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## Analysis: Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal on Maybelline Impulse Buying

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### A B S T R A C T

The rapid growth of social commerce in Indonesia has transformed consumer shopping behavior, particularly among Generation Z, who demonstrate high engagement with digital content. Amid the significant expansion of the cosmetics industry, Maybelline experienced a consecutive decline in brand index performance, creating a notable gap worth investigating. This study aims to analyze the effect of Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content on Impulse Buying through Brand Trust as a mediating variable among Generation Z consumers of Maybelline lipstick products on social commerce platforms. A quantitative approach was employed using purposive sampling, targeting Generation Z consumers residing in the Greater Jakarta area who had purchased Maybelline lipstick through social commerce within the past three months. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software. The findings reveal that Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content exert a significant positive effect on both Brand Trust and Impulse Buying directly. Brand Trust is also proven to positively and significantly affect Impulse Buying, while simultaneously mediating the influence of Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content on Impulse Buying. These findings indicate that influencer credibility and content visual quality are important stimuli that shape brand trust and ultimately drive impulsive purchasing behavior among Generation Z consumers within the social commerce ecosystem.

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's cosmetics industry has grown consistently over the past several years, with market value rising from approximately US\$7.22 billion in 2020 to around US\$9.74 billion in 2025 [1], a trend driven in large part by lip makeup, which holds the largest category share at 24.7 percent and the highest usage rate among Indonesian women at 99 percent [2]. Despite this favorable category-level trend, a notable contradiction has emerged at the brand level: Maybelline, one of Indonesia's well-recognized lipstick brands, recorded a consecutive decline in brand index from 2025 to 2026 [3], indicating that overall market growth does not automatically translate into sustained brand-level performance. This contradiction between rising category demand and declining brand performance is the empirical puzzle that motivates the present study.

One plausible explanation for this puzzle lies in shifting consumer behavior driven by digital technology and social media, which plays a central role in helping consumers search for product information before making a purchase [5]. Indonesia's internet penetration reached approximately 230 million users, or 80.5 percent of the population, by late 2025, while social media users reached around 180 million, equivalent to 62.9 percent of the active population [6]. This growing use of social media has given rise to social commerce, a form of online trade that merges social media activity with buying and selling [7], which now accounts for roughly 84.2 percent of Indonesia's digital transaction value, compared to about 15.8 percent from conventional marketplaces. This trend is particularly pronounced among Generation Z: 87 percent of Indonesian Generation Z consumers shop online, with 65 percent doing so

at least once a week [8], [9], positioning this generation as a highly relevant consumer segment for examining social commerce phenomena.

Within this context, two digital marketing stimuli are particularly salient on social commerce platforms: the credibility of influencers who promote products, and the visual appeal of the promotional content itself. Both are widely believed to shape consumer trust toward a brand, which in turn may translate into impulsive purchasing behavior. However, prior empirical research has generally examined influencer credibility and visual appeal of content separately, or has tested brand trust as a mediator for only one of the two stimuli at a time rather than jointly within a single integrated model, and limited attention has been given to a specific scenario in which a well-established beauty brand experiences declining brand performance despite operating within a growing product category and an expanding social commerce ecosystem. This combination of a fragmented empirical treatment of the two stimuli and an underexamined empirical context constitutes the research gap that motivates the present study: an integrated examination of Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content as joint antecedents of Impulse Buying, with Brand Trust tested as a mediating mechanism, situated within the specific empirical context of a declining beauty brand in Indonesian social commerce. This study therefore examines the influence of Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content on Impulse Buying through Brand Trust among Generation Z consumers of Maybelline lipstick on social commerce platforms.

## ***Literature Review***

Consumer decision-making is shaped by both internal factors, such as motivation, perception, attitude, and personality, and external factors, such as culture, social environment, and marketing stimuli [10]. As digital technology has advanced, many consumers now rely on social media as an external information source containing product recommendations from various influencers, and complex psychological processes and social interaction increasingly shape consumer behavior as information spreads through digital channels [11]. Emotional and situational factors can further push consumers toward unplanned, spontaneous purchases [12], and the credibility of the source delivering a marketing message strongly affects communication effectiveness, since source characteristics influence how much an audience trusts and accepts that message [13].

Source Credibility Theory, first introduced by Hovland and Weiss [14], holds that information delivered by a source perceived as credible is more readily accepted and trusted. Source credibility is generally composed of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Building on this foundation, Ohanian [15] developed the concept of endorser credibility, showing that a source with high trustworthiness, relevant expertise, and strong attractiveness is more effective in shaping consumer attitudes and behavior. To explain how such stimuli translate into consumer response, this study also draws on Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory, introduced by Mehrabian and Russell [16], which posits that behavior results from the interaction between an external stimulus (S), an individual's internal state (O), and the resulting response (R). In a marketing environment, stimuli may take the form of visual elements, product information, or interactive offerings [17], which are then processed cognitively and emotionally by the consumer.

Influencer Credibility refers to the consumer's perception of an influencer's ability to deliver information honestly, reliably, and in a way consistent with what audiences actually receive [18]. It reflects the extent to which information conveyed by an influencer can be trusted by the audience [19], [20], and a higher level of credibility tends to produce a greater influence on consumer perception and attitude toward a product. Influencers who combine relevant expertise with a positive image and reputation tend to be more persuasive than those who rely on popularity alone [21]. Building on Lou and Yuan's framework, Influencer Credibility is commonly captured through three indicators, namely expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness [22], which together describe an influencer's domain knowledge, capacity to engage an audience, and honesty in conveying information.

Visual Appeal of Content concerns how graphic and pictorial elements are used to communicate marketing and branding messages in a way that is as engaging and effective as possible [23]. Beyond conveying information, visual content shapes consumers' emotional responses and can capture attention and stir audience emotion almost instantly [24]. Informative image design, coherent layout, and consistent color choice have all been shown to strengthen user engagement with promotional content [25], and good visual quality not only improves the aesthetic appeal of content but also strengthens consumer interaction with the information presented. Following Depi and Husna's framework, Visual Appeal of Content is measured through four indicators: image clarity, layout harmony, color consistency, and communicative and persuasive typography [26].

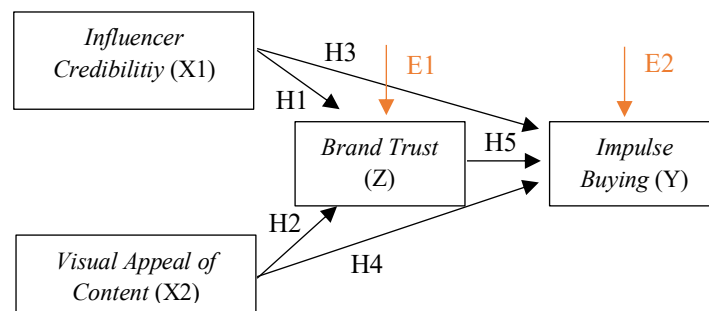
Brand Trust refers to consumers' willingness to rely on a brand under conditions of risk, based on the expectation that the brand will deliver a positive outcome [27]. It is formed from accumulated information, experience, and the fulfillment of expectations regarding product performance and satisfaction [28], [29], and reflects a brand's capacity to create a meaningful, sustained relationship with consumers grounded in integrity, honesty, and consistency [30]. This study operationalizes Brand Trust through four indicators: brand credibility, brand competence, brand goodness, and brand reputation [30], which together capture consumers' confidence in a brand's reliability, quality, positive image, and consistency over time.

Impulse Buying is commonly defined as an unplanned purchase in which the consumer makes an immediate decision upon encountering a product or promotion [31], reflecting a strong, sudden urge to buy something immediately that often overrides rational deliberation or consideration of actual product usefulness [32]. In a similar vein, Rahmawati and Samiono [33] describe impulse buying as part of a broader condition referred to as "unplanned purchase", in which a consumer's actual spending diverges from their original spending plan. Following Rook's framework as applied in subsequent research [34], [35], Impulse Buying in this study is measured through four indicators: spontaneity, power/force/intensity, excitement and stimulation, and disregard for consequences. This view is consistent with the broader characterization of impulse buying as a behavioral pattern marked by limited planning and a tendency to disregard long-term consequences in pursuit of instant gratification [36], and with the observation that such purchasing is driven more by low cognitive control and a dominant emotional response than by deliberate reasoning [37].

Taken together, the literature reviewed above shows that each construct examined in this study is individually well established: Source Credibility Theory and its extensions explain why influencer credibility shapes consumer response [14], [15], [21], [22]; visual-content research explains how imagery and design shape emotional and cognitive engagement [23], [24], [25], [26]; brand-trust research explains how accumulated brand-related experience translates into consumer confidence [27], [28], [29], [30]; and impulse-buying research explains the unplanned, emotionally driven nature of the resulting purchase behavior [31], [32], [33], [34], [35], [36], [37]. What this body of work has generally not done, however, is bring these four constructs together within a single tested structural model that positions Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content as joint, competing stimuli acting through a shared trust mechanism, within the specific empirical context outlined in the Introduction, namely a well-established beauty brand experiencing declining performance despite operating in a growing product category. Synthesizing across these otherwise separate streams of literature, rather than treating each construct in isolation, is therefore necessary to build the integrated framework presented next.

### Framework

As outlined in the Literature Review, prior studies have largely treated influencer credibility and visual appeal of content as separate predictors, and have rarely tested brand trust as a joint mediating mechanism for both stimuli within a single model, particularly in the context of a declining beauty brand operating in a growing product category. To address this gap, the present study develops an integrated research framework grounded in Source Credibility Theory [14], [15] and Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory [16], [17]. Within this framework, Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content represent external marketing stimuli (S); Brand Trust represents the consumer's internal evaluative state, or organism (O), that forms in response to these stimuli; and Impulse Buying represents the resulting behavioral response (R). The framework is designed to test both the direct paths from the two stimuli to the behavioral outcome and the indirect paths channeled through the consumer's internal trust state, thereby providing a more complete account of how digital marketing stimuli translate into impulsive purchase behavior.



**Figure 1 Research Framework: Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content on Impulse Buying through Brand Trust**

As shown in Figure 1, the framework specifies seven hypothesized relationships among the four constructs. Influencer Credibility (X1) and Visual Appeal of Content (X2) are positioned as exogenous stimulus variables, Brand Trust (Z) as the mediating organism variable, and Impulse Buying (Y) as the endogenous response variable. The direct paths from X1 and X2 to Z (H1, H2) test whether influencer credibility and content visual quality shape the level of trust consumers place in the brand. The direct paths from X1, X2, and Z to Y (H3, H4, H5) test whether these same stimuli, together with the resulting trust, translate directly into impulsive purchase behavior. Finally, the indirect paths from X1 and X2 to Y through Z (H6, H7) test whether Brand Trust mediates the relationship between each stimulus and impulsive buying.

Ultimately, this model is tested to determine whether brand trust functions as a genuine psychological bridge between digital marketing stimuli and impulsive purchase behavior, rather than treating influencer credibility and visual appeal as direct, unmediated drivers of consumer response. Confirming this mediating role would clarify why a brand can face declining performance even while operating in an expanding product category, by showing that stimulus exposure alone is insufficient and that the trust it generates is what ultimately governs the behavioral outcome.

### METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach to test the proposed framework through a structured, multi-stage research design. The research was conducted between April 2026 and June 2026 in the Jabodetabek metropolitan area, an area selected for its high level of cosmetics consumption, social media use, and social commerce activity. The chronological research procedure, the sampling and data collection technique, and the data analysis procedure are described below. The research followed a sequential quantitative procedure consisting of instrument development, sampling, data collection, data cleaning, and structural equation modeling analysis. This procedure is consistent with standard quantitative survey research practice [38], and the analytical stages follow established PLS-SEM evaluation conventions [39], [40], [41], described further in Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

Regarding the population and sample, this study targeted Jabodetabek residents who had purchased Maybelline lipstick through a social commerce platform within the preceding three months [38]. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used [42], because the target respondents possessed specific characteristics, namely domicile in Jabodetabek, membership in Generation Z, and recent purchase experience with the focal product, that could not be identified directly from official population data. To determine

the minimum sample size, this study followed the rule-of-thumb approach proposed by Hair et al. [43], which recommends a minimum sample of 5 to 10 times the number of indicators. With 15 indicators across the four constructs, the minimum required sample was 150 respondents ( $10 \times 15$ ), and this study achieved exactly that target after the data-cleaning stage, satisfying the sample-adequacy requirement for SEM-PLS analysis involving multiple constructs, a mediating relationship, and reflective indicators [43]. Because purposive sampling is a non-probability technique, respondents were not selected through random selection from a defined sampling frame; sample adequacy in this context therefore refers to meeting the statistical minimum required for stable SEM-PLS estimation, not to statistical representativeness of the broader Generation Z or Maybelline-consumer population. The implications of this design choice for the generalizability of the findings are discussed further in the Limitations subsection of the Conclusions.

Primary data were collected directly from respondents through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, chosen for its ability to reach a broad respondent base efficiently and its fit with Generation Z's high familiarity with digital tools. Secondary data, including books, scientific journals, industry reports, and official statistical publications, were used to support the theoretical foundation, the research framework, and the discussion of findings. All questionnaire items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) [44], and the questionnaire opened with screening questions to confirm that respondents met all three inclusion criteria before proceeding to the main instrument, thereby minimizing sampling bias.

Because all constructs were measured through a single, self-administered questionnaire completed by each respondent at one point in time, the design is potentially susceptible to Common Method Bias (CMB), a source of systematic measurement variance that can inflate observed relationships when predictor and outcome constructs are drawn from the same source and method. To mitigate this risk at the design stage, respondent anonymity was assured to reduce social-desirability pressure, and items were worded concisely and grouped by construct to minimize ambiguity. No statistical post hoc test for CMB (e.g., Harman's single-factor test) was performed on the collected data; consequently, the extent to which these procedural safeguards fully offset the risk inherent in the single-source, single-time-point design cannot be statistically confirmed, and the possibility of residual common method variance is acknowledged as a limitation of the study in the Conclusions.

Turning to the measurement model evaluation, the outer model followed standard PLS-SEM convergent and discriminant validity, and reliability procedures [39]. Convergent validity was assessed using outer loading values, with a threshold above 0.60 considered acceptable, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a threshold above 0.50 considered acceptable [45]. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, under which a construct is considered to exhibit adequate discriminant validity if the square root of its AVE exceeds its correlation with any other construct in the model [45]. Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability ( $\rho_a$  and  $\rho_c$ ), with a threshold of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable [45], [46]. These procedures provide the scientific basis for confirming that the 15 indicators adequately and distinctly represent the four latent constructs prior to structural model testing.

Following outer model confirmation, the structural model was evaluated using the Coefficient of Determination (R-square), Effect Size (f-square), path coefficient significance testing, and specific indirect effect testing for mediation, in line with established PLS-SEM evaluation guidance [40], [41]. R-square values were interpreted using the thresholds of 0.19 (weak), 0.33 (moderate), and 0.67 (strong) [45], while f-square values were interpreted as small ( $\geq 0.02$ ), medium ( $\geq 0.15$ ), and large ( $\geq 0.35$ ) effects [45]. Path coefficients were tested through bootstrapping with 5,000 sub-samples, with a relationship considered statistically significant when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05 at a 5 percent significance level [39]. The same significance criteria were applied to the specific indirect effect tests for H6 and H7, with the type of mediation classified as full mediation when only the indirect effect was significant, or partial mediation when both the direct and indirect effects were significant. All structural and measurement model computations were performed using SmartPLS 4 (version 4.1.1.8).

## RESULTS

Data collection yielded 150 valid responses meeting all inclusion criteria, satisfying the minimum sample requirement for SEM-PLS analysis [43]. Table 1 to Table 3 present the demographic distribution of respondents by gender, age, and domicile.

**Table 1. Respondent Distribution by Gender**

| Gender       | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Female       | 144        | 96.5           |
| Male         | 6          | 3.5            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>150</b> | <b>100</b>     |

Table 1 shows sample was predominantly female (96.5%,  $n = 144$ ), with male respondents accounting for 3.5% ( $n = 6$ ) of the total 150 respondents.

**Table 2. Respondent Distribution by Age Group**

| Age Group   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| 16-18 years | 13        | 8.6            |
| 19-21 years | 47        | 31.4           |
| 22-24 years | 69        | 46.0           |

|              |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| 25-27 years  | 18         | 12.0       |
| 28-29 years  | 3          | 2.0        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>150</b> | <b>100</b> |

As reported in Table 2, the largest age group was 22-24 years (46.0%, n = 69), followed by 19-21 years (31.4%, n = 47), 25-27 years (12.0%, n = 18), 16-18 years (8.6%, n = 13), and 28-29 years (2.0%, n = 3).

**Table 3. Respondent Distribution by Domicile**

| Domicile     | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Jakarta      | 50         | 33.3           |
| Bekasi       | 35         | 23.4           |
| Tangerang    | 24         | 16.0           |
| Bogor        | 23         | 15.3           |
| Depok        | 18         | 12.0           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>150</b> | <b>100</b>     |

As shown in Table 3, respondents were most frequently domiciled in Jakarta (33.3%, n = 50), followed by Bekasi (23.4%, n = 35), Tangerang (16.0%, n = 24), Bogor (15.3%, n = 23), and Depok (12.0%, n = 18). Turning to the measurement model evaluation, convergent validity was assessed using outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each of the four constructs: Influencer Credibility (IC), Visual Appeal of Content (VAC), Brand Trust (BT), and Impulse Buying (IB).

**Table 4. Convergent Validity Test Results**

| Variable                      | Indicator                           | Outer Loading | AVE   | Decision |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------|----------|
| Influencer Credibility (X1)   | Expertise                           | 0.816         | 0.667 | Valid    |
|                               | Attractiveness                      | 0.810         |       | Valid    |
|                               | Trustworthiness                     | 0.825         |       | Valid    |
| Visual Appeal of Content (X2) | Image clarity                       | 0.878         | 0.767 | Valid    |
|                               | Layout harmony                      | 0.854         |       | Valid    |
|                               | Color consistency                   | 0.898         |       | Valid    |
|                               | Communicative/persuasive typography | 0.873         |       | Valid    |
| Brand Trust (Z)               | Brand credibility                   | 0.802         | 0.609 | Valid    |
|                               | Brand competence                    | 0.776         |       | Valid    |
|                               | Brand goodness                      | 0.751         |       | Valid    |
|                               | Brand reputation                    | 0.791         |       | Valid    |
| Impulse Buying (Y)            | Spontaneity                         | 0.742         | 0.592 | Valid    |
|                               | Power, force, and intensity         | 0.780         |       | Valid    |
|                               | Excitement and stimulation          | 0.792         |       | Valid    |
|                               | Disregard for consequences          | 0.762         |       | Valid    |

As shown in Table 4, all 15 indicators recorded outer loading values between 0.742 and 0.898, exceeding the 0.60 threshold. AVE values were 0.667 for Influencer Credibility, 0.767 for Visual Appeal of Content, 0.609 for Brand Trust, and 0.592 for Impulse Buying, all above the 0.50 threshold. These results indicate that convergent validity was achieved for all four constructs, and no indicator required elimination from the model.

**Table 5. Discriminant Validity Test Results (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)**

|                                | BT           | IB           | IC           | VAC          |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Brand Trust (BT)               | <b>0.781</b> |              |              |              |
| Impulse Buying (IB)            | 0.754        | <b>0.769</b> |              |              |
| Influencer Credibility (IC)    | 0.713        | 0.691        | <b>0.817</b> |              |
| Visual Appeal of Content (VAC) | 0.731        | 0.737        | 0.598        | <b>0.876</b> |

Bold diagonal values denote the square root of AVE for each construct.

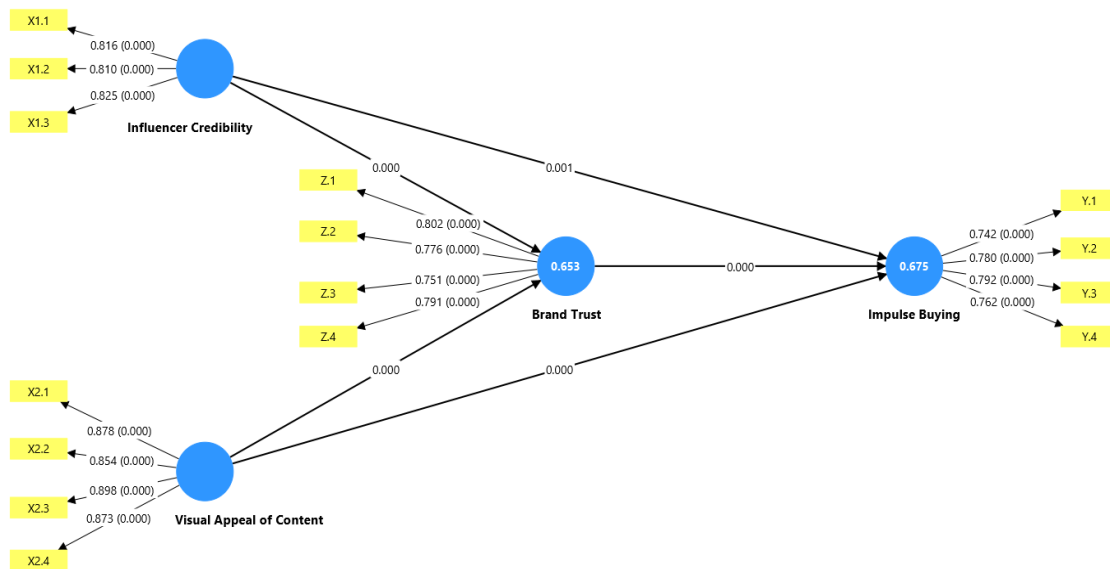
Table 5 shows that the square root of AVE for each construct (BT = 0.781, IB = 0.769, IC = 0.817, VAC = 0.876) exceeded its correlation with every other construct in the model, satisfying the Fornell–Larcker criterion for discriminant validity across all four constructs.

**Table 6. Construct Reliability Test Results**

| Variable                      | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability (rho_a) | Composite Reliability (rho_c) | Decision |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|
| Influencer Credibility (X1)   | 0.751            | 0.753                         | 0.857                         | Reliable |
| Visual Appeal of Content (X2) | 0.899            | 0.899                         | 0.929                         | Reliable |
| Brand Trust (Z)               | 0.786            | 0.786                         | 0.862                         | Reliable |
| Impulse Buying (Y)            | 0.770            | 0.772                         | 0.853                         | Reliable |

As reported in Table 6, Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.751 to 0.899, rho\_a ranged from 0.753 to 0.899, and rho\_c ranged from 0.853 to 0.929, all exceeding the 0.70 threshold. Taken together with the convergent and discriminant validity results, the measurement model was considered valid and reliable, supporting progression to structural model evaluation.

With the measurement model confirmed, the structural model was evaluated next, beginning with the Coefficient of Determination (R-square).



**Figure 2 Inner Model**

**Table 7. R-Square Test Results**

| Variable           | R-square | R-square adjusted | Category |
|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| Brand Trust (Z)    | 0.653    | 0.648             | Moderate |
| Impulse Buying (Y) | 0.675    | 0.668             | Strong   |

Table 7 indicates that Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content jointly explained 65.3% of the variance in Brand Trust ( $R^2 = 0.653$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = 0.648$ ), a moderate level of explanatory power, while Influencer Credibility, Visual Appeal of Content, and Brand Trust jointly explained 67.5% of the variance in Impulse Buying ( $R^2 = 0.675$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = 0.668$ ), a strong level of explanatory power. The remaining variance in each endogenous variable is attributable to factors outside the scope of the present model.

**Table 8. Effect Size (f-Square) Test Results**

| Path                                                | f-square | Category |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Influencer Credibility (X1) -> Brand Trust (Z)      | 0.341    | Moderate |
| Visual Appeal of Content (X2) -> Brand Trust (Z)    | 0.417    | Large    |
| Influencer Credibility (X1) -> Impulse Buying (Y)   | 0.098    | Small    |
| Visual Appeal of Content (X2) -> Impulse Buying (Y) | 0.178    | Moderate |
| Brand Trust (Z) -> Impulse Buying (Y)               | 0.102    | Small    |

As shown in Table 8, Visual Appeal of Content exerted the largest effect size on Brand Trust ( $f^2 = 0.417$ , large), followed by Influencer Credibility on Brand Trust ( $f^2 = 0.341$ , moderate). For Impulse Buying, Visual Appeal of Content recorded a moderate effect

( $f^2 = 0.178$ ), while Brand Trust ( $f^2 = 0.102$ ) and Influencer Credibility ( $f^2 = 0.098$ ) each recorded a small effect. Visual Appeal of Content therefore contributed the largest individual share to the model, particularly through its relationship with Brand Trust.

Hypothesis testing was then carried out. Direct-effect hypotheses (H1-H5) were tested via bootstrapping with 5,000 sub-samples, using a t-statistic threshold of 1.96 and a p-value threshold of 0.05 [39].

**Table 9. Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing Results**

| Path                                                | Original sample (O) | T statistics | P values | Decision  |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------|-----------|
| Influencer Credibility (X1) -> Brand Trust (Z)      | 0.429               | 6.300        | 0.000    | Supported |
| Visual Appeal of Content (X2) -> Brand Trust (Z)    | 0.475               | 8.921        | 0.000    | Supported |
| Influencer Credibility (X1) -> Impulse Buying (Y)   | 0.257               | 3.192        | 0.001    | Supported |
| Visual Appeal of Content (X2) -> Impulse Buying (Y) | 0.358               | 4.506        | 0.000    | Supported |
| Brand Trust (Z) -> Impulse Buying (Y)               | 0.309               | 3.515        | 0.000    | Supported |

As reported in Table 9, all five direct paths recorded a t-statistic above 1.96 and a p-value below 0.05: Influencer Credibility on Brand Trust ( $\beta = 0.429$ ;  $t = 6.300$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), Visual Appeal of Content on Brand Trust ( $\beta = 0.475$ ;  $t = 8.921$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), Influencer Credibility on Impulse Buying ( $\beta = 0.257$ ;  $t = 3.192$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), Visual Appeal of Content on Impulse Buying ( $\beta = 0.358$ ;  $t = 4.506$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), and Brand Trust on Impulse Buying ( $\beta = 0.309$ ;  $t = 3.515$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Accordingly, H1 through H5 were each supported by the data. For the indirect (mediation) effects, mediation hypotheses (H6-H7) were tested using the specific indirect effect procedure in SmartPLS 4, applying the same significance thresholds used for the direct-effect tests [39].

**Table 10. Mediation (Specific Indirect Effect) Test Results**

| Path                                                                   | Original sample (O) | T statistics | P values | Decision  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------|-----------|
| Influencer Credibility (X1) -> Brand Trust (Z) -> Impulse Buying (Y)   | 0.133               | 2.847        | 0.004    | Supported |
| Visual Appeal of Content (X2) -> Brand Trust (Z) -> Impulse Buying (Y) | 0.147               | 3.478        | 0.001    | Supported |

Table 10 shows that the indirect effect of Influencer Credibility on Impulse Buying through Brand Trust was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.133$ ;  $t = 2.847$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ), as was the indirect effect of Visual Appeal of Content on Impulse Buying through Brand Trust ( $\beta = 0.147$ ;  $t = 3.478$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). Because the corresponding direct effects reported in Table 9 were also statistically significant, both mediation relationships are classified as partial mediation. H6 and H7 were therefore both supported by the data.

## DISCUSSION

This section interprets the hypothesis-testing results presented in Section 3 by relating them to the theoretical framework and to relevant prior empirical findings, in order to develop a deeper understanding of how Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content affect Impulse Buying through Brand Trust among Generation Z consumers of Maybelline lipstick in social commerce. Beginning with H1, the results show that Influencer Credibility had a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust ( $\beta = 0.429$ ;  $t = 6.300$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), so H1 was supported. This finding indicates that the more credible an influencer promoting Maybelline lipstick on social commerce is perceived to be, the higher the level of trust consumers place in the brand. The result suggests that Generation Z consumers tend to trust brands recommended by influencers perceived to possess sound knowledge, attractiveness, and honesty, consistent with influencers' frequent role as a trusted reference point prior to purchase in social commerce settings. This finding aligns with prior research showing that influencer credibility positively and significantly affects brand trust [47], [48], reinforcing the view that influencer credibility plays an important role in building consumer trust toward beauty brands marketed through social media.

Turning to H2, Visual Appeal of Content had a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust ( $\beta = 0.475$ ;  $t = 8.921$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), so H2 was likewise supported. This result indicates that more visually appealing promotional content for Maybelline lipstick on social commerce is associated with higher consumer trust toward the brand. Visual presentation often constitutes a consumer's first impression of a product, so content featuring clear imagery, an orderly layout, consistent color, and easily understood typography appears to strengthen consumer confidence in the promoted brand. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that visual content positively and significantly affects brand trust among consumers of another skincare brand [49], suggesting that visual content quality is an important factor in building brand trust irrespective of the specific beauty product category examined. Comparing the two path coefficients directly, Visual Appeal of Content exerted a descriptively stronger effect on Brand Trust ( $\beta = 0.475$ ) than Influencer Credibility did ( $\beta = 0.429$ ). A plausible explanation is that lipstick is a highly visual, sensory-dependent product, where attributes such as shade, texture, and finish are more directly and credibly conveyed through clear, well-composed imagery than through an influencer's

verbal or written endorsement; content quality may therefore function as a more immediate trust cue than endorser characteristics in this specific product category, even though both stimuli remain statistically significant contributors to Brand Trust.

For H3, Influencer Credibility had a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying ( $\beta = 0.257$ ;  $t = 3.192$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), so H3 was supported as well. This finding indicates that higher influencer credibility in promoting Maybelline lipstick on social commerce is associated with a greater tendency among consumers toward impulsive purchasing. Generation Z consumers appear more readily moved toward spontaneous purchase when receiving a recommendation from an influencer perceived as knowledgeable, attractive, and honest, particularly within a social commerce environment that enables rapid, interactive access to information. This result is consistent with prior findings that beauty-influencer credibility positively and significantly affects impulse buying for makeup products [50], and that influencer credibility positively affects impulse buying behavior among beauty product consumers more broadly [51], supporting the view that a credible influencer can heighten consumer interest and confidence in a product to the point of triggering an impulsive purchase decision.

For H4, Visual Appeal of Content had a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying ( $\beta = 0.358$ ;  $t = 4.506$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), so H4 was supported. This result indicates that more visually appealing promotional content for Maybelline lipstick on social commerce is associated with a stronger tendency toward impulsive purchasing. Generation Z consumers appear to pay closer attention to content with a visually appealing, clear, and easily comprehensible presentation; in a social commerce setting, such content can generate emotional interest in a product that prompts spontaneous purchasing without extended deliberation. This finding is consistent with research showing that visual appeal positively affects impulse buying in live-streaming social commerce [52], and with earlier evidence that visual appeal is among the factors driving impulsive purchase tendencies on Instagram-based social commerce [53], together indicating that visual presentation quality plays an important role in capturing consumer attention and raising the likelihood of impulse buying on digital platforms. As with the paths to Brand Trust, Visual Appeal of Content again showed a descriptively larger direct effect on Impulse Buying ( $\beta = 0.358$ ) than Influencer Credibility ( $\beta = 0.257$ ), reinforcing the pattern that content visual quality carries comparatively more weight than influencer characteristics for this product category, both as a trust-building cue and as a direct trigger of impulsive purchase behavior. This consistency across both outcome variables suggests the difference is unlikely to be incidental to a single model estimation, and instead points to visual stimuli occupying a more central position than endorser credibility within the stimulus-response process for a visually evaluated product such as lipstick.

For H5, Brand Trust had a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying ( $\beta = 0.309$ ;  $t = 3.515$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), so H5 was supported. This finding indicates that higher consumer trust toward the Maybelline brand is associated with a greater tendency toward impulsive purchasing. The result suggests that brand trust can reduce consumer hesitation during purchase decisions; when consumers feel confident that a brand will deliver the quality they expect, they appear more willing to reach a purchase decision quickly, without an extended evaluation process, which raises the likelihood of impulse buying, particularly for beauty products heavily promoted through social commerce. This is consistent with prior research showing that brand trust positively and significantly affects impulse buying for beauty products [54], reinforcing the view that greater consumer trust toward a brand corresponds to a greater likelihood of spontaneous purchase.

With respect to the mediating role of Brand Trust, H6 was supported: the indirect effect of Influencer Credibility on Impulse Buying through Brand Trust was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.133$ ;  $t = 2.847$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ), and, because the corresponding direct effect (H3) was also significant, this relationship is classified as partial mediation. This result indicates that influencer credibility does not only drive impulsive purchasing directly, but also operates indirectly by strengthening consumer trust toward the brand; when an influencer is perceived as knowledgeable, attractive, and trustworthy, consumers appear more confident in the recommended brand, and that heightened confidence in turn encourages spontaneous purchasing. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that trust significantly mediates the effect of influencer credibility on impulse buying behavior in a social commerce context [55], indicating that brand trust plays an important role in channeling the influence of influencer credibility into impulsive purchase behavior.

H7 was likewise supported: the indirect effect of Visual Appeal of Content on Impulse Buying through Brand Trust was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.147$ ;  $t = 3.478$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), and, because the corresponding direct effect (H4) was also significant, this relationship is also classified as partial mediation. This result indicates that visually appealing content does not only drive impulsive purchasing directly, but also operates indirectly through heightened brand trust; content featuring appealing visuals, an orderly layout, and clearly presented information appears capable of shaping a positive brand perception, which strengthens consumer trust and subsequently encourages a tendency toward impulsive purchasing. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that content marketing, including its visual-appearance dimension, significantly affects brand trust and indirectly affects impulse buying through brand trust among TikTok Shop users [56], indicating that content presentation quality, including its visual dimension, can shape brand trust in a way that ultimately drives impulsive purchase behavior in a social commerce setting. Comparing the two indirect effects, the mediated pathway through Visual Appeal of Content ( $\beta = 0.147$ ) was again descriptively larger than that through Influencer Credibility ( $\beta = 0.133$ ), mirroring the pattern already observed in the direct effects. Because both relationships were classified as partial rather than full mediation, Brand Trust should be understood as one of several channels through which each stimulus reaches Impulse Buying rather than the sole mechanism; the residual direct effects (H3, H4) indicate that influencer credibility and visual content also move consumers toward impulsive purchase through pathways not captured by brand trust alone, such as immediate affective arousal consistent with the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework.

Taken together, across the seven hypotheses tested, all relationships in the proposed model (H1 through H7) were supported by the data, indicating that both the direct and indirect relationships examined exert a positive and significant influence. Brand Trust was confirmed to function as a partial mediating variable in the relationship between Influencer Credibility and Impulse Buying, and likewise between Visual Appeal of Content and Impulse Buying. Taken together, these findings indicate that impulsive buying among Generation Z consumers of Maybelline lipstick on social commerce is shaped not only directly by influencer credibility and content

visual appeal, but also through the trust those stimuli help to build toward the brand; as influencer credibility and content visual appeal increase, consumer trust toward Maybelline tends to rise correspondingly, and that heightened trust in turn encourages a greater tendency toward spontaneous purchase.

These results should, however, be interpreted with an important boundary in mind. While Impulse Buying among Maybelline lipstick consumers is significantly shaped by Influencer Credibility, Visual Appeal of Content, and Brand Trust, this pattern cannot, on its own, be read as evidence of improved overall brand sales performance. The relationship between impulse buying and broader business outcomes is widely understood to be context-dependent rather than uniformly positive [57], impulsive purchases reflect a spontaneous urge that does not necessarily translate into sustained brand commitment [58], and the ultimate contribution of impulsive purchasing to sales performance can be shaped by external factors such as competitive dynamics and shifting consumer preferences [59]. This distinction offers a plausible explanation for why Maybelline's brand index could decline relative to competitors even though the present findings show that consumers continue to exhibit a meaningful tendency toward impulsive purchasing driven by influencer credibility, visual content appeal, and brand trust: impulsive purchase behavior, by itself, does not guarantee that this behavior accumulates into a durable, brand-level sales advantage.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to examine whether Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content shape Impulse Buying among Generation Z consumers of Maybelline lipstick in social commerce, and whether this relationship operates through Brand Trust as a mediating mechanism. The empirical results provide a direct answer to that aim: both Influencer Credibility and Visual Appeal of Content exert a positive and significant influence on Brand Trust and on Impulse Buying, Brand Trust itself exerts a positive and significant influence on Impulse Buying, and Brand Trust partially mediates the effect of each of the two stimulus variables on impulsive purchasing. The consistency of these results across all seven tested paths supports the conclusion that consumer trust functions as a genuine psychological bridge linking digital marketing stimuli to impulsive purchase behavior in this product and platform context, rather than the two stimuli acting on purchase behavior solely through a direct, unmediated route.

A finding that warrants particular care in interpretation concerns the boundary between impulsive purchase behavior and brand-level sales performance. Although Generation Z consumers in this study showed a clear tendency toward impulsive buying in response to influencer credibility, visually appealing content, and the brand trust these stimuli help to build, this behavioral tendency does not by itself establish that such purchasing translates into a durable improvement in Maybelline's overall sales position relative to its competitors. Recognizing this boundary is essential to avoid overstating what the present model can support: the study demonstrates a robust psychological and behavioral mechanism operating at the level of the individual consumer, not a verified causal pathway to aggregate brand performance, and the two should not be conflated when drawing managerial or theoretical implications from these results.

From a disciplinary standpoint, this study contributes to the marketing and consumer-behavior literature, an applied branch of management science concerned with how individual and organizational decisions are modeled and tested empirically, by integrating Source Credibility Theory and Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory into a single empirically tested structural model that treats brand trust as a joint mediator for two distinct digital marketing stimuli rather than examining each stimulus in isolation. In doing so, it extends the methodological application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling to a concrete social commerce setting characterized by a specific behavioral puzzle, namely a declining brand index within a structurally growing product category, and it shows how a multi-construct mediation model can be used to disentangle direct stimulus effects from trust-mediated effects within that setting. This contributes a replicable analytical template that future studies of digital consumer behavior in other product categories or platforms may adapt, while also reinforcing, through new empirical evidence from an Indonesian social commerce context, the broader theoretical claim that trust functions as a measurable psychological mechanism rather than a purely conceptual construct in models linking marketing stimuli to consumer response. It should be noted that the individual relationships tested here build on associations already established in prior literature; the study's contribution therefore lies primarily in their joint, integrated testing within a single model and in the specific empirical puzzle they are applied to, namely a well-established brand experiencing declining performance within a structurally growing category, rather than in the introduction of an entirely new theoretical relationship.

## Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to three limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings and assessing their generalizability. First, respondents were selected through non-probability purposive sampling based on specific screening criteria rather than random selection from a defined population; the resulting sample is therefore best understood as descriptive of Generation Z, Jabodetabek-based Maybelline lipstick consumers meeting those criteria, and the findings should not be extended to the broader Indonesian Generation Z or cosmetics-consumer population without caution. Future research could employ probability-based sampling, where a suitable sampling frame is available, to strengthen the statistical generalizability of similar findings. Second, all constructs were measured through a single, self-reported questionnaire administered to each respondent at one point in time, creating the potential for Common Method Bias (CMB); while procedural safeguards were applied during instrument design, as discussed in the Methods section, no post hoc statistical test for CMB was conducted, so the cross-sectional, single-source design cannot rule out the possibility of residual common method variance inflating the observed relationships. Future studies could reduce this risk by separating the measurement of predictor and outcome variables in time, by supplementing self-reported data with behavioral or transactional data, or by conducting a formal statistical test for CMB (e.g., Harman's single-factor test) during data analysis. Third, the study included only respondents who had purchased Maybelline lipstick, which severely limits the generalizability of the findings to a single brand and a

single cosmetics product category; the observed relationships and their relative magnitudes may not hold for other beauty brands, other cosmetic categories such as skincare or fragrance, or other social commerce platforms. Future research is encouraged to replicate the proposed model across multiple brands, product categories, and platforms to assess the robustness and boundary conditions of the relationships identified here.

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