limitations in assessing overall model fit. Future studies are encouraged to use covariance-based SEM (e.g., AMOS) to obtain a more comprehensive evaluation of model fit and causal relationships.

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