

***THE DIGITAL DOMINO EFFECT: INFLUENCERS, CONTENT MARKETING,
AND THE CASCADING IMPACT ON GEN Z'S BRAND PERCEPTION AND
PURCHASE INTENTIONS***

**EFEK DOMINO DIGITAL: INFLUENCER, PEMASARAN KONTEN, DAN
DAMPAK BERANTAI PADA PERSEPSI MEREK DAN NIAT PEMBELIAN
GENERASI Z**

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital marketing has elevated the role of influencers and content strategies in shaping consumer behavior, yet research on electronic products remains limited. This study aims to examine the influence of influencer marketing and content marketing on Generation Z's purchase intention for electronic products, with trust in the influencer and brand perception as mediating factors. A quantitative survey design was employed, collecting responses from two hundred Generation Z individuals aged twelve to twenty-eight who had viewed promotional advertisements of electronic products on YouTube in the past three months. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling and bootstrapping techniques. The results revealed that influencer marketing on YouTube significantly predicted purchase intention, consumer trust, and brand perception, while content marketing had a direct impact on information-based purchase intention, trust, and brand perception. Mediation analysis indicated that consumer trust significantly mediated the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention, whereas brand perception did not. These findings suggest that influencer credibility and consistent content narratives play a more critical role than brand perception alone in shaping Generation Z's electronics purchasing behavior. Practically, the study highlights the importance for companies to carefully select influencers and maintain consistent messaging when designing YouTube-based marketing campaigns targeting Generation Z audiences.

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing, Content Marketing, Purchase Intention, Generation Z, Consumer Trust, Brand Perception.*

ABSTRAK

Pertumbuhan pesat pemasaran digital telah meningkatkan peran influencer dan strategi konten dalam membentuk perilaku konsumen, namun penelitian tentang produk elektronik masih terbatas. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh pemasaran influencer dan pemasaran konten terhadap niat pembelian produk elektronik oleh Generasi Z, dengan kepercayaan terhadap influencer dan persepsi merek sebagai faktor mediasi. Desain survei kuantitatif digunakan, mengumpulkan tanggapan dari dua ratus individu Generasi Z berusia dua belas hingga dua puluh delapan tahun yang telah menonton iklan promosi produk elektronik di YouTube dalam tiga bulan terakhir. Data dianalisis menggunakan model persamaan struktural dan teknik bootstrapping. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran influencer di YouTube secara signifikan memprediksi niat pembelian, kepercayaan konsumen, dan persepsi merek, sementara pemasaran konten memiliki dampak langsung pada niat pembelian berbasis informasi, kepercayaan, dan persepsi merek. Analisis mediasi menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan konsumen secara signifikan memediasi hubungan antara pemasaran influencer dan niat pembelian, sedangkan persepsi merek tidak. Temuan ini menyarankan bahwa kredibilitas influencer dan narasi konten yang konsisten memainkan peran yang lebih kritis daripada persepsi merek saja dalam membentuk perilaku pembelian elektronik Generasi Z. Secara praktis, studi ini menyoroti pentingnya bagi perusahaan untuk memilih influencer dengan hati-hati dan menjaga pesan yang konsisten saat merancang kampanye pemasaran berbasis YouTube yang menargetkan audiens Generasi Z.

Kata Kunci: Pemasaran Influencer, Pemasaran Konten, Niat Pembelian, Generasi Z, Kepercayaan Konsumen, Persepsi Merek.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of infinite scrolls and viral videos, Generation Z in Indonesia is transforming how products are discovered and purchased. This cohort, born approximately between 1997 and 2012, relies heavily on YouTube not only for entertainment but also as a trusted guide in making purchasing decisions, particularly for electronic products. Surveys indicate that nearly nine out of ten Gen Z and Millennial consumers in Indonesia consider influencer recommendations when deciding what to buy, and forty percent report that YouTube content from influencers directly motivates them to purchase electronics (Yunianto, 2023). This trend demonstrates a critical shift: traditional advertising alone is no longer sufficient, and brands must engage young consumers through digital channels where attention, trust, and influence converge.

Prior research has consistently highlighted the effectiveness of influencer and content marketing in shaping consumer purchase intentions. Hermawan (2023) showed that influencer credibility and emotional closeness significantly drive purchase decisions among Gen Z audiences, while also emphasizing the role of YouTube influencers in creating authentic and trusted marketing communication. Furthermore, content marketing strategies, including storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer collaborations, have been found to enhance engagement, loyalty, and purchase intention (Putra et al., 2023). Despite these insights, most studies have focused on fashion and beauty products (Seruni et al., 2024; Kuswoyo et al., 2022), leaving electronic products underexplored. Additionally, while direct effects of influencer and content marketing have been well documented,

fewer studies examine the psychological mechanisms, such as consumer trust in influencers or brand perception, that mediate these effects (Laheba & The Jin Ai, 2020).

These gaps underscore the necessity of investigating digital marketing in the context of electronic products for Gen Z. Indonesian Gen Z increasingly depends on influencer recommendations as a key source of information, making it essential to understand whether trust in influencers and brand perception mediate the relationship between influencer and content marketing and purchase intention. Addressing this question provides valuable insights into the mechanisms through which digital marketing strategies translate influence into actual consumer behavior.

This study aims to examine the impact of influencer marketing on YouTube and content marketing strategies on the purchase intention of Generation Z in Indonesia toward electronic products, with a particular focus on the mediating roles of consumer trust and brand perception. The study contributes theoretically by expanding research on digital marketing to an underexplored product category, introducing a dual-mediator framework, and exploring potential nonlinear relationships in marketing responses. From a practical perspective, the findings offer actionable guidance for marketers in Indonesia, emphasizing the importance of selecting credible influencers and maintaining consistent content narratives to effectively engage Gen Z consumers. As this generation emerges as a significant and influential segment in Indonesia's digital economy, insights from this study provide timely and strategic direction for marketers seeking to connect meaningfully with young, digitally native audiences.

Literature Review

2.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains that social interactions between individuals and other parties are built on the basis of value exchanges involving perceived rewards and costs (Blau, 1964). In the context of digital marketing, this theory can be used to understand how consumers evaluate their relationships with influencers and brands. Consumers will tend to maintain relationships if the benefits received, such as useful information, emotional connection, or increased self-confidence, are perceived to be greater than the costs, such as time, attention, or the potential risk of receiving biased information (Homans, 1974).

In the realm of influencer marketing, SET asserts that trust and credibility are forms of “social reciprocity” that influencers give to their audience, while purchase intent and brand loyalty are consumer responses as a form of “return” from that relationship (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Saima & Khan, 2021). Similarly, in content marketing, consumers are more likely to respond positively if the content provided is not only consistent but also valuable in terms of information and emotion (Pulizzi, 2012; Wu et al., 2024). In the context of electronic products, this theory is particularly relevant because Gen Z consumers are not only seeking entertainment but also a beneficial exchange in the form of in-depth knowledge about product specifications, quality, and real-world usage experiences. Thus, Social Exchange Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for explaining why trust and brand perception can serve as important mediators in the relationship between influencer/content marketing and purchase intention.

2.2 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is increasingly recognized as an effective communication strategy for shaping consumer attitudes and behavior through public figures who possess credibility and emotional closeness with their audience. By leveraging influencers’ perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and relatability, brands can create persuasive messages that resonate more deeply with potential consumers. Previous studies have shown that credibility, expertise, and parasocial relationships with influencers play a major role in building consumer trust and driving purchase intention (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sharkasi & Rezakhah, 2023). However, much of this research has concentrated on fashion and beauty products, leaving electronic products, a category that often involves higher-involvement, information-driven purchase decisions—underexplored (Seruni et al., 2024). This distinction is critical because the mechanisms through which influencer marketing affects purchase behavior may differ across product types; electronic products typically require more rational evaluation and technical information, which may alter the way trust, credibility, and emotional closeness influence decision-making.

The concept of influencer marketing is particularly important in today’s digital ecosystem because social media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, serve as primary sources of information and guidance for young consumers. Generation Z, as digital natives, actively seek content from influencers who provide authentic, relatable, and informative perspectives. Understanding influencer marketing’s effectiveness in this context provides both theoretical and practical insights: theoretically, it extends existing models

of consumer behavior by incorporating social influence factors in high-involvement purchase contexts; practically, it informs brands on how to strategically select influencers and design content to maximize engagement and purchase intention.

In the context of this study, influencer marketing is operationalized as the degree to which consumers perceive YouTube influencers as credible, trustworthy, and emotionally engaging when promoting electronic products. Specifically, three dimensions are considered: expertise, which reflects the influencer's knowledge and competence regarding the product; trustworthiness, which indicates the perceived honesty and reliability of the influencer; and parasocial interaction, which captures the emotional closeness and connection felt by viewers toward the influencer. By measuring these dimensions, the study can examine how influencer marketing shapes Generation Z's purchase intention directly and indirectly through mediating variables such as trust and brand perception.

Several recent studies highlight the nuanced effects of influencer marketing. For instance, Hmoud et al. (2023) emphasize that influencer credibility is a key determinant of purchase intention, while Saroyini and Putri (2024) suggest that emotional connection plays a more dominant role. These findings indicate that the impact of influencers is context-specific, varying across product categories and platforms. By focusing on electronic products on YouTube, this study aims to clarify how credibility, trust, and emotional closeness interact to influence consumer behavior, thereby filling a critical gap in the literature.

2.3 Content Marketing

Content marketing is defined as the creation and distribution of relevant,

valuable, and consistent content with the goal of attracting and retaining consumers (Pulizzi, 2012). In the digital age, this strategy has been shown to effectively enhance consumer engagement, brand awareness, and loyalty (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Recent research further confirms that emotional and authentic content can strengthen brand resonance and positively influence purchase intention (Wu et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of content marketing is not always guaranteed; Wang et al. (2023) caution that uncoordinated, inconsistent, or irrelevant content can erode consumer trust and undermine brand credibility.

The importance of content marketing is particularly pronounced in the context of electronic products, where consumer decision-making is typically more rational and information-driven, relying heavily on technical specifications, pricing, and after-sales service quality (Kireyev et al., 2016). Unlike fashion or beauty products, which are largely influenced by lifestyle and emotional appeal, consumers of electronic products expect educational, comparative, and transparent content that reduces perceived purchase risk. Content that fails to meet these expectations may not only reduce trust but also negatively impact purchase intention (Izza et al., 2024; Putra et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding how content quality, consistency, and relevance affect Gen Z's purchase behavior is critical, particularly in platforms such as YouTube where consumers actively seek informative and reliable product guidance.

In this study, content marketing is operationalized through three key dimensions: content relevance, which measures how well the content aligns with consumer information needs; content consistency, which captures the

coherence and regularity of messages across campaigns; and content value, which assesses the perceived usefulness and informativeness of the content. By evaluating these dimensions, the study investigates how content marketing directly influences Gen Z consumers' purchase intention and indirectly affects their behavior through mediating variables such as trust in the influencer and brand perception.

2.4 Trust in Influencers

Consumer trust in influencers functions as a critical bridge between marketing messages and actual purchasing decisions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Research indicates that trust can fully mediate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention (Saima & Khan, 2021). However, most studies have focused on visual-based platforms such as Instagram, leaving YouTube relatively underexplored despite its richer audio-visual format and potential to build stronger trust through more in-depth content. This highlights the need to re-examine the role of trust in the context of YouTube and electronic products.

Trust in influencers is central to how consumers evaluate the credibility and reliability of promotional messages. When followers perceive influencers as honest, transparent, and knowledgeable, they are more likely to internalize marketing messages and translate them into favorable brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Saima & Khan, 2021). This is particularly relevant for Generation Z, who tend to be highly skeptical of traditional advertising and place significant value on authenticity, peer-like recommendations, and relatable content (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

The role of trust becomes even more critical in the context of electronic

products. These products often involve higher involvement, require technical knowledge, and carry greater perceived risk, prompting consumers to seek credible and detailed information before making purchasing decisions. Without trust in the influencer, even persuasive content may be dismissed as biased or purely commercial, reducing its effectiveness in shaping purchase intention (Hmoud et al., 2023).

In this study, trust in influencers is operationalized as the extent to which consumers perceive YouTube influencers as credible, honest, and reliable in providing information about electronic products. Measuring this construct allows the research to examine how influencer trust mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention, providing insights into the psychological mechanisms that drive the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies for Generation Z.

2.5 Brand Perception

Brand perception refers to the subjective evaluations and interpretations consumers form about a brand based on their personal experiences, interactions with marketing content, and social recommendations (Chen et al., 2023). Unlike brand image, which is a strategic and deliberate representation designed by companies through branding initiatives, visual identity, and marketing communications (Kotler & Keller, 2016), brand perception reflects the authentic impressions that exist in consumers' minds. In essence, brand image represents "what the company wants to convey," while brand perception captures "what consumers actually perceive and feel" (Kuswoyo et al., 2022). This distinction is critical because the success of marketing strategies

ultimately hinges not on the intended image but on the perceptions held by consumers. A well-crafted brand image can fail to resonate if it does not align with consumer experience and expectation.

The importance of brand perception is particularly evident in shaping purchase intention, especially among Gen Z consumers, who are highly discerning and skeptical of traditional marketing claims (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). This generation prioritizes authenticity and is more inclined to trust firsthand experiences, organic reviews, and genuine content over corporate assertions (Hermawan, 2023; Wu et al., 2024). In the electronic products sector, where decisions rely heavily on detailed knowledge about product quality, functionality, and durability, consumer perceptions of honesty, consistency, and brand reliability become critical determinants of purchase behavior. Research shows that any significant gap between the company's projected brand image and the consumer's perceived brand identity can negatively affect purchase intention (Wang et al., 2023).

Consequently, understanding and actively managing brand perception is essential for aligning marketing communications with consumer expectations. By focusing on how consumers perceive the brand rather than solely on how the brand wishes to be perceived, companies can enhance engagement, build trust, and ultimately drive purchase behavior (Mandagi et al., 2021).

2.6 Purchase intention

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's conscious inclination or likelihood to buy a product or service, shaped by their evaluations, perceptions, and experiences derived from diverse sources of information (Kotler & Keller,

2016). This construct is widely regarded as a critical predictor of actual purchasing behavior, as intention reflects the translation of attitudes and perceptions into potential action. In other words, a strong purchase intention indicates that a consumer's favorable evaluation has progressed toward an actionable decision.

Operationally, purchase intention can be assessed through metrics such as the likelihood to buy, willingness to try, and preference over competing products. These measurements often rely on surveys, experimental designs, or behavioral proxies such as click-through rates, wish-list additions, or pre-order commitments. By capturing both cognitive (e.g., product evaluation, perceived value) and affective (e.g., emotional attachment, trust) dimensions, researchers and marketers can better understand the drivers behind consumer decision-making.

Research has demonstrated that multiple influencers, including perceived credibility of sources, content quality, and brand reputation, significantly shape purchase intention, particularly among younger, digitally native consumers (Pinto, 2021; Saima & Khan, 2021; Sijabat et al., 2022). In the context of electronic goods, consumers tend to seek detailed information regarding technical specifications, benefits, and product quality before committing to a purchase. Consequently, they rely on sources perceived as credible and relevant, such as expert reviews, authentic user experiences, and trustworthy influencers.

Beyond serving as a predictor of behavior, purchase intention functions as a bridge between external marketing efforts and consumers' ultimate purchasing decisions (Hmoud et al., 2023). This underscores the notion that purchase intention does not emerge

solely from exposure to marketing communications; it is also shaped by consumers' perceptions of message authenticity, relevance, and credibility (Waworuntu et al., 2022). Generation Z, in particular, exhibits heightened skepticism toward overt marketing messages, often dismissing them as exaggerated or inauthentic (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). This demographic is more responsive to information that demonstrates genuine experiences and practical value. Purchase intention for this group is strengthened when they perceive a favourable balance between the benefits of acting on the information received and the potential risks associated with the purchase.

In the electronic products sector, purchase intention is especially critical due to the high level of consumer involvement and the requirement for verifiable product evidence (Rantung et al., 2023). Consumers demand trustworthy, detailed information before committing to high-involvement purchases, making the accurate assessment and strategic enhancement of purchase intention a cornerstone of effective digital marketing (Walewangko et al., 2024). By understanding the cognitive and affective mechanisms underlying this intention, companies can design content, influencer collaborations, and communication strategies that resonate authentically with target audiences, thereby increasing the likelihood of conversion (Rantung et al., 2025).

2.7 Hypothesis Development

SET posits that relationships between parties, such as consumers and influencers or brands, are maintained when the perceived benefits of interaction outweigh the associated costs (Homans, 1974; Blau, 1964). In the

context of YouTube marketing, influencer credibility and consistent content quality act as valuable resources that strengthen consumer trust, enhance brand perception, and ultimately shape purchase intentions. Conversely, when consumers perceive greater costs than benefits, they are more likely to reject marketing messages (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Saima & Khan, 2021).

Influencer marketing is recognized as an effective strategy in shaping consumer behavior due to influencers' credibility, expertise, and emotional connection with their audience (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). According to SET, consumers maintain relationships with influencers when the benefits of relevant information and trustworthy recommendations exceed the costs, such as exposure to commercial bias (Sijabat et al., 2022). Accordingly, influencer marketing on YouTube is expected to positively influence purchase intention among Generation Z consumers.

H1: Influencer marketing has a significant impact on Generation Z consumers' purchase intention for electronic products.

Relevant, consistent, and valuable content marketing can enhance consumer engagement and reinforce purchase intention (Pulizzi, 2012; Holliman & Rowley, 2014). For electronic products, Generation Z tends to seek informative content such as specification comparisons, real-world reviews, and experience-based recommendations (Kireyev et al., 2016). In line with SET, the perceived benefits of high-quality content outweigh the potential costs of time or unreliable information.

H2: Content marketing strategies have a significant impact on Generation Z

consumers' purchase intention for electronic products.

Trust is a foundational element in consumer-influencer relationships (Lou & Yuan, 2019). SET suggests that successful exchanges occur when mutual trust provides perceived value to both parties (Blau, 1964). In influencer marketing, trust enhances consumers' receptiveness to product recommendations and increases the likelihood of translating these interactions into purchase intention.

H3: Consumer trust in influencers significantly mediates the positive relationship between influencer marketing and Generation Z's purchase intention for electronic products.

Brand perception is shaped by consumers' interpretations of content, social interactions, and product experiences (Chen, Yan, & Smith, 2023). SET indicates that informative and consistent content increases the perceived value of the exchange, fostering positive brand perceptions. Conversely, poor or irrelevant content diminishes these benefits, reducing purchase intention.

H4: Brand perception significantly mediates the positive relationship between YouTube content marketing strategies and Generation Z's intention to purchase electronic products.

Influencer marketing can enhance consumer purchase intention when consumers trust the influencer delivering the message. Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains that trust acts as a social reward that reinforces the perceived benefits of interaction, making consumers more receptive to recommendations (Blau, 1964; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Empirical studies show that trust is a key mediator in influencer

marketing, particularly among digitally native audiences such as Generation Z, who prioritize authenticity and credibility before acting on product recommendations (Saima & Khan, 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is introduced:

H5a: Influencer marketing significantly affects purchase intention, mediated by consumer trust in the influencer.

Theoretically, SET suggests that when consumers perceive the benefits of interactions, such as credible endorsements and informative content, as outweighing the costs, positive brand perception is reinforced (Blau, 1964). Empirical evidence supports this, showing that influencer credibility, communication style, and authentic recommendations can enhance brand perception, which then drives purchase behavior (Kuswoyo et al., 2022). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was developed:

H5b: Influencer marketing significantly affects purchase intention, mediated by brand perception.

Content marketing strengthens trust in both the brand and the influencer when the content is authentic, consistent, and valuable. From the SET perspective, trust represents a social reward that validates high-quality exchanges and increases consumers' willingness to act on information (Blau, 1964). Empirical studies indicate that effective content marketing builds trust, which subsequently enhances purchase intention, especially for products that require detailed evaluation such as electronics (Wu et al., 2024). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H5c: Content marketing strategy significantly affects purchase

intention, mediated by consumer trust in the influencer (Wu et al., 2024).

Content marketing also influences purchase intention indirectly by shaping brand perception. SET posits that consumers perceive value in high-quality informational and experiential exchanges, which enhances brand perception and encourages action (Blau, 1964). Empirical research confirms that consistent and relevant content improves brand perception, which in turn positively affects purchase intention, particularly among Generation Z consumers evaluating high-involvement products (Pulizzi, 2012; Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H5d: Content marketing strategy significantly affects purchase intention, mediated by brand perception (Pulizzi, 2012; Wang et al., 2023).

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework, depicting the relationships and corresponding hypotheses (H1 to H5d) among the variables investigated in this study.

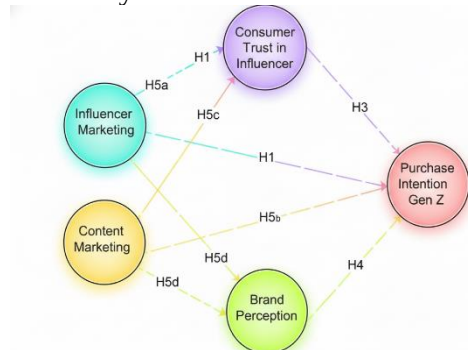


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design, which aims to examine the relationships between variables and determine the strength and direction of these relationships. A correlational design is suitable for understanding how

influencer marketing and content marketing influence Generation Z consumers' purchase intention for electronic products on YouTube, both directly and through mediating variables such as trust and brand perception. This design allows for statistical testing of hypotheses and the modeling of complex relationships using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that respondents met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). The target population comprised Generation Z consumers (born approximately 1997–2012) who had watched promotional content for electronic products on YouTube within the last three months. This group was selected because they are digital natives highly influenced by social media and online content in their purchasing decisions (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). According to a survey by Marketeers, 87% of Indonesian Generation Z make purchases based on influencer recommendations (Yunianto, 2023).

Respondents were required to meet the following criteria: belonging to Generation Z, having watched electronic product videos on YouTube in the last three months, and being interested in recommendations provided by influencers. To ensure ethical compliance, respondents' ages were limited to 17–28 years, with a minimum age of 17 to avoid involving minors without parental consent (Israel & Hay, 2006). Filter questions were included at the beginning of the questionnaire to screen participants and confirm eligibility. A total of 193 respondents participated, which is sufficient for statistical analysis using PLS-SEM. This sample meets the common rule of thumb

for PLS-SEM (at least 10 times the number of indicators) and is adequate given PLS-SEM's tolerance for moderate sample sizes and non-normal data distribution (Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009).

3.2 Measurement

The research instrument was a questionnaire developed by the researchers, based on a synthesis of theory and prior studies on influencer marketing, content marketing, consumer trust in influencers, brand perception, and purchase intention (Pulizzi, 2012; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Kotler & Keller, 2016). The questionnaire was designed to capture the context of YouTube promotion for electronic products. It consisted of two parts: the first part gathered demographic information including gender, age, highest education level, and occupation, while the second part contained 35 statements divided into five constructs: Influencer Marketing (IM, 7 items), Content Marketing (CM, 7 items), Consumer Trust in Influencers (CTI, 7 items), Brand Perception (BP, 7 items), and Purchase Intention (PI, 7 items). All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A pilot test with 30 respondents was conducted to ensure validity and reliability. All items were found valid ($r > 0.361$, $p < 0.05$), and all constructs had high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha: IM = 0.842, CM = 0.839, CTI = 0.819, BP = 0.862, PI = 0.854), demonstrating that the questionnaire is appropriate for measuring the intended constructs.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through an online survey via Google Forms. Respondents were guaranteed anonymity and assigned unique identification codes to protect privacy.

The survey link was distributed in WhatsApp groups in Jayapura City, accompanied by clear instructions to ensure proper understanding and response. After submission, responses were checked for completeness and consistency to minimize missing data and maintain quality.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it can handle complex models, is suitable for moderate sample sizes, and does not require normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2017). Analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model (outer model) was assessed to ensure construct validity and reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings (>0.70 , acceptable $0.60-0.70$) and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, Cross Loadings, and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio ($HTMT < 0.90$). Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability ($CR \geq 0.70$). Second, the structural model (inner model) was analyzed to test relationships between latent constructs. This involved evaluating the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and path significance using bootstrapping. R^2 values were interpreted as weak (0.25), moderate (0.50), or strong (0.75), while $Q^2 > 0$ indicated predictive relevance. Path significance was determined using a t-statistic > 1.96 at a 5% significance level (two-tailed). This approach ensured that the model had adequate validity, reliability, and predictive power for testing the hypothesized relationships.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Analysis

The respondents in this study consisted of 193 individuals, with a nearly equal gender distribution of 51% male and 49% female. Most were young adults aged 17–22 years (62%), while 38% were aged 23–28 years. In terms of education, the majority had completed high school or an equivalent (68%), followed by bachelor's degree holders (31%), and a very small portion had postgraduate qualifications (1%). Regarding occupation, respondents were

primarily private employees (40%) and students (33%), with civil servants (12%), company owners (12%), and others (3%) comprising the remainder. Monthly income varied, with the largest group earning IDR 4,000,000–6,000,000 (34%), followed by IDR 2,000,000–4,000,000 (28%), below IDR 2,000,000 (23%), and above IDR 6,000,000 (15%). Overall, the sample reflects a young, mostly educated population with diverse occupations and predominantly middle-income levels.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Data

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	99	51%
Female	94	49%
Age		
17–22	120	62%
23–28	73	38%
Highest Education		
Postgraduate (Master/Doctorate)	2	1%
Bachelor (S1)	60	31%
High School/Equivalent	131	68%
Occupation		
Private Employee	77	40%
Civil Servant	24	12%
Student	64	33%
Company Owner	23	12%
Others	5	3%
Monthly Income		
< IDR 2,000,000	44	23%
> IDR 6,000,000	29	15%
IDR 2,000,000 – IDR 4,000,000	55	28%
IDR 4,000,000 – IDR 6,000,000	65	34%

4.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed to determine whether the indicators of each construct consistently reflect the intended latent variable. As shown in Table 2, all indicators across the five constructs (i.e., CM, IM, CTI, PI, and BP) exhibited factor loadings above the

recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.747 to 0.862. This indicates that each indicator adequately represents its respective construct (Hair et al., 2019). Although a few indicators had loadings close to the minimum threshold, they still met the criteria, so no items were removed from the analysis.

Table 2. Factor Loadings

Indicator	CM	IM	KKI	MB	PM	AVE
CM						0,638
CM1	0,862					
CM2	0,800					
CM3	0,807					
CM4	0,756					
CM5	0,816					
CM6	0,792					
CM7	0,756					
IM						0,651
IM1		0,805				
IM2		0,827				
IM3		0,765				
IM4		0,783				
IM5		0,817				
IM6		0,853				
IM7		0,797				
CTI						0,634
CTI1			0,755			
CTI2			0,817			
CTI3			0,807			
CTI4			0,765			
CTI5			0,766			
CTI6			0,832			
CTI7			0,830			
PI						0,621
PI1				0,812		
PI2				0,750		
PI3				0,800		
PI4				0,841		
PI5				0,747		
PI6				0,780		
PI7				0,780		
BP						0,619
BP1					0,747	
BP2					0,752	
BP3					0,822	
BP4					0,836	
BP5					0,791	
BP6					0,787	
BP7					0,765	

Furthermore, the AVE for all constructs exceeded the minimum requirement of 0.50, with values of 0.638 (CM), 0.651 (IM), 0.634 (CTI), 0.621

(PI), and 0.619 (BP). This demonstrates that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators, confirming that the constructs possess

adequate convergent validity. Overall, these results indicate that all constructs in the study are valid representations of their underlying concepts and are suitable for further structural analysis.

4.3 Discriminant Validity

One of the criteria for testing discriminant validity is using the Fornell-Larcker approach and cross-loading analysis. The Fornell-Larcker

criterion is considered met when the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than the correlation between constructs of all other constructs in the model. This indicates that the construct is more closely related to the indicators of the construct itself compared to other constructs. The results of the Fornell-Larcker correlation coefficient for this study are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Fornell – Larcker Criterion

	BP	CTI	CM	IM	PI
BP	0,788				
CTI	0,364	0,796			
CM	0,296	0,413	0,797		
IM	0,295	0,425	0,393	0,808	
PI	0,304	0,395	0,402	0,433	0,790

The discriminant validity test using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion shows that all constructs in this study have met the requirements for discriminant validity. This is evidenced by the square root of the AVE for each construct (BP: 0.788, CTI: 0.796, CM: 0.797, IM: 0.808, PI: 0.790) which is greater than the correlation value between constructs. This means that all constructs clearly measure different concepts without overlapping between

variables, so that the measurement model is considered valid and useful for further analysis.

Discriminant validity cannot only rely on the Fornell–Larcker criterion; it must also be verified through cross-loading analysis. In this method, the loading value of each indicator on the measured construct must exceed the loading of the indicator on other constructs.

Table 4. Cross Loading

	BP	CTI	CM	IM	PI
BP1	0,743	0,287	0,242	0,162	0,235
BP2	0,755	0,240	0,180	0,176	0,281
BP3	0,826	0,357	0,253	0,246	0,238
BP4	0,833	0,298	0,291	0,260	0,231
BP5	0,790	0,275	0,179	0,195	0,202
BP6	0,788	0,266	0,272	0,304	0,239
BP7	0,778	0,283	0,195	0,260	0,250
CM1	0,251	0,329	0,859	0,331	0,316
CM2	0,231	0,308	0,798	0,311	0,295
CM3	0,228	0,341	0,802	0,326	0,346
CM4	0,263	0,329	0,748	0,326	0,332
CM5	0,204	0,334	0,821	0,302	0,315
CM6	0,268	0,337	0,792	0,272	0,327
CM7	0,198	0,321	0,754	0,322	0,307

CTI1	0,264	0,758	0,252	0,281	0,249
CTI2	0,258	0,815	0,359	0,391	0,363
CTI3	0,284	0,804	0,346	0,365	0,409
CTI4	0,266	0,764	0,283	0,317	0,318
CTI5	0,291	0,768	0,314	0,264	0,195
CTI6	0,303	0,830	0,376	0,426	0,314
CTI7	0,372	0,827	0,344	0,273	0,297
IM1	0,249	0,332	0,314	0,811	0,322
IM2	0,259	0,369	0,360	0,828	0,381
IM3	0,189	0,293	0,231	0,765	0,338
IM4	0,190	0,321	0,283	0,783	0,293
IM5	0,273	0,408	0,393	0,818	0,389
IM6	0,219	0,357	0,281	0,851	0,357
IM7	0,277	0,306	0,335	0,798	0,357
PI1	0,246	0,357	0,277	0,381	0,818
PI2	0,228	0,297	0,350	0,350	0,751
PI3	0,203	0,306	0,308	0,404	0,801
PI4	0,427	0,403	0,355	0,455	0,846
PI5	0,163	0,288	0,309	0,245	0,746
PI6	0,145	0,243	0,297	0,206	0,782
PI7	0,170	0,235	0,320	0,258	0,781

The results of discriminant validity testing using the cross loading approach show that each indicator has a higher loading value on its own construct than on other constructs. For example, indicator BP1 has a loading of 0.743 on the BP construct, which is higher than its correlation with the CTI (0.287), CM (0.242), IM (0.162), and PI (0.235) constructs. The same pattern is also seen in other indicators, such as CM1 (0.859 on CM), CTI2 (0.815 on CTI), IM1 (0.811 on IM), and PI4 (0.846 on PI), where the highest loading value is always on its original construct.

Thus, these results indicate that each indicator truly reflects the intended construct and does not have a stronger correlation with other constructs. This condition meets the discriminant validity

criteria according to Hair et al. (2019), which states that good cross loading is indicated when the indicator loading value is greater on the construct being measured than on other constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the measurement model in this study has met the discriminant validity requirements based on the cross loading test.

4.4 Reliability Test

In this study, construct reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability metrics. As shown in Table 5, all constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability scores above the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating excellent reliability.

Table 5. Construct Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Description
BP	0,898	0,920	Reliable
CTI	0,904	0,923	Reliable

CM	0,904	0,924	Reliable
IM	0,911	0,929	Reliable
PI	0,900	0,921	Reliable

Based on the results in table 5, the values for Cronbach's Alpha for each construct are as follows: Influencer Marketing (0.911), Consumer Trust in Influencers (0.904), Purchase Intention (0.900), Brand Perception (0.898), and Content Marketing (0.904). In addition, the Composite Reliability scores are also high: Influencer Marketing (0.929), Consumer Trust in Influencers (0.923), Purchase Intention (0.921), Brand Perception (0.920), and Content Marketing (0.924).

These results indicate that all constructs in the research model are confirmed to have a high level of internal consistency, so that the measurement instrument used can be relied on for the intended construct. Therefore, this model is justified for further analysis either in structural model testing or in hypothesis testing.

4.5 Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

The purpose of assessing the internal model or structural model is focused on the causal relationship between latent constructs as determined in the research hypothesis. Evaluation of the internal model is carried out by examining the values of the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2).

4.5.1 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis is used to measure how much variability in the dependent construct can be explained by the independent constructs in the model. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination

	R Square
Brand Perception	0,126
Consumer Trust in Influencer	0,252
Purchase Intention Gen Z	0,289

The analysis of the coefficient of determination (R^2) in table 6 shows that the Consumer Trust in Influencer variable obtained an R^2 value of 0.252, for the Purchase Intention variable of 0.289, and for Brand Perception of 0.126. From these results, it can be interpreted that this model is able to explain the variability of the dependent construct moderately for both Trust and Purchase Intention, while for Brand Perception it looks weak but is still acceptable in the context of social research in a complex system.

4.5.2 Effect Size Analysis

The results of the effect size (F^2) analysis in Table 7 show that most of the relationships between variables have a small effect according to the criteria of Hair et al. (2019). Brand Perception (BP) has a very weak effect on Purchase Intention (PI) ($F^2 = 0.014$), while Consumer Trust in Influencer (CTI) has a small effect on PI ($F^2 = 0.027$) with a more significant contribution from Content Marketing (0.096) and Influencer Marketing (0.109). Content Marketing itself has a small effect on Brand Perception (0.044) and PI (0.044), while Influencer Marketing has a small effect on Brand Perception (0.043), CTI

(0.109), and PI (0.067). Overall, these findings indicate that Content Marketing and Influencer Marketing contribute

more to building consumer trust, which ultimately drives Generation Z's purchase intent.

Table 7. Effect Size (F^2)

	BP	CTI	CM	IM	PI
BP					0,014
CTI					0,027
CM	0,044	0,096			0,044
IM	0,043	0,109			0,067
PI					

Furthermore, Table 8 presents the results of the model fit test using the Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.806. The NFI value approaching 1 indicates a good fit between the model and the data. In addition, the Root Mean Square Theta (RMS Theta) value of 0.114 also supports the model's suitability, because it is below the threshold of 0.12 which generally indicates an acceptable structural model. Therefore, these results indicate that the research model has adequate suitability for further analysis.

Table 8. Fit Model (NFI)

Fit Model	Value
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NFI 0,806

Rms theta 0,114

Based on the analysis results shown in Table 9, the Q^2 value for the Consumer Trust in Influencer variable is 0.153, for Brand Perception 0.074, and for Purchase Intention 0.167. A positive Q^2 value (> 0) indicates that the model has good predictive relevance. In this study, Q^2 is above 0 for all investment variables and indicates the ability to predict the constructs of Consumer Trust in Influencers, Purchase Intention, and Brand Perception with an adequate level of accuracy.

Table 9. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
BP	1351,000	1251,034	0,074
CTI	1351,000	1144,834	0,153
CM	1351,000	1351,000	
IM	1351,000	1351,000	
PI	1351,000	1125,545	0,167

4.8 Hypothesis Testing

After the model measurement completes all validity and reliability indicators, the next step is to examine the structural model. This stage is dedicated to hypothesis testing in order to investigate each hypothesis that has been proposed in the study. Testing the structural model requires evaluating the significance of the path coefficients using the Bootstrapping feature in the SmartPLS 3.2.9 statistical software. The

results of the structural model analysis are presented in Figure 3 and Table 10.

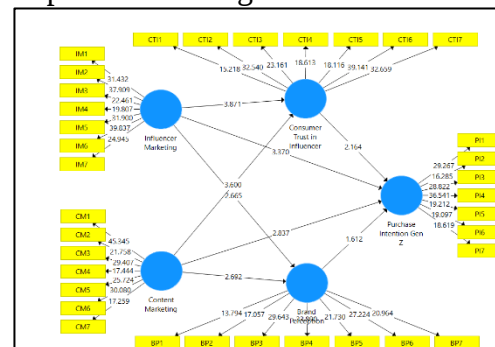


Figure 3. Structural Model

4.8.1 Direct Effect

Influencer Marketing (IM) has been proven to have a significant effect on Consumer Trust in Influencers (CTI) with a value of $t = 3.871$, on Brand Perception (BP) with $t = 2.665$, and on Purchase Intention (PI) with $t = 3.370$. This indicates that influencer marketing strategies consistently build consumer trust, strengthen brand perception, and directly increase Generation Z's purchase intention.

Content Marketing (CM) also shows a significant influence on CTI ($t =$

3.600), BP ($t = 2.692$), and PI ($t = 2.837$). This means that relevant and interesting content not only increases consumer trust in influencers but also strengthens brand image and encourages purchase interest. Meanwhile, CTI has a significant effect on PI ($t = 2.164$), confirming that consumer trust in influencers is an important factor in shaping purchase intent. Unlike other variables, BP does not show a significant effect on PI ($t = 1.612$), indicating that brand perception is not yet strong enough to directly drive purchase intent.

Table 10. Direct Effects Hypothesis

	Hypothesis	Original Sample	Std Dev	T Statistics	P Values	Significant
BP > PI	H4	0,110	0,068	1,612	0,107	No
CTI > PI	H3	0,165	0,076	2,164	0,031	Yes
CM > BP	H5d	0,213	0,079	2,692	0,007	Yes
CM > CTI	H5c	0,291	0,081	3,600	0,000	Yes
CM > PI	H2	0,203	0,072	2,837	0,005	Yes
IM > BP	H5b	0,212	0,079	2,665	0,008	Yes
IM > CTI	H5a	0,311	0,080	3,871	0,000	Yes
IM > PI	H1	0,251	0,075	3,370	0,001	Yes

4.8.2 Indirect Effect

The results of the indirect effect show that Brand Perception (BP) does not mediate the relationship of Content Marketing (CM) and Influencer Marketing (IM) to Purchase Intention (PI). It is seen from the t-statistic values of $CM \rightarrow BP \rightarrow PI$ ($t = 1,266$; $p = 0,205$) and $IM \rightarrow BP \rightarrow PI$ ($t = 1,315$; $p = 0,188$) which are not significant. Therefore, brand perception does not serve as an effective mediating path to increase purchase intention of Generation Z.

Meanwhile, Consumer Trust in Influencer (CTI) has also not been shown to be significantly mediated in the relationship between $CM \rightarrow PI$ and $IM \rightarrow PI$. Value of t-statistic $CM \rightarrow CTI \rightarrow$

PI of $1,719$ ($p = 0,086$) and $IM \rightarrow CTI \rightarrow PI$ of $1,853$ ($p = 0,064$) both below the 5% significance boundary. However, it can be interpreted that a p-value approaching 0.05 indicates sufficient evidence for potential partial mediation.

The results show that brand perception and consumer trust in influencers are not yet effective mediators of content marketing and influencer marketing on purchase intention. In other words, the primary influence on Generation Z's buying intention is more likely to be demonstrated through direct relationships rather than indirect mechanisms.

Table 11. Indirect Effects Hypothesis

	Original Sample	Std Dev	T Statistics	P Values	Significant
CM > BP > PI	0,023	0,018	1,266	0,205	No
IM > BP > PI	0,023	0,018	1,315	0,188	No
CM > CTI > PI	0,048	0,028	1,719	0,086	No
IM > CTI > PI	0,051	0,028	1,853	0,064	No

4.10 Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that influencer marketing and content marketing on YouTube have a direct and significant influence on purchase intention among Gen Z for electronic products. This finding is consistent with research by Hmoud et al. (2023), which stated that influencer credibility and attractiveness are key factors in shaping the purchasing decisions of the younger generation. In the context of the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974), this result suggests that Gen Z perceives the benefits, in the form of relevant information and trustworthy recommendations, as greater than the potential costs, such as commercial bias. Consequently, the social relationship between the consumer and the influencer can be maintained.

Moreover, content marketing was also proven to directly contribute to purchase intention, brand perception, and consumer trust. This supports the arguments of Pulizzi (2012) and Wu et al. (2024) that relevant, consistent, and valuable content can increase consumer engagement while strengthening purchase intention. In the context of electronic products, which demand rational evaluation, the presence of informative content (e.g., specification comparisons, real-life experience reviews) becomes a social value perceived as beneficial by Gen Z consumers.

However, the study's results also revealed that the mediating role of brand perception is not significant, neither in

the path from influencer marketing nor from content marketing to purchase intention. This differs from the findings of Kuswoyo et al. (2022), which emphasized the importance of brand perception in the fashion product category. This difference can be explained by the characteristic of electronic products, which are based more on technical information and tangible evidence, meaning brand perception is not yet strong enough to be the primary determining factor in purchase intention. Thus, brand perception for Gen Z acts more as a supporting factor rather than a primary mediating path.

Conversely, consumer trust shows an indication of a partial mediating role, although its significance is at the boundary (p approaches 0.05). This corroborates the findings of Saima & Khan (2021) that trust can be a bridge between the influencer's message and consumer behavior. Nevertheless, this study's results also indicate that, in the context of electronic products, trust has not fully formed as a dominant mediator. This may be linked to the tendency of Gen Z to be more critical, demanding high transparency, and relying on more than one source of information before making a decision (Chen, Yan, & Smith, 2023).

Consequently, the theoretical implication of these findings is the reinforcement of Social Exchange Theory in the context of digital marketing for electronic products, where benefits like influencer credibility and

content consistency play a more significant role than brand image factors. The practical implication is that companies need to be more selective in choosing influencers with an authentic reputation and ensure consistency in content narrative, as these two factors have been proven to significantly affect Gen Z's purchase intention.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings, influencer marketing and content marketing on YouTube positively and significantly influence the purchasing intention, consumer trust, and brand image of Indonesian Gen Z consumers in the context of electronic products. When the mediation test was conducted, it was found that the consumer trust had an indication of a partial mediation on the influencer marketing and purchase intention relationship although not strongly significant. Meanwhile, customer perception of a brand wasn't a significant mediator. This means that for branding of electronic products through digital advertising, the crucial factors are credibility of influencers and content congruity.

This study theoretically contributes to the application of SET by claiming that the social value of credibility and content relevance is more decisive in establishing a reciprocal relationship with Gen Z consumers. The study adds to the literature on digital marketing. For the electronic product category, the influence of trust and informative content is greater than the influence of brand image.

Practically, the research results emphasize the importance for companies to: (1) choose influencers who have an authentic and trustworthy reputation, (2) ensure consistency of content narratives across platforms, and (3) provide content that is informative, comparative, and

tailored to Gen Z's needs. This strategy will be more effective in increasing Gen Z's purchasing interest in electronic products than relying solely on branding-based campaigns.

This study has limitations in the use of samples limited to Gen Z in Jayapura City so that the results cannot be generalized to the entire Gen Z population in Indonesia. In addition, being focused on Youtube, this study cannot be compared with changes on any other platform like Instagram, TikTok and/or marketplaces. Future studies could add a diverse sample, multi-platform comparisons or other variables, such as parasocial relationships, brand engagement or consumer scepticism, to enhance our understanding of the psychological mechanisms driving Gen Z's purchase intention toward electronic products.

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