

The Role of Digital Trust in Mediating the Influence of Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale on Product Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology and the increasing use of social media have changed consumer behavior in purchasing skincare products online so that companies need to implement digital marketing strategies that are able to increase consumer trust. This study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale on Purchase Decision with Digital Trust as a mediating variable in Skintific Generation Z product consumers in Jepara Regency. The study uses a quantitative approach using survey data of 230 Skintific user generation consumers selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires using a Likert scale of 1-10 points and analyzed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results of the study show that Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale increase Digital Trust. Flash Sale and Digital Trust increase Purchase Decision, while Social Media Marketing and Customer Engagement Strategy have no direct effect on Purchase Decision. Digital Trust mediates the influence of Social Media Marketing and Customer Engagement Strategy in full and Flash Sale partially on Purchase Decision. These findings confirm that digital trust is an important mechanism that connects digital marketing strategies with purchase decisions. The implications of this study show that skincare companies need to prioritize building digital trust through transparent communication, responsive interactions, and secure transaction experiences to improve consumer purchasing decisions.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has changed the way companies market products and consumers make purchasing decisions. Social media and e-commerce are now the main

sources of information, product comparisons, reviews, and transactions, especially for Generation Z. This condition makes companies not only need to attract attention through digital marketing strategies, but also build consumer trust because online purchase decisions have uncertainty related to information credibility, transaction security, and platform reliability (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Hajli, 2015; Mainardes et al., 2019). However, various previous studies have not shown consistent results regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Daya & Daya Yolanda Masnita Siagian Kurniawati, 2022; Hannan et al., 2023).

Skintific was chosen as the object of the research because it is one of the skincare brands that actively utilizes social media and e-commerce platforms to reach Generation Z consumers. Skintific's characteristics that combine digital communication, consumer engagement, and time-limited promotions provide relevant context to test how digital marketing strategies shape trust and purchase decisions. In contrast to general consumer products, skincare has a higher risk of perception because it relates to the safety, quality, and suitability of products with consumer conditions.

Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale can be a stimulus that influences consumer evaluation before making a purchase decision. Social Media Marketing provides information and interaction, Customer Engagement Strategy builds relationships through consumer engagement, while Flash Sale creates urgency and economic benefits. These three strategies are expected to increase Digital Trust, namely consumer confidence in the credibility of information, transaction security, and reliability of companies or digital platforms. Furthermore, Digital Trust can encourage Purchase Decision because trust helps reduce uncertainty and risk perception in online transactions (Brodie et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2012; McKnight et al., 2002). Previous research has also shown that digital marketing strategies are able to improve purchasing decisions through the interaction process that occurs in the digital environment, although the amount of influence produced still varies between studies (Laila & Mohamad Rifqy Roosdhani, 2025).

Although the relationship between Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, Flash Sale, Digital Trust, and Purchase Decision has been extensively researched, there are still some research gaps that require further study, the influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decisions still shows inconsistencies. Several studies report that Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decisions because it is able to improve the quality of information, interaction, and positive consumer perception of brands (An & Ngo, 2025; Emini & Zeqiri, 2021; Santos et al., 2023). However, most previous studies still test Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale separately in explaining Purchase Decisions. This approach has not been able to explain the psychological mechanisms that link digital marketing strategies to consumer purchase decisions. In fact, in the digital environment, consumers do not necessarily make a purchase after receiving a marketing stimulus, but first evaluate the security of transactions, the credibility of information, and the reliability of digital platforms. The role of Digital Trust as a mediating variable is still

relatively limited in previous research, especially in models that integrate all three digital marketing strategies simultaneously (Daya & Daya Yolanda Masnita Siagian Kurniawati, 2022; Emini & Zeqiri, 2021; Prasetyo et al., 2025) Previous research has also shown inconsistent results. Social Media Marketing has been reported to improve purchasing decisions in several studies (An et al., 2025; Emini et al., 2021) but other studies have shown that the effect does not always occur directly and can depend on trust or engagement (Onofrei et al., 2021; Qiao et al., 2024). Research on Customer Engagement Strategy and Flash Sale also tests more direct influence on consumer behavior, while the role of Digital Trust as a mechanism linking the three strategies to Purchase Decision is still limited. Recent research on Skintific consumers is also still testing the relationship between variables partially so that it has not yet explained the model that integrates Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale through Digital Trust simultaneously (Fitriasari et al., 2025; Misbakhudin et al., 2024.)

Based on these gaps, this study offers novelty through the integration of Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale in one model with Digital Trust as a mediating variable to explain the formation of Purchase Decision. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of digital consumer behavior by explaining the role of trust as a psychological mechanism, while practically the results of the research can be a consideration for companies in designing digital marketing strategies that not only attract attention, but also build consumer trust. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale on Purchase Decision, either directly or through Digital Trust as a mediating variable in Generation Z consumers who use Skintific.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to test the relationship between Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, Flash Sale, Digital Trust, and Purchase Decision in Skintific consumers. The research model is based on the integration of Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, and Trust Theory.

The study population is Generation Z consumers in Jepara Regency who have purchased and used Skintific products. Because the exact population is not known, the study used a non-probability sampling technique with a purposive sampling method. The respondent criteria included men or women aged 18–28 years, domiciled in Jepara Regency, had purchased and used Skintific products, and had obtained information about Skintific through social media or digital media. Based on the consideration of the complexity of the PLS-SEM model (Hair, 2022), the study involved 230 respondents. Primary data was obtained through an online questionnaire using Google Forms, while secondary data was obtained from scientific articles, books, industry reports, and relevant publications. The entire construct was measured using a 10-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree)

Data analysis was carried out using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Evaluation of the measurement model was carried out through testing of outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, and discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The evaluation of the structural model included VIF, R^2 . Hypothesis testing was carried out using bootstrapping as many as 5,000 subsamples by looking at path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values (Hair, 2022).

Based on the results of data processing on 230 respondents, the majority of respondents were women (83.9%) and were in the age range of 21–24 years (75.5%), with the last education of high school/vocational school (49.2%). As many as 98.7% of respondents had purchased Skintific products. The results of descriptive statistics showed that all constructs had a relatively high average value, with Purchase Decision obtaining the highest mean value of 8,363, followed by Flash Sale and Digital Trust at 8,197, Social Media Marketing at 8,157, and Customer Engagement Strategy at 7,872. The standard deviation value was in the range of 1,790–2,004, while all constructs had a minimum value of 1 and a maximum of 10. These results showed that respondents tended to give a positive assessment of the variables studied.

Table 1. R-square

Variable	R-square	Customized R-square values
Digital trust	0.821	0.819
Purchase decision	0.805	0.802

Source: process data (2026)

Based on the results presented in table 6, the R-squared value shows that the digital trust has an r-square of 0.821 (adjusted R-square = 0.819), the purchase decision value has an R-square of 0.805 (adjusted R-square of 0.802). This suggests that the exogenous construct collectively explains 80.5% of the variance in digital trust to make the purchase decision of skintific products, showing a substantial influence, the remaining 19.5% can be attributed to variables or other indicators not studied in this study.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Social Media Marketing	0.910	0.933	0.736
Customer Engagement Strategy	0.859	0.898	0.639
Flash Sale	0.879	0.917	0.735
Digital Trust	0.909	0.932	0.734
Purchase Decision	0.922	0.942	0.764

Source: Data Processing (2026)

Based on the results of the outer model test, all indicators in Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, Flash Sale, Digital Trust, and Purchase Decision have an outer loading value above 0.70, thus meeting the convergence validity criteria. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values of all constructs are also above 0.70, while AVE is greater than 0.50, so all constructs are declared valid and reliable. Social Media Marketing has an outer loading of 0.839–0.865, Cronbach's Alpha 0.910, Composite Reliability 0.933, and AVE 0.639. Customer Engagement Strategy has an outer loading of 0.765–0.839, Cronbach's Alpha 0.859, Composite Reliability 0.898, and AVE 0.734. Flash Sale had an outer loading of 0.779–0.892, Cronbach's Alpha 0.879, Composite Reliability 0.917, and AVE 0.735. Digital Trust had an outer loading of 0.795–0.901, Cronbach's Alpha 0.909, Composite Reliability 0.932, and AVE 0.764. Meanwhile, Purchase Decision had an outer loading of 0.836–0.918, Cronbach's Alpha 0.922, Composite Reliability 0.942, and AVE 0.736. The results showed that the entire research construct had met the criteria of convergent validity and reliability.

Table 3. Fornell Larcker Criteria

Variable	CES	DT	FS	PD	SMM
SMM	0.765	0.840	0.817	0.790	0.858
CES	0.799				
FS	0.772	0.869	0.857		
DT	0.797	0.857			
PD	0.747	0.878	0.852	0.874	

Source: Data Processing (2026)

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, with the criterion that the square root value of AVE ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$) in each construct must be greater than its correlation with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Based on the test results, Social Media Marketing had a $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ value of 0.858, while the Purchase Decision value was 0.874. This value shows that the construct has a good ability to distinguish itself from other constructs. In general, the results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion test show that the measurement model has met discriminant validity, so that each construct is able to represent a different concept and is suitable for use in structural model analysis

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

HTMT	CES	DT	FS	PD	SMM
SMM	0.848	0.920	0.912	0.857	
FS	0.883	0.972			
DT	0.890				
PD	0.829	0.957	0.943		

Source: process data (2026)

Based on Table 4, most HTMT values are below the 0.90 limit. Although there are some construct pairs that have values above 0.90, the results of HTMT inference through

bootstrapping show that the 95% confidence interval does not include a value of 1.00. Therefore, discriminant validity is still acceptable and the measurement model is declared worthy of further analysis.

Table 5. Vit Test

Fit model	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.063	0.063
d_ ULS	1.181	1.18
d_ G	0.830	0.830
Chi-square	1.036.446	1.036.446
NFI	0.806	0.806

Source: process data (2026)

Based on Table 6, the SRMR value in the Saturated Model and Estimated Model was 0.063 (< 0.08), while the NFI value was 0.806 (> 0.80). These results show that the research model has a good level of suitability (goodness of fit) so it is suitable for further analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6. Hypothesis Tester

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample red (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Stuttgart
SMM -> DT	0.308	0.300	0.104	2.952	0.003	Accepted
SMM -> PD	0.069	0.059	0.086	0.800	0.424	Rejected
CES -> DT	0.210	0.210	0.067	3.116	0.002	Accepted
CES -> PD	0.040	0.039	0.070	0.575	0.565	Rejected
FS -> PD	0.328	0.346	0.131	2.496	0.013	Accepted
FS -> DT	0.456	0.462	0.102	4.485	0.000	Accepted
DT -> PD	0.503	0.494	0.104	4.830	0.000	Accepted

Source : 2026 process data

The test results showed that the Customer Engagement Strategy had no significant effect on the Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.040$; $t = 0.576$; $p = 0.565$), so the hypothesis was rejected. On the other hand, Digital Trust had a positive and significant effect on the Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.503$; $t = 4.830$; $p = 0.000$), so the hypothesis was accepted and showed that Digital Trust was the most dominant factor in influencing the purchase decision. Flash Sale had a positive and significant effect on Digital Trust ($\beta = 0.456$; $t = 4.486$; $p = 0.000$) and Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.328$; $t = 2.496$; $p = 0.013$), so both hypotheses were accepted. Furthermore, Social Media Marketing had a positive and significant effect on Digital Trust ($\beta = 0.308$; $t = 2.952$; $p = 0.003$), but did not have a significant effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.069$; $t = 0.800$; $p = 0.424$). Thus, the hypothesis of the influence of Social Media Marketing on Digital Trust was accepted,

while its direct influence on Purchase Decision was rejected. Overall, the results showed that Digital Trust has a central role in the model, as it is the most powerful factor in driving Purchase Decision, while Flash Sale and Social Media Marketing contribute to building consumer digital trust.

Digital Trust Mediation Analysis

Table 7. Indirect Effect Test Results

Hypothesis	Mediation Relationship	B	T	p-value	Verdict
H8	SMM → DT → PD	0,155	2,337	0,019	Accepted
H9	CES → DT → PD	0,105	2,503	0,012	Accepted
H10	FS → DT → PD	0,229	3,773	0,000	Accepted

Source: process data (2026)

Based on Table 11, all indirect effects through Digital Trust showed significant results with a *p-value* of < 0.05 . The relationship between Social Media Marketing → Digital Trust → Purchase Decision (H8) had a coefficient of 0.155, a t-statistic value of 2.337, and a p-value of 0.019, so the hypothesis was accepted. The relationship between Customer Engagement Strategy → Digital Trust → Purchase Decision (H9) obtained a coefficient of 0.105, a t-statistic value of 2.503, and a p-value of 0.012, so the hypothesis was also accepted. Meanwhile, the relationship between Flash Sale → Digital Trust → Purchase Decision (H10) showed the largest indirect influence with a coefficient of 0.229, a t-statistic value of 3.773, and a p-value of 0.000, so that the hypothesis was accepted. These results indicate that Digital Trust plays a significant role as a mediating variable in bridging the influence of Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale on Purchase Decisions.

The test results showed that Customer Engagement Strategy had no significant effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.040$; $t = 0.576$; $p = 0.565$), while Digital Trust had a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.503$; $t = 4.830$; $p = 0.000$). Flash Sale had a positive effect on Digital Trust ($\beta = 0.456$; $t = 4.486$; $p = 0.000$) and Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.328$; $t = 2.496$; $p = 0.013$). Social Media Marketing had a positive effect on Digital Trust ($\beta = 0.308$; $t = 2.952$; $p = 0.003$), but did not have a significant effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.069$; $t = 0.800$; $p = 0.424$). Overall, Digital Trust is a major factor in increasing Purchase Decisions.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study shows that Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement Strategy, and Flash Sale have a significant effect on Digital Trust, while Digital Trust has an effect on Generation Z's consumer purchase decisions on skincare products. Digital Trust has been proven to play a role as a mediating variable that turns digital marketing stimulus into a purchase decision. These findings confirm that Generation Z consumers not only consider the intensity of digital promotions and interactions, but also need trust before making a purchase.

Therefore, companies need to implement a trust-oriented marketing strategy through information transparency, authentic engagement, honest promotions, influencer credibility, user reviews, and transaction security. Further research is recommended to expand the research object, generation, platform, and variables and use longitudinal design to obtain more comprehensive results.

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