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# Framing Cosmetic Purchase Decisions in the Digital Era: The Role of Influencer Storytelling and Consumer Reviews with Self-Brand Connection as a Moderating Variable

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***Keywords***

influencer storytelling, consumer reviews, self-brand connection, purchase decision, cosmetics

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the influence of influencer storytelling and consumer reviews on cosmetic product purchase decisions, with self-brand connection as a moderating variable. The focus is on cosmetic consumers across Indonesia within the context of digital marketing. The theoretical foundation includes the *Theory of Planned Behavior*, *Elaboration Likelihood Model*, and *Self-Congruity Theory*. A quantitative method using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (*PLS-SEM*) was employed. The findings reveal that both influencer storytelling and consumer reviews positively affect purchase decisions. Moreover, self-brand connection strengthens the relationship between these variables and purchase decisions, highlighting the emotional role consumers play in shaping brand preference. These findings provide both theoretical and practical implications, especially in crafting effective digital marketing strategies for local cosmetic brands. The study emphasizes the importance of fostering emotional bonds between brands and consumers to enhance loyalty and drive purchase decisions.

## INTRODUCTION

The global cosmetics industry continues to demonstrate significant growth, with the market value projected to reach USD 473.21 billion by 2028, reflecting an annual growth rate of 5.5% (Ekon, 2024). In Indonesia, the cosmetics industry has experienced a 21.9% increase in the number of companies, rising from 913 in 2022 to 1,010 by mid-2023 (*antarafoto*, 2023). This growth is driven by rising public awareness of the importance of self-care and skin health, as well as the growing trend of using high-quality local products. To better understand the dynamics of cosmetic industry growth both globally and nationally, the following two charts illustrate key market trends. The first chart presents the projected growth in global cosmetics market value, estimated to reach USD 473.21 billion by 2028. Meanwhile, the second chart highlights the increase in the number of cosmetic companies in Indonesia between 2022 and mid-2023. Together, these charts reflect the rapid development of the cosmetics sector, propelled by heightened consumer awareness and a favorable shift toward quality local brands.

The shift in consumer behavior has increasingly led individuals to rely on social media as a primary source of information and a platform for purchasing beauty products. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become key channels through which consumers explore, evaluate, and ultimately decide to purchase cosmetic products. This phenomenon has created a new landscape in which personal narratives from influencers and consumer reviews play a significant role in shaping purchase decisions.

Although digital marketing strategies have been widely adopted, there remains a lack of studies that specifically examine the influence of influencer storytelling and consumer reviews on purchase decisions, particularly when considering the moderating role of self-brand connection. This study focuses on cosmetic consumers in Indonesia to explore these dynamics within the broader context of the local beauty market.

Previous studies have examined the influence of influencer marketing and consumer reviews on purchase decisions in the digital era. *Mustikowati* (2023) found that influencer marketing and online customer reviews significantly affect online purchase decisions, while advertising attractiveness does not show a notable impact. This suggests that trust in the information source is more crucial than visually appealing promotional content. *Macheka et al.* (2024) emphasized that the credibility of influencers and online reviews plays an essential role in young women's purchase intentions, although an influencer's physical attractiveness has no significant effect on consumer attitudes. This highlights that credibility and information quality outweigh mere popularity or appearance. *Senalasari et al.* (2025) demonstrated that consumer and influencer reviews only influence purchase intentions when consumers have strong trust in the information source. When trust was introduced as a mediating variable, the direct effect of reviews became insignificant, emphasizing the dominant role of trust in shaping purchase decisions. *Anastasiei* (2024) further noted that personal motivations, such as the need to evaluate information and social media habits, have more impact on *e-WOM* behavior than direct product experience. *Bertaglia et al.* (2024) investigated influencer self-disclosure practices across countries and found that audience engagement remained high as long as sponsorship disclosures were transparent and adhered to national regulations. Similarly, *Anastasiei* (2025) concluded that the effectiveness of *e-WOM* in influencing purchase intention is fully mediated by product quality perception, emotional response, and perceived risk, rather than brand trust or engagement. *Migkos & Giannakopoulos* (2025) noted that successful influencer campaigns are driven by authenticity, transparency, and user trust, with limited research addressing their long-term effects on brand loyalty. *Joshi et al.* (2025) observed that while influencer marketing has shown effectiveness, many studies lack a robust theoretical framework and rarely explore mediating or moderating variables comprehensively. In a large-scale meta-analysis, *Pan et al.* (2025) found that follower characteristics and post attributes (e.g., informational and hedonic value) are more influential on purchase intentions, while influencer characteristics are more closely linked to actual purchasing behavior. Lastly, *Chen et al.* (2024) emphasized the importance of influencer professionalism and real-life experience, especially when delivered through interactive storytelling formats like live streaming in shaping positive brand perception and purchase decisions.

Despite the extensive literature underscoring the importance of influencer marketing, consumer reviews, and trust, very few studies have integrated influencer storytelling and consumer reviews into a unified model, incorporating self-brand connection as a moderating variable. Moreover, limited research has specifically focused on cosmetic consumers in Indonesia, particularly within the context of digital marketing and local brand engagement. This study offers a novel contribution by framing cosmetic purchase decisions in the digital era through the lens of storytelling, accounting for the power of consumer reviews, and exploring how emotional bonds with the brand (*self-brand connection*) may strengthen or weaken these effects on consumer decisions.

**Research Urgency and Contribution**

Understanding how influencer storytelling and consumer reviews affect purchase decisions while accounting for *self-brand connection* is crucial for cosmetic companies seeking to design effective marketing strategies. This research is expected to provide both theoretical contributions to the field of digital marketing and practical insights for local cosmetic industry players aiming to optimize their promotional campaigns.

**Research Focus and Objectives**

This study aims to analyze the effect of influencer storytelling on purchase decisions of *De Scents* products; examine the effect of consumer reviews on purchase decisions of *De Scents* products; and investigate the moderating role of *self-brand connection* in the relationship between influencer storytelling and consumer reviews with purchase decisions.

**Hypotheses Development**

**Influencer Storytelling and Purchase Decisions**

Theory A – Influencer Credibility & Trust
Recent research confirms that authentic influencers significantly influence consumer behavior by fostering trust and satisfaction through relatable narratives. Consumers often use influencer recommendations instead of traditional advertising, as influencers provide a sense of reliability and authenticity (*Masarroh & Andriani*, 2025; *Wikipedia*, 2025a).

Theory B – Social Media Persuasion Mechanisms (*Sprout Social*, 2024)
A report shows that 49% of consumers make purchases at least monthly based on influencer posts, with 30% trusting influencers more than six months earlier, underscoring storytelling's profound impact (*sproutsocial*, 2024).

Theory C – *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) in Social Media
The *ELM* posits that consumers process influencer messages via central and peripheral routes: authentic, informative content (central route) enhances persuasive effect, while superficial cues (likes, visuals) work only if they reinforce quality messaging (*Wikipedia*, 2024).

**Consumer Reviews (*e-WOM*) and Purchase Decisions**

Theory A – Trust Through Peer Reviews
*Bazaarvoice* (2025) reports that 47% of consumers trust testimonials and peer reviews when shopping on social media, and 39% gain confidence from the sheer volume of reviews (*Palaparti*, 2025).

Theory B – Mediating Role of Emotions, Quality, and Risk
*Anastasiei et al.* (2025) found that *e-WOM's* effect on purchase intention is fully mediated by perceived product quality, emotional response, and perceived risk, not directly by brand trust or engagement (*Anastasiei*, 2025).

Theory C – Bandwagon Heuristic in e-Commerce
Experimental findings highlight that high review scores, combined with volume and valence, trigger bandwagon effects, where consumers rely on social proof to guide decisions (*Anastasiei*, 2025).

**Self-Brand Connection as Moderating Variable**

Theory A – Self-Brand Matching
*Self-brand connection* arises when consumers align their self-concept with brand images, reinforcing attachment and identity-based purchasing (*Wikipedia*, 2025b).

Theory B – Role in Brand Loyalty & Engagement
Consumers with higher self-brand alignment interpret influencer and peer narratives more personally, strengthening message impact and emotional resonance (Ball & Tasaki, 1992; Kleine et al., 1993; *Wikipedia*, 2025b).

Theory C – Personalization and Digital Trust in Cosmetics
Recent statistics show 83% of beauty consumers are drawn to personalized experiences, and 60% are influenced by online reviews, indicating that *self-brand connection* enhances how personalized content and reviews are perceived (*Jannik Linder*, 2025).

Based on the background and theoretical foundation previously discussed, it can be concluded that consumer purchase decisions in the context of digital cosmetic products are influenced not only by external factors such as influencer storytelling and consumer reviews, but also by the emotional attachment consumers have toward the brand (*self-brand connection*).

Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships among these variables, the following conceptual framework and hypothesis formulation have been developed:

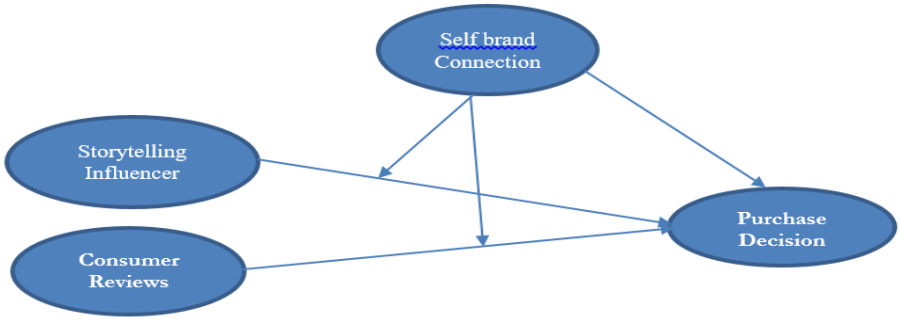


**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Diagram**
Source: Research Problem

Research Hypotheses:
Direct Hypotheses:
H1: Influencer storytelling has a positive effect on the purchase decision of De Scents cosmetic products.
H2: Consumer reviews have a positive effect on the purchase decision of De Scents cosmetic products.
H3: Self-brand connection has a positive effect on the purchase decision of De Scents cosmetic products.
Moderating Hypotheses:
H4: Self-brand connection strengthens the effect of influencer storytelling on purchase decision.
H5: Self-brand connection strengthens the effect of consumer reviews on purchase decision.

## METHOD

### Type and Approach of Research

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal research design. The objective is to examine the influence of the independent variables (influencer storytelling and consumer reviews) on the dependent variable (purchase decision), with *self-brand connection* serving as a moderating variable, in the context of *De Scents* cosmetic product consumers in the digital era.

### Population and Sample

The population in this study consists of Indonesian cosmetic consumers who are active social media users and have been exposed to influencer content and beauty product reviews.

### Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling (*salmaa*, 2023), applying the following criteria:

1. Active users of social media.
2. Have previously purchased cosmetic products in Indonesia.
3. Have been exposed to influencer content and consumer reviews on social media.

### Sample Size Calculation

The minimum sample size was calculated using the formula from (repository for *PLS-SEM* analysis): n = 10 × the highest number of indicators in a single construct. In this study, the construct with the most indicators contains 5 indicators, resulting in: n = 10 × 5 = 50 (minimum). However, to increase the reliability of the analysis and to accommodate potential

outliers and the testing of moderation effects, a total of 300 respondents was used. This sample size is considered statistically sufficient for testing complex models in *PLS-SEM*.

**Data Collection Technique**

Primary data was collected using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms (*Widodo et al.*, 2023). The link was disseminated through beauty community groups, social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp, and online cosmetic product discussion forums. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point *Likert* scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. This study investigates the influence of influencer storytelling and consumer reviews on purchase decisions, as well as the moderating role of *self-brand connection*. To provide a clear structure for measuring each research construct, the following table presents the operationalization of variables used in this study. Each variable is defined through specific indicators and dimensions, supported by relevant theoretical sources from international literature published between 2024 and 2025.

**Table 1. Operationalization Table of Research Variables**

| Variable | Code | Indicator Statement | Dimension / Sub-variable | Source (2024–2025) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Influencer Storytelling (X1) | X1.1 | I am interested in purchasing the product after hearing the influencer's personal story. | Influencer Credibility & Trust | Masarroh & Andriani (2025); Wikipedia (2025a) |
| | X1.2 | The influencer's story makes me feel closer to the product. | Social Media Persuasion Mechanism | Sprout Social (2024) |
| | X1.3 | The influencer's storytelling style feels authentic and genuine. | Influencer Credibility & Trust | Masarroh & Andriani (2025); Wikipedia (2025a) |
| | X1.4 | The influencer's experience helps me understand the product's benefits. | Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) | Wikipedia (2024) |
| | X1.5 | I trust the product more after hearing the influencer's story. | Influencer Credibility & Trust | Masarroh & Andriani (2025); Wikipedia (2025a) |
| Consumer Reviews (X2) | X2.1 | I read consumer reviews before deciding to purchase the product. | Trust Through Peer Reviews | Bazaarvoice (2025); Palaparti (2025) |
| | X2.2 | Consumer reviews provide the information I need about product quality. | Mediating Role of Quality | Anastasiei et al. (2025) |
| | X2.3 | I feel consumer reviews are more honest than advertisements. | Trust Through Peer Reviews | Bazaarvoice (2025); Palaparti (2025) |
| | X2.4 | Positive reviews make me more confident to buy the product. | Mediating Role of Emotion | Anastasiei et al. (2025) |
| | X2.5 | A large number of similar reviews makes me trust the product's authenticity. | Bandwagon Heuristic | Anastasiei et al. (2025) |
| Self-Brand Connection (Z) | Z1 | I feel that this brand reflects who I am. | Self Brand Matching | Wikipedia (2025b) |
| | Z2 | I have a strong personal connection with the brand. | Brand Loyalty & Engagement | Ball & Tasaki (1992); Kleine et al. (1993); Wikipedia (2025b) |
| | Z3 | Using this product makes me feel more confident. | Personalization & Digital Trust | Jannik Linder (2025) |
| | Z4 | I personally relate to the image of this brand. | Self Brand Matching | Wikipedia (2025b) |
| | Z5 | I feel emotionally connected to this brand. | Brand Loyalty & Engagement | Ball & Tasaki (1992); Wikipedia (2025b) |

| Variable | Code | Indicator Statement | Dimension / Sub-variable | Source (2024–2025) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Purchase Decision (Y) | Y1 | I consciously and deliberately decided to purchase this product. | Rational Decision-Making | Kotler & Armstrong (2025) |
| | Y2 | I believe my decision to buy this product was the right choice. | Purchase Satisfaction | Solomon (2024) |
| | Y3 | I seriously considered my options before buying this product. | Purchase Consideration | Hoyer et al. (2025) |
| | Y4 | I am satisfied with my decision to purchase this product. | Post-purchase Evaluation | Oliver (2024) |
| | Y5 | I am willing to repurchase this product in the future. | Repurchase Intention | Oliver (2024) |

## Data Analysis Technique

The collected data will be analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the help of SmartPLS 4.0 software (Rahadi, 2023). The analysis process consists of the following steps:

Outer Model Evaluation (Hatta Setiabudhi, S.E. et al., 2025):

1. Indicator validity (Outer Loadings > 0.7)
2. Convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted/AVE > 0.5)
3. Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability > 0.7)

Inner Model Evaluation**:**

1. Coefficient of determination (R-Square/$R^2$) and effect size (F-Square/$F^2$)
2. Significance testing using t-statistics and p-values
3. Moderation analysis using interaction terms (moderated regression approach)

Discriminant Validity**:**

HTMT Ratio (Heterotrait-Monotrait) < 0.90

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Outer Model Evaluation

To assess the reliability and validity of each indicator in the measurement model, the following table presents the outer loading values for all observed variables. These values reflect the strength of the relationship between each indicator and its corresponding latent construct in the PLS-SEM analysis.

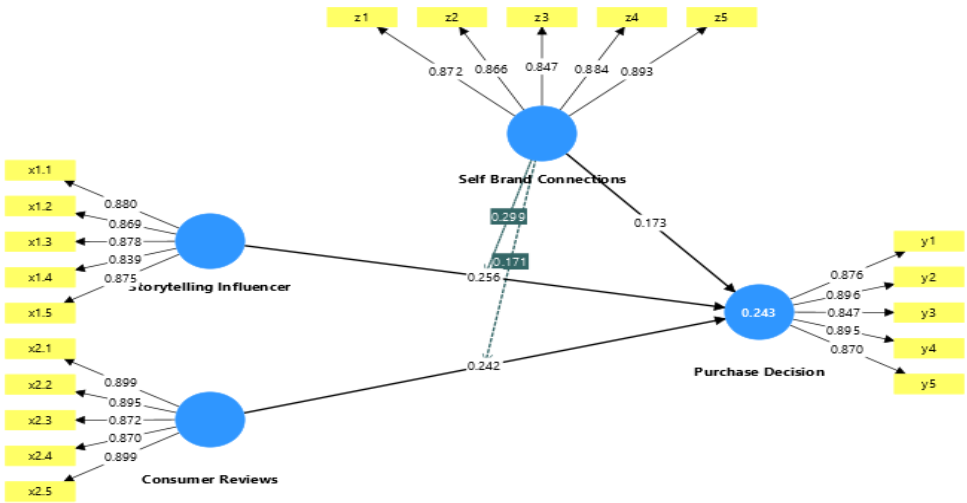


**Figure 2. Outer Model Test Diagram**
Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

**Table 2. Outer Loadings – Matrix Table**

| Indicator | Consumer Reviews | Purchase Decision | Self Brand Connection | Storytelling Influencer | Self Brand × Storytelling | Self Brand × Consumer Reviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| X1.1 | | | | 0.880 | | |
| X1.2 | | | | 0.869 | | |
| X1.3 | | | | 0.878 | | |
| X1.4 | | | | 0.839 | | |
| X1.5 | | | | 0.875 | | |
| X2.1 | 0.899 | | | | | |
| X2.2 | 0.895 | | | | | |
| X2.3 | 0.872 | | | | | |
| X2.4 | 0.870 | | | | | |
| X2.5 | 0.899 | | | | | |
| Y1 | | 0.876 | | | | |
| Y2 | | 0.896 | | | | |
| Y3 | | 0.847 | | | | |
| Y4 | | 0.895 | | | | |
| Y5 | | 0.870 | | | | |
| Z1 | | | 0.872 | | | |
| Z2 | | | 0.866 | | | |
| Z3 | | | 0.847 | | | |
| Z4 | | | 0.884 | | | |
| Z5 | | | 0.893 | | | |
| Interaction 1 | | | | | 1.000 | |
| Interaction 2 | | | | | | 1.000 |

Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

**Interpretation of Outer Loadings**

All outer loadings are above 0.7**,** which indicates strong indicator reliability for all constructs (Consumer Reviews, Storytelling Influencer, Self-Brand Connection, and Purchase Decision).

The highest loading values are seen in interaction terms (1.000), which is expected for computed moderation constructs (as they are product terms).

This suggests that the measurement model has good convergent validity and that each indicator is well-aligned with its intended latent variable.

Next step: Proceed to evaluate AVE, CR, and Cronbach's Alpha to confirm overall model reliability and validity.

To evaluate the internal consistency and convergent validity of the measurement model, the following table presents the values of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct. These indicators help confirm whether the constructs are measured reliably and validly in the context of this study.

**Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity**

| Construct | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability (ρa) | Composite Reliability (ρc) | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Storytelling Influencer | 0.919 | 0.933 | 0.939 | 0.754 |
| Self-Brand Connections | 0.923 | 0.947 | 0.941 | 0.762 |
| Purchase Decision | 0.926 | 0.943 | 0.943 | 0.769 |
| Consumer Reviews | 0.932 | 0.937 | 0.949 | 0.787 |

Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

**Interpretation**

Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability for all constructs are above 0.7, indicating excellent internal consistency and construct reliability.

AVE (Average Variance Extracted) values for all constructs are above 0.5, demonstrating strong convergent validity**,** meaning that indicators effectively These results confirm that the measurement model is both reliable and valid**,** allowing for further structural model testing ($R^2$, $F^2$, and path coefficients).

To evaluate discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was assessed for all constructs in the model. The following table presents the HTMT values, which indicate the degree to which each construct is empirically distinct from the others. HTMT values below the threshold of 0.90 confirm that discriminant validity is established.

**Table 4. Discriminant Validity – HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)**

| Constructs | Consumer Reviews | Purchase Decision | Self Brand Connection | Storytelling Influencer | Self Brand × Storytelling | Self Brand × Consumer Reviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Purchase Decision | 0.238 | | | | | |
| Self Brand Connection | 0.074 | 0.202 | | | | |
| Storytelling Influencer | 0.041 | 0.228 | 0.048 | | | |
| Self Brand × Storytelling Influencer | 0.024 | 0.275 | 0.019 | 0.090 | | |
| Self Brand × Consumer Reviews | 0.086 | 0.152 | 0.053 | 0.027 | 0.000 | |

Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

**Interpretation**

All HTMT values are below 0.90**,** which means discriminant validity is established across all constructs.

This indicates that each construct in the model is empirically distinct from the others, fulfilling a key requirement in PLS-SEM model evaluation.

The lowest HTMT is between Self Brand Connection × Storytelling Influencer and Consumer Reviews (0.024)**,** showing very low construct overlap.

These results validate that the constructs measure different concepts and are not redundant.

**Inner Model Evaluation**

To assess the explanatory power of the structural model, the following table presents the R-square and adjusted R-square values for the endogenous variable. These values indicate how well the independent variables explain the variance in the purchase decision construct.

**Table 5. R-Square Overview**

| Endogenous Variable | R-Square | Adjusted R-Square |
|---|---|---|
| Purchase Decision | 0.243 | 0.230 |

Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

**Interpretation**

The R-square value of 0.243 indicates that 24.3% of the variance in Purchase Decision can be explained by the independent variables in the model (i.e., Storytelling Influencer, Consumer Reviews, and Self-Brand Connection including their interactions).

The Adjusted R-square of 0.230 confirms this explanatory power after adjusting for the number of predictors.

According to Chin (1998), an $R^2$ value between 0.19 and 0.33 is considered moderate, suggesting that the model provides a moderate level of explanatory accuracy.

To determine the magnitude of the contribution of each exogenous variable to the endogenous variable, the following table presents the f-square values. These values indicate the effect size of each construct on purchase decision, helping to assess the relative importance of direct and moderating variables in the structural model.

**Table 6. F-Square Matrix**

| Construct | Purchase Decision (Y) |
|---|---|
| Consumer Reviews | 0.076 |
| Self-Brand Connection | 0.039 |
| Storytelling Influencer | 0.086 |
| Self-Brand × Storytelling Influencer (Moderation) | 0.107 |
| Self-Brand × Consumer Reviews (Moderation) | 0.033 |

Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

***Interpretation***

F-Square indicates the effect size of each exogenous construct on the endogenous variable (Purchase Decision). According to Cohen (1988), effect sizes can be interpreted as 0.02 = small. 0.15 = medium.0.35 = large.

In this model:

Storytelling Influencer (0.086) and Consumer Reviews (0.076) have small but meaningful effects on Purchase Decision.

Self-Brand × Storytelling (0.107) shows the largest effect size among all, indicating the moderating effect is notably impactful.

All values are above the minimum threshold (0.02), confirming their relevance in the model.

To examine the significance of the hypothesized relationships within the structural model, the following table presents the path coefficients along with their corresponding t-statistics and p-values. These results are used to determine whether the proposed direct and moderating effects significantly influence the purchase decision variable.

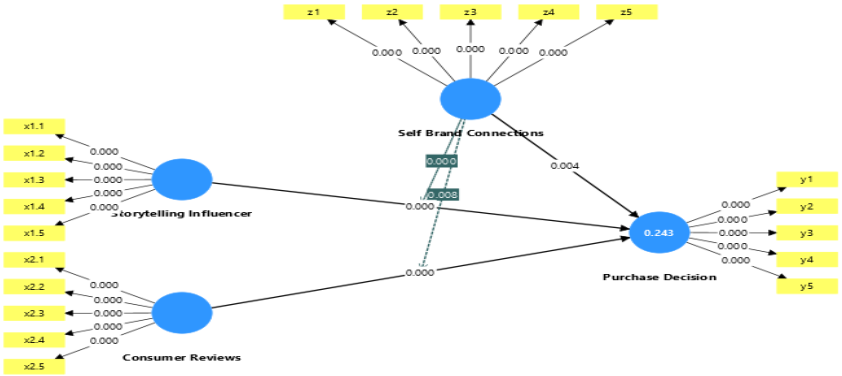


**Figure 3. Path Coefficients Diagram**

Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

**Table 7. Path Coefficients – Mean, Standard Deviation, T-Values, and P-Values**

| Path | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|
| Storytelling Influencer → Purchase Decision | 0.256 | 5.436 | 0.000 |
| Self Brand × Storytelling Influencer → Purchase Decision | 0.299 | 4.836 | 0.000 |
| Self Brand × Consumer Reviews → Purchase Decision | 0.171 | 2.640 | 0.008 |
| Self Brand Connection → Purchase Decision | 0.173 | 2.842 | 0.004 |
| Consumer Reviews → Purchase Decision | 0.242 | 5.348 | 0.000 |

Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

***Interpretation***

All P values < 0.05**,** indicating that all hypothesized paths are statistically significant**.**
Storytelling Influencer and Consumer Reviews both have a strong and significant direct influence on Purchase Decision**.**
Self-Brand Connection not only has a significant direct effect on Purchase Decision**,** but also significantly moderates the effects of both Storytelling Influencer and Consumer Reviews**,** strengthening their influence.
The highest effect is seen in the interaction between Self-Brand Connection × Storytelling Influencer (β = 0.299)**,** indicating a strong moderating effect.

To evaluate the proposed hypotheses in this study, the following table presents the results of the path analysis, including path coefficients (β), t-statistics, p-values, and hypothesis conclusions. These results indicate whether the direct and moderating effects are statistically supported within the structural model.

**Table 8. Hypotheses Testing Results**

| Hypothesis | Path | Coefficient (β) | T-Statistic | P-Value | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | Storytelling Influencer → Purchase Decision | 0.256 | 5.436 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H2 | Consumer Reviews → Purchase Decision | 0.242 | 5.348 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H3 | Self-Brand Connection → Purchase Decision | 0.173 | 2.842 | 0.004 | Supported |
| H4 | Self-Brand × Storytelling Influencer → Purchase Decision | 0.299 | 4.836 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H5 | Self-Brand × Consumer Reviews → Purchase Decision | 0.171 | 2.640 | 0.008 | Supported |

Source: SmartPLS Data Analysis

**Discussion**

The findings of this study reinforce the notion that both influencer storytelling and consumer reviews play a meaningful role in shaping consumer purchase decisions within the digital cosmetics market. These results validate the theoretical frameworks and also align with previous empirical studies. The results confirm that storytelling by influencers significantly influences purchase decisions. This is consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**,** which posits that consumers are more likely to be persuaded when they engage cognitively with authentic and meaningful messages rather than surface-level content.

The narratives delivered by influencers establish a sense of credibility and emotional connection**,** supporting the perspective of Masarroh & Andriani (2025) and Sprout Social (2024)**,** who emphasized the persuasive power of relatable stories over traditional advertising formats. Previous studies by Mustikowati (2023) and Macheka et al. (2024) also support this view, noting that consumers are more influenced by trustworthy and authentic communication than by visually attractive or popular endorsements. Consumer reviews were also found to have a significant impact on purchase decisions. This reinforces the Trust Through Peer Reviews theory, where consumers place value on the shared experiences and opinions of fellow buyers as a form of social proof.

The work of Bazaarvoice (2025) and Palaparti (2025) illustrates how reviews contribute to consumer confidence, while Anastasiei et al. (2025) provide evidence that emotional response, quality perception, and risk assessment are key mediators in the impact of electronic word-of-mouth. These insights suggest that peer feedback is more than just a source of information it plays an integral role in forming judgments, especially for products tied to personal identity and appearance, such as cosmetics. The study also highlights the importance

of self-brand connection, both as an independent driver of purchase decisions and as a moderator that strengthens the influence of storytelling and reviews.

This supports the Self-Congruity Theory, which suggests that consumers are more likely to choose brands that align with their personal identity. When consumers feel emotionally bonded with a brand, they tend to interpret influencer messages and peer reviews through a more favorable and personal lenses findings are echoed by Ball & Tasaki (1992), Kleine et al. (1993), and more recently by Linder (2025), who emphasize the importance of personalization and emotional branding, particularly in industries like beauty and fashion. Moreover, this supports the growing trend that identity-driven consumption is becoming central to digital marketing strategies, especially as consumers seek brands that reflect their values and self-image. This study bridges key gaps in prior research by integrating storytelling, e-WOM, and self-brand connection into a cohesive model.

While previous literature has addressed these elements individually, few have considered their interaction. This responds directly to critiques raised by Joshi et al. (2025) and Migkos & Giannakopoulos (2025), who highlighted the lack of studies exploring interaction effects and emotional variables. From a theoretical standpoint, the research strengthens the relevance of ELM, bandwagon heuristic, and self-congruity in explaining how consumers make informed, trust-based, and identity-aligned decisions in digital contexts. Practically, the results suggest that cosmetic brands should go beyond surface-level influencer campaigns. They should invest in partnerships that focus on authentic narratives, credible voices, and emotional resonance. Encouraging honest consumer feedback and fostering a strong self-brand connection can help create not just awareness, but loyalty and advocacy, particularly in a competitive and highly personalized market like cosmetics.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that influencer storytelling and consumer reviews play a significant role in shaping consumers' purchase decisions in the digital cosmetics market. Both factors contribute positively, indicating that authentic narratives and peer recommendations are key drivers of consumer behavior in online environments. In addition to their direct effects, *self-brand connection* is shown to have a meaningful role both as an independent factor influencing purchase decisions and as a moderator that strengthens the impact of influencer storytelling and consumer reviews. This suggests that consumers who feel emotionally connected to a brand are more likely to be influenced by the messages and opinions they encounter online. Overall, the research confirms that successful digital marketing strategies should focus not only on the content delivered by influencers and customers, but also on building emotional ties between the brand and its audience. Strengthening *self-brand connection* can enhance the effectiveness of marketing communications and contribute to stronger customer loyalty and purchase intentions.

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