

THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND IMAGE, SUBJECTIVE NORMS, AND PERCEIVED BEHAVIORAL CONTROL ON PURCHASE INTENTION OF SKINCARE PRODUCTS AMONG GENERATION Z IN LHOKSEUMAWE CITY

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Abstract: The Indonesian skincare industry has shown rapid growth, driven by increasing awareness of self-care and a healthy lifestyle, especially among Generation Z. As a digital generation, this generation relies heavily on online information, including customer reviews, making it a crucial segment for understanding modern consumer behavior. This study adopted the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB, Ajzen, 1991). A quantitative survey was conducted on 280 Generation Z respondents in Lhokseumawe City using a one-stage cluster sampling method. Results structural model testing shows that the research model has power strong explanation, with value R^2 Attitude of 0.705 And R^2 Purchase Intention of 0.690. Brand Image has a significant influence on Attitude consumers. direct influence of image Brand on Purchase Intention is not significant. Norma Subjective And Perceived Behavioral Control own influence which has a significant effect on Purchase Intention. Attitude has been proven to have a direct effect on significant effect on Purchase Intention. This study extends the TPB in a digital context and suggests that skin care marketers must strengthen brand image, cultivate positive attitudes, and manage reviews strategically online to increase purchase intent among Generation Z.

Keywords: Brand Image, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, Purchase Intention, Skin Care.

1. Introduction

The skincare industry in Indonesia is experiencing rapid growth, driven by increasing awareness of self-care, especially among Generation Z. Based on the 2020 Population Census, Generation Z in Indonesia amounts to around 27.94% of the total population, or around 74.93 million people, including individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Meanwhile, the population of Lhokseumawe City according to data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2024 was around 198.71 thousand people. So the number of Gen Z in Lhokseumawe City is around 45,781.12 people. They are not only the main consumers, but also drive innovation and trends in this industry. Their tendency to seek products that align with personal values, such as sustainability and authenticity, forces brands to be more responsive to dynamic market needs. In addition, Generation Z is known as digital natives, which means they are very familiar with digital technology and information. This makes it easier for them to access information about skincare products, including customer reviews, product ingredients, and brand reputation. This ability enables them to make more informed and critical purchasing decisions. Generation Z is the first group to grow up with digital technology as an integral part of their daily lives. They are not only technologically adept but also have very different consumer behaviors compared to previous generations.

In understanding consumer purchasing behavior, especially Generation Z, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991) is a relevant theoretical framework. TPB states that behavioral intention is influenced by three main components: attitude toward the

behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Research by Bian & Forsythe (2012) confirmed that these three components have a significant influence on the intention to purchase environmentally friendly cosmetic products among Generation Z, with attitude toward the product as the strongest predictor.

2. Literature Review

Brand Image

Brand image is a consumer's perception of a brand, formed through experiences, associations, and emotional impressions (Keller, 2019). In the context of skincare products, brand image is a key factor in building consumer trust and preference, especially as these products are associated with safety, quality, and visible results on the skin. Research shows that a strong brand image can increase consumer perceptions of quality and loyalty to skincare products (Hanaysha, 2022). According to Santos and Mendes (2023), brand image has a significant influence on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in the beauty product category. Brand image associated with ingredient quality, dermatological credentials, and a brand's social responsibility can strengthen purchase intentions (Nguyen & Johnson, 2022). Furthermore, brand image also creates differentiation in a competitive market and strengthens the emotional bond between consumers and the brand (Akbari et al., 2022). A study by Lin and Huang (2023) found that a positive brand image is a major determinant of attitude formation and purchase intentions for cosmetic and skincare products.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms refer to an individual's perception of social pressure or expectations from others regarding a particular action (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of skincare purchasing, subjective norms play a crucial role because purchasing decisions are often influenced by the opinions of peers, family, and public figures on social media. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) emphasized that social norms are a key predictor of intention in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Recent research has shown that social influence has a significant impact on purchase intentions for beauty products. Chien et al. (2021) suggested that recommendations from friends or influencers increase the tendency of younger generations to purchase skincare products. In collectivist cultures like Indonesia, social pressure plays a greater role than individual factors (Han et al., 2020). Mahardika and Santoso (2022) found that social norms influence purchasing decisions for local beauty products through online community support and user reviews. Lee and Chow (2023) also added that perceptions of social acceptance encourage individuals to adapt their beauty consumption behavior to current trends.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control describes the extent to which an individual perceives they have the ability and resources to perform an action (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of skincare purchasing, factors such as ease of product access, availability of information, and financial capability are key determinants of perceived control. Research by Maichum et al. (2016) shows that the higher an individual's perception of their ability to obtain the desired product, the higher their purchase intention. This finding is also confirmed by Nguyen and Johnson (2022), who found that ease of obtaining skincare products through online platforms increases purchase intention. Kumar et al. (2023) emphasize that behavioral control acts as a reinforcement between positive attitudes and purchase intentions of young consumers. Other factors such as affordability, product authenticity, and customer reviews also strengthen perceived behavioral control (Hanaysha, 2022).

Attitudes towards Behavior

Attitudes toward behavior reflect a person's positive or negative evaluation of a particular action (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of skincare, positive attitudes are formed through perceived benefits, belief in product safety, and previous usage experiences. Research by Maichum et al. (2017) and Bui and Kemp (2013) shows that positive attitudes toward beauty products significantly influence consumer purchase intentions. According to Mehraj and Qureshi (2022), attitudes are influenced by beliefs in product effectiveness, brand reputation, and alignment with consumers' personal values. Van der Werff et al. (2013) also added that attitudes toward behavior are often moderated by self-identity and social norms. In the context of the younger generation, positive attitudes toward skincare often arise from the need to appear confident and follow emerging beauty trends on social media. Therefore, understanding attitude formation is crucial for skincare marketers to build long-term brand loyalty (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010).

Purchase Intent

Purchase intention represents a person's desire or plan to purchase a product in the future (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In the skincare industry, purchase intention is an important indicator in predicting actual consumer behavior towards a particular product. Research by Paul et al. (2016) and Kumar et al. (2023) found that purchase intention for skincare products is influenced by a combination of psychological factors (attitude), social factors (subjective norms), and perceived ability (perceived behavioral control). Hanaysha (2022) added that a strong brand image strengthens purchase intention by increasing trust in the product's quality and reputation. Furthermore, Santos and Mendes (2023) emphasized that purchase intention is influenced by consumer perceptions of brand consistency and positive online review experiences. Lin and Huang (2023) stated that the younger generation has high purchase intention for skincare products that are considered in line with their personal values and self-image.

Online Customer Reviews (Electronic Word of Mouth / eWOM)

Online customer reviews (electronic word of mouth or eWOM) are a form of communication between consumers through digital media that discusses experiences, satisfaction, or recommendations related to a product (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). In the skincare industry, eWOM plays a crucial role because purchasing decisions are often influenced by reviews, ratings, and testimonials from other users on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and marketplaces (Cheng et al., 2023). Recent research shows that eWOM can moderate the relationship between brand image and purchase intention, where positive reviews can strengthen trust and perceived quality in a product (Kim & Park, 2022). Furthermore, Generation Z tends to trust user reviews more than traditional advertising, as they are perceived as more authentic and relevant to personal experiences (Wang et al., 2024).

According to a study by Alalwan (2023), credible and informative online reviews increase consumers' purchase intentions for beauty products. Meanwhile, Chen et al. (2022) emphasized that active interactions between brands and consumers on social media can strengthen the influence of eWOM on the formation of positive attitudes and brand loyalty.

3. Method

Research Design

This research model is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework developed by Ajzen (1991), which explains that the intention to perform a behavior is influenced by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In this context, the study attempts to expand the TPB by adding two additional variables, namely brand image as an external factor that can influence the formation of attitudes and purchase intentions, and online customer reviews as a moderating factor that represents the influence of electronic communication on modern consumer behavior.

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to analyze the influence of Brand Image (X1), Subjective Norms (X2), and Perceived Behavioral Control (X3) on Purchase Intention of Skincare Products (Y), with Attitude towards Behavior (Z) as an intervening (mediation) variable, and Online Customer Reviews as a moderating variable. The research model framework is arranged according to Figure below:

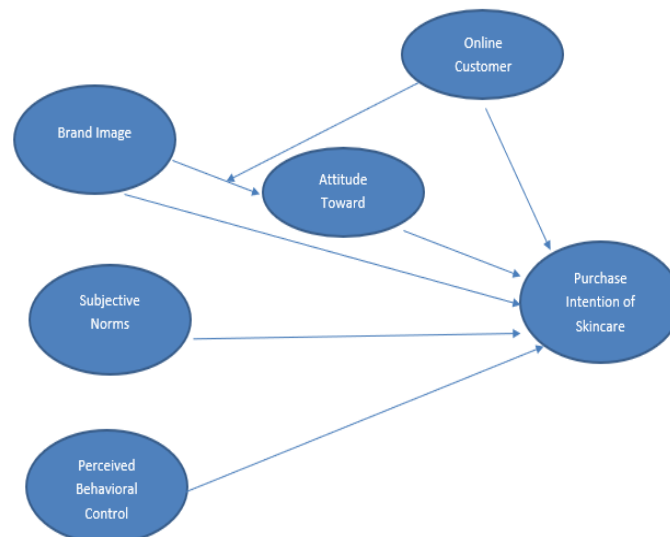


Figure 1. Framework of Research

Based on the theory and research roadmap discussed above, the following research hypotheses can be derived:

1. Direct Impact:

- H1: Brand Image has a positive effect on Attitude towards Behavior.
- H2: Subjective norms have a positive effect on purchase intention.
- H3: Perceived Behavioral Control has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.
- H4: Attitude towards Behavior has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

2. Effect of Mediation:

- H5: Attitude towards Behavior mediates the influence of Brand Image on Purchase Intention.

3. Moderation Effect:

- H6: Online Customer Reviews moderate the relationship between Attitude towards Behavior and Purchase Intention

H7: Online Customer Reviews moderate the relationship between Brand Image and Attitude towards Behavior

Population and Research Sample

Population is a group of research elements, where the element is the smallest unit that is the source of the required data Sugiono (2022). The target population in this study is all Gen Z in the city of Lhokseumawe around 45,781.12 people. According to the Pew Research Center, generation Z are those born between 1997 and ending in 2012, in 2025 their oldest generation is 28 years old and the youngest is 13 years old. According to Hair, et al., (2021), that research with the SEM model, the appropriate sample size is 200-400. The population in this study is Gen Z who use Skin Care in Lhokseumawe City.

The sample in this study was not conducted on the entire population due to the large population. Sampling in this study follows the sampling guideline theory according to Hair et al., (2012), which states that "the minimum sample size is 5-10 times the size of the indicator used to measure 1 latent variable. In this study, the number of respondents selected was 280 respondents throughout Lhokseumawe City.

Testing and Analysis Methods

In this study, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the research instrument had an adequate level of accuracy and consistency. Validity tests included convergent validity and discriminant validity. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) approach using SmartPLS software. This method was chosen because it is capable of testing complex relationships between latent variables, including mediation and moderation effects, and is suitable for data with non-normal distributions. Hypothesis testing was conducted by analyzing the p-value and t-statistic of bootstrapping results. The hypothesis was accepted if the p-value <0.05 and t-statistic >1.96. The analysis included testing direct, indirect (mediation), and interaction (moderation) effects. The results of these tests were used to confirm the causal relationship between variables as formulated in the research conceptual model.

4. Result and Discussion

Respondent Profile Description

Table 1 Respondent Profile

	Profile	Frequency (%)
Gender	Female	242 (86,4%)
	Male	38 (13,6%)
Age	13 - 16	5 (1,8%)
	17 - 20	179 (63,9%)
	21 - 24	90 (32,1%)
	25 - 28	6 (2,1%)
Education	SMP	4 (1,4%)
	SMA	22 (7,9%)
	Diploma 3	188 (67,4%)
	S1/D4	65 (23,3%)
Source of Income	Orang tua	234 (83,9%)
	Diri Sendiri	45 (16,1%)

Source: Processed data, 20205

Based on the results of the respondent profile analysis, the majority were female (86.4%), indicating that skincare consumers are predominantly female who are more concerned with appearance. Most respondents were aged 17–20 years (63.9%), reflecting the characteristics of Generation Z who are active on social media and easily influenced by trends and online reviews. In terms of education, the majority were Diploma 3 graduates (67.4%), indicating a fairly high level of awareness and knowledge of skincare products. The main source of income came from parents (83.9%), so purchasing decisions were still heavily influenced by brand image and online recommendations. These findings indicate that young women with secondary to higher education are the dominant segment in the skincare market, in line with studies by Han et al. (2023) and Nguyen & Wang (2024) which confirmed the strong influence of brand image and online reviews on the purchase intentions of the younger generation.

Structural Model (Inner Model)

The calculation results of the entire model using Smart PLS 3.2.9 software can be seen in the following image:

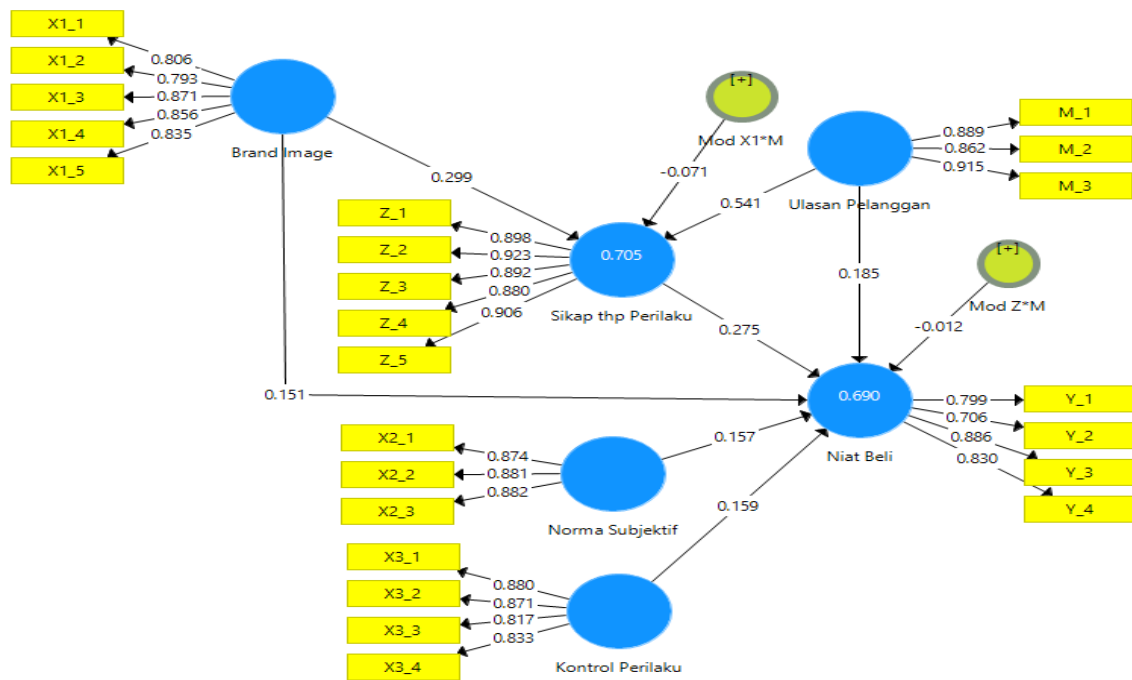


Figure 2 Structural Model (Inner Model)

Model Fit Measurement

Model fit measurements in this study were conducted using several indicators, namely the RMS Theta value, which should be less than 0.12, the SRMR, which should be less than 0.10, and the NFI, which should ideally be greater than 0.90. The test results are presented in the following table:

Table 2 Measurement of Model Fit

Estimated Model	
SRMR	0,067
d_ ULS	1,323
d_ G	0,537
Chi-Square	822,199
NFI	0,854
rms Theta	0,111

Source: Data processing results with Smart PLS 3.29, 2025

Based on the data processing results in the table above, the NFI value is 0.854, which is below the ideal limit of 0.90. Meanwhile, the RMS Theta value is 0.111, still below the maximum threshold of 0.12. This indicates that the model has met the model fit criteria based on the RMS Theta indicator, but has not met the ideal criteria in terms of NFI. On the other hand, the SRMR value of 0.067, which is smaller than 0.10, indicates that the model has an adequate level of fit. Thus, overall, the model can be said to be quite suitable for further analysis, although there is one indicator (NFI) that has not reached the ideal value.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1.1 Brand Image → Attitude Toward Behavior	0.299	4.713	0.000	H1.1 accepted
H1.2 Brand Image → Purchase Intention	0.151	1.893	0.059	H1.2 rejected
H3 Subjective Norm → Purchase Intention	0.157	2.285	0.023	H2 accepted
H4 Perceived Behavioral Control → Purchase Intention	0.159	2.235	0.026	H3 accepted
H5 Attitude Toward Behavior → Purchase Intention	0.275	3.206	0.001	H4 accepted

Source: Data processing results with Smart PLS 3.29

The Direct Influence of Brand Image, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control on Purchase Intention

The results of the study indicate that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention for skincare products. This finding supports the theory that a strong brand image increases consumer trust and confidence in product quality, thereby driving purchase intention. This finding is consistent with research by Keller (2019) and Paul et al. (2016), which states that brand image is a cognitive stimulus that shapes positive perceptions of a product. This finding also aligns with a recent study by Santos and Mendes (2023), which confirmed that strong brand perception can strengthen consumer purchasing decisions in the skincare category. *beauty and personal care.*

In addition, Ramos et al. (2024) in the context of the European market found that brand image plays a major role as a determinant. *purchase intention* especially when consumers have a high orientation towards product authenticity. Similar results were also revealed by Agyeman et al. (2023) who studied the West African cosmetics industry and found that brand image influences *trust* and value perception (*perceived value*), which further encourages *purchase intention*. Overall, these results confirm the strategic role of brand image in building purchase intention for skincare products, including in the Indonesian market. Furthermore, subjective norms have also been shown to have a positive effect on purchase intention. This means that the greater the social influence from the environment, such as friends, family, or public figures, the higher the consumer's purchase intention for skincare products. These results support *Theory of Planned Behavior* (Ajzen, 1991) and reinforced by the findings of Nguyen et al. (2023) who found that digital social norms have a strong influence on the intention to purchase beauty products on the platform. *social commerce*. Nham et al.'s (2024) study also confirmed that social norms significantly strengthen the relationship between consumer attitudes and behavior in the youth cosmetics market. Meanwhile, perceived behavioral control has a significant influence on purchase intentions for skincare products, indicating that the greater the consumer's perceived ease and ability to purchase, the higher the purchase intention. These results are consistent with studies by Chen and Chang (2022) and Alnaser et al. (2023), which found that perceived behavioral control plays a significant role in converting attitudes into actual intentions, especially for products with high perceived risk such as skincare. Empirically, Bui and Kemp's (2023) study also showed that perceived ease of purchase (online/offline) strengthens the effect of attitudes on skincare product purchase decisions.

The Mediating Effect of Attitude on the Relationship between Brand Image, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Control with Purchase Intention

The test results show that attitude toward behavior plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between brand image, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on skincare product purchase intentions. This means that good brand image, subjective norms, and behavioral control will shape positive consumer attitudes, which ultimately increase purchase intentions. A recent study by Afonso et al. (2023) in Portugal also confirmed that brand experience and brand attitude simultaneously play a role in shaping skincare product purchase intentions. *purchase intention* in beauty products. In addition, research by Anastasiei, Dospinescu, & Dospinescu (2025) found that *emotional response to e-WOM* and perceptions of product quality are key mediators between the credibility of electronic reviews and purchase intentions. These findings strengthen the argument that consumer attitudes are formed by a combination of brand perceptions, social norms, and trust in digital information sources. Mendoza-Moreira et al.'s (2025) research on Latin American cosmetics consumers also shows that *perceived e-WOM credibility* And *social influence* strengthens the relationship between perceived attitude and purchase intention, indicating that the mediating effect of attitude is strengthened by the digital context. Furthermore, Yoon & Kim (2024) found that in the premium skincare category, attitude towards the brand mediates the relationship between brand trust and purchase intention, especially when consumers have high involvement (*high involvement consumers*). The findings of this study confirm that positive attitudes toward skincare brands and products are an important mechanism that bridges the influence of cognitive variables (brand image and behavioral control) and social (subjective norms) on purchasing decisions.

The Effect of Moderation of Online Customer Reviews (e-WOM) on the Relationship between Attitude and Purchase Intention

The test results show that online customer reviews (e-WOM) moderate the relationship between attitudes toward behavior and purchase intentions for skincare products. This means that the more positive and credible the reviews consumers receive, the stronger the influence of attitudes on purchase intentions. This suggests that e-WOM plays a role in strengthening or weakening the effect of attitudes depending on the quality and credibility of the information consumers receive. This finding is consistent with a study by Xiao & Myers (2025), which found that *bandwagon heuristic* and review volume significantly moderate the *effect attitude–intention*, especially when the reviews are considered relevant and credible. This study provides evidence that *perceived diagnosticity* from online reviews strengthens the conversion of positive attitudes into actual purchase intentions.

Chen et al.'s (2022) research also shows that visual attention to review elements (such as ratings and illustrated testimonials) increases *attitude activation*, which further strengthens purchase intentions. Furthermore, Mendoza-Moreira et al. (2025) in the context of cosmetics consumers in Latin America found that the credibility and social influence of e-WOM significantly moderated the influence of consumer perceptions on purchase intentions, indicating similar cross-cultural patterns. The results of this study are also supported by Sofia & Ridhaningsih (2024) who emphasized that e-WOM and *live streaming reviews* has an important role in strengthening the relationship between brand trust and repurchase intention of skincare products on the platform *social commerce*. Furthermore, Rahman et al. (2023) found that the interaction between attitudes and digital reviews had a significant effect on *purchase intention*, especially among young consumers who are active on social media.

5. Conclusions

Overall, the results of this study strengthen the theory of planned behavior (*Theory of Planned Behavior*) and current digital marketing literature, asserting that: Brand Image, Subjective Norms, And Perceived Behavioral Controls significantly influence Attitudes towards Behavior And Purchase Intent. Attitudes towards Behavior proven to be an important mediator in bridging the influence of the three external factors on purchase intention. Online Customer Reviews strengthen the relationship between Attitudes towards Behavior and Purchase Intentions, emphasizes the importance of online reputation in shaping purchasing decisions in the digital age.

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