Bima Journal – Bussiness Management and Accounting
Available online at : http://journal.pdmbengkulu.org/index.php/bima
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37638/bima.6.2.1479–1490

Revealing Purchase Intention as a Mediator Between Influencers and Gen Z Purchase Decisions

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How to Cite :
Martini, I.A.O., Wijayanti, N.K.W.A., and Antara, M.E.Y. (2025). *Revealing Purchase Intention as a Mediator Between Influencers and Gen Z Purchase Decisions. Bima Journal : Business, Management and Accounting Journal, 6* (2) 1479–1490 . DOI: https://doi.org/10.37638/bima.6.2.1479–1490

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received [20 Sept 2025]
Revised [15 Oct 2025]
Accepted [26 December 2025]

KEYWORDS
Influencer; Purchase Intention; Purchase Decision; Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *This study investigates how influencers affect purchase intention and decision-making for Maybelline makeup products among Generation Z in Denpasar City. The novelty of this research lies in strengthening the understanding of influencer-based marketing in the digital era, particularly among digital-native consumers. It provides practical insights for companies in selecting relevant influencers and creating engaging marketing content tailored to Generation Z's preferences. Using a quantitative approach with Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), data were collected from 130 purposively selected respondents. The findings reveal that influencers have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention and purchase decision. Purchase intention also positively and significantly affects purchase decision, confirming its mediating role in the relationship between influencers and purchase decisions. These results highlight that the higher the consumer's interest, the stronger the likelihood of making a purchase. Overall, this study emphasizes the strategic importance of influencer-based marketing in enhancing product appeal and driving purchasing behavior among Generation Z consumers.* ***Type of Paper:*** *Research article.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media, as a form of digital communication, is used not only for socializing but also as a tool for business and product promotion (Shamim et al., 2024). Social media's popularity in Indonesia is very high. Hootsuite data from 2021 shows that there are 170 million social media users in Indonesia, with an average usage of 3 hours and 14 minutes per day (Aryani & Murtiariyati, 2022). This demonstrates the high level of enthusiasm for social media use in Indonesia. One of the most popular social media platforms is Instagram. According to a We Are Social survey, Instagram surpassed WhatsApp and Facebook as the most popular social media platform among Generation Z, or users aged 16-24 (Hana et al., 2023). Generation Z is the generation born between 1997 and 2012. This generation is digitally savvy and passionate about information technology. They also enjoy and frequently communicate through social media (Pradhan et al., 2023). Furthermore, it's no surprise that Instagram is extremely popular among Generation Z due to its ease of use.

Generation Z, who grew up with social media, is heavily influenced by recommendations from influencers they idolize (Leite et al., 2024). Influencer marketing has become a dominant trend in the marketing world (Chetioui et al., 2020; Ki et al., 2020). Influencers, perceived as credible and relatable figures, build emotional connections with their followers and affect their attitudes and purchasing behaviors (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The popularity of this concept is inseparable from the crucial role of social media in everyday life and consumers' trust in recommendations from trusted individuals. Generation Z constitutes the largest population in Indonesia. According to data from the National Statistics Agency (BPS), in 2023, of Indonesia's 268.17 million population, 74.93 million, or 27.94%, will be Generation Z.

This research will focus on Generation Z consumer behavior in purchasing makeup products, exploring makeup brand preferences among Generation Z. For the wider public, this research can increase understanding of how purchasing decisions are influenced by social and digital factors, as well as the importance of digital literacy in navigating the rapid flow of information. This research will uncover the mechanisms behind Generation Z's decisions to purchase cosmetic products after seeing recommendations from influencers they follow.

One prominent phenomenon in modern marketing is the use of influencers as a strategy to increase consumer purchase intention. Purchase intention is the behavior of consumers when they want to buy or choose a product based on their previous experiences selecting, using, or consuming the product, or simply because they desire it (Santoso & Sispradana, 2021).

Influencers, individuals with significant influence on social media, play a crucial role in shaping consumer opinions and purchasing decisions. They are perceived as credible and trustworthy sources of information by their followers. Through authentic and engaging content, influencers are able to create emotional connections with their audiences, which in turn can increase consumer trust and interest in the products they promote. Therefore, it can be said that influencers have a significant impact on increasing consumer purchasing interest (Stevani & Junaidi, 2021).

One key factor that makes influencers so effective in influencing purchasing decisions is their ability to create compelling and relatable narratives. Influencers tend to share their personal experiences with a particular product or service, which serve not only as reviews but also as recommendations from close friends, even though they are public figures. Followers often feel emotionally connected to influencers, which makes them more likely to purchase the recommended product (Nisa & Wijayani, 2024). Research by Khairunnisa et al., 2024, found that influencers significantly influence skincare and makeup purchasing decisions among Generation Z. However, research by Jati & Artadita (2022) found different results. Their study found that Instagram influencer endorsements did not significantly influence purchasing decisions among Generation Z.

Before influencing purchasing decisions, influencers influence consumer intention to make a decision. Therefore, it can be concluded that influencers significantly influence purchasing intention (Jati & Artadita, 2022). Research by Agustin & Amron (2022) also found similar results. Their research found that influencer marketing has a significant relationship or influence on purchase intention. However, research by Rifiani et al. (2022) found different results. Their research found that the content of influencer endorsement messages did not significantly influence consumer purchase intention.

Consumer purchase intention is an urge or desire that arises within consumers to own or use a particular product or service (Chetioui et al., 2020). This purchase intention can be influenced by various factors, such as personal needs, social influences, product perceptions, and information obtained from various sources, including advertisements, recommendations from friends, or influencers (Lin et al., 2021). The higher a person's purchase intention for a product, the greater the likelihood that they will make a purchase. Purchase intention is dynamic and can change over time due to the influence of various internal and external factors. Understanding consumer purchase intention is crucial for marketers to design effective marketing strategies that can trigger purchase (Antara & Martini, 2024).

This research was conducted in Denpasar City because it is the capital of Bali Province, has a high urbanization rate and a large Generation Z population (Antara, 2025). Quoted from denpasarkota.bps.go.id, the population of Denpasar City in the 15-24 year old range (Gen Z) is 114,900 people. This allows for a representative research sample. Second, Bali is known as a tourism center with a modern lifestyle, so the trend of social media use and the influence of influencers is very noticeable among the community, including Generation Z. Third, Denpasar City has a diversity of cultures and lifestyles that can provide a more comprehensive picture of the influence of influencers on beauty product purchasing decisions. Thus, research conducted in Denpasar is expected to provide relevant results and can be generalized to the Generation Z population in other cities with similar characteristics.

The theory of planned behavior explains that a person's behavior, including purchase intention, is influenced by three main factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). The influence of influencers on purchase intention is significant, especially in today's digital era. This aligns with the results of researches conducted by Jati and Artadita (2022) and Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019), which found that Instagram influencer endorsements have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. Agusti & Amron (2022) also found similar results, indicating that influencers have a significant relationship or influence on purchase intention. The intensity of influencer endorsements significantly influences consumer purchase intention (Rifiani et al., 2022).

H1: Influencers have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention

The theory of planned behavior explains that purchase intention is a crucial component in forming purchase intention (Antara et al., 2025). The greater a person's interest in a product, the greater their intention to purchase it. This intention will then translate into actual behavior, namely the decision to purchase. The higher a consumer's interest in a product, the more likely they are to proceed to the purchase decision stage. This aligns with the results of research conducted by Jati and Artadita (2022), which found that purchase intention has a significant and positive effect on purchase decisions. However, research by Maryamah Haniza Putri et al. (2024) showed that purchase intention has a negative but insignificant effect on purchase decisions. Purchase intention is formed solely due to a strong consumer desire without any other factors, therefore, the purchase decision is insignificant.

H2: Purchase intention has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions

The theory of planned behavior helps us understand how influencers can influence consumer purchasing decisions. A well-liked and trusted influencer can shape a consumer's positive attitude toward a product (Acikgoz & Burnaz, 2021). Influencers play a significant role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions in today's digital age. This aligns with the research findings of Khairunnisa et al. (2024), who found that influencers significantly influence purchasing decisions for skincare and makeup products among Generation Z. Afandi et al. (2021) also found that influencers influence purchasing decisions among Generation Z. Another study, conducted by Mahardini et al. (2023), also found similar results, namely that influencers have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions.

H3: Influencers have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) helps us understand how influencers can influence consumer purchasing decisions through purchase intention. Influencers, with their attractiveness and credibility, can shape consumers' positive attitudes toward a product (Zeballos et al., 2020). Based on this description, it can be concluded that influencer variables influence purchase intention, and purchase intention variables influence purchase decisions. This aligns with the research findings of Jati and Artadita (2022), who found that Instagram influencer endorsements have a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. Agusti & Amron (2022) also found similar results, indicating that influencers have a significant relationship or influence on purchase intention. On the other hand, purchase intention also influences purchase decisions. For example, research by Sari (2020) found a positive and significant relationship between purchase intention and consumer purchase decisions.

H4: Purchase intention significantly mediates the influence of influencers on purchase decisions.

METHOD

This study was conducted on Generation Z consumers residing in Denpasar City, Bali. Denpasar was selected as the research location because it has a dense urban population, a high concentration of Generation Z, and strong exposure to social media trends, which align with the research objectives. The study population comprises Generation Z individuals in Denpasar City, the total number of which is unknown. Therefore, a non-probability sampling technique was applied, specifically purposive sampling, to select respondents who met the inclusion criteria: (1) aged 18–27 years (classified as Generation Z), (2) active Instagram users, and (3) have purchased or are familiar with Maybelline makeup products.

The minimum sample size was determined based on the requirements of Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis. According to Hair et al. (2021), the minimum sample size should be at least 10 times the largest number of structural paths directed at any construct in the model. Since the most complex construct in this study has three paths, a minimum of 90 respondents is required. To ensure adequate statistical power and account for potential incomplete responses, 130 respondents were included in this study, which meets the recommended threshold for SEM-PLS analysis.

The study used quantitative data, collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale to measure each indicator related to influencer attributes, purchase intention, and purchase decision. Data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique with SmartPLS 4 software. In SEM-PLS, the outer model assesses the validity and reliability of measurement indicators, while the inner model evaluates the relationships between latent variables. Ethical considerations were fully observed in this research. Respondents participated voluntarily after providing informed consent. They were assured that their participation was anonymous, data were used solely for academic purposes, and they had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Based on the validity test results, all instrument items were declared valid because all correlation coefficients were greater than 0.30. Therefore, all questionnaire items were considered valid and suitable for use in the study. Based on the reliability test results, all variables had Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.6, indicating that all variables were reliable and worthy of further analysis. From the results of the instrument measurements (outer model) which have produced evidence that the instrument is valid and reliable, the next step is to test the structural model (inner model).

To measure the inner model, direct and indirect effects were tested, as well as the magnitude of the effect using the coefficient of determination (R-square) analysis, F-square analysis, and Q-square analysis (Sarwono, 2018). The structural model, or inner model, was evaluated by examining the percentage of explained variance, namely by examining the R2 (R-square of the exogenous variable) for the dependent latent construct using the Stone-Geisser Q-square test and also by observing the magnitude of the structural path coefficient. Potential mediation was confirmed after further mediation analysis using the bootstrap method (Adelekan et al., 2018).

Figure 1. Results Conceptual Framework

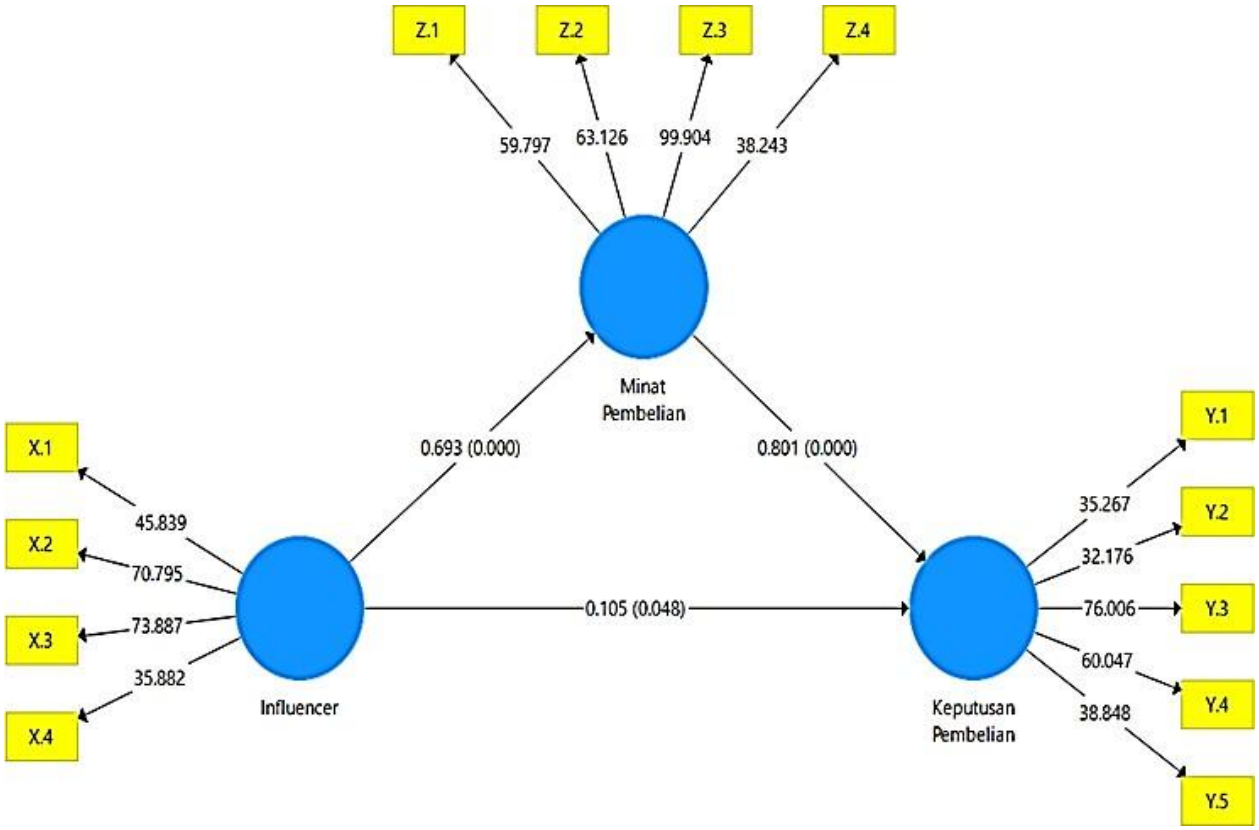


Table 1. R-square Test Results

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Purchase Decision	0.769	0.765
Purchase Intention	0.481	0.477

Source: Processed data (2025)

Based on the Table 1, the R-square value for the influencer and purchase intention variables on purchasing decisions is 0.769, which is large, indicating a large influence of 0.769 x 100% = 76.9%. The R-square value for the influencer variable on purchasing intentions is 0.481, which is large, indicating a large influence of 0.481 x 100% = 48.1%.

Table 2. Q Square Results

Variable	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
Influencer	520.000	520.000	
Purchase Decision	650.000	276.810	0.574
Purchase Intention	520.000	322.923	0.379

Source: Processed data (2025)

Based on the Table 2, the Q-square value obtained is 0.574, which is more than 0 and close to 1, so it can be concluded that the model has a predictive relevance value or the model can be said to have a relevant predictive value.

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results

Path Analysis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Influencer → Purchase Decision	0.105	0.103	0.053	1.987	0.048
Influencer → Purchase Intention	0.693	0.694	0.051	13.647	0.000
Purchase Intention → Purchase Decision	0.801	0.805	0.048	16.697	0.000
Influencer → Purchase Intention → Purchase Decision	0.555	0.559	0.055	10.135	0.000

Source: Processed data (2025)

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the data analysis (Table 3), the p-value of the influencer variable on purchase interest was 0.000, which was compared to a significant value of 0.05. Because the p-value <significant (0.000 <0.05) with a beta value of 0.693 and a t-statistic value of 13.647, it can be concluded that influencers have a positive and significant effect on purchase interest. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that the more appropriate the influencer who promotes the product, the higher the purchase interest will be (De Veirman et al., 2017). This is supported by the answers of most respondents who stated that the visibility of Maybelline makeup products displayed by influencers made respondents more aware of Maybelline makeup products and increased respondents' confidence in purchasing Maybelline makeup products after an influencer recommended them. This shows that influencers who have the ability to reach a broad and relevant audience are able to shape consumer opinions and preferences, thereby increasing purchase interest in Maybelline makeup products. The results of this study are in line with the results of research conducted by Jati and Artadita (2022) which found that Instagram influencer endorsements have a positive and significant effect on purchase interest. Agusti & Amron (2022) also found similar results, indicating that influencers have a significant relationship or influence on purchase intention. The intensity of influencer endorsements significantly influences consumer purchase intention (Rifiani et al., 2022).

Based on the data analysis, the p-value for the variable of purchase intention on purchase decisions was 0.000, compared to a significance level of 0.05. Because the p-value is <significant (0.000 < 0.05), with a beta value of 0.801 and a t-statistic of 16.697, it can be concluded that purchase intention has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that as purchase intention increases, purchase decisions will also increase. This is supported by respondents' responses expressing a desire to purchase Maybelline makeup products recommended by influencers if the products align with their personal preferences and style. This indicates that respondents' interest in purchasing Maybelline makeup products is often driven by need and the product's suitability to their style. The higher a consumer's interest in a product, the more likely they are to proceed to the purchase decision stage (Antara et al., 2024a). This study's findings align with those of Jati and Artadita (2022), which found that purchase interest has a significant and positive effect on purchase decisions. There is a positive and significant relationship between purchase interest and consumer purchase decisions. This means that the higher the purchase interest, the higher the purchase decision. Conversely, the lower the purchase interest, the lower the consumer's purchase decision (Sari, 2020).

Based on the results of the data analysis, the p-value of the influencer variable on purchasing decisions was 0.048, which was compared to a significant value of 0.05. Because the p-value <significant (0.048 <0.05) with a beta value of 0.105 and a t-statistic value of 1.987, it can be concluded that influencers have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. So the hypothesis is accepted. This means that the more appropriate the influencer who promotes the product, the more purchasing decisions will increase. This is supported by the answers of most respondents who stated that respondents knew the visibility of Maybelline makeup products after an influencer recommended Maybelline makeup products, thus increasing respondents' confidence in purchasing Maybelline makeup products. This shows that product recommendations or reviews from influencers are often considered more authentic than traditional advertising, thus encouraging consumers to try the products or services they offer and having a major impact on respondents' purchasing decisions. The results of this study align with those of Khairunnisa et al. (2024), who found that influencers significantly influence purchasing decisions for skincare and makeup products among Generation Z. Afandi et al. (2021) also found that influencers influence purchasing decisions among Generation Z. Another study, conducted by Mahardini et al. (2023), also found similar results, indicating a positive and significant influence of influencers on purchasing decisions.

Based on the data analysis, the p-value for the influencer variable on purchasing decisions was mediated by purchase intention of 0.000, compared to a significance level of 0.05. Since the p-value is <significant (0.000 <0.05), with a beta value of 0.555 and a t-statistic of 10.135, it can be concluded that purchase intention mediates the influence of influencers on purchasing decisions. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that higher purchase intention will have a direct or indirect influence on purchasing decisions, further increasing purchasing decisions. This is supported by the majority of respondents' answers, stating that they became aware of Maybelline makeup product visibility after an influencer recommended it. This increased respondents' confidence in Maybelline makeup products, leading them to purchase the products recommended by influencers. This indicates that when influencers recommend a product, they are able to generate consumer interest in that product. Ultimately, the established purchase intention can influence consumers' purchasing decisions. The results of this study align with the opinion expressed by Jati and Artadita (2022), who found that Instagram influencer endorsements have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. Agusti & Amron (2022) also found similar results, indicating that influencers have a significant relationship or influence on purchase intention. On the other hand, purchase intention also influences purchasing decisions, as research by Sari (2020) and Antara & Martini (2024) found a positive and significant relationship between purchase intention and consumer purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSION

Influencers have a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that the more appropriate the influencer's product promotion, the greater the purchase intention. Purchase intention has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that as purchase intention increases, the purchase decision will also increase. Influencers have a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that the more appropriate the influencer's product promotion, the greater the purchase decision will be. Purchase intention can mediate the influence of influencers on purchase decisions. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that higher purchase intention will directly and indirectly influence purchase decisions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by demonstrating its applicability in the context of influencer-based marketing among Generation Z cosmetic consumers. The findings emphasize how influencers shape attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control, which collectively strengthen purchase intention and lead to purchase decisions. Thus, the study contributes to the broader understanding of digital consumer behavior and enriches TPB’s explanatory power in the beauty industry context.

From a practical perspective, the results provide valuable insights for marketing practitioners and brand managers. Cosmetic brands, such as Maybelline, should prioritize collaboration with influencers who possess high credibility, authenticity, and alignment with the brand’s image and target audience values. Brands are encouraged to design influencer marketing strategies that foster emotional engagement and trust, as these factors significantly enhance consumer purchase intention and conversion rates.

Future researchers can expand the research population and sample, and apply it to different objects to provide broader insights into the factors influencing purchase decisions, for example, targeting a broader range of consumers. Future researchers can add other determinants not examined in this study, such as price perception, customer reviews, product quality, brand image, and others, to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that can improve consumer purchasing decisions.

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