THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS (SMIs) ON PURCHASE INTENTION OF SUNSCREEN PRODUCTS

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on purchase intention with the object of research on sunscreen products. With the new paradigm due to rapid developments, the marketing world is encouraged to adapt and follow marketing trends using social media influencers (SMIs). In addition, the rampant cases of overclaiming sunscreen content that have occurred in Indonesia have made people more careful in buying sunscreen products through recommendations from social media influencers (SMIs). In this study, the sample used was 166 respondents throughout Indonesia, with a non-probability sampling technique and using the convenience sampling method. The analysis technique used in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with analysis software, namely AMOS 26.0. The results of this study prove that there is a significant positive influence of the characteristics of social media influencers (SMIs) on the purchase intention of sunscreen products.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers (SMIs), Attractiveness, Expertise, Homophily, Advertising Trust, Self-Brand Connection, and Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

The growing interest in the use of social media has become a major concern in the field of marketing due to its potential to influence customer behavior (Almohaimmeed, 2019). The internet, particularly social media, has shifted how consumers and marketers communicate. Before the existence of social media, communication was limited, but now social media encourages users to connect with others, especially within groups of similar preferences (Castro et al., 2021). With the development of social media, the rise of social media influencers (SMIs) has become a powerful tool in marketing campaigns. These influencers are expected to shape or stimulate positive consumer behavior toward a brand (Torres et al., 2019). Malik et al. (2023) argue that SMIs can also be referred to as "Human Brands," as they possess attributes that create an image, with their followers building interpersonal relationships that include expectations, cognition, and emotions.

SMIs visually present branded products in usage scenarios, such as demonstrating the process of using a product or showing before-and-after effects. This strategy increases consumer awareness of the product's reality and strengthens brand associations (Li & Peng, 2021). Given the vast scope of information circulating on social media, SMIs have become a preferred promotional strategy for marketers across industries such as food and beverage, fashion, technology, and skincare. This study focuses on the beauty industry, particularly skincare, which has undergone significant transformation in recent years. Public awareness of skincare use has grown substantially, making it one of the essential daily needs, and this has fueled intense competition in the skincare market (Halim & Keni, 2022).

The number of sunscreen brands in Indonesia continues to rise, including Azarine, Labore, YOU, Wardah, Grace and Glow, and others. Demand for sunscreen has also increased due to the importance of skin protection in tropical climates. Producers see this as a promising business opportunity and aggressively market their products on social media with the help of SMIs. Consumers, however, are now more discerning and selective, seeking product information from both official advertisements and influencer reviews. Public trust began to decline in 2023 following the SPF overclaim issue, when several local brands were found to misrepresent their SPF levels. A viral case revealed that a product claiming to have SPF 50 PA+++ actually contained only SPF 2 based on laboratory tests. This scandal triggered consumer distrust, leading them to rely more on reviews from influencers who are genuine beauty experts. As a result, companies need to focus on rebuilding consumer trust to stimulate purchase intention by considering the factors that influence such trust.

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's decision-making process that explores the reasons behind purchasing a specific brand (Saad et al., 2012). When exposed to marketing content, consumers develop attitudes or feelings toward the promotion, creating positive perceptions of the brand and encouraging favorable attitudes toward it (Mirabi et al., 2015). Marketing activities are therefore designed to attract positive consumer responses, and SMIs play an important role in influencing purchase decisions, particularly in skincare products.

According to Li and Peng (2021), SMIs bring two important elements to social media marketing: first, they represent a new type of personality with unique characteristics that actively contribute to brand image; and second, they release content that combines personal branding with brand promotion. From this standpoint, what unique characteristics of SMIs actively contribute to building brand image and self-brand connection? Li and Peng (2021) identify three characteristics of SMIs that influence consumer purchase intention:

attractiveness, expertise, and homophily (similarity). Attractive SMIs in terms of appearance and lifestyle create positive perceptions, leading consumers to believe they can achieve similar results with recommended products. Expertise, especially in beauty, builds trust as SMIs are perceived to have knowledge and experience. Homophily fosters emotional connections between SMIs and consumers, making consumers more receptive to recommendations. These three factors strengthen trust and increase purchase intention.

This study aims to investigate whether the characteristics of SMIs can build consumer trust toward sunscreen products, especially given that consumers have become more cautious after the SPF overclaim controversy. It also explores whether consumer trust—formed through SMI characteristics—can drive purchase intention. Considering the intense competition in the sunscreen market today, it is crucial for companies to understand how consumers respond to influencer-driven advertisements and to use that knowledge strategically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Source Credibility Theory

Hovland & Weiss (1951) defined that a credible communicator emphasizes two main factors: the extent to which the communicator has knowledge relevant to the topic discussed, and the extent to which the audience feels that the communicator can be trusted to provide unbiased information. Research conducted by Hovland and others highlights the essential factors in a source that build consumer trust in a person's credibility.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

In the theory proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003), the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) reveals that there are three important factors influencing purchase intention: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence. Performance expectancy refers to how and to what extent consumers believe that the advertised product will help solve their problems or fulfill their needs.

Hypothesis Development

Attractiveness

The attractiveness of social media influencers (SMIs), which includes physical appearance, communication style, and personality, plays an important role in building consumer trust in the information conveyed. Influencers who are visually and emotionally appealing can enhance audience engagement and advertising effectiveness. Consumers who trust influencers tend to be more engaged through information search and processing. Therefore, influencer attractiveness has a significant effect on consumer trust in advertising. Based on this, the hypothesis is developed:

H1: The attractiveness of social media influencers (SMIs) has a positive effect on advertising trust.

Expertise

The expertise of social media influencers (SMIs) can shape a positive perception among audiences, thereby increasing trust in the information conveyed. Influencers who are convincing and promise benefits through their content are more likely to be trusted. The higher the audience's perception of an influencer's experience and knowledge, the stronger the influence of their message. Expertise is especially important when conveying technical product information or content requiring in-depth explanation. Therefore, influencer

expertise becomes the foundation for building advertising trust and encouraging trust in the promoted product. Based on this, the hypothesis is developed:

H2: The expertise of social media influencers (SMIs) has a positive effect on advertising trust.

Homophily

A strong bond between influencers and their audience is formed through interaction and similarities, such as values and experiences, which create mutual trust. The emotional connection established makes audiences more likely to trust information from influencers. When advertisements are delivered by influencers who share emotional closeness and similarities with the audience, trust in the advertisement increases. Therefore, influencer-based advertisements with strong audience bonds are more effective in building advertising trust. Based on this, the hypothesis is developed:

H3: Homophily of social media influencers (SMIs) has a positive effect on advertising trust.

Advertising Trust

Trust in advertisements delivered by SMIs is formed when the content provides benefits and meets consumer expectations. This trust acts as a bridge between digital marketing and consumer purchase intention, as well as strengthening emotional ties with the brand. Moreover, trust plays an important role in shaping personal connections with the brand, brand experience, and brand loyalty. Based on this, the hypothesis is developed:

H4: Advertising trust has a positive effect on self-brand connection.

Self-Brand Connection

When SMIs are able to represent a brand effectively through strong characteristics and storytelling, this can increase consumer purchase intention and build a self-brand connection. Narratives in social media content become essential in shaping a brand image that is easily understood. Brands with strong storytelling are more likely to receive positive responses and higher purchase opportunities. Based on this, the hypothesis is developed:

H5: Self-brand connection has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention toward sunscreen products.

Purchase Intention

Social media influencers (SMIs) play an important role in shaping consumer opinions and increasing purchase intention through the content they create. Influencers have been proven effective in influencing purchasing decisions, with around 80% of social media marketing acknowledging their role in driving business growth. High-quality content, from a trustworthy source, and delivered by expert influencers, will have a positive impact on consumer purchase intention.

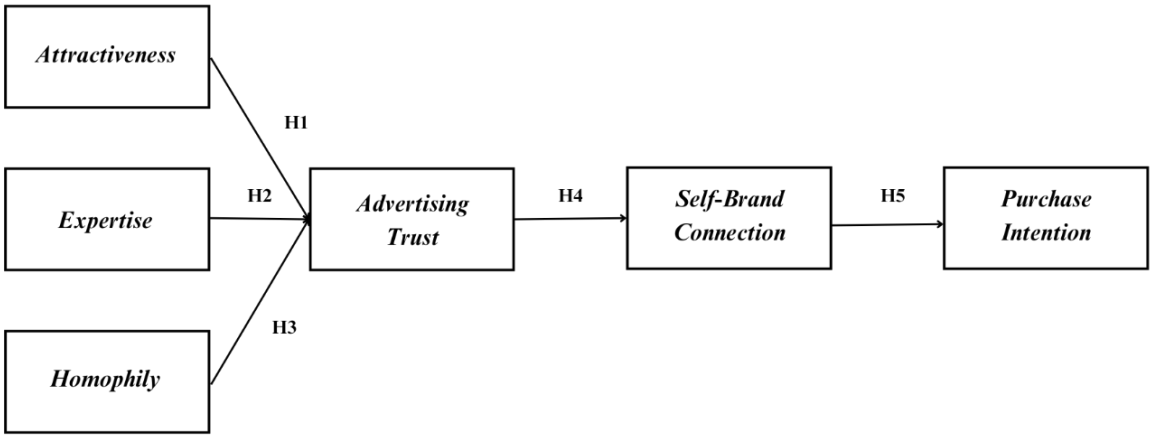

Figure 1.
Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach, which translates real-world phenomena into numerical data that can be processed to solve a problem (Rachman et al., 2024). Darwin et al. (2021) argue that research based on a positivistic view assumes that every event is a collection of diverse elements that may vary depending on the context of observation.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and reveal the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on purchase intention for sunscreen products. This study involves five independent variables (causes): attractiveness, expertise, homophily, advertising trust, and self-brand connection. In addition, there are three dependent variables (outcomes): advertising trust, self-brand connection, and purchase intention. The data analysis tool used in this research is SPSS 30.0.

This study applies an experimental or modeling research scope (Experiment/Modeling). As quantitative research is number-based, modeling research supports it by simulating processes or phenomena using data and algorithms. In other words, experimental research aims to test causal relationships, while modeling helps analyze patterns or phenomena based on available data (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

The sampling technique used in this study is convenience sampling, a type of non-probability sampling that targets respondents who are easily accessible. This method was chosen because the study does not require specific criteria, but rather focuses on the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on sunscreen purchase intention, both for users and potential users. According to Asrulla et al. (2023), convenience sampling is carried out based on the researcher's judgment and spontaneity, by distributing questionnaires to willing respondents. In this study, the questionnaire was distributed through social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook.

The minimum sample size was determined using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{1}{4}\left(\frac{Z\frac{1}{2}a}{E}\right)^2$$

Explanation:
n: Number of samples used in the study
Z 1/2a: Standard normal curve area (can be found in the Z table)
a: Significance level (margin of error in drawing conclusions)
E: Maximum sampling deviation

This study sets a 99% confidence level (Z = 2.576) due to the heterogeneous population, to increase accuracy. A 10% margin of error was established to maintain acceptable accuracy. The sample size calculation is as follows:

$$n = \frac{1}{4}\left(\frac{2.576}{0.05}\right)^2$$

$$n = \frac{1}{4}(25.76)^2$$

$$n = \frac{1}{4}\,x\,663.5776$$

$$n = 165.8944$$

Based on this calculation, the required sample size is 165.89, which is rounded up to 166 respondents. This is consistent with Hair et al. (2021), who stated that the ideal sample size for the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method ranges from 100 to 200 respondents.

Before distributing the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with 50 initial respondents to test the validity and reliability of the instrument using SPSS version 30.0. The validity test was conducted using the Pearson product-moment correlation technique, where indicators are considered valid if r-calculated ≥ r-table (0.2787). Subsequently, a reliability test was performed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold value of ≥ 0.70 considered reliable. The results showed that all items in the instrument met the validity and reliability criteria.

Table 1.
Results of Instrument Validity and Reliability Test

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	R Table (df) = 50 - 2	Construct Reliability
I find advertisements presented by social media influencers (SMIs) who are attractive more convincing than other ads.	A1	0.825	0.2787	0.796
I find advertisements presented by SMIs who look neat, polite, and professional more convincing than other ads.	A2	0.729	0.2787	
I find advertisements presented by SMIs who are beautiful/handsome	A3	0.662	0.2787	

more convincing than other ads.				
I find advertisements presented by SMIs who communicate elegantly and gently more convincing than other ads.	A4	0.623	0.2787	
I find advertisements presented by SMIs with a friendly and warm personality more convincing than other ads.	A5	0.749	0.2787	
I find advertisements presented by SMIs with a cheerful and energetic personality more convincing than other ads.	A6	0.662	0.2787	
SMIs with extensive experience make me trust the sunscreen products they endorse more.	E1	0.833	0.2787	0.814
SMIs who are knowledgeable and understand the benefits and ingredients of sunscreen make me trust the products they endorse more.	E2	0.787	0.2787	
SMIs who are formally qualified make me trust the sunscreen products they endorse more.	E3	0.817	0.2787	
SMIs who are skilled at delivering information make me trust the sunscreen products they endorse more.	E4	0.795	0.2787	
I tend to trust SMIs more when they share the same lifestyle or interests as me in using sunscreen.	H1	0.890	0.2787	0.779
I tend to trust SMIs more when they are closely related to my needs or preferences in choosing sunscreen products.	H2	0.812	0.2787	
I tend to trust SMIs more when they share similarities with me in skin type, skin problems, and skincare needs when choosing sunscreen.	H3	0.799	0.2787	
I believe that credible SMIs' content can be relied upon when choosing sunscreen products.	AT1	0.806	0.2787	0.769
I believe that credible SMIs' content is useful for me when choosing sunscreen products.	AT2	0.746	0.2787	

I believe that credible SMIs' content has a positive influence on my perspective in choosing sunscreen products.	AT3	0.770	0.2787	
I am willing to rely on the recommendations of sunscreen products endorsed by credible SMIs.	AT4	0.759	0.2787	
I feel that the sunscreen brand recommended by credible SMIs helps affirm who I am.	SBC1	0.807	0.2787	0.821
I feel that the sunscreen brand recommended by credible SMIs helps me become a better version of myself.	SBC2	0.827	0.2787	
I feel that the sunscreen brand recommended by credible SMIs helps me build a strong personal relationship with the brand.	SBC3	0.807	0.2787	
I feel that the sunscreen brand recommended by credible SMIs suits my preferences very well.	SBC4	0.703	0.2787	
I am likely to buy sunscreen products recommended by credible SMIs.	PI1	0.840	0.2787	0.811
I want to buy sunscreen products recommended by credible SMIs.	PI2	0.873	0.2787	
I will buy sunscreen products recommended by credible SMIs.	PI3	0.848	0.2787	

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

In this study, the descriptive analysis presented includes gender, age, domicile, education, occupation, and monthly income. The analysis of these points was carried out to describe the characteristics of the respondents. This analysis is useful for converting the raw data obtained from respondents into processed data that is easier to understand. In addition, the descriptive analysis of each variable was explained using validity and reliability testing through factor loading and construct reliability. As explained in the previous chapter, factor loading is useful for considering whether to remove or further evaluate indicators with low factor loadings, while retaining indicators that meet the criteria. The description of the data is presented below:

Table 2.
Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	53	31,9%
Female	113	68,1%

Age		
15 – 20	10	6%
21 – 25	78	47%
26 – 30	50	30.1%
31 – 40	17	10.2%
41 – 50	11	6.6%
Education		
Junior High School or Equivalent	1	0.6%
Senior High School or Equivalent	66	39.8%
D3 or Equivalent	6	3.6%
Bachelor's or Equivalent	88	53%
Master's or Equivalent	5	3%
Domicile		
Jakarta	12	7.2%
Yogyakarta	62	37.3%
Surabaya	12	7.2%
Semarang	13	7.8%
Bandung	18	10.8%
Other	49	29.5%
Education		
Students	75	45.2%
Housewives	9	5.4%
Entrepreneurs/Self-Employed	9	5.4%
Private Employee	63	38%
Civil Servant	9	5.4%
Freelance	1	0.6%
Income		
< 1.000.000	24	14.5%
1.000.000 - 2.000.000	33	19.9%
2.000.001 – 3.000.000	29	17.5%
3.000.001 – 4.000.000	27	16.3%
4.000.001 – 6.000.000	37	22.3%
>6.0000.000	16	9.6%

Based on the data, the characteristics of the respondents show that the majority of those who filled out the questionnaire were female (68.1%) and aged 21–25 years (47%). Social media users are predominantly in the 18–34 age group, who are active on various platforms. Most respondents had a bachelor's degree (53%), with higher social media use due to greater exposure to technology. The largest number of respondents came from Yogyakarta (37.3%), a city known as an educational hub, and were mostly students (45.2%). Occupation as students is closely related to social media usage, while the majority of respondents reported a monthly income between IDR 4,000,001–6,000,000 (22.3%), indicating sufficient financial capacity to purchase beauty products regularly.

Validity and Reliability Testing of Variables with Descriptive Analysis

Reliability testing was conducted using construct reliability. In general, indicators are considered reliable if the construct reliability value is greater than 0.70. The construct reliability formula used in this study is as follows:

$$Construct\ Reliability = \frac{(\sum standart\ loading\ estimate)^2}{(\sum standart\ loading\ estimate)^2 + \sum e}$$

Table 3.
Validity and Reliability Testing of Each Variable

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Description	Construct Reliability	Description
Attractiveness	A1	0,653	Valid	0,875	Reliable
	A2	0,567	Valid		
	A3	0,487	Invalid		
	A4	0,497	Invalid		
	A5	0,543	Valid		
	A6	0,555	Valid		
Expertise	E1	0,634	Valid	0,947	Reliable
	E2	0,875	Valid		
	E3	0,904	Valid		
	E4	0,629	Valid		
Homophily	H1	0,575	Valid	0,933	Reliable
	H2	0,881	Valid		
	H3	0,973	Valid		
Advertising trust	AT1	0,636	Valid	0,880	Reliable
	AT2	0,500	Valid		
	AT3	0,598	Valid		
	AT4	0,698	Valid		
Self-brand connection	SBC1	0,914	Valid	0,903	Reliable
	SBC2	0,688	Valid		
	SBC3	0,626	Valid		
	SBC4	0,495	Invalid		
Purchase intention	PI1	0,519	Valid	0,887	Reliable
	PI2	0,627	Valid		
	PI3	0,935	Valid		

Based on the validity and reliability testing results, Table 2 shows that three indicators were not valid, namely A3, A4, and SBC4. Therefore, these indicators were removed from the study. After eliminating the invalid indicators, the researcher re-conducted the validity and reliability testing, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.
Validity and Reliability Testing of Each Variable After Eliminating Invalid Indicators

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Description	Construct Reliability	Description
Attractiveness	A1	0,603	Valid	0,857	Reliable
	A2	0,633	Valid		
	A5	0,543	Valid		
	A6	0,567	Valid		
Expertise	E1	0,634	Valid	0,947	Reliable
	E2	0,875	Valid		
	E3	0,904	Valid		
	E4	0,629	Valid		
Homophily	H1	0,575	Valid	0,933	Reliable
	H2	0,881	Valid		
	H3	0,973	Valid		
Advertising Trust	AT1	0,636	Valid	0,880	Reliable
	AT2	0,500	Valid		
	AT3	0,598	Valid		
	AT4	0,698	Valid		
Self-Brand Connection	SBC1	0,981	Valid	0,904	Reliable
	SBC2	0,636	Valid		
	SBC3	0,601	Valid		
Purchase Intention	PI1	0,519	Valid	0,887	Reliable
	PI2	0,627	Valid		
	PI3	0,935	Valid		

The data in Table 4 shows the validity and reliability testing results after eliminating invalid indicators. Out of 21 tested indicators, all had factor loadings greater than 0.50, which indicates validity. In addition, all variables had construct reliability values greater than 0.70, indicating that all instruments in this study were valid and reliable. The goodness-of-fit measurements for each variable are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.
Goodness of Fit for Each Variable

Goodness Of Fit	Attractiveness	Expertise	Homophily	Advertising Trust	Self-Brand Connection	Purchase Intention
CMIN/DF	0,418	2,293	-	0,611	0,003	-
RMSEA	0.000	0,089	0,751	0.000	0.000	0,474
GFI	0,998	0,993	1.000	0,996	1.000	1.000
AGFI	0,988	0,931	-	0,981	1.000	-
NFI	0,991	0,993	1.000	0,989	1.000	1.000
TLI	1.040	0,976	-	1,023	1.031	-

Based on Table 5, the results of the goodness-of-fit testing for each variable are as follows:

- **Attractiveness**: All indices (CMIN/DF, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, NFI, TLI) show good fit.
- **Expertise**: All indices fall within the cut-off value range, showing good fit.
- **Homophily**: The RMSEA index is slightly higher, but GFI and NFI meet the cut-off values, indicating good fit.
- **Advertising Trust**: All indices meet the cut-off values, indicating good fit.
- **Self-Brand Connection**: All indices meet the cut-off values, indicating good fit.
- **Purchase Intention**: RMSEA is slightly higher, but GFI and NFI are acceptable, indicating good fit.

Overall, the research model can be accepted as all indicators show good fit.

SEM Data Analysis

Table 6.
Summary of Validity and Reliability Testing of the Model

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Description	Construct Reliability	Description
Attractiveness	A1	0,556	Valid	0,837	Reliabel
	A2	0,633	Valid		
	A5	0,502	Valid		
	A6	0,530	Valid		
Expertise	E1	0,650	Valid	0,948	Reliabel
	E2	0,849	Valid		
	E3	0,933	Valid		
	E4	0,613	Valid		
Homophily	H1	0,746	Valid	0,939	Reliabel
	H2	0,893	Valid		
	H3	0,954	Valid		
Advertising Trust	AT1	0,621	Valid	0,870	Reliabel
	AT2	0,544	Valid		
	AT3	0,544	Valid		
	AT4	0,657	Valid		
Self-Brand Connection	SBC1	0,564	Valid	0,798	Reliabel
	SBC2	0,578	Valid		
	SBC3	0,646	Valid		
Purchase Intention	PI1	0,605	Valid	0,784	Reliabel
	PI2	0,523	Valid		
	PI3	0,548	Valid		

Based on Table 6, the results show that the 21 indicators had factor loading values above 0.50, and the reliability testing using construct reliability yielded values greater than 0.70. Thus, the structural model is declared valid and reliable. The researcher then proceeded to the next stage of testing. Goodness-of-fit testing was conducted to assess the model's fit with the data, with results shown in Table 7.

Table 7.
Goodness of Fit Results

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut-off value	Research Model	Description
CMIN/DF	< 2	1.034	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.05 – 0.08	0.014	Good Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.927	Good Fit
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.885	Marginal Fit
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.912	Good Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.995	Good Fit

Based on Table 7, the hypothesized model shows five goodness-of-fit indices in the good fit category and one in the marginal fit category. The indices CMIN/DF (1.034), RMSEA (0.014), GFI (0.927), NFI (0.912), and TLI (0.995) meet the good fit criteria. Meanwhile, AGFI (0.885) falls in the marginal fit category but remains within acceptable limits. Overall, the model is considered fit and acceptable, as most indicators meet the criteria.

Selection of Input Matrix Type and Proposed Model Estimation

This study used the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation technique, with two main assumptions:

a. **Sample Size**: The ML technique is recommended for samples between 100–200. This study used 166 samples, thus meeting the requirement.
b. **Data Normalization**: Normality testing was conducted using AMOS based on critical ratio (CR) values, skewness, and kurtosis, considered normal if within ±2.58. The normality test results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.
Normality Test Results

Variable	min	max	Skew	c.r.	kurtosis	c.r.
PI3	2.000	4.000	-.037	-.179	-1.127	-2.750
PI2	1.000	4.000	-.597	-2.915	.798	1.948
PI1	2.000	4.000	.278	1.357	-1.510	-3.685
SBC3	2.000	4.000	.286	1.395	-.380	-.928
SBC2	2.000	4.000	-.195	-.954	-1.132	-2.763
SBC1	2.000	4.000	.235	1.146	-.086	-.210
AT4	2.000	4.000	-.108	-.526	-1.343	-3.277
AT1	3.000	4.000	.414	2.022	-1.828	-4.463
H2	2.000	4.000	-.455	-2.220	-.873	-2.131
H1	2.000	4.000	.074	.362	-.577	-1.408
E3	2.000	4.000	-.037	-.179	-1.127	-2.750
E1	2.000	4.000	.193	.943	-1.563	-3.816
A6	2.000	4.000	-.441	-2.152	-1.003	-2.448
A2	2.000	4.000	-.684	-3.337	-.873	-2.131
A1	2.000	4.000	.477	2.331	-.198	-.483
Multivariate					8.728	2.311

Based on Table 8, the multivariate value is 2.311, indicating that the data in this study are normally distributed on a multivariate basis.

For outlier testing, AMOS was used to examine Mahalanobis Distance values. The outlier threshold was determined based on the CHIINV value with a probability < 0.001 and 15 indicators, which equals 37.697. The results showed no Mahalanobis Distance value exceeding 37.697, as shown in Table 8. Therefore, it can be concluded that there were no multivariate outliers in this study.

Table 9.
Mahalanobis Distance Sample

Observation Number	Mahalanobis Distance
59	30.687
43	27.28
29	27.155
50	27.129
123	26.964

Structural Model Identification

SEM analysis can be performed if the structural model is over-identified, indicated by a positive degree of freedom (df). The df value was calculated using AMOS, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10.
Computation of Degrees of Freedom

Number of distinct sample moments:	231
Number of parameters to be estimated:	85
Degrees of freedom	146

Table 10 shows a degree of freedom value of 146, meaning the model has a positive df and is classified as over-identified. Thus, the researcher concludes that the model meets the requirements to proceed with further analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 11.
Hypothesis Testing

Variable				Estimate	C.R.	P	Description
H1:	Advertising trust	←	Attractiveness	1.239	5.788	***	significant
H2:	Advertising trust	←	Expertise	-.126	-1.339	.181	insignificant
H3:	Advertising trust	←	Homophily	.086	1.275	.202	insignificant
H4:	Self-brand connection	←	Advertising trust	1.011	6.164	***	significant
H5:	Purchase intention	←	Self-brand connection	.971	5.832	***	significant

The summary of the hypothesis testing results based on Table 11 is as follows:

a. **H1 (Accepted):** The attractiveness of social media influencers (SMIs) has a positive effect on advertising trust ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$).
b. **H2 (Rejected):** SMIs' expertise does not significantly affect advertising trust ($p = 0.181 \geq 0.05$).
c. **H3 (Rejected):** SMIs' homophily does not significantly affect advertising trust ($p = 0.202 \geq 0.05$).
d. **H4 (Accepted):** Advertising trust has a positive effect on self-brand connection ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$).
e. **H5 (Accepted):** Self-brand connection has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention of sunscreen products ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

Overall, three hypotheses were accepted and two were rejected based on significance values.

The Effect of Attractiveness on Advertising Trust

The results of the Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis in this study show that the attractiveness of social media influencers (SMIs) has a positive effect on consumers' advertising trust in sunscreen advertisements or products. In other words, the more attractive an SMI appears, the greater the increase in consumers' advertising trust toward sunscreen product advertisements. This finding is consistent with the study by Permadani & Hartono (2022), which examined the influence of attraction, expertise, interaction, image satisfaction, and advertising trust on purchase intention of the Erigo brand. Their study demonstrated that attractiveness positively affects advertising trust in the Erigo brand. Similarly, Rahayu & Tri Sutiono (2024) found that attractiveness significantly and positively influences advertising trust in Tiket.com advertisements. Hariningsih et al. (2024) also argue that visually and emotionally appealing influencers can create deeper audience engagement, thereby increasing trust in the content delivered. Based on these previous studies, the present findings align with earlier results, indicating that attractiveness positively affects advertising trust in a product. Therefore, for brands intending to advertise through SMIs, it is crucial to consider the attractiveness factor to enhance consumer trust in sunscreen product advertisements.

The Effect of Expertise on Advertising Trust

The results of this study's SEM analysis indicate that the expertise of social media influencers (SMIs) does not significantly affect consumers' trust in sunscreen product advertisements. In other words, expertise is not a primary factor determining consumer trust in these ads. This finding is consistent with Yudiawati & Ariyanti (2022), who studied the dimensions of credibility, including expertise, on advertising trust and found a similar nonsignificant influence. In the context of cosmetic products, expertise is not the main determinant of consumer trust in influencer advertising. Moreover, not all influencers active on social media are perceived by consumers as having credible expertise. Puspita & Suryoko (2018) also support this finding, showing that an endorser's or influencer's expertise does not significantly impact advertising trust, as other factors carry more weight in the cosmetics industry. Therefore, brands should shift their marketing strategies to focus on other aspects that are more effective in building consumer trust.

The Effect of Homophily on Advertising Trust

The next hypothesis test, using SEM, reveals that homophily does not have a significant effect on advertising trust. Thus, homophily is not a major factor influencing consumer trust in sunscreen product advertisements on social media. This finding is consistent with Pribadi

(2023), who also reported that homophily does not significantly affect advertising trust. Consumers, when evaluating advertising trust, do not solely consider homophily but pay more attention to other factors they perceive as more important. However, this result differs from Bari et al. (2024), who found that homophily can significantly influence trust, particularly when there is a mutual relationship between the influencer and their followers. In other words, homophily matters if an influencer has loyal followers. Therefore, brands should consider selecting SMIs with high homophily or strong audience connections to enhance consumer trust in advertising.

The Effect of Advertising Trust on Self-Brand Connection

The following SEM analysis shows that advertising trust has a positive effect on self-brand connection. This finding is consistent with Denissa & Dewi (2023), who found a significant relationship between advertising trust and self-brand connection. This implies that the higher consumers' trust in advertisements, the stronger their bond with the brand (self-brand connection). Similarly, Kurniawan et al. (2018) discovered that trust in both brands and advertisements has a significant positive impact on self-brand connection. These findings highlight the importance of trust in building connections between consumers and brands. Therefore, companies must sustain and strengthen consumer trust in advertising to enhance their emotional attachment to the brand.

The Effect of Self-Brand Connection on Purchase Intention

The final hypothesis test in this study reveals that self-brand connection has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention for sunscreen products. In other words, the stronger consumers' attachment to a brand, the greater their intention to purchase products from that brand. This finding aligns with Denissa & Dewi (2023), who reported that self-brand connection positively contributes to purchase intention, indicating that greater consumer attachment to a brand increases their likelihood of making a purchase. Pacho (2023) also supports this conclusion, noting that self-brand connection significantly influences consumers' desire to buy a product. Therefore, companies need to maintain and strengthen their consumers' self-brand connection to boost purchase intention for the sunscreen product

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and tests conducted in this study, the researcher draws the following conclusions:

1. The results of the descriptive analysis reveal several findings related to the variables studied. For the Attractiveness variable, the highest score was found on the indicator showing that respondents trust advertisements more from SMIs who appear neat, polite, and professional, while the lowest score was on the indicator showing lower trust in SMIs with a friendly and warm personality. For Expertise, the highest score was given to SMIs with official qualifications, whereas the lowest score indicated that respondents were less influenced by SMIs' skills in delivering information when purchasing sunscreen products. For Homophily, respondents trusted SMIs more when they shared the same skin type, skin problems, and skincare needs, but similarities in lifestyle or interests with SMIs did not significantly influence purchasing decisions. For Advertising Trust, respondents tended to rely more on product recommendations from credible SMIs, while although content from credible SMIs was considered useful, it was not as strong as direct recommendations

in influencing purchasing decisions. Regarding Self-Brand Connection, respondents felt that sunscreen brands recommended by credible SMIs could help them express their identity, but a strong relationship with the brand was not a primary factor in their purchasing decisions. Finally, for Purchase Intention, respondents stated that they would buy sunscreen products recommended by credible SMIs, although their consideration for purchase was not as strong as their genuine intention to buy.

2. Based on the results of the estimate tests, the researcher concludes that three out of five hypotheses were accepted. These three accepted hypotheses are: the attractiveness of social media influencers (SMIs) has a positive and significant effect on advertising trust; advertising trust has a positive and significant effect on building self-brand connection; and self-brand connection has a positive and significant effect on increasing purchase intention for sunscreen products.
3. The results of the analysis on the effects of attractiveness, advertising trust, and self-brand connection show that all three variables have equally strong influence on purchase intention. Therefore, it can be concluded that attractiveness, advertising trust, and self-brand connection all play equally important roles in influencing consumers' purchase intention toward sunscreen products.

Recommendation

Based on the results of this study, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Since hypotheses H1, H4, and H5 were proven to have a positive and significant influence, companies or sunscreen brands are advised to select social media influencers (SMIs) with strong attractiveness to enhance advertising trust and self-brand connection, which in turn can increase consumers' purchase intention for sunscreen products.
2. The analysis of the total effect of attractiveness, advertising trust, and self-brand connection shows that all three variables have an equally strong impact on purchase intention. This suggests that companies and brands should carefully choose the right SMIs to maximize purchase intention.
3. This study demonstrated that three out of five tested hypotheses were accepted and had a positive effect. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore additional variables and test different subjects for further development.

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