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The Influence of Social Media Marketing, Product Quality, and Influences on Brand X Purchasing Decisions

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to determine the impact of social media marketing and product quality on the purchasing choices of Brand X items, while also examining the function of influencers as mediators, specifically among the generation-Z demographic. This study aimed to examine the interplay between Social Media Marketing, Product Quality Perceptions, Influencer Influence, and Purchasing Decisions in relation to Brand X items. This study employs a descriptive quantitative methodology, utilizing Google Form surveys as the data collecting tool. The target population for this research consists of individuals belonging to generation-Z who satisfy the specified research criteria. The data was examined using the regression method to quantify the impact of the independent variables (Social Media Marketing and Product Quality) on the dependent variable (Purchasing Decisions). The effectiveness of influencer mediation was assessed using path analysis and the Sobel test. The findings of this study indicate that Social Media Marketing and Product Quality exert an impact on Influencers. Product quality and influencers do not exert any impact on purchase decisions, however social media marketing does have an impact on purchasing decisions. Neither Social Media Marketing nor Product Quality exert any influence on Purchasing Decisions through Influencers as mediating variables.

Keywords: Product Quality, Social Media Marketing, Influences, Purchase Decisions

INTRODUCTION

The retail industry is a vital economic sector that forms the basis of consumers' daily lives and significantly contributes to a country's economic development. Presently, retail enterprises encounter numerous obstacles, among them is the alteration in consumer behavior. Consumers have become increasingly discerning and are prioritizing a superior buying experience. Gaining insight into the psychology underlying online customer behavior is crucial for staying competitive in the current marketplace, which is marked by intensifying competition and globalization. Buyers carefully evaluate the product's quality before making a purchasing decision. A significant component that is given great consideration is the practice of comparing products of similar quality before making a purchase. Nevertheless, the growing prevalence of online social media platforms is prompting shops to contemplate the potential

of using social media for product marketing, enabling clients to access and peruse their offerings. Based on a survey by We Are Social, Figure 1 indicates that the total count of individuals actively using social media in Indonesia reached 167 million in January 2023. This figure represents 60.4% of the total population in the country, according to Shilvina Widi in 2023.

Generation Z refers to individuals born between 1995 and 2012, a period coinciding with the widespread use of the World Wide Web. Having come of age after 2000, they have been exposed to digital devices throughout their entire lives. These individuals are alternatively referred to as iGen, Centennials, Generation Next, and Post-Millennials (Sadaf, 2019). They utilize diverse internet platforms and consistently adjust to the most recent technology. To effectively engage with Generation Z, it is crucial to create material that is unambiguous, captivating, humorous, intellectually stimulating, uncomplicated, and concise. Generation Z has a greater degree of engagement with storytelling and narrative content.

Social media platforms have altered the dynamics of online markets by promoting the creation of social networks among industry experts, influential individuals, and consumers. Kumar et al. (2020) proved the significance of social media marketing by showing that incorporating marketing promotional messages can effectively alter consumers' impressions of a product and impact their purchasing choices. The rapid and immediate exchange of data and information in the current period has significantly influenced consumer behavior, leading to a greater reliance on social media platforms for obtaining information and evaluations about desired products. The fashion industry is experiencing fast growth among influencers in Indonesia. A fashion influencer typically engages in product reviews and offers guidance on enhancing the visual appeal of clothing.

Brand X is seeing rapid growth in Indonesia. Brand X, also known as Hennes & Mauritz AB, is a global apparel retailer with its main office located in Stockholm, Sweden. Established in 1947 by Erling Persson, Brand X has grown to become one of the foremost fashion merchants globally. Brand X is under the category of fast fashion brands, with a vast network of outlets throughout multiple countries. Additionally, it has a comprehensive e-commerce platform to cater to online clients. Brand X provides distinctive designs crafted from premium and very practical materials at reasonable prices, guided by the LifeWear philosophy of everyday wear (Fast Retailing, 2021b). Aligned with the ethos of "Adore fashion, adore the planet", the company holds the belief that the longevity of its products will serve as a compelling feature in enticing customers to make repeat purchases. Brand X's global sales of clothes in 2018 amounted to around 10 million units. According to Erma (2022), creating a company similar to Brand X is a challenging task due to Brand X's strong focus on material quality, marketing strategies, contemporary apparel designs, and up-to-date clothing models. While Brand X is known for maintaining the quality of its products, it is not exempt from occasional product failures. Brand X produces engaging and educational content on Instagram, utilizing influencers to showcase the core principles of the Brand X brand (Widodo, 2017).

According to a poll conducted by Matter in 2023, 81 percent of customers had engaged in purchasing, researching, or contemplating acquiring a product or service after being exposed to posts about it from friends, family, or influencers. A significant majority of consumers, almost 69 percent, place more trust in recommendations from friends, family members, or influencers compared to information provided directly by a brand. Therefore, it is unsurprising that these influencers are able to perform promotional tasks with more effectiveness. The appeal of influencers stems from their credibility, effective communication abilities, and significant public attention they receive. This attention is seen in the enormous number of followers they have on their social media platforms. As a result, influencers have the potential to significantly raise product awareness among a wider audience and enhance marketing efforts. This research aimed to investigate the impact of social media marketing and product

quality on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z customers, with the involvement of influencers as mediators.

METHOD

This study employs descriptive quantitative research methodology. Descriptive research is primarily concerned with providing detailed descriptions and explanations of specific phenomena that are associated with behavior, situations, problems, and the interconnections between elements believed to be responsible for these difficulties. This study will gather primary data from participants utilizing an online questionnaire method implemented through Google Forms. According to Bougie & Sekaran (2019), the questionnaire method is a systematic approach for gathering information and data from individuals by having them respond to a series of questions. An interview and a questionnaire differ in their approach to gathering information. While an interview requires direct conversation with the participant, a questionnaire allows respondents to answer questions privately and without any discussion. This study involved the distribution of a Google Forms questionnaire with a Likert Scale using online platform such as social media.

As per Bougie & Sekaran (2019), population refers to a collective of individuals, events, or objects that capture the interest of a researcher, prompting them to conduct investigations and derive conclusions pertaining to the issue under study. The population under study comprises all individuals belonging to Generation Z residing in Indonesia. As per Bougie & Sekaran (2019), this sample is representative of the population and will be utilized by researchers to draw inferences and extrapolate their findings to the entire population. The Slovin formula is a useful tool for determining the state of a sample in relation to the overall population by calculating sample outcomes. The subsequent equation provides a method for determining the minimum sample size in situations when the behavior of the population is uncertain (Nalendra, 2021). The researcher determined the sample size to be 100 based on the aforementioned calculations. Prior to data processing, questionnaires were obtained from respondents on the internet using Google Forms. This questionnaire assesses 12 dimensions, each consisting of 3 indicators, out of the 4 variables examined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers obtained data from a questionnaire survey, revealing that 48.6% of the respondents were male and 51.4% were female. The largest age group was 17-21 years, accounting for 81.3% of the respondents. The majority of respondents, 86.9%, were university students. Among the 107 respondents, 95.3% had purchased Brand X products and had seen Brand X promotional content on Instagram.

Validity test

Using SPSS tools, we can make a comparison between the calculated r value and the r value from the table. If the estimated correlation coefficient (r) is higher than the critical value (table r), then the indicator is deemed to be legitimate (Ghozali, 2018). The validity test results for the determined set of indicators are displayed below:

Table 1. Validity Test Results for Product Quality Variables (X1)

Indicator	r count	r table	Information
Kp1.1	0.698	0.1946	VALID
Kp1.2	0.749	0.1946	VALID
Kp1.3	0.724	0.1946	VALID
Kp2.1	0.661	0.1946	VALID
Kp2.2	0.574	0.1946	VALID
Kp2.3	0.605	0.1946	VALID
Kp3.1	0.650	0.1946	VALID

Kp3.2	0.641	0.1946	VALID
Kp3.3	0.646	0.1946	VALID

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

According to the validity test results of the product quality variables in table 1, it is evident that all indicators of the product quality variables are legitimate as the computed r value is greater than the r table value.

Table 2. Validity Test Results for Social Media Marketing Variables (X2)

Indicator	r count	r table	Results
SM1.1	0.614	0.1946	VALID
SM1.2	0.679	0.1946	VALID
SM1.3	0.658	0.1946	VALID
SM2.1	0.733	0.1946	VALID
SM2.2	0.650	0.1946	VALID
SM2.3	0.555	0.1946	VALID
SM3.1	0.668	0.1946	VALID
SM3.2	0.643	0.1946	VALID
SM3.3	0.707	0.1946	VALID

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

According to the validity test results of the social media marketing variable in table 2, it is evident that all indicators of the variable are legitimate since the computed r value is greater than the r table value.

Table 3. Validity Test Results for Influencer Variables (Z)

Indicator	r count	r table	Results
I1.1	0.736	0.1946	VALID
I1.2	0.737	0.1946	VALID
I1.3	0.836	0.1946	VALID
I2.1	0.761	0.1946	VALID
I2.2	0.728	0.1946	VALID
I2.3	0.696	0.1946	VALID
I3.1	0.656	0.1946	VALID
I3.2	0.630	0.1946	VALID
I3.3	0.701	0.1946	VALID

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

According to the findings of the influencer variable validity test in table 3, it can be determined that all indicators of the influencer variable are legitimate because the calculated r value is greater than the r table.

Table 4. Purchasing Decision Variable Validity Test Results (Y)

Indicator	r count	r table	Results
Kpb1.1	0.598	0.1946	VALID
Kpb1.2	0.682	0.1946	VALID
Kpb1.3	0.545	0.1946	VALID
Kpb2.1	0.516	0.1946	VALID
Kpb2.2	0.688	0.1946	VALID
Kpb2.3	0.599	0.1946	VALID
Kpb3.1	0.602	0.1946	VALID
Kpb3.2	0.636	0.1946	VALID

Kpb3.3	0.637	0.1946	VALID
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Source: SPSS Statistics 26

According to the validity test results of the purchase decision variable in table 6, it is evident that all indicators of the purchasing decision variable are legitimate since the calculated r value is greater than the r table value.

Reliability Test

Ghozali (2018) indicated that the Cronbach's Alpha approach will be employed to assess the reliability of the instruments utilized in this study. A tool's dependability coefficient is deemed reliable and trustworthy if its value exceeds 0.7 in Cronbach's Alpha. For values less than 0.7, the instrument is deemed to be unreliable and lacking in trustworthiness. The findings of the dependability test are as follows:

Table 5. Reliability Test Results

Variable	CronbachAlpha	Reliability Standards	Information
Product Quality (X1)	0.762	0.7	RELIABLE
Social Media Marketing(X2)	0.761	0.7	RELIABLE
Influencers(Z)	0.774	0.7	RELIABLE
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.750	0.7	RELIABLE

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

The table above reveals the Cronbach alpha values for each variable: the product quality variable (X1) has a value of 0.762, the social media marketing variable (X2) has a value of 0.761, the influencer variable (Z) has a value of 0.774, and the purchase decision variable has a value of 0.750. Therefore, it may be inferred that the indicators in this questionnaire are deemed credible due to the Cronbach alpha value surpassing the conventional reliability threshold of 0.7.

Classic assumption test

In this study, the researchers conducted various Classical Assumption Tests using the SPSS software. Researchers typically conduct several assumption tests, including the normalcy test, heteroscedasticity test, and multicollinearity test (Ghozali, 2018).

Coefficient of Determination

The determinant coefficient, also known as the R^2 coefficient, quantifies the extent to which the model can account for variations in the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2018). Here are the findings of the coefficient of determination test.

Table 6. Determination Coefficient Test Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.813a	0.661	0.654	2.41646

Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Product Quality

Dependent Variable: Influencers

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

According to the data provided, the value of R^2 is 0.661, which is equivalent to 66.1%. Therefore, it can be inferred that a mere 66.1% of the influencer variable is impacted by the variables of product quality and social media marketing. The influencer variable is affected by unexamined variables in this research by a magnitude of 33.9%.

Table 7. Coefficient of Determination Test Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.551a	0.303	0.289	2.62827
Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Product Quality				
Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision				

Source: SPSS Statistics

According to the provided data, the value of R^2 is 0.303, which is equivalent to 30.3%. Therefore, it can be inferred that social media marketing variables and product quality only have an impact on 30.3% of purchasing decision variables. The purchase decision variable in this research is influenced by additional variables, which account for 69.7% of the total.

F test

The purpose of the F statistical test is to determine if there is a combined effect of each independent variable in the model on the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2018). When evaluating the effectiveness of a model, one might examine and compare ANOVA or F table data. This study used a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). If the significance value is below 0.05, it indicates that the independent variable has a significant impact. The results of the F test are as follows:

Table 8. F Test Results

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1126,235	2	563,118	96,436	0,000b
	Residual	578,088	99	5,839		
	Total	1704,324	101			

Dependent Variable: Influencers

Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Product Quality

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

According to the provided table, the F value is 96.436, and its significance level is 0.00, which is less than 0.05. It may be inferred that both product quality and social media marketing characteristics exert a positive and significant impact on influencers.

Table 9. F Test Results

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	297,500	2	148,750	21,534	0,000b
	Residual	683,872	99	6,908		
	Total	981,373	101			

Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Product Quality

According to the provided table, the F value is 21.534, and its significance level is 0.00, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore, it can be inferred that the factors of social media marketing and product quality exert a favorable and substantial impact on purchasing decisions.

t test

Within the t test, there are two distinct types of tests that can be conducted to ascertain the significance of the impact of an independent variable on the fluctuations in the dependent variable. If the calculated t value exceeds the critical value of 0.05, it can be inferred that the independent variable does not exert a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable. On the other hand, if the t value is below the threshold of 0.05, it indicates that the independent variable has a notable impact on the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2018). Here are the outcomes of the t statistical test.

Table 10. Statistical Test Results t

Model	Standardized B	Coefficients Error	Standardized Std.Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-2,971	2,554		-1,163	0.248
Quality Product	0.387	0.102	0.296	3,804	0,000
<i>Social Media Marketing</i>	0.686	0.091	0.587	7,543	0,000

Dependent Variable: Influencers

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

According to the table, the product quality variable has a t-count value of 3.804, which is greater than the critical value of 1.983. Additionally, the significance value of 0.000 is less than the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, it may be inferred that the variable of product quality has a substantial impact on influencers. This implies that the null hypothesis (H0) can be rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis (Ha) cannot be dismissed. The t-count value for the social media marketing variable is 7.543, which is greater than the critical value of 1.983. Additionally, the significance value is 0.000, which is less than the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, it can be inferred that the variable of social media marketing has a substantial impact on influencers. This implies that the null hypothesis (H0) may be rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (Ha) cannot be dismissed.

Table 11. Statistical Test Results t

Model	Standardized B	Coefficients Error	Standardized Std.Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	15,358	2,791		5,503	0,000
Quality Product	0.108	0.118	0.109	0.916	0.362
<i>Social Media Marketing</i>	0.295	0.124	0.333	2,381	0.019
<i>Influencers</i>	0.129	0.109	0.170	1,182	0.240

Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

Based on the table above, it is shown that the influencer variable has a t-count value of $1.182 < 1.983$ and a significance value of $0.240 > 0.05$. So it can be concluded that the influencer variable has no influence and is not significant on purchasing decisions or H_0 cannot be rejected and H_a can be rejected.

Table 12. Statistical Test Results t

Model	Standardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	14,975	2,778		5,391	0,000
Product quality	0.158	0.111	0.159	1,430	0.156
<i>Social Media Marketing</i>	0.383	0.099	0.432	3,877	0,000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source: SPSS Statistics 26

The table above indicates that the t-count value for the product quality variable is 1.430, which is less than 1.983. Additionally, the significance value is 0.156, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it may be inferred that the variable of product quality does not have any impact and is not statistically significant in influencing purchase decisions. This implies that the null hypothesis (H_0) cannot be rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis (H_a) can be rejected. The t-count value for the social media marketing variable is 3.877, which is greater than the critical value of 1.983. Additionally, the significance value is 0.000, which is less than the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, it may be inferred that the variable of social media marketing has a substantial impact on purchasing decisions, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and the inability to reject the alternative hypothesis (H_a).

Sobel Test

The Sobel test or mediation or intervening hypothesis can be used to find out whether the relationship can significantly mediate the relationship through mediating or intervening variables. (Ghozali, 2018). To find out whether the mediation effect was significant, a Sobel test was carried out. The following are the results of the Sobel test:

Table 13. Sobel Test

Hypothesis	Direct Influence	Std. Error
Product Quality (X1) → Influencer (Z)	0.387	0.102
<i>Social Media Marketing</i> (X2) → Influencers (Z)	0.686	0.091

Table 14. Sobel Test Results

Hypothesis	Influence No Direct	Z Sobel	P Value
Quality (X1) → Influencer (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.049	1,129	0.258

<i>Social Media Marketing</i> (X2) → Influencers (Z)	0.088	1,169	0.242
→ Purchase Decision (Y)			

According to the table provided, the tcount or Z value is 1.129, which is less than 1.983. Additionally, the significance value or P value is 0.258, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be inferred that the variable of product quality does not have any impact and is not statistically significant on purchase decisions when mediated by influencers. This implies that the null hypothesis (H0) cannot be rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis (Ha) can be rejected. The tcount or Z value is 1.169, which is less than the critical value of 1.983. Similarly, the significance value or P value is 0.242, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it may be inferred that the social media marketing variable does not have any impact and is not statistically significant on purchasing decisions when mediated by influencers. In other words, the null hypothesis (H0) cannot be rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis (Ha) can be rejected.

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis test results indicate that the quality of Brand X products has a substantial impact on consumers who are influenced by influencers. This demonstrates that consumers' evaluations of product quality have the potential to impact their level of interest in Brand X products, which is subsequently reinforced by endorsements from influencers. In addition, social media marketing has a substantial influence on influencers, demonstrating that social media marketing tactics can enhance the popularity and appeal of influencers. However, it seems that influencers do not exert a substantial impact on consumers' purchasing decisions for Brand X products. While influencers have the ability to shape consumers' opinions and generate interest in Brand X products, their influence does not consistently translate into actual purchases by consumers. Furthermore, while the caliber of Brand X merchandise does not directly impact consumers' buying choices, social media advertising exerts a substantial influence on consumer purchasing decisions. This study also discovered no indication that influencers play a role in the connection between customer buying choices and the quality of Brand X products. While influencers can contribute to enhancing product quality and social media marketing, they do not directly mediate the impact of their influence on customer purchasing decisions. The findings of this study indicate that consumer behavior is influenced by various elements, such as the impact of influencers, the quality of the product, and the techniques employed in social media marketing.

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