

## **THE MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND TRUST BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the impact of Social Media Marketing on Online Purchase Intention, emphasizing the mediating role of Brand Trust among consumers of Azarine skincare products. Despite the rapid expansion of digital marketing activities, the rise in purchase intention has not kept pace, as consumers still prioritize trust and the credibility of information when making purchasing decisions. The research applies a quantitative approach with a causal design. Data were gathered using a Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from Kim and Ko (2012), which comprised 12 items divided into Social Media Marketing (6 items), Brand Trust (3 items), and Online Purchase Intention (3 items). The sample consisted of 80 student respondents who were familiar with the Azarine brand and actively engaged on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. The data were analyzed through multiple linear regression using SPSS version 26. The analysis indicates that Social Media Marketing does not have a significant direct influence on Online Purchase Intention ( $p = 0.213 > 0.05$ ), while Brand Trust has a positive and significant effect ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Consequently, the impact of Social Media Marketing on purchase intention is transmitted indirectly through Brand Trust as the mediating factor. These results align with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, demonstrating the essential role of Brand Trust in transforming promotional engagement into purchase intention. From a practical perspective, local brands such as Azarine should focus on strengthening consumer trust by delivering authentic, transparent, and informative social media content to enhance online purchasing intentions.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing; Brand Trust; Purchase Intention; Digital Marketing; Skincare Brand

### **INTRODUCTION**

Purchase intention in the beauty industry does not always correspond to the intensity of promotional exposure or overall market growth. Consumers often exhibit hesitation to make purchasing decisions despite extensive exposure to digital campaigns. This behavioral tendency occurs because consumers carefully evaluate brand trust, information credibility, and product safety before committing to a purchase. Consequently, purchase intention remains a critical issue that warrants further empirical examination.

The global beauty industry is undergoing rapid expansion, driven by increasing consumer awareness of self-care and personal well-being. Statista (2024) projects that the global skincare market will surpass USD 200 billion by 2026, with the Asia-Pacific region identified as one of the most dynamic growth areas. Indonesia, as a major market in Southeast Asia, follows a similar pattern. The national skincare segment is estimated to reach USD 3 billion by 2027, reflecting an annual growth rate of approximately 6–8 percent.

Empirical evidence from Populix (2023) indicates that 67% of Indonesian skincare consumers rely on user reviews before purchasing products, and 45% express hesitation to try new products despite repeated exposure to social media advertisements. Katadata Insight (2024) reveals that merely 38% of Generation Z consumers place trust in the promotional statements of local brands. This finding highlights the necessity of brand trust as a core driver of purchase intention. For local skincare brands such as Azarine, which have actively engaged in digital promotions, influencer partnerships, and creative content initiatives to expand their reach, the fundamental challenge extends beyond enhancing social media exposure. It lies in fostering a credible brand image capable of transforming online visibility into real purchasing actions.

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has been recognized in digital marketing literature as a significant factor influencing consumer behavior, particularly in shaping purchase intention (Phan et al., 2024). Dwivedi et al. (2021) argue that current SMM research must emphasize the establishment of long-term relational constructs, including brand trust and customer engagement, which substantially contribute to the development of purchase intention. Previous empirical investigations consistently demonstrate that brand trust operates as a mediating mechanism connecting SMM with purchase intention. Singh et al. (2025) identified that trust mediates the association between SMM and purchase decisions in the food and beverage sector, while Jeromina and James (2024) reported that the indirect pathway through trust exerts a stronger influence than the direct effect of SMM. Alrwashdeh (2025) further confirmed that brand trust serves as a central element reinforcing the link between SMM activities and consumer purchasing behavior.

Despite these findings, inconsistencies persist across empirical studies. Hanaysha (2022) identifies that only selected dimensions of SMM, specifically informativeness and interactivity, significantly influence trust, whereas entertainment does not. Al-Salim et al. (2023) reveal that the relationship between brand image and brand trust explains 70% of the variance in purchase intention, with SMM accounting for 45% of the variance in

brand image and 55% in brand trust. Alshehhi et al. (2023) demonstrate that both brand trust and brand loyalty mediate the relationship between SMM and purchase intention within the online tourism industry. These mixed results suggest that the strength of brand trust as a mediating factor may differ according to industrial context and consumer characteristics.

Scholarly attention has also been directed toward influencer marketing, which emphasizes the centrality of trust. Sivanesan et al. (2023) show that influencer transparency enhances consumer trust and, consequently, purchase intention. Credibility of influencers similarly functions as a key determinant in shaping consumer confidence toward brands. Within the Indonesian context, Ramadhani and Prasasti (2023) find that SMM dimensions such as trendiness, word-of-mouth, and customization positively influence purchase intention through brand trust.

Discrepancies among earlier studies and the limited number of investigations focusing on local skincare brands highlight a notable gap in the existing body of research. The present study aims to fill this gap by reassessing the mediating function of brand trust in the connection between social media marketing and purchase intention, with a particular focus on young consumers who are actively involved in social media activities.

The primary objectives of this research are:

- (1) to investigate the influence of social media marketing on purchase intention, and
- (2) to evaluate the mediating effect of brand trust within this relationship.

## METHOD

This research represents a small-scale empirical study utilizing a quantitative methodology with a causal research design to investigate the influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention, with Brand Trust serving as the mediating variable. The target population consisted of active students enrolled in the Business Education Department at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, who were acquainted with the Azarine skincare brand. A purposive sampling technique was employed, selecting participants who met the inclusion criteria, namely individuals possessing prior knowledge or experience with Azarine products and who actively engaged on social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 10 percent margin of error, as outlined below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where:

- $n$  = sample size,
- $N$  = population size, and
- $e$  = margin of error (tolerance level).

Based on this formula:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \\ n &= \frac{395}{1 + 395(0,10)^2} \\ n &= \frac{395}{1 + 395(0,01)} \\ n &= \frac{395}{1 + 3,95} \\ n &= \frac{395}{4,95} \\ n &= 79,8 = 80 \text{ respondents} \end{aligned}$$

The study employed a structured questionnaire utilizing a five-point Likert scale, where responses ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The measurement indicators were adapted and refined from the framework proposed by Kim and Ko (2012), which has been widely adopted in previous research examining Social Media Marketing, Brand Trust, and Purchase Intention. The instrument comprised 12 items, categorized into six statements assessing Social Media Marketing, three assessing Brand Trust, and three assessing Online Purchase Intention.

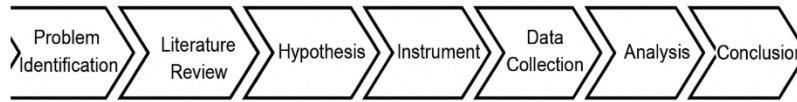
Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression with the aid of SPSS version 26, allowing the investigation of both direct and indirect relationships among the studied variables.

The formulated hypotheses were presented as follows:

- $H_0$ : Social Media Marketing does not exert a significant influence on the purchase intention of Azarine skincare consumers, and Brand Trust does not mediate the relationship between SMM and purchase intention (indicating no significant indirect effect through Brand Trust).
- $H_1$ : Social Media Marketing positively and significantly affects the purchase intention of Azarine skincare consumers, with Brand Trust functioning as a mediating variable that channels the impact of SMM on purchase intention (indicating a significant indirect effect through Brand Trust).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the results of the data analysis along with the research procedure and interpretation of findings.



**Figure 1. Research Procedure**

**Result**

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Marketing	80	14.00	30.00	24.0125	2.88819
Brand Trust	80	4.00	15.00	12.0625	1.75271
Online Purchase Intention	80	3.00	15.00	11.1000	2.33086
Valid N (listwise)	80				

**Source:** Processed secondary data, SPSS version 26 output.

The descriptive results reveal that respondents exhibit a favorable perception of Azarine’s social media marketing activities (M = 24.01), a relatively high degree of brand trust (M = 12.06), and a strong level of purchase intention (M = 11.10).

**Table 2. Reliability and Validity Test Summary**

Variable	No.Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Validity Range (r)	Status
Social Media Marketing	6	0.851	0.684–0.794	Reliable & Valid
Brand Trust	3	0.870	0.870–0.920	Reliable & Valid
Online Purchase Intention	3	0.897	0.895–0.923	Reliable & Valid

**Source:** Processed secondary data, SPSS version 26 output.

All measurement instruments exhibit strong internal consistency ( $\alpha > 0.80$ ) and statistically significant item–total correlations ( $p < 0.01$ ), confirming that each construct is measured with reliability and construct validity.

**Table 3. Correlations Between Constructs**

Variable	1	2	3
1. Social Media Marketing	1	0.773	0.564
2. Brand Trust		1	0.643
3. Online Purchase Intention			1

**Source:** Processed secondary data, SPSS version 26 output.

**Note:**  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis reveals the strongest association between Social Media Marketing and Brand Trust ( $r = 0.773$ ). A similarly strong correlation is identified between Brand Trust and Online Purchase Intention ( $r = 0.643$ ), suggesting the potential mediating effect of Brand Trust in linking Social Media Marketing to Online Purchase Intention.

**Table 4. Model Summary and ANOVA**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig
1	0.658	0.433	0.418	29.380	0.000
<b>Dependent Variable:</b> Online Purchase Intention					
<b>Predictors:</b> (Constant), Brand Trust, Social Media Marketing					

**Source:** Processed secondary data, SPSS version 26 output.

The regression model demonstrates statistical significance ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the combination of Social Media Marketing and Brand Trust accounts for 43.3% of the variance in Online Purchase Intention.

**Table 5. Regression Coefficients**

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	-0.325	1.664	—	-0.195	0.846
Social Media Marketing	0.136	0.108	0.170	1.256	0.213
Brand Trust	0.681	0.178	0.518	3.831	0.000
<b>Dependent Variable:</b> Online Purchase Intention					

Source: Processed secondary data, SPSS version 26 output.

The analysis reveals that Social Media Marketing does not have a significant direct influence on purchase intention ( $p = 0.213 > 0.05$ ). Conversely, Brand Trust demonstrates a positive and statistically significant impact ( $p < 0.001$ ). These results suggest that the influence of Social Media Marketing on purchase intention occurs indirectly through Brand Trust, which serves as the mediating variable in this relationship.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal that Brand Trust plays a pivotal mediating role in the relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Online Purchase Intention. Exposure to Azarine’s digital campaigns through social media platforms alone is insufficient to increase purchase intention without the presence of strong brand trust. This result reinforces the consumer trust-based behavior theory, which posits that trust functions as a primary psychological mechanism transforming promotional perceptions into purchasing actions (Erdem & Swait, 2004).

Empirically, the result diverges from the findings of Singh et al. (2025) and Jeromina and James (2024), who identified a direct influence of SMM on purchase intention through interactivity and content credibility. Nevertheless, this study aligns with Hanaysha (2022) and Al-Salim et al. (2023), who emphasized that only the informativeness and interactivity dimensions of SMM significantly contribute to the development of Brand Trust, while entertainment content yields no substantial effect.

The present findings also support the perspective of Dwivedi et al. (2021), asserting that the effectiveness of Social Media Marketing is not determined by the intensity of exposure but by a brand’s ability to establish trust-based emotional relationships with consumers. In the skincare context, this is particularly relevant, as consumers tend to be more sensitive to issues of safety, authenticity, and credibility (Alrwashdeh, 2025). Brand Trust thus serves as a psychological bridge that converts digital exposure into a genuine purchase intention (Kim & Ko, 2012), consistent with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

From a managerial standpoint, local brands such as Azarine should prioritize content credibility and transparency rather than relying solely on visual appeal or viral trends. The incorporation of user-generated content, authentic testimonials, and interactive two-way communication can effectively foster Brand Trust and enhance online purchase intention (Ramadhani & Prasasti, 2023).

**CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study indicate that Brand Trust functions as a key mediating variable in the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Online Purchase Intention. The regression results show that these two variables collectively have a significant influence on Online Purchase Intention ( $p = 0.000 < 0.001$ ), accounting for 43.3% of its variance. When assessed individually, however, Social Media Marketing does not exhibit a significant direct impact ( $p = 0.213 > 0.05$ ), while Brand Trust demonstrates a strong and positive effect ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $\beta = 0.681$ ).

These results suggest that the influence of Social Media Marketing on consumers’ purchase intentions operates indirectly through the development of brand trust. The higher the level of consumer trust—cultivated through credible, transparent, and interactive social media marketing efforts—the greater the likelihood of making online purchases. The study highlights the essential role of establishing and sustaining Brand Trust as a fundamental strategic element to strengthen consumer purchase intention in the increasingly competitive digital marketplace.

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