

Social Media Credibility and Consumer Behavior: SOR Analysis of TikTok Content @dokterdetektif on Gen Z's Skincare Product Choices

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ABSTRAK: Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana keputusan konsumen Gen Z terkait produk perawatan kulit dipengaruhi oleh kredibilitas media sosial, dengan fokus khusus pada konten TikTok akun @dokterdetektif. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah model Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR), yang menjelaskan bagaimana konten digital sebagai stimulus memengaruhi proses psikologis pengguna (organisme) dan menghasilkan respons berupa tindakan konsumtif. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik analisis konten serta wawancara mendalam kepada lima informan Gen Z yang aktif menggunakan TikTok dan pernah melakukan pembelian *skincare* berdasarkan konten yang mereka tonton. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konten akun @dokterdetektif, yang ditandai dengan tulisan berbasis sains, komunikasi yang kredibel, serta visual yang menarik, memberikan banyak stimulasi bagi Gen Z. Persepsi kredibilitas yang kuat menghasilkan peningkatan rasa percaya, kewaspadaan, dan literasi mengenai kandungan produk. Hal ini berdampak pada perubahan perilaku konsumsi, di mana Gen Z menjadi lebih kritis, selektif, serta mengandalkan sumber informasi yang kredibel sebelum mengambil keputusan pembelian. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya media sosial sebagai sumber utama informasi dalam membentuk perilaku konsumen muda, sekaligus relevansi model SOR dalam menganalisis pengaruh komunikasi digital di era modern.

Kata kunci: kredibilitas media sosial, Gen Z, skincare, model SOR, TikTok

ABSTRACT: This study examines how Gen Z consumers' decisions about skincare products are influenced by social media credibility, specifically focusing on the @dokterdetektif account's TikTok content. The approach used is the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model, which explains how digital content as a stimulus affects the psychological processes of users (organism) and results in a response in the form of consumptive actions. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with content analysis techniques and in-depth interviews with five Gen Z informants who actively use TikTok and have made skincare purchases based on the content they watch. The study's findings indicate that the content of the account @dokterdetektif, which is characterized by sains-based writing, credible communication, and eye-catching visuals, provides Gen Z with a lot of stimulation. Strong credibility perceptions result in increased trust, vigilance, and literacy regarding the product's contents. This has an impact on changes in consumption behavior, where Gen Z becomes more critical, selective, and relies on credible sources of information before making purchasing decisions. These findings underscore the importance of social media as a primary source of information in shaping the behavior of young consumers, as well as the relevance of the SOR model in analyzing the influence of digital communication in the modern era.

Keywords: credibility of social media, Gen Z, skincare, SOR model, TikTok

INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has increased rapidly in recent years, with various platforms becoming the main means of interaction, information seeking, and influencing customer decisions in purchasing a product. TikTok is one of the rapidly growing social media platforms. Now it has become a strong arena for digital marketing, especially among the younger generation. TikTok is a social media platform that allows users to share information or entertainment through videos. Its content is diverse, including creative videos, unique viral challenges, singing, dancing, and product promotions. TikTok has become very popular because it can spread quickly and reach a large number of people. This platform has also become an effective space for persuasive communication (Sadjijo et al., 2024).

According to the We Are Social and Meltwater report, the number of global TikTok users is expected to reach 1.58 billion by April 2024, with the majority of users aged 18 to 34. The majority of Indonesians are TikTok users. As of April 2024, the number of TikTok users in Indonesia is 127.5 million. In second place, the United States has 121.52 million TikTok users. Following next is Brazil with 101.8 million TikTok users, and Mexico with 77.93 million users, and Vietnam with 69.68 million users. Additionally, 59.64 million TikTok social media users come from Pakistan, while Russia has 58.22 million TikTok users. Thailand ranks eighth with 53.42 million TikTok users in April 2024 (Rizaty, 2021).

TikTok has a menu commonly referred to as "FYP," or "For You Page," which serves as a reference for the content shown to users when they open the app. This menu often appears on the homepage when users open the app and consists of content about beauty and style, inspiration, education, and information (Juliana, 2023).

In the beauty industry, there are a few creators' content that is going viral. One of them is @dokterdetektif, which is present on TikTok social media. The account is one of the anonymous accounts on TikTok that is famous for revealing laboratory results of several skincare products. Using test results from SIG Laboratory, which are considered accurate. The account shows exaggerated claims made by several products. The goal is to encourage healthy competition in the Indonesian skincare industry and hold brands

proven to be fraudulent accountable. Despite the fact that her account remains anonymous, she stated that she has completed beauty courses since 2007 and has been practicing as a beauty doctor for 17 years.

In addition, she has experience in developing her own skincare formulations, but she has not disclosed what brand she owns. Many skincare users appreciate her actions, but there are also those who question the truth of the information. After then, the creator's content Dr. Yessica Tania, also known as @dr.ziee on TikTok, is a medical professional with expertise in aesthetics and skincare. With over 1.9 million followers and 59.8 million likes, she actively shares educational content related to skin health, aesthetic treatments, as well as beauty tips and tricks.

Content that is easy to understand and informative makes it popular among TikTok users who are looking for trustworthy information after skincare. Additionally, the TikTok creator @skincarebyjessi has more than 557.200 followers and 24.3 million followers.

Residing in Bali, Jessica is known for providing beauty product reviews, skincare tips, and glimpses into her daily life. Jessica's content covers a wide range of topics, from beauty product reviews to skincare tips.

In the current digital era, Gen Z (born 1997–2012) has become the most active consumer group on social media, where they are more likely to rely on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube as their primary sources of information compared to conventional advertisements or official communications from the product companies (Smith, 2021).

This phenomenon indicates a shift in information reception patterns, where trust in content originating from fellow users or influencers is higher compared to messages conveyed directly by the company. Gen Z has a higher level of skepticism towards traditional advertising compared to previous generations (Edelman, 2021). Only about 30% of Gen Z trusts direct marketing messages, while more than 60% state that they trust content from influencers and online communities more. This is supported by research from Influencer Marketing Hub (2022), which found that 93% of Gen Z consumers read online reviews and follow

influencer recommendations before making a purchase, indicating that social media has become a major factor in their consumption decisions.

One of the main reasons behind this phenomenon is the authenticity and higher interaction on social media. The content delivered by influencers or other individuals in online communities is often considered more transparent and based on real experiences, unlike advertisements that tend to be promotional and profit-oriented (Evans et al., 2021).

Additionally, social media algorithms also play a significant role in tailoring content to user preferences, making Gen Z feel like they are receiving more personal and trustworthy information. In the context of skincare products, for example, many Gen Z individuals trust reviews from beauty influencers, dermatologists on social media, or online communities more than the claims made by the brands themselves (Johnson & Wang, 2022). They rely on educational content, personal experiences, and honest reviews before deciding to purchase a particular product. TikTok, as a platform based on short and interactive content, is accelerating this trend by allowing users to see the real-time results of product usage, which increases trust in the source of information.

Psychologist John B. Watson first created the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Model within the behaviorist tradition. This model was then expanded in the study of psychology and communication to understand how external stimuli can influence human behavior through internal processes (McQuail, 2010). This model serves as a relevant theoretical framework in the context of modern communication, particularly in the digital and social media era, to explain how digital content can influence audience perception and behavior.

A strong foundational framework for understanding the dynamics of digital communication is provided by the SOR model, especially in terms of the impact of credible social media content on consumer decisions. In this case, the behavior of Gen Z consumers towards skincare products is influenced by the information presented as well as how they process and assess the credibility of the digital communicators. Therefore, the SOR-method is an ideal analytical tool for explaining the relationship between social media,

audience psychology, and consumption behavior in the modern communication environment.

This phenomenon reflects that social media is not only an entertainment tool but has also become a primary source of information that shapes the opinions and consumption behaviors of Gen Z. Brands and companies need to adapt to this trend by developing marketing strategies that are more based on trust, transparency, and community engagement, compared to conventional advertising approaches that are increasingly losing their effectiveness among this younger generation.

The credibility of social media not only influences purchasing decisions but also shapes their skincare choices. Gen Z tends to choose products that have been scientifically proven or recommended by experts on social media. They are more aware of active ingredients like niacinamide, retinol, and centella asiatica, whose popularity has increased due to education from trusted influencers. Additionally, the credibility of social media influences changes in consumer preferences towards more "clean" and transparent products.

Brands that prioritize transparency in ingredients and production processes find it easier to gain the trust of Gen Z, especially through social media, which allows direct communication between the brand's products and consumers. With the increasing dependence of Gen Z on social media in choosing skincare products, influencers are demanded to be more credible and transparent in conveying information.

Additionally, this study intends to assess the reliability of @dokterdeektif as a skincare information source, examine the ways in which TikTok content affects Gen Z skincare practices, and offer suggestions for skincare firms looking to boost consumer trust through social media. Having a high level of social media credibility will influence young consumers' decisions to buy as well as foster enduring loyalty. This begs the question of how much Gen Z skincare habit is influenced by social media credibility.

Additionally, assessing the correlation between skincare purchase decisions and @dokterdeektif's trustworthiness. Based on the above phenomenon, it is important to examine in depth how the credibility of the @dokterdeektif TikTok account is able to shape Gen Z's perceptions and

consumption behavior, especially in the context of choosing skincare products. This study contributes to providing an empirical understanding of the relationship between social media stimuli and the behavioral responses of digital generation consumers.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This method was chosen to analyze and explain societal phenomena. A phenomenon in society reveals that the use of qualitative descriptive methods can be used as a step to solve the problem being studied (Suryono & Anggraini, 2016). This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of Gen Z consumer perceptions and behavior towards TikTok content @dokterdetektif towards skincare purchasing decisions.

The object of this research is the popular skincare-themed TikTok content, namely @dokterdetektif. The subjects in this study were 5 Gen Z individuals (aged 18–25 years) who use TikTok to search for skincare information and have made purchases based on the content they see.

The data collection technique used in this study was a content analysis technique which is used to identify stimulus elements in TikTok content. Then, in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 Gen Z informants who have purchased skincare products due to the influence of TikTok content. After that, the data analysis technique was carried out through the process of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in informants' perceptions and responses. After that, to measure the validity of the data through source triangulation techniques (comparing interview results with TikTok content) and method triangulation (content analysis and interviews)

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

This study examines Gen Z's perception of the credibility and popularity of TikTok influencers in influencing skincare product choices. Generation Z, known for their active social media use, is

increasingly exposed to influencer marketing, particularly on platforms like TikTok. Influencers who are perceived as credible and popular can influence their choices and decisions about what they purchase. To understand the factors that make an influencer credible and how their popularity can influence Gen Z consumers' perceptions and behaviors when choosing skincare products, this study examines the TikTok social media account @dokterdetektif using SOR analysis (stimulus, organism, response).

Using a literature review method, this study aims to provide a clearer picture of the influence of TikTok influencers on Gen Z consumers' perceptions and behaviors when choosing skincare products using SOR analysis. The following is a discussion.

The detective doctor is a figure featured on TikTok who plays a role in exposing laboratory tests of skincare products, thereby attracting public attention. That action becomes an element that what is being done is credible and strengthens the perception of his expertise. TikTok user @dokterdetektif reviews skincare products in an educational, informative, and frequently sains/medics-based fashion. In addition, the content is also created using visuals such as skin graphs and appealing formulas.

In addition, the content presented also does not shy away from using simple yet professional language. The detective doctor also includes research results or clinical studies in several videos as a basis for the credibility of presenting the review results. The video content presented is short, averaging 1–3 minutes.

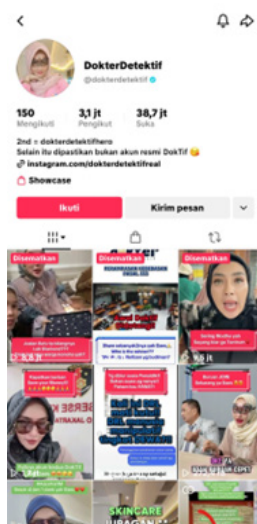
His name is becoming more popular because he exposes and criticizes skincare products that make unrealistic promises. Dokter Detektif presents the results of the SIG Laboratory's test in a skincare video review that is posted on their TikTok account, @dokterdetektif. Many people welcome and follow the information and reviews presented by the detective doctor because it has helped skincare users become more discerning in choosing skincare products. However, some people question the statements made by the detective doctor. Even the detective doctor often clashes with skincare brand owners who disagree with the information provided.

The accusations received by the detective doctor from the skincare brand owners are

considered excessive and have also obstructed the reviews and criticisms carried out by the detective doctor. This did not deter him in fact, he challenged the skincare brand owners for making overclaims about their products by showing detailed laboratory test results and asked them to close their social media accounts and withdraw the products already on the market as a form of accountability for harming the public.

The presentation of scientific evidence (photos and laboratory documents) in TikTok videos serves as a strong stimulus that triggers curiosity and the desire of Gen Z to be more critical of product claims. His mysterious yet assertive delivery style in his TikTok content, complete with a mask and critical narration, creates visual and psychological appeal that reinforces the element of attraction. This provides a strong stimulus that is informative and evokes emotional reactions (curiosity, anxiety, and interest).

The element of credibility in the stimulus conducted by the detective doctor is expertise, where the account is managed by someone who claims to be a doctor and has competence in the field. Another element is trustworthiness, where the product evaluations conducted by the detective doctor tend to be objective (not always positive). The final element is attractiveness, where the communication style is calm, relatable, and straightforward in conveying the review results and criticisms of the brands he has analyzed.



Picture 1. Stimulus (Content @dokterdetektif)
Sumber: TikTok @dokterdetektif Account
Organism (Perception & Internal Process)

Uji The organism analysis in this study focuses on the psychological responses of the users, namely Generation Z, as they interact with the TikTok account @dokterdetektif. The results of interviews with 5 Gen Z informants and observations produced a high perception of credibility, as viewers trust the delivery because it is scientific and not overly "salesy."

The detective doctor presents reviews and critiques of skincare products based on laboratory test results, making the information conveyed credible. Then, from a cognitive aspect, the audience feels more knowledgeable about the ingredients in skincare and how the products work. Especially for Gen Z, who are thirsty for genuine information. Meanwhile, the affective aspect generates a sense of trust and interest in trying the recommended product.

The reinforcing factor in the organism is that Gen Z tends to trust educational content from figures with a medical background. Additionally, the level of credibility is determined by the positive comments and high level of engagement in each TikTok video created by @dokterdetektif. The high level of credibility in the TikTok account @dokterdetektif indicates internal audience responses.

According to the interview, Gen Z sees this account as a source of information and not just entertainment. The cognitive process includes reevaluating brand marketing data. Gen Z sees the detective doctor as an expert, transparent, and honest figure, especially with educational support based on scientific evidence. Emotionally, the content generates both trust and caution regarding the ingredients in all skincare products. Gen Z becomes more critical and selective towards skincare product claims.

The impact that is currently occurring is that they tend to study the ingredients of every brand they are going to buy, tailored to their skin health needs. These findings indicate that the perception of credibility formed through content stimuli significantly impacts consumer attitudes and preferences, highlighting the importance of authoritative figures in shaping opinions in the digital era.



Picture 2.

Sumber: factor in the organism Response (Consumer Behavior)

Changes in attitude and purchase intention for skincare products among Generation Z tend to delay purchases and prefer to conduct more in-depth product research first. They have a brand that promotes transparency and knowledge sharing, which goes beyond simple pemasaran, as demonstrated by the TikTok account @dokterdetektif. Some skincare brands issued clarifications because they were considered to be making over-claims.

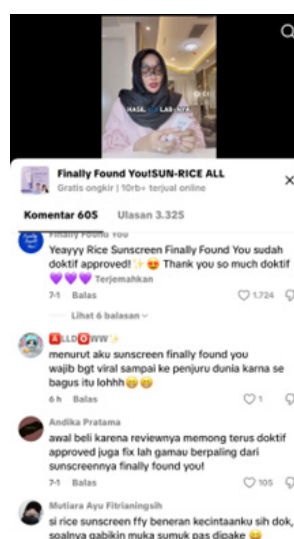
Some industry players are actually grateful because their educational content encourages improvements in formulations and consumer trust. This is a form of brand resistance to clarification. In enhancing consumer literacy through educational content based on laboratory tests, educating Gen Z to understand the composition of active ingredients, the impact of side effects, and product safety standards (BPOM vs marketing claims).

The responses that emerge from users, viewers, and especially Gen Z after being exposed to the content include taking positive actions such as trying the reviewed skincare products, saving the videos, and sharing them with friends. After that, they engage further by following the account, asking questions in the comments section, seeking additional information, and discussing with each other on that social media account. After that, trust in the content influences trust in the recommended skincare products. They transfer information to recommend the credibility of skincare products to others.

The real response from the informants and the comments from followers is an increase in selective attitudes towards skincare products, the cancellation of purchases of questionable products,

and the emergence of motivation to learn more about the composition of products according to the needs and skin health of consumers.

The TikTok account @dokterdetektif serves as a powerful example of how educational influencers can influence Gen Z behavior through credible, clear, and interactive content. This validates the SOR model for skincare products and TikTok social media. This research involved in-depth interviews with five Gen Z informants who actively use TikTok and reported purchasing or avoiding skincare products after viewing content on the @dokterdetektif account.



Picture 3.

Sumber: Consumer Behavior

CONCLUSION

This research explicitly aims to fill a gap in digital consumer behavior studies, specifically in explaining the influence of the credibility of educational content on TikTok on Gen Z purchasing decisions. Through the use of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model approach, this study attempts to understand how Gen Z users' behavior in choosing skincare products is influenced by the credibility of social media content, specifically the @dokterdetektif account on TikTok.

The analysis results show that the account's content serves as a strong stimulus, primarily due to the combination of medical-based information, an engaging delivery style,

and the presence of a communicator persona who is perceived as proficient and reliable. In the organism stage, Gen Z processes the stimulus through their perception of the account's credibility, which consists of elements such as expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness.

This process results in a positive attitude towards the information received, as well as fostering trust and high emotional engagement. In the response stage, this positive perception is reflected in customer behavior. This can include increased interest in trying recommended skincare products, sharing content with friends, and making the account a primary reference when making skincare decisions.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that social media credibility not only plays a significant role in shaping public opinion but also influences Gen Z's purchasing behavior for health and skincare products. The SOR model is proven to be a useful analytical tool for understanding how social media stimuli, audience perceptions, and consumer actions interact in today's digital world.

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