

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE IN SHAPING PERCEPTIONS AND PURCHASE DECISIONS TOWARD SKINTIFIC PRODUCTS: A STUDY OF EIGHTH-SEMESTER FEMALE STUDENTS IN THE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AT UNIVERSITAS MAYJEN SINGKONO MOJOKERTO

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the dynamics of social influence, the formation of consumer perceptions, and their impact on purchasing decisions regarding Skintific products among eighth-semester female students of the 2022 cohort in the Management Study Program at Universitas Mayjen Sungkono. This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive-interpretive method. The participants consisted of 12 female students selected through purposive sampling based on their intensity of social media use and experience with Skintific products. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that social influence is formed through influencers, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and intensive interactions on TikTok and Instagram. These social influences shape positive perceptions of product quality, consumer trust, and Skintific's brand image, which subsequently affect purchasing decisions through information searching and alternative evaluation. Influencer credibility, consistent positive reviews, product suitability, and high social media usage strengthen social influence, whereas negative reviews, doubts about testimonial authenticity, and product incompatibility weaken its effect

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has shifted consumer behavior toward an ecosystem increasingly shaped by social interaction, recommendations, and forms of digital legitimacy. In the skincare industry, influencers, user reviews, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) have become important sources of consideration prior to purchase. Influencers' credibility, attractiveness, and parasocial interactions can shape consumers' responses, while social

media marketing strengthens perceived value and trust, particularly among Generation Z consumers. Advances in communication technology have further expanded access to information and accelerated consumer interaction. These patterns are evident in Skintific's marketing activities on TikTok and Instagram, which employ influencer marketing, before-and-after content, user experiences, and eWOM. Accordingly, the central issue concerns how social influences are received and interpreted by consumers and subsequently translated into perceptions and purchase decisions.

Social influence refers to the process through which individuals or groups affect the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of others. Consumer perception, meanwhile, represents a cognitive process through which individuals select, organize, and interpret information about products. Purchase decision refers to the outcome of consumers' evaluation of various alternatives before making a final choice. These three constructs form a behavioral sequence in which social influence provides reference points, perception assigns meaning to information, and the purchase decision constitutes the resulting behavioral response. In the context of skincare products, this process is influenced by source credibility, user experiences, product-consumer fit, and fear of missing out (FOMO), which may encourage consumers to follow prevailing digital trends.

Previous studies have established the important roles of influencers, eWOM, parasocial interaction, and information credibility in shaping consumer behavior. More recent studies have also associated FOMO and information credibility with consumers' purchase decisions [3], [11]. Nevertheless, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, limited attention has been given to the mechanism through which consumer perception mediates the relationship between social influence and purchase decisions. Second, previous research has predominantly focused on purchase intention rather than actual purchase decisions. Third, quantitative approaches remain dominant, providing limited insight into consumers' subjective experiences and interpretations. Finally, empirical studies focusing specifically on final-year female university students and a particular skincare brand remain relatively limited. These gaps provide an opportunity to examine the process of social influence more deeply through consumers' lived experiences and interpretations.

The selection of eighth-semester female students from the 2022 cohort of the Management Study Program at Universitas Mayjen Sungkono Mojokerto provides a relevant empirical setting for this study. During the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, the 2022 cohort consisted of 215 students. The focus on female students is particularly relevant given their active engagement with skincare products and social media environments. Final-year university students may possess relatively mature evaluative capacities while simultaneously experiencing substantial exposure to digital trends, influencers, and online recommendations. This context provides an opportunity to examine the interaction between rational evaluation and social influence in skincare product selection, particularly amid the continued growth of Indonesia's skincare industry.

The novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing social influence as a socio-psychological process that moves from exposure to social stimuli toward the formation of consumer perceptions and, ultimately, actual purchase decisions. This perspective complements existing studies that predominantly examine the effects of influencers, eWOM, or social media marketing on purchase intention through quantitative approaches. A qualitative approach enables a more comprehensive exploration of how consumers assess the

credibility of information, interpret user experiences, compare product alternatives, and respond to social pressures before making a purchase. The specific focus on Skintific and eighth-semester female students also provides a more contextually bounded empirical setting than studies addressing Generation Z consumers in general.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on consumer behavior and digital marketing by demonstrating that social influence operates through consumers' processes of interpretation and meaning-making. Influencer credibility, consistency of user reviews, product relevance, intensity of social media use, and FOMO may shape consumers' acceptance of information, whereas negative reviews, doubts concerning testimonial authenticity, and experiences of product incompatibility may inhibit the formation of favorable perceptions and purchase decisions. This perspective extends the understanding of social influence, which has often been conceptualized primarily as a direct predictor of consumer behavior. Practically, the findings may provide implications for digital marketing strategies that emphasize credibility, authenticity, information relevance, and meaningful consumer engagement.

This study aims to analyze the role of social influence in shaping perceptions and purchase decisions regarding Skintific products among eighth-semester female students from the 2022 cohort of the Management Study Program at Universitas Mayjen Sungkono Mojokerto. The analysis focuses on the roles of influencers, eWOM, social media interactions, and FOMO in shaping consumer perceptions and on how these perceptions are subsequently translated into purchase decisions. The conceptual foundation of the study draws upon social norms within the Theory of Planned Behavior, information credibility, and FOMO. A qualitative approach is employed to explain how and why social influence operates through the formation and interpretation of consumer perceptions, thereby providing a more contextual understanding of skincare purchasing behavior within the contemporary digital marketing ecosystem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Grand Theory: Marketing

Marketing is viewed as a process of creating, exchanging, and delivering value to satisfy consumer needs. Technological developments have expanded these practices through digital marketing, which integrates technology, interactive communication, data, and consumer engagement. Marketing 5.0 positions technology as a bridge connecting firms and consumers, while communication technologies accelerate interaction and information exchange. Social media further transforms consumers from merely recipients into both recipients and producers of information through reviews, recommendations, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Social media marketing activities also shape perceptions of quality, value, trust, and purchasing responses among Generation Z consumers. In this study, marketing is conceptualized as value creation based on digital interaction, enabling social influence to shape consumer evaluations.

This framework positions marketing theory as the grand theory explaining the influence of the digital environment on consumer behavior. Social influence functions as a stimulus through influencers, eWOM, and social media interactions; perception represents the internal process through which information is interpreted; and purchase decisions

constitute the behavioral response resulting from consumer evaluation. Social media marketing shapes consumer experiences through digital interaction and engagement. Based on this synthesis, the marketing perspective encompasses seven dimensions: value creation, digital marketing communication, consumer engagement, social interaction, eWOM, trust, and consumer experience, which collectively provide a foundation for explaining the formation of perceptions and purchase decisions regarding Skintific products.

2. Social Influence

Social influence is explained through three processes: compliance, identification, and internalization, ranging from conformity to social pressure to the acceptance of social values as personal beliefs. Social media has expanded the sources of social influence through influencers, digital communities, and eWOM. Influencers' credibility, expertise, and attractiveness can affect consumer responses, while social media marketing and eWOM shape Generation Z consumers' responses as well as digital consumption norms and patterns. In this study, social influence is conceptualized as a process of digital social influence that shapes consumers' acceptance, evaluation, and responses toward Skintific. Kelman's theory is employed to explain the depth and mechanisms of this influence.

In the context of skincare products, social influence operates through source credibility, user experiences, recommendations, social validation, and the intensity of information exposure. Based on this synthesis, the exploration of social influence encompasses trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, influencer-product fit, content exposure intensity, the strength of recommendations/eWOM, information credibility, and social validation. These dimensions are used to explain how informants receive, evaluate, and internalize digital social influence before forming perceptions of Skintific.

3. Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior refers to the process of selecting, purchasing, using, and evaluating products to satisfy needs and is influenced by psychological, social, cultural, and environmental factors. Social media has expanded the consumer environment by providing broader access to information, interaction, and digital evaluation. In the skincare context, purchasing behavior is also influenced by personal preferences, digital information, and social influence. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes consumer behavior as a dynamic process in which internal and external factors shape consumers' choices and consumption experiences concerning Skintific products.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) explains that behavior is influenced by intention, which is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This framework is therefore relevant for understanding the influence of influencers, peers, and digital communities on consumer behavior. Previous findings also reinforce the roles of digital information, perception, and social pressure in consumption behavior. Based on this synthesis, the exploration of consumer behavior encompasses need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, social considerations, risk considerations, product selection, usage experience, and post-purchase evaluation as an interconnected sequence of consumption processes involving Skintific products.

4. Consumer Perception

Perception is defined as the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information to construct meaning regarding an object, with its subjective nature being influenced by experience, motivation, and expectations. In digital environments, influencer

credibility can shape consumer perceptions, while source credibility and eWOM are associated with trust in skincare products. In this study, consumer perception is conceptualized as an interpretive process in which informants receive socially generated information, relate it to their experiences and needs, and subsequently form evaluations of Skintific.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) explains information processing through two routes: the central route, which involves systematic and in-depth evaluation, and the peripheral route, which relies on cues such as source credibility and attractiveness. This framework is relevant for explaining consumers' evaluation of product ingredients and suitability, as well as their use of influencer popularity as a peripheral evaluative cue. Based on this synthesis, the dimensions of consumer perception encompass attention, comprehension, information credibility, perceived quality, perceived benefits, perceived safety and suitability, perceived value, and brand image. These dimensions explain how social influence is transformed into consumer evaluations of Skintific products.

5. Purchase Decision

A purchase decision is viewed as a process of selecting an alternative after consumers recognize a need, search for information, and evaluate available alternatives. This process is influenced by internal, external, rational, emotional, and social factors. The digital environment has expanded the sources of consideration through online reviews and recommendations. In this study, purchase decision is conceptualized as the process through which consumers ultimately select Skintific products after evaluating their needs, available information, alternatives, perceived risks, and confidence in the product as a response to social influence and the perceptions formed through that influence.

The Theory of Planned Behavior explains that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intentions, which are associated with actual behavior. Subjective norms are particularly relevant for understanding the influence of influencers, peers, and digital communities on consumers' decisions. Source credibility, eWOM, and trust are also associated with purchase intention, while digital factors influence consumers' purchasing considerations. Based on this synthesis, the dimensions of purchase decision encompass need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, social recommendations, risk consideration, confidence in the selected product, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. These dimensions are used to trace how perceptions formed through social influence ultimately lead to the selection of Skintific products.

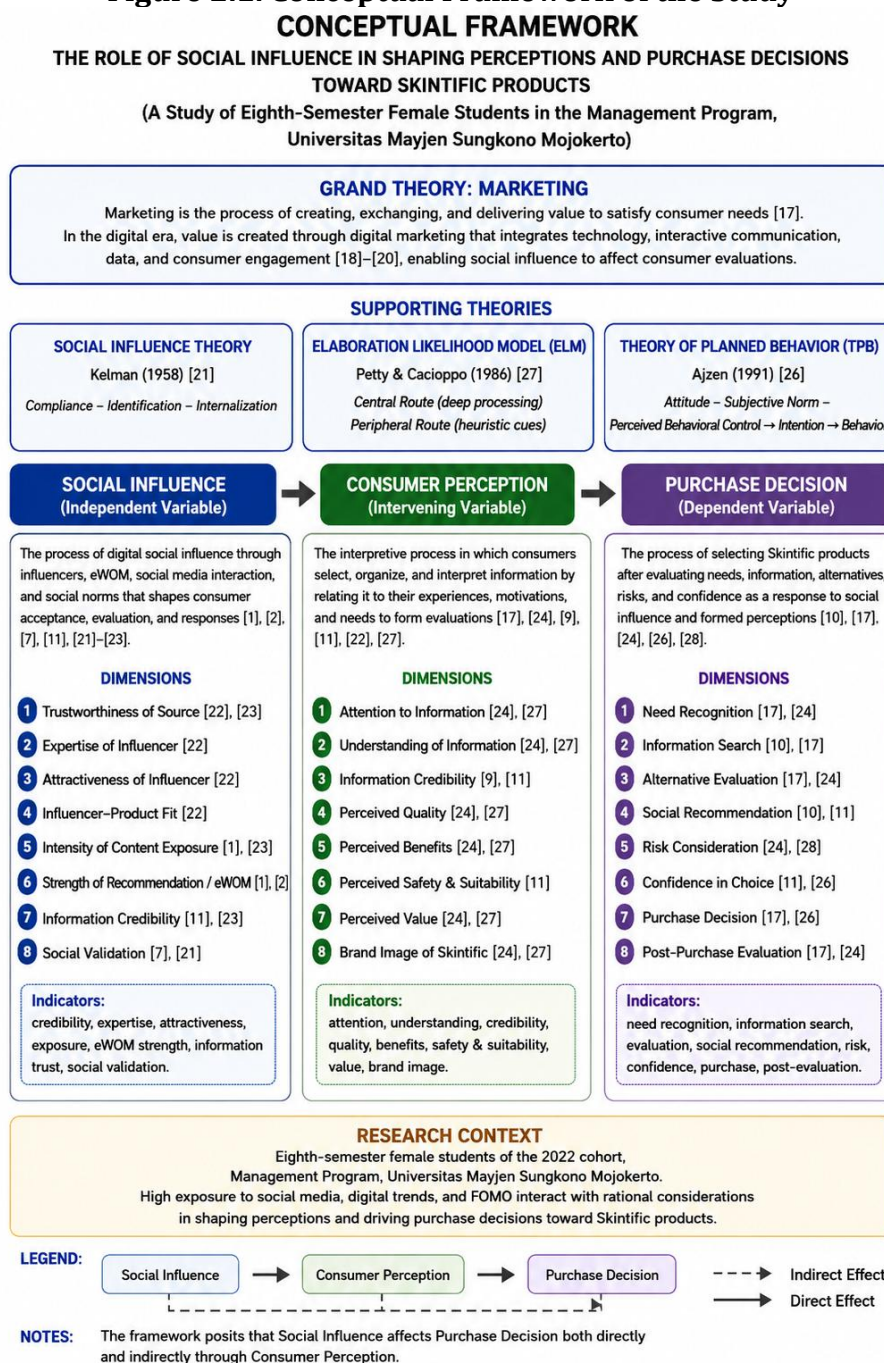
6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the assumption that purchase decisions emerge from the interaction between social and cognitive factors. Within the digital marketing environment, social influence functions as a stimulus through influencers, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and social norms. These stimuli are processed through consumer perception as a cognitive mechanism through which consumers receive, interpret, and evaluate information. Purchase decision subsequently represents the behavioral response, consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior through the roles of attitudes and subjective norms.

Among eighth-semester female students in the Management Study Program at Universitas Mayjen Sungkono Mojokerto, who are highly exposed to social media, influencer

credibility, social recommendations, digital trends, and fear of missing out (FOMO) may interact with rational considerations in shaping perceptions of Skintific and subsequently influencing purchase decisions. Thus, the proposed framework positions social influence as the independent variable, consumer perception as the intervening variable, and purchase decision as the dependent variable. This framework further illustrates the underlying socio-cognitive mechanism through which digital social influence is interpreted by consumers and translated into purchasing behavior.

Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework of the Study



RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to gain an in-depth understanding of how social influence shapes perceptions and purchasing decisions regarding skincare products among female university students. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore participants' experiences, meanings, interpretations, and social constructions from their own perspectives. The study was conducted at Universitas Mayjen Sungkono Mojokerto among eighth-semester female students in the Management Study Program, cohort 2022, during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Data collection and processing were planned for April–June 2026, taking into account the flexibility of qualitative research in obtaining rich data and verifying emerging findings.

The research participants were eighth-semester female students in the Management Study Program who had used or were currently using Skintific products, actively used social media, and had been exposed to influencer content or skincare product reviews. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their suitability for the research objectives. Twelve informants were initially selected, considering the depth of information required and the principle of data saturation. The data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, while secondary data were derived from scientific journals, books, industry reports, and relevant documents supporting the interpretation of the phenomenon.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of social influence in their purchasing decisions regarding Skintific products, while observation was used to understand participants' behavior when interacting with social media and skincare-related content. Documentation, including screenshots, field notes, and digital archives, was used as supporting evidence to strengthen the interview and observation findings. Data analysis employed the interactive model, consisting of data condensation or reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the data collection process until patterns and meanings explaining the relationship between social influence, consumer perceptions, and purchasing decisions were identified.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking by comparing information across informants and data collection methods and by confirming the researchers' interpretations with the informants. The quality of the findings was assessed through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, supported by contextual descriptions, documentation of the research process, empirical evidence, and researcher reflexivity. The entire research process was scheduled to take place from February to July 2026.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 12 eighth-semester students from the Management Study Program who actively used social media and had been exposed to information concerning Skintific skincare products. The informants were between 21 and 23 years old, with social media usage ranging from 2 to 8 hours per day. These characteristics indicate that the participants

were relatively intensive users of digital media, particularly TikTok, Instagram, and marketplaces. This condition made them relevant research subjects because they had experience receiving, evaluating, and responding to digital marketing information. Skintific was selected as the research object because of its high exposure through influencers, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), user reviews, digital promotions, and various skincare-related contents circulating on social media.

The interview findings indicated that social influence constituted an initial factor shaping informants' attention and interest in Skintific. Most informants became familiar with the products through TikTok, Instagram, marketplaces, influencers, friends, and other users. Review content, before-and-after presentations, explanations of product ingredients, usage experiences, and recommendations from social networks encouraged informants to seek further information about the products. Informants with higher levels of social media usage tended to encounter skincare-related content more frequently, making Skintific increasingly familiar to them. However, social influence was not accepted passively. Informants continued to consider influencer credibility, review authenticity, user comments, and the relevance of the information before accepting it. Thus, social influence emerged through a combination of social media exposure, influencer communication, eWOM, interpersonal interaction, and validation from other users.

This social influence subsequently shaped consumers' perceptions of Skintific, particularly regarding product quality, safety, popularity, brand image, and trustworthiness. Informants tended to develop positive perceptions after encountering numerous reviews and testimonials demonstrating perceived product benefits. The frequent appearance of Skintific on social media also generated a perception that the product was popular and widely used among peers. eWOM served as a form of social validation that strengthened consumer confidence, particularly when the information originated from actual users or influencers perceived as credible. Nevertheless, several informants demonstrated critical evaluation by comparing positive and negative reviews, reading user comments, seeking information about product ingredients, and considering product compatibility with their individual skin conditions. These findings indicate that consumer perception results from an interaction between external social influence and consumers' internal evaluation processes.

The perceptions formed through this process subsequently influenced purchasing decisions through a gradual evaluation process. Informants did not immediately purchase Skintific products after encountering promotional content. Instead, they generally sought additional information, read reviews, compared products with competing brands, considered price and perceived benefits, and evaluated product suitability before making a purchase decision. Positive perceptions concerning quality, safety, popularity, and other users' experiences increased their confidence to purchase. Conversely, negative reviews, concerns regarding product incompatibility, price considerations, and doubts about information credibility could lead consumers to postpone or cancel their purchases. Observations revealed similar patterns through activities such as viewing review content, comparing products, saving products to a wishlist or shopping cart, and eventually completing transactions. Documentation consisting of search histories, marketplace screenshots, shopping carts, and transaction records further supported the finding that purchasing decisions resulted from a process of information perception and evaluation.

Table 1. Overall Synthesis of Research Findings

No.	Aspect	Main Finding	Implication
1	<i>Social influence</i>	Influencers, social media, eWOM, friends, and other users served as major sources of social influence.	Shaped initial attention and interest.
2	Social media exposure	Higher social media usage increased the frequency of exposure to Skintific-related content.	Strengthened product familiarity.
3	Source credibility	Informative, experienced, and realistic influencers were perceived as more trustworthy.	Strengthened social influence.
4	Consumer perception	Perceptions were formed regarding quality, safety, popularity, brand image, and trust.	Became the basis for product evaluation.
5	eWOM and reviews	Positive reviews and user experiences served as social validation, whereas negative reviews increased caution.	Strengthened or weakened consumer confidence.
6	Purchasing decision	Consumers searched for information, compared alternatives, evaluated products, and subsequently purchased or postponed the purchase.	Represented the final response in the evaluation process.
7	Reinforcing factors	Influencer credibility, positive reviews, recommendations from friends, popularity, promotions, and discounts.	Accelerated purchasing decisions.
8	Weakening factors	Negative reviews, excessive promotion, price, incompatibility risks, and doubts about information credibility.	Delayed or prevented purchasing decisions.
9	Relationship mechanism	<i>Social influence</i> → consumer perception → purchasing decision.	Demonstrated a sequential and interconnected relationship.

The observation and documentation findings generally confirmed the interview results. Regarding social influence, informants were observed actively accessing skincare content, watching influencer reviews, reading comments, and engaging in activities such as liking, saving, and sharing content. Regarding consumer perception, informants paid attention to product ingredients, benefits, reviews, and other users' experiences before forming evaluations of Skintific. In terms of purchasing decisions, observable stages included information seeking, product comparison, saving products to shopping carts or wishlists, and completing transactions. Documentation in the form of screenshots of social media content, positive and negative reviews, search histories, marketplace pages, shopping carts, and transaction records demonstrated that consumer behavior developed systematically from information exposure to evaluation and purchasing action.

Overall, the findings indicate that the relationship between social influence, consumer perception, and purchasing decisions occurs through a sequential and interconnected mechanism. Social influence functions as an external stimulus originating from influencers, social media, eWOM, friends, and the digital environment. Consumer perception represents the cognitive process through which consumers evaluate product quality, safety, popularity, brand image, and credibility, while the purchasing decision constitutes the behavioral response that emerges after consumers have developed sufficient confidence. This relationship can be formulated as social influence exposure → perception formation → product evaluation → purchasing decision. The strength of this relationship is enhanced by source credibility, positive reviews, user experiences, product popularity, and promotional incentives, but may be weakened by negative reviews, excessive promotional claims, price

considerations, and perceived risks of product incompatibility. Therefore, this study demonstrates that Skintific purchasing decisions among eighth-semester university students are not driven solely by digital promotion but emerge from the interaction between social influence, perception formation, information evaluation, and consumers' rational considerations.

Discussion

The findings from the 12 informants demonstrate that social influence plays a substantial role in shaping perceptions and purchasing decisions regarding Skintific skincare products. This influence primarily emerged through TikTok, Instagram, influencers, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), user reviews, comments, and repeated digital interactions. Higher levels of social media use increased the likelihood of exposure to Skintific-related content, while influencer credibility and consistent positive user experiences strengthened informants' interest in seeking further information. The behavioral pattern identified in the study progressed from content exposure and attention to reviews and comments, to information seeking, product evaluation, and purchasing through marketplaces. These findings indicate that social influence operates as a social stimulus that gradually shapes consumption processes rather than functioning as a single stimulus that directly results in purchase behavior.

From an interpretive perspective, digital social influence shapes consumer perceptions through processes of social validation, comparison of experiences, and uncertainty reduction. Informants tended to perceive Skintific as a high-quality, safe, modern, and popular product after repeated exposure to information from influencers and other users. These perceptions became stronger when information obtained from different sources produced relatively consistent evaluations. This finding is consistent with the concept of perception and the perspective presented by, which conceptualize perception as a process of selecting and interpreting information based on individual experiences and the surrounding social environment. In the context of contemporary digital marketing, this mechanism is relevant to Marketing 5.0, which emphasizes the role of technology and digital interaction in understanding consumer behavior. It is also supported by the findings of and, which highlight the importance of digital information credibility in shaping consumer responses.

The relationship between social influence, perception, and purchasing decisions reveals a stimulus-cognitive process-behavioral response mechanism. Social influence originates from influencer content, eWOM, recommendations from friends, user comments, and social media trends. This information is subsequently processed through perceptions concerning product quality, safety, benefits, brand image, and product suitability. The final behavioral response is reflected in consumers' decisions to purchase, postpone, or cancel a purchase. This mechanism supports Social Influence Theory, particularly through the processes of compliance, identification, and internalization, and is also consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior through attitudes and subjective norms. Previous findings reported by, and further support the relationship between social influence, consumer perceptions, and purchasing behavior. The present findings indicate that perception functions as a cognitive mechanism that translates social stimuli into consumption behavior.

The findings are also consistent with the development of literature on influencer marketing and digital consumer behavior. Study demonstrates the importance of influencer credibility and emotional relationships in shaping purchase intentions, while positions

influencers as persuasive agents within digital marketing. Study identifies a relationship between influencer credibility and purchasing responses through consumer perceptions, whereas highlights the role of influencers and eWOM in shaping brand image. Findings reported by, and further demonstrate the substantial influence of social media, eWOM, FOMO, and influencers on young consumers. The contribution of the present study lies in providing a qualitative explanation of this sequence of processes, from exposure to digital social influence to actual purchasing decisions. In this respect, the study complements previous research that has predominantly examined relationships among variables using quantitative approaches.

Differences in the intensity of social influence across informants can be explained by variations in social media usage, levels of trust in influencers, personal experiences, product needs, and perceived skincare risks. Informants who used social media for approximately 6–8 hours per day were exposed to Skintific-related content more frequently, whereas informants with lower levels of exposure tended to conduct additional verification through product comparisons and further review searches. Reinforcing factors included influencer credibility, the number of positive reviews, brand popularity, visualization of product results, compatibility between product ingredients and skincare needs, and marketplace promotions. Conversely, weakening factors included negative reviews, doubts regarding testimonial authenticity, the risk of skin incompatibility, price considerations, and negative experiences reported by other users. These findings demonstrate that consumers retain evaluative capacity; social influence becomes stronger when information is perceived as credible and relevant, whereas uncertainty increases the likelihood of postponing or cancelling a purchase.

The principal contribution of this study lies in explaining consumer perception as a mediating cognitive mechanism between social influence and purchasing decisions in the context of university students' skincare consumption. The study extends the understanding that digital social influence operates through a multilayered process: exposure to information generates attention, social interaction produces validation, validation shapes perception, and perception directs product evaluation and purchasing decisions. This pattern enriches the application of Social Influence Theory, consumer perception theory, and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework within social media-based marketing environments. The novelty of the study is also reflected in its use of participants' actual experiences, observations of digital interactions, and documentation of information-searching and purchasing activities to provide a more contextual explanation of consumer behavior. Thus, young consumers are positioned not merely as passive recipients of social influence but as active actors who select, compare, and evaluate the information they encounter.

The findings have both theoretical and practical implications. For skincare companies, marketing strategies should prioritize influencer credibility, information transparency, eWOM quality, consistency of consumer experiences, and digital reputation management because positive consumer perceptions constitute an important pathway toward purchasing decisions. For consumers, digital literacy is necessary to distinguish authentic user experiences, personal recommendations, and promotional content before making purchasing decisions. For higher education institutions, these findings may support the

development of digital marketing literacy and students' understanding of consumption behavior in digital environments. Future studies could expand participant characteristics, geographical contexts, and product categories and employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches incorporating variables such as FOMO, trust, brand loyalty, digital lifestyle, and perceived risk. The limitation of the present study, which involved only 12 eighth-semester Management Study Program students at Universitas Mayjen Sungkono Mojokerto and employed a qualitative approach, means that the findings should be interpreted as an in-depth explanation of behavioral mechanisms within a specific group rather than as generalizable conclusions applicable to all skincare consumers.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that social influence plays an important role in shaping perceptions and purchasing decisions regarding Skintific skincare products among eighth-semester female students in the Management Study Program at Universitas Mayjen Sungkono Mojokerto. This influence primarily originates from influencers, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), peers, and intensive exposure to content on TikTok, Instagram, and marketplaces. Digital information shapes perceptions concerning product quality, safety, benefits, popularity, and brand image, subsequently encouraging consumers to engage in information seeking, evaluation, comparison, and validation before making a purchase. Consumer perception functions as the mechanism connecting social influence to purchasing decisions. Influencer credibility, positive reviews, visualization of product results, product suitability to skincare needs, peer recommendations, and skincare trends strengthen this process, whereas negative reviews, doubts regarding information authenticity, perceived risks of skin incompatibility, price considerations, and consumers' critical attitudes may inhibit purchasing decisions. These findings confirm that skincare purchasing decisions constitute a social and cognitive process involving the interaction of digital information, social validation, user experiences, and individual evaluation.

Based on these findings, skincare companies, particularly Skintific, should develop digital marketing strategies that prioritize influencer credibility, information transparency, product education, and authentic consumer engagement. Consumers should strengthen their digital literacy by assessing source credibility, comparing reviews, examining product ingredients and their suitability for individual skincare needs, and avoiding decisions driven solely by social media trends or product popularity. Higher education institutions can utilize these findings to strengthen digital literacy and students' understanding of consumer behavior within digital marketing environments. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the characteristics of informants, research locations, age groups, and brands examined, as well as to employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches incorporating variables such as brand trust, FOMO, digital lifestyle, brand image, and brand loyalty. The principal limitation of this study lies in the limited number and specific characteristics of its informants, who were restricted to eighth-semester female students in the Management Study Program at Universitas Mayjen Sungkono Mojokerto. Consequently, the findings cannot yet be generalized to a broader population of skincare consumers.

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