

## The Influence of Influencer Marketing, Brand Image and Electronic Word of Mouth on Emina Skincare Purchase Decisions in Generation Z in Cirebon City

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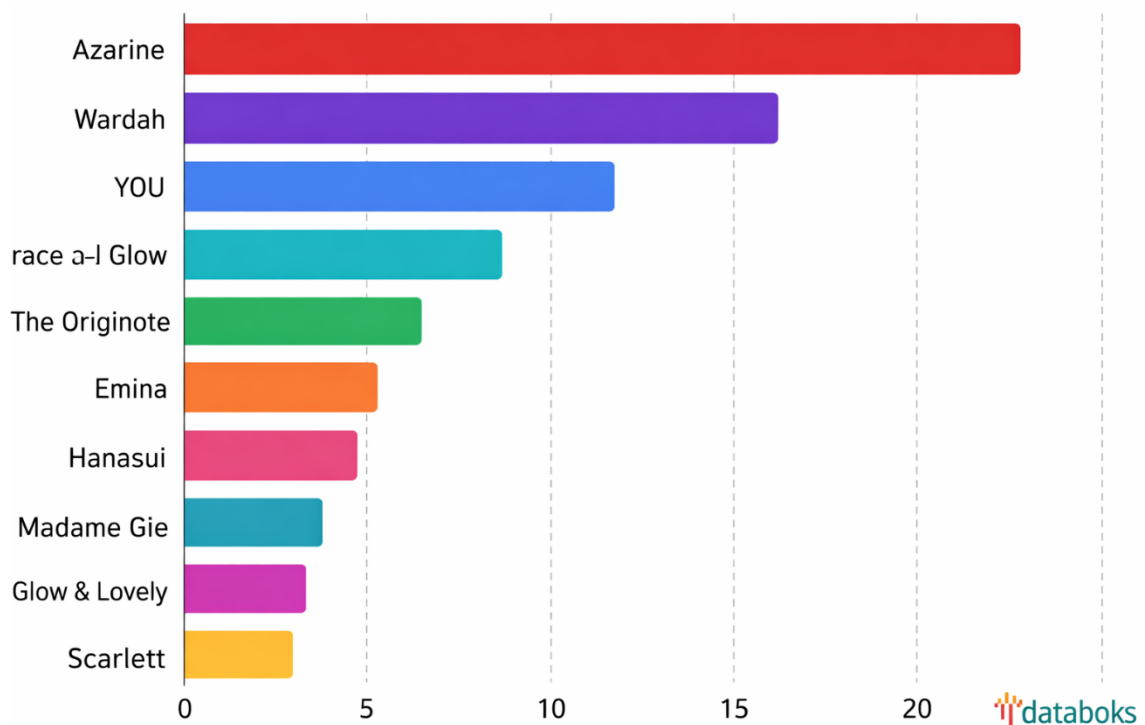
### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the influence of influencer marketing, brand image, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on purchasing decisions for Emina skincare products among Generation Z consumers in Cirebon City. Using a quantitative associative approach, data were collected through questionnaires from 200 respondents and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings indicate that influencer marketing, brand image, and e-WOM each have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions, both partially and simultaneously ( $p < 0.05$ ). Among these variables, brand image emerges as the most dominant factor, followed by e-WOM and influencer marketing. The coefficient of determination shows that the three variables explain a substantial proportion of variation in purchasing decisions ( $R^2 \approx 0.85$ ), indicating a strong explanatory power of the model. These results suggest that purchasing decisions among Generation Z are shaped not only by promotional exposure through influencers but also by brand credibility and peer-generated online information. This study contributes contextually by providing empirical evidence from a medium-sized city and focusing on a local skincare brand, offering insights into how digital marketing strategies operate among Generation Z consumers outside major metropolitan areas.*

## INTRODUCTION

The cosmetics industry in Indonesia has experienced rapid growth, accompanied by increasing public awareness of skincare and personal health. This development has encouraged the rise of local skincare brands, which are increasingly favored by younger consumers. Generation Z, as a digitally native cohort, tends to be more selective and information-oriented in making purchasing decisions. This generation actively utilizes social media and electronic devices to evaluate product quality, credibility, and peer experiences before purchasing (Fernando et al., 2025).

Changes in consumer behavior among Generation Z have significantly influenced marketing communication strategies. Compared to conventional advertising, this generation places greater trust in recommendations from peers, online reviews, and social media influencers whom they perceive as authentic and relatable. Information derived from real user experiences is considered more credible and relevant, leading companies to adopt more interactive and trust-based digital marketing approaches (Amani & Agus, 2025).



**Figure 1. Top Best-Selling Skincare Brands in E-Commerce**

Source: Shalsabilla et al., 2025

The competitive dynamics of the local skincare market are illustrated in **Figure 1**, which presents the ranking of top best-selling skincare brands in Indonesian e-commerce platforms (Shalsabilla et al., 2025). The figure shows that while Emina has consistently remained among popular brands, its position has fluctuated over time due to intensifying competition. Emina's

sales increased significantly from IDR 2.1 billion in February 2021 to IDR 7.4 billion in the second quarter of 2022 (Kompas.co.id, 2021), reflecting strong acceptance among young consumers due to affordable pricing and brand positioning. However, subsequent data indicate a decline in turnover and ranking in late 2022 and 2024, suggesting growing pressure from competing local brands such as Azarine, Wardah, YOU, Grace & Glow, and The Originote (Kompas.co.id, 2022; Shalsabilla et al., 2025).

Despite facing intense competition, Emina continues to strive to maintain its presence through digital marketing strategies. One key strategy employed is influencer marketing, which involves partnering with credible figures in the beauty industry. Influencer selection is based not only on the number of followers but also on the alignment of values and membership with the products being promoted. This approach aims to build consumer trust in the brand (Fernando et al., 2025).

To address competitive challenges, Emina has actively implemented digital marketing strategies, particularly influencer marketing. This strategy involves collaboration with beauty influencers whose values and product usage align with the brand, aiming to enhance credibility and consumer trust rather than merely maximizing exposure (Fernando et al., 2025). Influencer-generated content typically emphasizes storytelling and personal experience, which has been shown to be effective in attracting attention and building emotional connections with Generation Z audiences (Dewi & Puspita, 2025).

In addition to influencer marketing, brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions of skincare products. A positive brand image can increase consumer confidence in the quality and safety of the products they use. Consistent product quality and clear brand communication are key factors in maintaining a reputation. A strong brand image also helps companies maintain consumer loyalty (Kinasih et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2024).

Beyond influencer marketing, brand image remains a critical factor shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. A positive brand image strengthens consumer confidence in product quality and safety, while consistent communication and innovation help maintain long-term loyalty (Kinasih et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2024). In the digital era, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) further amplifies brand perceptions through online reviews, comments, and social media discussions. For Generation Z, e-WOM serves as a key reference point in assessing credibility before making purchase decisions (Dewi & Puspita, 2025).

Previous studies have confirmed that influencer marketing, brand image, and e-WOM significantly influence skincare purchasing decisions (Fitriani et al., 2025; Sepfiani et al., 2023). However, several research gaps remain. First, most studies have been conducted in metropolitan areas, leaving limited understanding of consumer behavior in mid-sized cities such as Cirebon, which may exhibit different digital consumption patterns and social influences. Second, prior research often focuses on general consumer groups or urban Generation Z, while non-metropolitan Generation Z consumers remain underexplored. Third, many studies examine

these variables partially, rather than testing influencer marketing, brand image, and e-WOM simultaneously within a single analytical model for local skincare brands.

However, most previous research has focused on major brands or metropolitan areas. Studies specifically examining local skincare brands like Emina, targeting Generation Z in mid-sized cities, are limited. Cirebon City has different consumer characteristics than large cities, both in terms of preferences and digital consumption behavior. Therefore, this study is important to analyze the influence of influencer marketing, brand image, and e-WOM on purchasing decisions for Emina skincare among Generation Z in Cirebon City.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the simultaneous and partial effects of influencer marketing, brand image, and electronic word of mouth on purchasing decisions for Emina skincare products among Generation Z consumers in Cirebon City. This research is expected to provide contextual insights into digital marketing effectiveness for local brands operating in competitive markets outside major metropolitan areas.

Based on the research objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for Emina skincare products.
- H2: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for Emina skincare products.
- H3: Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for Emina skincare products.
- H4: Influencer marketing, brand image, and electronic word of mouth simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions for Emina skincare products.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a quantitative approach with an associative research design to examine the influence of influencer marketing ( $X_1$ ), brand image ( $X_2$ ), and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) ( $X_3$ ) on purchasing decisions ( $Y$ ). Data were collected at a single point in time, making this research cross-sectional in nature. The quantitative method was selected because it enables objective measurement and statistical testing of relationships among variables. The research design follows the associative research framework proposed (Sugiyono, 2021).

The population of this study consists of consumers of Emina skincare products aged 13–28 years who reside in Cirebon City. A total of 200 respondents were selected as the research sample, determined using the Lemeshow formula for an unknown population size. The sampling technique applied was purposive sampling, with the following criteria: (1) residing in Cirebon City for at least six months, (2) having used or being familiar with Emina skincare products, and (3) actively using social media. This technique was employed to ensure that respondents matched the characteristics of Generation Z, which represents the focus of the study.

The data used in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through questionnaires distributed to respondents using a five-point Likert scale. The research instrument was developed by adapting measurement indicators from relevant previous studies and adjusting them to the context of local skincare products and Generation Z consumers. Secondary data were collected from official reports, scientific publications, and other supporting literature relevant to the research topic. All measurement instruments were tested for validity using Pearson's correlation and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, following the criteria suggested (Sugiyono, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 30. The analysis stages included descriptive statistics to describe respondent characteristics and research variables. Classical assumption tests were then performed, including the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for normality, multicollinearity tests using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, and heteroscedasticity testing using the Glejser method (Ghozali, 2020). Hypothesis testing was carried out using t-tests to examine the partial effects of each independent variable and an F-test to assess their simultaneous effect. In addition, the coefficient of determination (Adjusted  $R^2$ ) was used to evaluate the explanatory power of the regression model in explaining variations in purchasing decisions. Operational definitions of variables are in Table 1:

**Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables**

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators	Measurement
Influencer Marketing ( $X_1$ )	Promotional activities conducted through social media influencers who affect audience attitudes and behavior	Credibility, attractiveness, influencer–brand fit, content quality (De Veirman et al., 2017)	Likert scale
Brand Image ( $X_2$ )	Consumers' perceptions and associations toward the Emina brand formed through experience and information	Brand quality, trustworthiness, uniqueness, reputation (Keller, 2013)	Likert scale
Electronic Word of Mouth ( $X_3$ )	Online consumer opinions and reviews shared through digital platforms	Intensity, valence, information credibility (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004)	Likert scale
Purchasing Decision ( $Y$ )	The consumer decision-making process leading to the purchase of a product	Purchase intention, confidence, final decision, repurchase intention (Kotler & Keller, 2016)	Likert scale

*Resource: Research Data (Processed), 2026*

This study applies purposive sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The results primarily reflect the purchasing behavior of Generation Z consumers in Cirebon City as a mid-sized urban area and may not fully represent consumers in metropolitan regions or other geographic contexts. In addition, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to capture changes in consumer behavior over time. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to employ probability sampling techniques, expand the research area, and consider longitudinal designs to enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings.

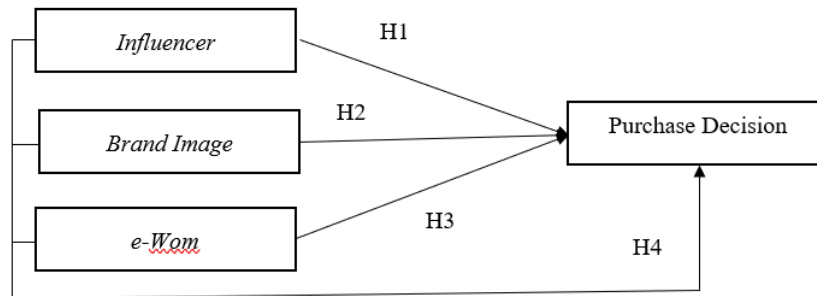


Figure 2. Research Design

**RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

A total of 200 Generation Z respondents in Cirebon City who are users of Emina facial care products participated in this study. Respondent characteristics were analyzed to understand the demographic profile of the study sample. Respondent characteristics data included age, gender, and status, which are presented in the Table 2:

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	13-16 years	8	4,0%
	17-20 years	22	11,0%
	21-24 years	144	72,0%
	25-28 years	26	13,0%
	Total	200	100,0%
Gender	Female	177	88,5%
	Male	23	11,5%
	Total	200	100,0%
Status	College Students	110	55,0%
	Workers	76	38,0%
	Student	14	7,0%
	Total	200	100,0%
Purchase Frequency	Regularly	42	21,0%
	Sometimes	72	36,0%
	Rarely	86	43,0%
	Total	200	100,0%

Resource: Research Data (Processed), 2026

Based on Table 2, most respondents were in the 21-24 age group (72.0%), representing the latter part of Generation Z. Gender distribution shows a predominance of female respondents (88.5%), which is reasonable considering that Emina skincare is a product traditionally used more by women. In terms of status, more than half of the respondents (55.0%) were university students, followed by workers (38.0%) and students (7.0%). Meanwhile, purchasing frequency

shows that 43.0% of respondents purchased Emina skincare rarely, 36.0% occasionally, and only 21.0% purchased regularly.

**Instrument Validity and Reliability Testing.** Testing the quality of the measuring instrument is mandatory before analyzing the hypotheses. In this process, validity is determined through the Pearson product-moment correlation, referring to the table's  $r$  value of 0.444 with a 5 percent significance level. If the correlation between each item and the overall score exceeds this value, the item is valid for use. Meanwhile, the level of internal consistency is assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A measuring instrument is categorized as reliable if the results reach or exceed the threshold of 0.60. The results of the validity and reliability tests are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Instrument Validity and Reliability Test Result**

Variable	Number of Items	Validity Range	Validity	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
<i>Influencer marketing</i>	8	0,749 - 0,936	Valid	0,946	Valid and Reliable
<i>Brand image</i>	6	0,772 - 0,988	Valid	0,966	Valid and Reliable
<i>Electronic word of mouth</i>	6	0,505 - 0,865	Valid	0,768	Valid and Reliable
Keputusan Pembelian	12	0,481 - 0,695	Valid	0,817	Valid and Reliable

Resource: Research Data (Processed), 2026

The validity test confirmed that all measurement items met the required criteria, with correlation values exceeding the acceptable threshold. Reliability analysis also showed satisfactory results, as all variables demonstrated adequate internal consistency. Among the constructs, brand image exhibited the strongest reliability, followed by influencer marketing, purchase decision, and electronic word of mouth. Overall, these findings indicate that the research instrument is reliable and appropriate for further analysis.

**Normality Test.** Normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, where a significance value greater than 0.05 indicates that the regression residuals are normally distributed. The results of the normality test are in Table 4:

**Table 4. Results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test**

Statistics	Value
N	200
Mean	0,000
Std. Deviation	2,612
Test Statistic	0,122
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0,200

Resource: Research Data (Processed), 2026

Based on the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the significance value exceeded the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the residuals are normally distributed. Therefore, the normality assumption of

the regression model is fulfilled, and the data are suitable for further analysis.

**Multicollinearity Test.** Multicollinearity was examined to identify potential correlations among the independent variables. The model is considered free from multicollinearity when the VIF value is below 10 and the Tolerance value exceeds 0.1. The results of the multicollinearity test are in Table 5:

**Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Results**

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Description
Influencer marketing	0,212	4,718	No Multicollinearity
Brand image	0,204	4,899	No Multicollinearity
Electronic word of mouth	0,270	3,698	No Multicollinearity

*Resource: Research Data (Processed), 2026*

The multicollinearity test indicated that all independent variables had VIF values below 10 and tolerance values above 0.10. These results confirm that multicollinearity is not present in the regression model, allowing all predictors to be analyzed simultaneously without bias.

**Heteroscedasticity Test.** The heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the Glejser test to detect the presence of heteroscedasticity in the regression model. The test criterion was that if the significance level was  $>0.05$  for all independent variables, heteroscedasticity was not present. The results of the heteroscedasticity test are in Table 6:

**Table 6. Results of Heteroscedasticity Test (Glejser Test)**

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3,719	1,152		3,229	0,001
Influencer marketing	0,038	0,071	0,082	0,544	0,587
Brand image	0,109	0,092	0,182	1,187	0,237
Electronic word of mouth	-0,233	0,073	-0,426	-3,203	0,082

*Resource: Research Data (Processed), 2026*

The Glejser test results show that all independent variables have significance values above 0.05, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity in the regression model. Thus, the assumption of homoscedastic residuals is fulfilled.

**Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.** With the basic requirements met, a multilevel linear regression test was applied to examine the influence of influencer marketing, brand image, and electronic word of mouth on Emina skincare purchasing decisions. The F-statistic test was used to assess the combined influence of these three factors. Results were determined based on the significance level; if it is lower than 0.05, then all tested factors have a collectively significant

effect on purchasing behavior. Ultimately, conclusions are based entirely on this probability threshold. The F test results are in Table 7:

**Table 7. Results of Simultaneous Significance Test (F Test)**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	7501,717	3	2500,572	360,832	0,000
Residual	1358,283	196	6,930		
Total	8860,000	199			

*Resource: Research Data (Processed), 2026*

The F-test yielded a score of 360.832 and a significance level of 0.000 (p-value not exceeding 0.05). It appears that influencer marketing, brand image, and electronic word of mouth collectively influence the purchasing decisions of Emina skincare products among Generation Z in Cirebon. Therefore, the multiple linear regression analysis model used is appropriate for interpreting the results. The t-test is intended to examine the individual impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable. In the determination process, if the significance level (p-value) is below 0.05, the effect is considered significant. However, the results are only valid if all statistical requirements are met. The final decision depends on the probability magnitude set as the tolerance limit. The t-test results are in Table 8:

**Table 8. Partial Test Results (t-Test)**

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Description
<b>(Constant)</b>	1,064	1,599		0,666	0,506	
<b>Influencer marketing</b>	0,289	0,098	0,179	2,947	0,004	Significant
<b>Brand image</b>	1,130	0,128	0,546	8,820	0,000	Significant
<b>Electronic word of mouth</b>	0,452	0,101	0,241	4,474	0,000	Significant

*Resource: Research Data (Processed), 2026*

The results of analyzing multiple linear regression produce the following regression equation:

$$Y = 1,064 + 0,289 X_1 + 1,130 X_2 + 0,452 X_3 \dots\dots\dots 1$$

The partial test results indicate that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. The calculated t-value of 2.947 with a significance level of 0.004 (<0.05) indicates that hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> is accepted. The regression coefficient of 0.289 indicates that increased influencer marketing is followed by an increase in purchasing decisions for Emina skincare products among Generation Z in Cirebon City.

Brand image also proved to have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. The calculated t-value of 8.820 with a significance level of 0.000 (<0.05) indicates the acceptance of hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>. The regression coefficient of 1.130 is the largest compared to other variables, making brand image the most dominant factor influencing purchasing decisions for Emina skincare among Generation Z in Cirebon. Electronic word of mouth has a positive and

significant effect on purchasing decisions. This is indicated by the calculated t-value of 4.474 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $<0.05$ ), thus hypothesis  $H_3$  is accepted. A regression coefficient of 0.452 indicates that the more positive e-Word of Mouth is, the higher the purchasing decision of Emina skincare products by Generation Z in Cirebon City.

A coefficient of determination analysis was conducted to understand how much of the variability in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. The analysis revealed an R-squared value of 0.847, indicating that the purchasing decision of Emina skincare products by Generation Z in Cirebon was influenced by influencer marketing, brand image, and electronic word of mouth, accounting for 84.7%. Factors outside these three contributed the remaining 15.3%, which was not included in this model. The strong relationship between all independent variables and the final response is reflected in the R-squared coefficient of 0.920. With an adjusted R-squared value of 0.844, the relationship structure in the model remains stable when applied to a larger group.

**The Influence of Influencer Marketing on Purchasing Decisions.** The findings indicate that influencer marketing plays a meaningful role in shaping purchasing decisions for Emina skincare among Generation Z in Cirebon City. This result matters because it confirms that influencer-based communication remains relevant for young consumers, particularly in non-metropolitan contexts where peer influence and digital figures often substitute traditional advertising channels. Generation Z tends to rely on influencers not merely as promoters, but as reference figures whose experiences help reduce uncertainty when choosing skincare products.

This outcome supports the TEARS Model proposed by Shimp (2014), which emphasizes credibility, expertise, and perceived similarity between influencers and audiences. When influencers are seen as authentic and relatable, their recommendations become persuasive signals rather than overt marketing messages. Similar conclusions were reported by Saragih et al. (2024) and Ichtiar et al. (2025), who found that influencer marketing contributes positively to purchase decisions in skincare contexts.

However, the relatively smaller contribution of influencer marketing compared to other variables suggests that its role is primarily supportive rather than decisive. This indicates that Generation Z consumers do not rely solely on influencer endorsements but integrate them with more substantive considerations. This finding aligns with Kotler & Keller (2019) consumer decision-making framework, where influencer input functions mainly at the information and preference-formation stages, while final decisions depend on broader evaluative criteria.

**The Influence of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions.** Brand image emerged as the most influential factor in shaping purchasing decisions, highlighting the central role of brand-related perceptions in the skincare industry. This result is important because skincare products are closely associated with personal health and self-image, making trust and perceived reliability essential. For Generation Z, a strong brand image acts as a form of psychological assurance when selecting products for daily use.

This finding is consistent with Brand Equity theory (Kotler & Keller, 2016), which explains that favorable brand associations such as quality, affordability, and relevance strengthen consumer confidence and lower perceived risk. Emina's positioning as an accessible yet innovative local brand appears to resonate strongly with Generation Z consumers, reinforcing loyalty even amid intense market competition.

Previous studies support this interpretation. Research by Hanifa et al. (2025) and Kinasih et al. (2023) demonstrates that a positive brand image enhances perceived value and differentiates products in crowded markets. Additionally, Jayanti (2024) and Liapriyanti (2025) highlight the mediating role of brand image in translating promotional efforts into purchase intentions. Collectively, these findings suggest that brand image serves as a strategic anchor that amplifies the effects of other marketing activities.

**The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions.** The findings indicate that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) plays a significant role in influencing purchasing decisions for Emina skincare among Generation Z. This result highlights the importance of user-generated information in the digital purchasing process, where reviews, comments, and shared experiences become key reference points before a transaction is made. For Generation Z consumers, e-WOM functions as a practical tool for evaluating product suitability and reducing uncertainty, particularly in the context of skincare products that involve personal risk and long-term use.

This influence is consistent with online communication theory as proposed (Tingga, 2022), which emphasizes that e-WOM reflects consumers' real experiences and thus shapes collective perceptions of a brand. As a digitally native generation, Generation Z is accustomed to actively searching for and comparing peer reviews across social media and e-commerce platforms. Information obtained from fellow users is perceived as more credible and authentic because it is not directly controlled by the brand, making e-WOM more persuasive than formal promotional messages.

The results of this study are in line with previous empirical research. Studies by Saragih et al. (2024) as well as confirm that e-WOM has a positive and significant influence on skincare purchasing decisions. However, the present findings differ from those of Liapriyanti (2025), who found that e-WOM affects purchase intention only indirectly through brand image. This divergence may be explained by differences in research context, respondent characteristics, and geographical settings. In the case of Generation Z consumers in Cirebon City, e-WOM appears to exert a direct influence, as consumers actively rely on digital reviews as a verification mechanism before finalizing their purchasing decisions.

**The Simultaneous Influence of Influencer Marketing, Brand Image, and Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions.** The results of the simultaneous analysis demonstrate that influencer marketing, brand image, and electronic word of mouth jointly exert a significant influence on purchasing decisions for Emina skincare among Generation Z consumers in Cirebon City. This indicates that purchasing behavior is not shaped by a single factor, but rather

by the interaction of multiple marketing and communication elements. The findings suggest that when these variables are considered together, they provide a strong framework for explaining how Generation Z forms purchasing decisions in the skincare market.

This result is consistent with Kotler & Keller (2019) view that consumer purchasing decisions emerge from a combination of internal and external influences. Influencer marketing functions as an initial stimulus that captures attention and introduces product information through relatable figures. Brand image contributes by strengthening perceptions of credibility, quality, and trust toward the product. At the same time, electronic word of mouth reinforces these perceptions through shared experiences and evaluations from other consumers in digital spaces. The synergy among these factors creates a more comprehensive and convincing basis for decision-making.

Furthermore, the findings align with several previous empirical studies. Research conducted by Hanifa et al., (2025), Saragih et al. (2024), as well as Ichtihar et al. (2025), confirms that the combined role of influencer marketing, brand image, and e-WOM significantly shapes consumer purchasing decisions. From a practical perspective, these results highlight the importance for Emina to integrate influencer strategies, consistently strengthen brand image, and actively manage online consumer reviews. Such an integrated marketing approach is considered more effective than relying on a single strategy in influencing purchasing decisions among Generation Z consumers.

## **CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION**

This study contributes to the marketing and consumer behavior literature by demonstrating that purchasing decisions among Generation Z consumers in non-metropolitan cities are shaped more strongly by cognitive and evaluative factors than by purely promotional stimuli. In the context of Emina skincare in Cirebon City, brand image emerges as the central mechanism through which trust and perceived product suitability are formed, while electronic word of mouth functions as a verification tool that reinforces these perceptions. Influencer marketing, although significant, plays a supportive role by facilitating initial awareness rather than directly driving final purchase decisions.

These findings extend existing theories of influencer marketing and digital communication by highlighting that Generation Z consumers in mid-sized cities exhibit more rational and selective decision-making patterns compared to those often described in metropolitan contexts. Rather than relying solely on influencer endorsements, these consumers actively evaluate brand credibility and peer-generated information before making purchasing decisions. This suggests that the effectiveness of influencer marketing is highly context-dependent and mediated by brand-related perceptions in local markets.

Conceptually, this study confirms that synergy among influencer marketing, brand image, and electronic word of mouth operates differently in non-metropolitan settings. In Cirebon City, the dominance of brand image indicates that long-term brand positioning and consistency outweigh

short-term promotional exposure. This finding provides empirical evidence that local context plays a critical role in determining how Generation Z responds to integrated marketing strategies, thereby offering a nuanced extension to consumer decision-making models in emerging urban markets.

Based on the findings, PT Emina is advised to prioritize brand image strengthening as the main strategic foundation in non-metropolitan markets, supported by influencer marketing and electronic word of mouth as complementary elements. Influencers should be selected based on credibility and value alignment to reinforce brand trust rather than merely increase exposure, while digital engagement strategies should encourage authentic consumer reviews through interactive communication and loyalty programs. For future research, it is recommended to incorporate additional variables such as consumer trust or perceived value and to expand the research scope across different non-metropolitan regions or longer timeframes to enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings.

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