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## DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND BRAND TRUST DRIVE GENERATION Z IN SKINCARE PURCHASE DECISIONS

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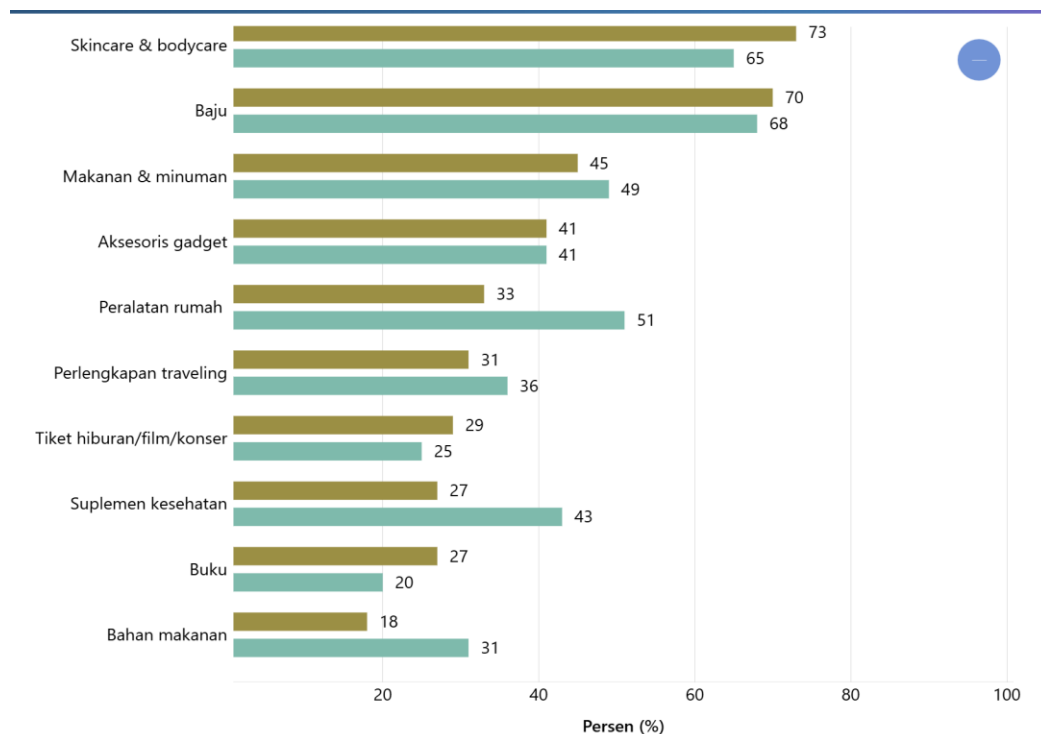
### Abstract

Changes in the behavior of Generation Z consumers, who are women and even men, can consciously be aware of self-care. This aligns with technological developments that make it easier for them to find information through social media, compare products, and see skincare user testimonials, which can encourage them to make effective purchasing decisions. This study examines how brand trust and digital storytelling affect consumers' buying decisions. It employs a quantitative approach focusing on Generation Z individuals aged 14-27 years in Cirebon City, which has a population of 117,229 people. The sample calculation uses the Slovin formula, with the calculation results obtained from 400 respondents. The data analysis method employed is Structural Equation Modeling using Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). This research shows that brand trust and digital storytelling greatly impact Cirebon City residents' decisions to buy skincare products. Trust dominates the influence on purchasing decisions because consumers are more careful in choosing skincare products through the information obtained, which is supported by other user reviews. Skincare industry players are expected to use the study's findings to inform their social media marketing tactics, which will drive more consumer purchases and boost sales growth while preserving business stability. The implications of this research are expected to be utilized by skincare business operators in determining their marketing strategies through social media to encourage increased consumer purchasing decisions, thereby boosting sales growth to maintain business stability, enabling them to compete and contribute to economic growth.

**Keywords:** Digital Storytelling, Brand Trust, Decision-Making Process, Generation Z, Social Media

## INTRODUCTION

The skincare industry in Indonesia is experiencing rapid growth, marked by the increasing variety of available products. The emergence of various brands of skin care products with different types on the market makes consumers more selective in determining which products are suitable for them (Yulianti et al., 2023). The Indonesian skincare market is growing fast and is highly competitive. Business players compete to offer skincare products by highlighting the benefits of various brands. Offering activities are marketing strategies used by business actors with technology support. Technological development with the Internet creates excellent opportunities for business stakeholders and is used for practical online shopping activities. In addition, the development of the Internet has brought significant changes to our lives. Marketplaces and social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are used in online purchasing (Ellitan et al., 2022). Generation Z favors online shopping activities when making decisions that affect lifestyle changes. The lifestyle of a generation that prefers to shop online through social media (Dr. Fatimah et al., 2022).



**Figure 1**  
**Generation Z Online Shopping Activities**

Source: Goodstats 2024

Figure 1 shows how online shopping activities are dominated in skincare and Z-generation fashion. The image illustrates that consumers in Indonesia exhibit significant engagement in the beauty and skincare industry. The increase in online shopping activity for skincare products is often attributed to Generation Z's perception of the importance of maintaining healthy skin. They are more concerned about the health and safety of skincare, so the composition of the ingredients in skincare products will be a concern. Before making

a purchase, Generation Z often examines digital narratives from skincare consumers, focusing on suitable product formulations, engaging videos that emphasize advantages, and endorsements by influencers (Kaur et al., 2024).

Storytelling from users will encourage strong emotional responses to create purchasing decisions (Widyastuti, 2024). Narratives that describe a brand's products become more multidimensional and interactive, and increasingly adapt to the consumer experience as a user. This story becomes valuable in attracting attention, communicating value, and driving purchase decisions. Digital stories usually take over the first-person narrative perspective, as digital storytelling can create stories based on consumer experiences (Bran, 2010). Storytelling is late becoming one of the promising tools in brand communication. In the context of globalization, digital storytelling is the most popular type of eWOM, significantly impacting customer decisions (Tran et al., 2022). Previous research generally analyzes consumers' positive, negative, objective, subjective, and subjective. The findings indicate that positive ratings influence buying tangible goods more than intangible services, while negative reviews have a greater impact than positive evaluations (Abdelhady, 2023).

Through digital storytelling, it helps users build consumer trust through various reviews from previous consumers. (Sung & Jeon, 2024). Because of this trust, consumers have high expectations for the brand since they think it is reliable, capable, and has a track record of satisfactory customer feedback (Dr. Fatimah, Siska Ernawati , S.E. & Dr. Curatman, 2024). Brand trust positively affects product purchase decisions, and when trust continues to increase, it will have a good impact on the impetus for repeat purchases. In addition, the brand image formed from information and experience reflects a positive impression of the brand. Research shows that brand image is strongly related to the purchase decision process. However, not all studies produce similar findings (Ati et al ., 2023).

The problem in this study is that skincare purchasing decisions in Generation Z are constantly changing due to various offers from competitors of similar skincare products. Compared to previous research, the novelty of this research is that few examine purchasing decisions from storytelling and brand trust, which impact the purchasing decision process. Previous research predominantly only associates purchasing decisions with advertising and attractive visuals. The purpose of this study is to support business stakeholders in choosing and determining the right strategy for Generation Z in determining the skin care process when choosing skin care through stories and trust in brands.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Digital Storytelling**

Digital storytelling refers to the practice of using digital media, such as video, images, audio, and text-to tell narratives that engage audiences emotionally and cognitively (Bran, 2010). Social media has a significant impact on the product storytelling process. Additionally, social media enhances experience sharing and facilitates greater collaboration between users. However, digital technology presents many new challenges for communications and marketing professionals, but business opportunities exist. Social media enables marketers to establish a public voice for sharing text, audio, photo, and video content

with companies and vice versa (Al Faizin, 2019). Therefore, marketplaces and social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become choices for online purchases (Kaur et al., 2024). Storytelling can be seen as a transformative experience for the receiver. Its action provides a new emotional sensation through the provision of this experience, which ultimately leads to the phenomenon of trust or behavior change (Abdelhady, 2023). Aesthetics and narrative are an important part of these oral or written stories, which are nowadays told by brands digitally, and the same also influences brand trust well (Kaur et al., 2024). When the aesthetics and narratives used are attractive and appropriate for the product, it will attract attention from consumers and this is supported by consumer behavior that is thick with content on social media.

Storytelling is a cultural practice involving the narration of events to convey meaning and values. Listening to other people's stories and experiences can provide knowledge about the benefits and value of the benefits that consumers feel (Supriaddin, 2024). In its development, this activity can be used in various ways, from visual stories to oral, written, and digital stories. Tombleson & Wolf (2023) identify two core dimensions of digital storytelling: (1) story content-focusing on narrative coherence and clarity of message, and (2) visual storytelling-emphasizing quality and representation through relatable brand ambassadors.

### **Brand Trust**

Brand trust refers to a consumer's willingness to rely on a brand based on the belief that it is reliable, honest, and capable of delivering promised value (Bozbay & Baslar, 2020). Brand trust is a key component of modern marketing and consumer behavior. Because consumer trust is important to feel safe and comfortable when using a product or service, leading to trust in a brand. Moreover, the brand fulfills its promises (Bozbay & Baslar, 2020). Building and sustaining long-term connections between the business as a brand owner and its customers depends heavily on the brand's capacity to deliver on its promises, which will inspire trust and dependability in consumers (Wardhana, 2024). This trust arises from a person's favorable opinion of the brand, product, etc. (Nurul Imani et al., 2023).

Brands that gain consumer trust are based on consumer assessments. The higher the brand trust that consumers have, the easier it is to make a purchase. Conversely, purchasing decisions tend to decrease if consumer brand trust is low or disappointing, so that consumer trust affects purchasing decisions. Previous research by Pradipta Utama and Ningrum Ambarwati, 2022 revealed product purchasing decisions in South Africa which showed results that brand trust influenced purchasing decisions in a positive direction. According to Pfeuffer et al. (2024), brand trust encompasses four key dimensions, each characterized by specific indicators. The first is cognitive-based trust, which involves a rational and logical evaluation of brand attributes, with indicators such as product content and shopping services. The second, affect-based trust, pertains to emotional connections and self-confidence related to the brand, indicated by brand image and product quality. The third dimension, experience-based trust, is derived from past experiences, both personal and from others, with indicators including product reviews and product testimonials. Lastly, personality-oriented trust is based on the alignment between the brand's personality and the consumer's self-image, with

indicators like lifestyle and product suitability. These dimensions collectively contribute to the overall trust a consumer places in a brand. (Wardhana, 2024).

### **Purchase Decision**

Purchasing decisions are a component of consumer behavior. They are shown by direct action in determining and obtaining products and services, both previous actions and those shown in the decision process. Consumers are influenced by several factors when deciding on a purchase, such as quality, price, brand image, and location. There are several levels of decision-making. Miswanto et al. (2019) categorize decision-making into prolonged, limited, and routine problem-solving.

Purchasing decisions are how consumers make decisions by comparing various products. The dimensions and indicators in decision-making begin with (1). Identifying problems with indicators of needs and wants, (2). The process of searching for product information, with indicators of personal sources, commercial sources (advertising), and sources of experience (3). Assessment of alternatives by comparing with other competitors related to price and quality indicators, (4) decision making with trust and buying ability as indicators, (5) post-purchase evaluation with indicators of consumer behavior from the decision process carried out (Harianto & Azizurrohman, 2023).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Methods**

The approach with the quantitative method was used in this research to test the influence of digital storytelling and brand trust on purchasing decisions. It gathers data using research tools, tests specific populations or samples depending on the phenomena mentioned, and evaluates quantitative or statistical data to assess hypotheses (Ellitan et al., 2022).

### **Population & Sample**

The population studied consists of teenagers from Cirebon City, specifically those aged 14 to 27. with as many as 117,229 people (Disdukcapil Kota Cirebon, 2023). To obtain the findings of 400 respondents, the sampling approach employed the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate. Purposive sampling and a questionnaire were employed as data-collecting methods for the study's sample. The selected sample aims to target respondents who are familiar with digital storytelling in skincare.

### **Data Analysis Method**

A questionnaire that was disseminated online via google forms is used in this information-gathering method. A Likert scale was used to evaluate the factors analyzed in this study. The information type utilized is primary data from the distribution survey findings and supplemental information from other sources, including books, diaries, and places needed in the research (Ati et al., 2023). The data processing approach employed in this examination is Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), because it has model complexity and small sample assumptions. Before testing the hypothesis in SEM-PLS, the validity and reliability must be examined (Saputra et al., 2024).

**Variable Measurement**

A Likert scale is utilized for measurements, featuring five score levels: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). Additionally, the variables that are used have pertinent dimensions and indications.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Descriptive Analysis**

According to the Slovin formula, this study included 400 respondents from a total population. The description of the respondents obtained from the questionnaire that has been made is as follows:

**Table 1  
Respondent Demographics**

Category	Possible Answer	F	%
Gender	Female	287	71,75%
	Male	113	28,25%
Age	14-18 Years Old	36	9,7%
	19-21 Years Old	267	66,75%
	22-24 Years Old	88	22%
	25-27 Years Old	9	2,25%
Education	Junior High School	2	0,5%
	Senior High School	52	13%
	Higher Education	315	78,75%
	Work	31	7,75%
Skincare Brand	Scientific	63	15,75%
	Wardah	57	14,25%
	Glad2Glow	39	9,75%
	Kahf	33	8,25%
	Emina	23	5,75%
	Other Brands	185	46,25%
Media Purchasing	Online Store	250	62,5%

	Offline Store	150	37,5%
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Source: Processing data 2025

Table 1 displays that there are 400 respondents in total, with the female gender dominating the number of respondents, namely 287 people aged 19-21 years with an education level of college. At that age, humans tend to be in the process of maturation, therefore they will behave following the times. that statement is supported by the statistical data obtained. Skintific and Wardah products are skin care products that dominate the use of skincare among Generation Z in Cirebon City, with 62.5% of purchases online through online shopping media. This is because, in their daily activities, women always use skincare to care for their skin and increase their confidence, especially among Generation Z, who always want to look beautiful and clean when doing their activities.

**Model Fit Test Results**

The model's fit is evaluated using several statistical metrics, such as RMS\_theta, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and Normed Fit Index (NFI). They have to fulfill the following requirements: The Root Mean Square or RMS\_theta, The NFI should be > 0.9” to indicate a good model fit. Also, for RMS\_theta, the value should be <0.12, and the SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square) value is neither >0.10 nor 0.08. The findings of this study's model fit test are as follows:

**Table 2**  
**Results of the Model Fit Test**

	Model Saturation	Model Estimate
SRMR	0,055	0,055
NFI	0,804	0,804
Theta rms	0,114	

Source: Processing data 2025

Based on the analysis of the model derived from the three fit indicator metrics, the created model has met the criteria of some of these statistical indicators. So, this model can be appropriately used to explain how the variables studied have a relationship and correlation.

**Model Measurement Test Results**

External model analysis is performed to ensure that the model measurements are appropriate. The applicability of this model measurement is evaluated using validity and reliability. To guarantee that the research data is accurate and trustworthy, this study applies numerous analytical tests, including construct reliability, Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted (AVE), and outer loading. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3 below:

**Table 3**  
**Measurement Model**

Variable	Indicator	Outer	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite
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		Loading			Reliability
Digital Storytelling	X 1.1	0,813	0,631	0,916	0,932
	X 1.2	0,781			
	X 1.3	0,801			
	X 1.4	0,816			
	X 1.5	0,744			
	X 1.6	0,822			
	X 1.7	0,798			
	X 1.8	0,776			
Brand Trust	X 2.1	0,716	0,596	0,955	0,959
	X 2.2	0,779			
	X 2.3	0,785			
	X 2.4	0,808			
	X 2.5	0,840			
	X 2.6	0,802			
	X 2.7	0,787			
	X 2.8	0,810			
	X 2.9	0,813			
	X 2.10	0,764			
	X 2.11	0,723			
	X 2.12	0,707			
	X 2.13	0,791			
	X 2.14	0,739			
	X 2.15	0,762			
	X 2.16	0,712			
Purchase Decision	Y 1	0,787	0,585	0,962	0,966
	Y 2	0,752			

	Y 3	0,706			
	Y 4	0,706			
	Y 5	0,719			
	Y 6	0,704			
	Y 7	0,715			
	Y 8	0,707			
	Y 9	0,706			
	Y 10	0,719			
	Y 11	0,759			
	Y 12	0,800			
	Y 13	0,788			
	Y 14	0,843			
	Y 15	0,786			
	Y 16	0,791			
	Y 17	0,837			
	Y 18	0,837			
	Y 19	0,798			
	Y 20	0,808			

Source: Processing data 2025

Table 3 states that every element needs to have an AVE value greater than 0.5 and an outer loading value greater than 0.7. As a result, all of the study's indicators are considered valid. The reliability calculation's results also show that the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha meet the necessary criteria, confirming the reliability and validity of the study's constituent parts (Hair et al., 2020).

### Model Structure Analysis

Model analysis aims to assess the structural model used to forecast causal links between components that are not readily measurable, such as latent variables. In the inner analysis of the model, the R-squared, F-squared, and adjusted R-squared values are included. The following are the outcomes of the data processing for R-squared and modified R-squared:

**Table 4**

**R-square and R-square adjusted output**

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square
X1 and X2 to Y	0,769	0,768

Source: Processing data 2025

According to Juni et al. (2024), an R-squared value of 0.75 is considered strong, a value of 0.50 is categorized as medium, and a value of 0.25 is regarded as weak. Based on Table 4, the independent factors have a significant impact on the dependent variable, as the R-squared and Adjusted R-squared values for the Brand Trust (X2) and Digital Storytelling (X1) models about purchase decisions (Y) are both above 0.75. However, these two models' R-squared and Adjusted R-squared values are actually below 0.75.

According to Table 4's R-squared value of 0.769, digital storytelling and brand trust account for 76.9% of the purchase decision variable (Y). Additionally, 23.1% of purchasing decisions are affected by factors not examined in this study.

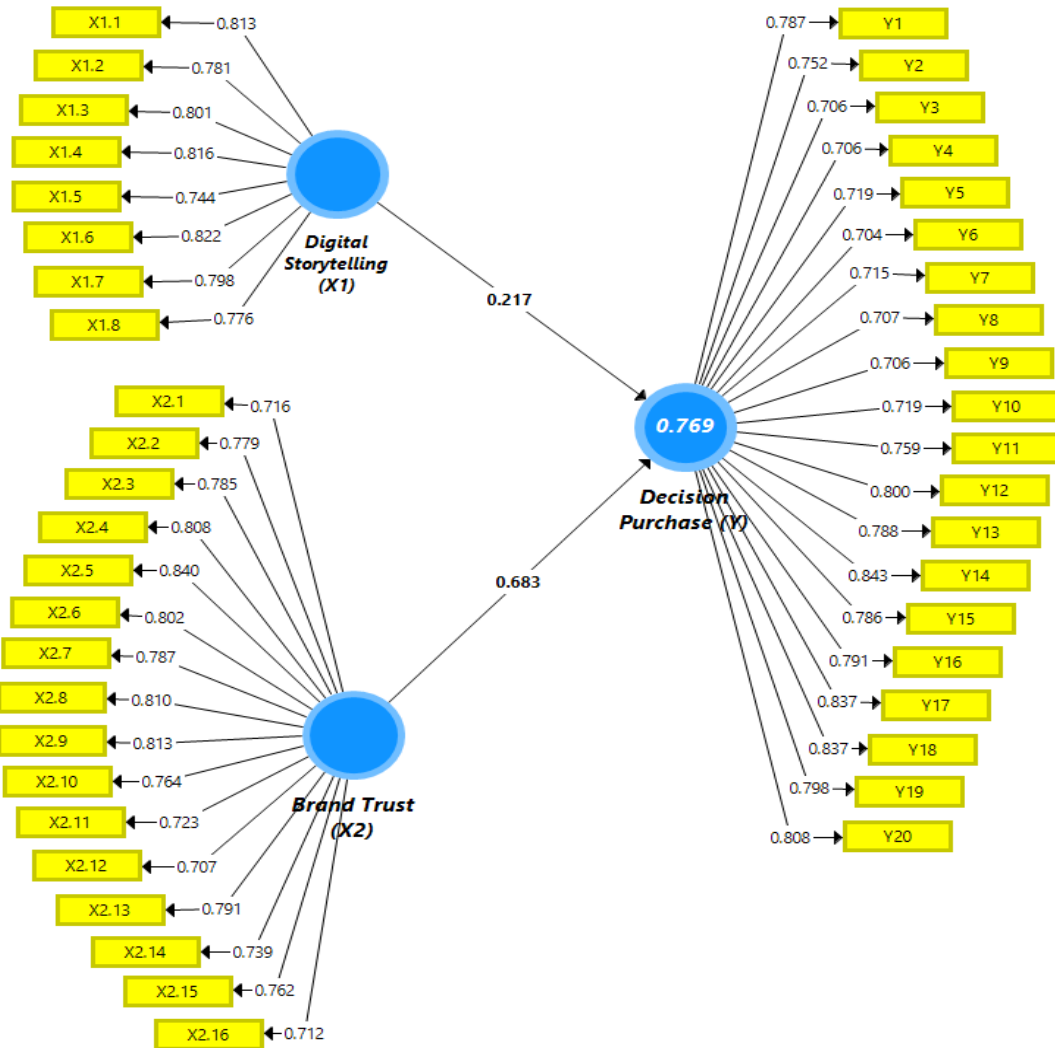
The effect size of each variable must be compared with the effect size, or *f*, to ascertain whether there is a meaningful link between them. In this study, the *f* square value is:

**Table 5**  
**F Square Output**

Variable	Purchase Decision
Digital Storytelling	0,051
Brand Trust	0,506

Source: Processing data 2025

By the criteria (*f*-square 0.35 high, 0.15 moderate, and 0.02 low) (Silitonga et al., 2024), the *F*-square value indicates the direct variable's influence at the structural level. The study's effect size, or *f*-square value, for every variable, is shown in Table 5, which shows that while the brand trust variable significantly influences purchase decisions, the digital storytelling variable has a moderate impact.



**Figure 3.**  
**Path Analysis Output**  
 Source: Processing data 2025

**Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis testing, both directly and indirectly in this study, can be found in Table 6 below:

**Table 6**  
**Hypothesis Testing Synopsis**

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Path Analysis	t value	p Value
H1	Digital Storytelling -> Purchase Decision	0.217	3,648	0,000
H2	Brand Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.683	12,733	0,000
H3	Digital Storytelling -> Brand Trust ->	0.769	-	-

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	Purchase Decision			
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Source: Processing data 2025

The findings of the study hypothesis value may be described as follows, based on the following table: The correlation between the Digital Storytelling variable and Purchase Decision has a t-value of 3.648 and a p-value of 0.000. Hypothesis 1 can be accepted since the T-value of 3.648, greater than 1.96, and the p-value of 0.000, under the threshold of 0.05, both satisfy the requirements. Additionally, the original sample (O) value, which is positive at 0.217, shows that digital storytelling significantly favors consumers' buying decisions.

The correlation between Brand Trust and Purchase Decision has a T-value of 12.733 and a p-value of 0.000. Given that the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 and the T-value of 12.733 is more than 1.96, Hypothesis 2 could be accepted. Additionally, these two numbers meet the established criteria. Additionally, the original sample (O) value of 0.683 is positive, suggesting that brand trust has a large and favorable influence on purchase decisions. The third hypothesis, the relationship between digital storytelling and brand trust on purchase decisions, is shown by path analysis data indicating a very significant figure of 0.769. which means that the dependent variable can be influenced by both of those variables.

## Discussion

The results indicated that 66.75% of respondents were female students aged 19 to 21, mostly opting for skincare products, specifically Skintific and Wardah, for their skincare routine. With the active Generation Z on social media, online product purchases dominate compared to coming directly to the store. This shows that Digital Storytelling is a potential tool in marketing campaigns to excite emotional attachment to a brand and to reveal facts about brands and events in engaging and memorable stories. Personalizing and adapting stories according to each consumer's preferences, such as consumer experiences and testimonials in using these products, can significantly stimulate consumers to purchase skincare products. The findings of the hypothesis testing research show that digital storytelling does affect purchase decisions ( $H1 = X1 \text{ to } Y$ ), even though the effect is small at 0.217. However, digital storytelling still has the potential to influence consumers to make purchasing decisions. having an influence but not significant, this could be caused by information media that is still not relevant and less interactive. This can be a concern, because consumer trust in choosing a product lies in the product's visuals and consumer experiences received either through interaction or by seeing reviews.

Digital Storytelling engages consumers as part of the brand story. Providing opportunities to contribute, provide feedback, build collaborative stories, and increase product authenticity, visual participation includes photos, videos, and other visual elements that enrich brand stories and attract audience attention more powerfully. In this way, it can form a good stimulus and support skin care purchasing decisions for Generation Z (Rachman et al., 2024). Digital storytelling is important in marketing, increasing deeper engagement and building trust in the product. This is particularly relevant for Generation Z, who are more responsive to visual content and digital interactions. This research aligns with a previous study by Sung and Jeon (2024), which indicates that positive digital storytelling has a significant influence. Specifically, it shows that more positive reviews lead to higher

purchasing decisions regarding skincare products. Findings also align with research by Widyastuti, 2024 which found that when consumers are shown videos with attractive visual aesthetics, they are more likely to engage in purchasing decisions due to the emotions triggered by the video (Fatimah, 2023).

The results of further research on consumer confidence in brands affect purchasing decisions for skin care products in Generation Z. In line with the findings of the hypothesis test, brand trust influences decisions regarding purchases by 0.683 ( $H_2 = X_2 \text{ to } Y$ ). Brand trust is a consumer's view of a particular brand. Consumer views are based on information, personal experiences, or other people that influence the performance of a product. Consumers will more readily accept products or brands that get positive trust from consumers. On the other hand, if a product or brand is perceived as having risks and tends to be negative, then the product will be more difficult for consumers to accept. Therefore, brand trust affects purchasing decisions on skincare products (Sutanto et al., 2024).

The outcomes of this study confirm the findings of a 2023 study by Ilmi et al., which indicated that brand trust significantly influences customer decisions. Buyers' higher self-efficacy increases purchasing decisions. Vice versa, if consumers' brand confidence is low, purchasing decisions will decrease.

Thus, digital storytelling and brand trust significantly influence purchasing decisions. This shows that digital storytelling indicators, which include narrative, main message, visual quality, and role models, can influence Generation Z in making skincare purchasing decisions. Brand trust is also impacted by belief in the brand, thus influencing the generation's decision to choose skincare. This result is compatible with a study suggested by Ellitan et al. (2022) that found social media platforms help users and brands engage and communicate. Therefore, it can be assumed that social media marketing can influence brand trust, significantly impacting skincare product purchase decisions. From the discussion above, it is hoped that business actors can choose and determine the proper and effective strategy by utilizing digital media to involve consumers to provide feedback and build good collaboration based on the products used. This will help consumers form trust in the brand and increase the sales of these products.

## CONCLUSION

This research aims to explore the influence of digital storytelling and brand trust on purchasing decisions for skincare products. Based on data from 400 respondents in this study, digital storytelling positively affects purchasing decisions for skin care products in Cirebon City by 0.217. More information, promotions, and communication on social media can show good perceptions or images of consumers toward brands. Furthermore, the information obtained and consumer contributions through product reviews will establish trust in the brand.

Brand trust also has a strong impact of 0.683 on Generation Z's skincare product selection through trusting the business. The more positive reviews, the higher the purchasing decisions on skincare products. The two variables are correlated because consumers first read

information and get a review of skincare products through digital storytelling to achieve a belief in a brand.

Thus, business actors can use their marketing strategies by utilizing social media, providing opportunities for consumers to provide positive reviews through attractive digital storytelling, building trust with consumers, and increasing their purchasing decisions for skincare products. This can be applied to the stability of the business and support the local economic growth as well as provide business competition on social media.

Suggestions for future research could explore variables that can enhance the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies, such as algorithm trends, audience preferences, consumer evaluations, and the integration of artificial intelligence technology. Additionally, an in-depth study on the impact of content personalization and real-time interaction on customer loyalty could also provide more comprehensive insights.

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