JEMSI: Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen Sistem Informasi
E-ISSN: 2686-5238
P-ISSN: 2686-4916
https://dinastirev.org/JEMSI dinasti.info@gmail.com +62 811 7404 455
DOI: https://doi.org/10.38035/jemsi.v7i3
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Received: 24 Desember 2025 | **Revised:** 08 Januari 2026 | **Accepted:** 24 Januari 2026

The Influence of Key Opinion Leaders on Generation Z Purchasing Decisions on Social Media

Erislan Erislan[1]
[1]Universitas Sahid Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia, drerislan@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: drerislan@gmail.com

Abstract: The Influence of Key Opinion Leaders on Generation Z Purchasing Decisions on Social Media. This study examines how Key Opinion Leaders influence purchasing decisions among Generation Z in Indonesia through credibility, content alignment, and interaction intensity on social media platforms. The research aims to identify the relative strength of these factors in shaping consumer purchase behavior in a digital marketing context. A quantitative explanatory design was employed, with data collected from 300 Generation Z respondents who actively use Instagram and TikTok. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling. The results show that credibility, content alignment, and interaction intensity all have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions, with credibility emerging as the most influential factor. These findings indicate that trustworthiness and expertise of influencers play a central role in digital persuasion, supported by relevant content and interactive engagement. The study concludes that effective influencer marketing strategies targeting Generation Z should emphasize credible opinion leaders, authentic content alignment, and meaningful interaction to enhance purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Key Opinion Leaders, Generation Z, Purchasing Decisions, Social Media, Credibility

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has fundamentally transformed economic and social landscapes, creating a new ecosystem in which social media serves as a primary public space for interaction, self-expression, and commercial transactions. This transformation has not only reshaped how brands communicate with consumers but has also profoundly altered consumer behavior, particularly among generations that have grown up in digitally mediated environments. Contemporary markets are increasingly characterized by a shift from conventional, one-way, and interruptive marketing approaches toward dialogical, personalized, and community-oriented communication models (Kumar & Gupta, 2021).

This transformation has gained momentum with the emergence of Generation Z as a significant consumer segment. Born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, Generation Z represents a cohort of digital natives who exhibit distinctive patterns of information

consumption and brand engagement. Having grown up in an environment saturated with advertising, they tend to display skepticism toward traditional corporate marketing messages. Instead, they place greater trust in recommendations from individuals perceived as peers, experts, or authentic voices within digital spaces (Smith, 2020). This shift indicates a declining effectiveness of traditional advertising and a growing reliance on perceived credible and neutral sources of information.

Within this context, Key Opinion Leaders have become increasingly central to digital marketing strategies. Key Opinion Leaders are individuals who possess substantial influence within specific niches on social media platforms due to their expertise, credibility, or ability to produce content that resonates with particular audiences (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Prior studies suggest that Key Opinion Leaders function as credibility intermediaries between brands and consumers by translating promotional messages into more personal, relatable, and trustworthy narratives. However, existing literature also indicates that their effectiveness in influencing purchasing decisions varies considerably and depends on several key determinants (Saima & Khan, 2021).

Among these determinants, credibility derived from perceived expertise and trustworthiness has been identified as a primary factor shaping persuasive influence (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In addition, as sponsored content becomes increasingly prevalent, Generation Z demonstrates heightened sensitivity to authenticity and relevance. Content that aligns with their values, interests, identities, and aspirations is perceived as more engaging and persuasive while being less intrusive as advertising (Audrezet et al., 2020). Furthermore, interactive engagement, such as responding to comments, hosting live sessions, or involving followers in content creation, strengthens parasocial relationships and fosters a sense of closeness and community, which can significantly influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Casaló et al., 2018; Lee & Eastin, 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature on influencer marketing, empirical research that simultaneously examines credibility, content congruence, and interaction intensity in shaping Generation Z purchasing decisions particularly within the Indonesian social media context—remains limited. Therefore, this study is conducted to address this gap by empirically investigating the influence of these three key factors on the purchasing decision-making process of Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. The objective of this research is to examine the extent to which Key Opinion Leader credibility, content congruence, and interaction intensity contribute to purchasing decisions on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. The findings are expected to contribute to the digital marketing and consumer behavior literature while providing context-specific and evidence-based strategic insights for practitioners in designing more effective collaborations with Key Opinion Leaders.

Literature Review

Key Opinion Leaders in Social Media Marketing

The growing prominence of social media has repositioned Key Opinion Leaders as influential actors in contemporary marketing communication. Key Opinion Leaders are individuals who possess the ability to shape opinions and behaviors within specific online communities through their expertise, credibility, and social presence. Unlike traditional celebrities, Key Opinion Leaders often build influence through sustained engagement, niche specialization, and perceived authenticity, making them particularly effective in digital environments (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Prior research suggests that consumers increasingly rely on Key Opinion Leaders as trusted intermediaries who filter, interpret, and personalize brand messages, thereby reducing perceived risk in purchasing decisions (Saima & Khan, 2021).

Generation Z Consumer Behavior on Social Media

Generation Z represents a distinct consumer cohort characterized by early exposure to digital technologies and social media platforms. As digital natives, they demonstrate high levels of media literacy, rapid information processing, and selective attention toward marketing messages. Existing studies indicate that Generation Z consumers tend to distrust overtly promotional content and traditional advertising formats, perceiving them as intrusive and less credible (Smith, 2020). Instead, they favor peer-like communication, transparency, and content that aligns with their personal values and identities. Social media therefore plays a central role in shaping their purchase decisions by providing interactive and socially validated sources of information.

Credibility of Key Opinion Leaders

Credibility is consistently identified as a core determinant of persuasive influence in influencer marketing. Credibility refers to the extent to which a Key Opinion Leader is perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and reliable. Drawing from source credibility theory, perceived expertise and trustworthiness jointly determine the effectiveness of message acceptance (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Empirical evidence demonstrates that highly credible Key Opinion Leaders are more likely to influence attitudes, brand evaluations, and purchasing decisions, particularly among younger consumers who actively evaluate the authenticity of digital content. For Generation Z, credibility functions as a prerequisite for persuasion, as skepticism toward commercial intent remains high.

Content Congruence and Authenticity

Content congruence refers to the perceived alignment between the Key Opinion Leader, the promoted brand, and the values or interests of the audience. Prior studies highlight that content perceived as authentic and contextually relevant generates higher engagement and persuasion than content that appears forced or overly commercial (Audrezet et al., 2020). For Generation Z consumers, authenticity is not only reflected in message tone but also in consistency between the influencer's personal identity and the endorsed product. Content congruence enhances message credibility, reduces resistance to persuasion, and strengthens emotional connections, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase decisions.

Interaction Intensity and Parasocial Relationships

Beyond credibility and content, interaction intensity plays a crucial role in influencer effectiveness. Interaction intensity refers to the frequency and depth of two-way communication between Key Opinion Leaders and their followers, including replying to comments, conducting live interactions, and involving audiences in content creation. Such interactions foster parasocial relationships, characterized by perceived intimacy and emotional closeness between audiences and influencers (Casaló et al., 2018). Research indicates that stronger parasocial bonds enhance trust, identification, and social influence, which in turn positively affect consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior (Lee & Eastin, 2021).

Influence on Purchasing Decisions

Purchasing decisions in social media contexts are increasingly shaped by a combination of cognitive evaluations and social influence mechanisms. Prior literature suggests that credibility establishes initial trust, content congruence reinforces relevance and authenticity, and interaction intensity strengthens relational bonds. Together, these factors form a multidimensional influence process through which Key Opinion Leaders affect Generation Z purchasing decisions. However, empirical studies that integrate these three dimensions within a single analytical framework, particularly in emerging markets such as Indonesia, remain

limited. This gap underscores the need for empirical investigation into how these factors jointly influence purchasing decisions among Generation Z consumers on social media platforms.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among the proposed variables. A survey method was used, with an online questionnaire serving as the primary research instrument.

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of Generation Z individuals in Indonesia aged 18–24 years who actively use Instagram and/or TikTok and follow at least one Key Opinion Leader on these platforms. The research was conducted between September and November 2026. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that respondents met the predetermined criteria. A total of 300 respondents who satisfied these criteria were obtained and used as the final sample for analysis.

Instrument and Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The research instruments were developed by adapting previously validated measurement scales. Key Opinion Leader credibility was measured using items adapted from Ohanian (1990), content congruence and interaction intensity were adapted from Lou and Yuan (2019), and purchasing decision items were adapted from Djafarova and Rushworth (2017). Prior to data analysis, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity, relevance, and suitability for the research context.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with the assistance of SmartPLS version 4.0. The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated to assess validity and reliability through factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted, Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha. Second, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among variables using path coefficients, t-statistics, and the coefficient of determination (R^2).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

The profile of the 300 respondents indicates that the majority were aged 21–24 years (58%), with Instagram being the primary social media platform used (61.7%). In addition, 64% of respondents reported interacting with Key Opinion Leader content on a daily basis. These findings suggest that Key Opinion Leaders have become an integral part of the daily digital routines of economically active Generation Z consumers.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Age	21–24 years	58%
Primary Platform	Instagram	61.7%
Interaction Frequency	Daily	64%

Source: Processed by the authors

The descriptive analysis presented in Table 1 reveals that the respondent profile is dominated by young adults aged 21–24 years (58%), with Instagram as the primary platform

(61.7%) and a high level of daily interaction with Key Opinion Leader content (64%). This configuration indicates that the research sample is highly representative for examining influencer marketing phenomena, as it reflects a digitally active and engaged core audience. This late Generation Z cohort, as highlighted in prior studies, represents a consumer segment whose purchasing behavior is strongly influenced by exposure to digital content and recommendations from followed figures, reinforcing the relevance of Key Opinion Leaders in shaping contemporary consumer decision-making processes.

The dominance of Instagram as the primary platform reinforces previous findings regarding the shift of marketing interactions toward visually oriented digital spaces. With its algorithms and platform features, Instagram not only facilitates content distribution but also fosters parasocial closeness between Key Opinion Leaders and their followers. According to Pratiwi et al. (2023), Instagram's immersive environment creates an ideal context for persuasive communication, in which promotional messages can be more organically embedded into the everyday life narratives of influencers.

The high frequency of daily interaction (64%) emerges as a key variable that strengthens both exposure and engagement. Such routine interactions not only enhance brand recall but also gradually build familiarity and trust. Research by Febrianto and Lestari (2024) explains that within social media contexts, consistent interaction intensity functions as a reinforcing mechanism that deepens the influence of messages delivered by sources perceived as credible.

Hypothesis testing results confirm that all three variables—Key Opinion Leader credibility, content congruence, and interaction intensity—have a significant positive effect on purchase intention. These findings are consistent with persuasive communication models in marketing, which emphasize the importance of message source, message content, and message frequency. Further analysis reveals that Key Opinion Leader credibility exerts the strongest influence. This indicates that within information-saturated digital ecosystems, audiences increasingly rely on credibility as a heuristic filter for evaluating recommendations, as highlighted in recent studies by Gunawan and Sari (2024).

The second-strongest effect of content congruence underscores the critical role of authenticity in influencer marketing. Alignment between the Key Opinion Leader's image, product values, and audience expectations creates coherence that reduces psychological resistance to commercial messages. Congruity theory, supported by the findings of Handoko (2023), suggests that misalignment may generate cognitive dissonance that undermines purchase intention, even when the influencer possesses a high level of popularity.

Although statistically significant, interaction intensity ranks last in terms of effect strength. This implies that a high frequency of interaction is effective only when it is preceded by a strong foundation of credibility and content congruence. Without these underlying conditions, excessive interaction may be perceived as spam-like or overly commercial, potentially reducing audience emotional engagement. This finding reinforces the argument proposed by Putra (2024), which emphasizes the importance of interaction quality rather than mere exposure quantity in social media marketing contexts.

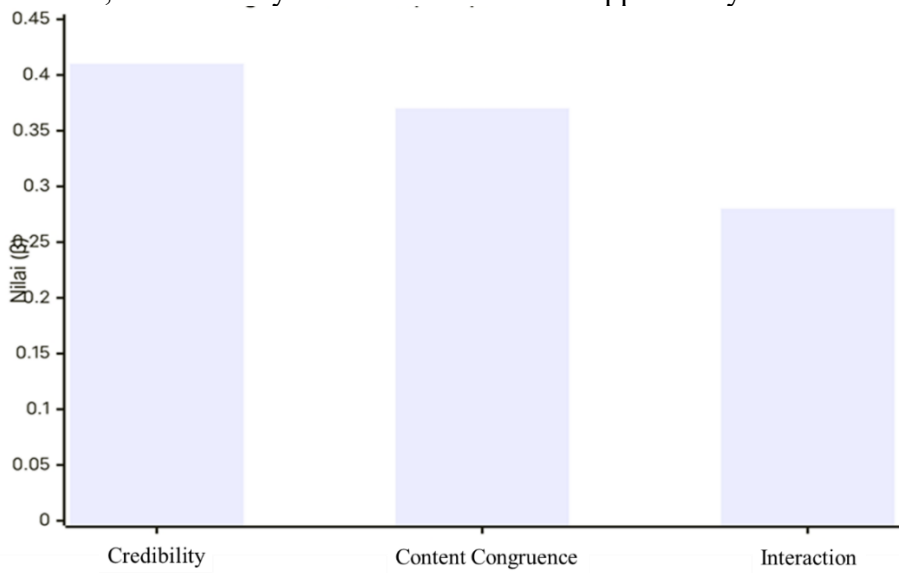
Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable	Effect (β)	Significance
KOL Credibility	0.41	Significant
Content Congruence	0.37	Significant
Interaction Intensity	0.28	Significant

Source: Processed by the authors

The results presented in Table 2 demonstrate that all proposed variables exert a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. Among them, Key Opinion Leader credibility

exhibits the strongest effect, followed by content congruence and interaction intensity. This pattern suggests a hierarchical influence mechanism, in which credibility serves as the primary driver of persuasion, reinforced by content relevance and supported by interactive engagement.



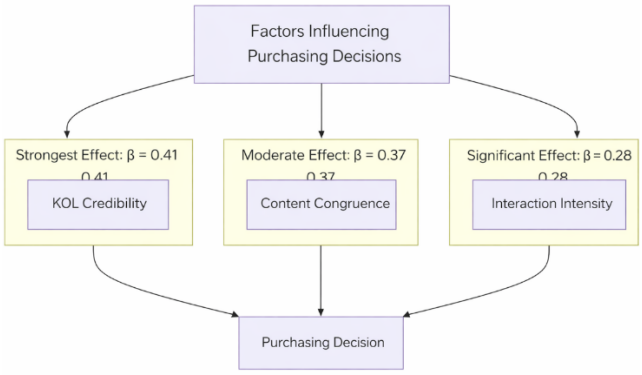
Source: Research Findings

Figure 1. Comparison of Effect Strengths (β)

The results of the path analysis provide a more precise assessment of the magnitude of influence exerted by each independent variable on purchasing decisions. The estimated path coefficients (β) indicate variations in effect strength, although all three variables are statistically significant. The finding that Key Opinion Leader credibility has the highest coefficient (β = 0.41) reinforces its position as the primary determinant in the persuasion process. This value indicates that a one-unit increase in perceived Key Opinion Leader credibility contributes to a 0.41-unit increase in purchase intention or purchasing decision, assuming other variables remain constant.

The strong influence of credibility is consistent with Source Credibility Theory, as proposed by Hovland et al., which emphasizes that a message source's expertise and trustworthiness are critical to persuasive acceptance. In the context of contemporary influencer marketing, credibility is no longer defined solely by formal authority but is increasingly shaped by perceptions of authenticity, integrity, and domain-specific expertise. Recent research by Sari and Gunawan (2024) suggests that in information-saturated digital environments, consumers become more critical and rely on credibility as a heuristic or mental shortcut to make faster and seemingly safer decisions.

The following figure presents a visualization of the hierarchical influence of the three variables based on their respective path coefficients.



Source: Research Findings
Figure 2. Hierarchy of Influence among the Three Variables

The visualization above clearly illustrates the hierarchical influence of the three research variables. Key Opinion Leader credibility occupies the leading position as the foundational element, followed by content congruence, which functions as a bridge between the message source and the audience, and finally interaction intensity, which serves as a mechanism for sustained reinforcement. This structure represents the consumer cognitive process, in which individuals initially filter information based on the credibility of the message source before engaging with other persuasive cues.

Content congruence ranks second with a path coefficient of 0.37. This magnitude of influence underscores the importance of alignment between the Key Opinion Leader's personal brand image, the values of the promoted product, and the needs or interests of the target audience. High congruence creates a coherent narrative and reduces potential cognitive dissonance that may arise when an influencer endorses products that are inconsistent with their established identity or expertise. Congruity Theory, as proposed by Osgood and Tannenbaum, explains that incongruence may trigger negative attitude adjustments toward both the message source and the endorsed object.

The importance of content congruence becomes even more critical in an era where consumers particularly Generation Z are highly sensitive to authenticity. Forced or unnatural promotional content may undermine previously established credibility. Recent research by Handoko (2024) indicates that content congruence acts as a moderating factor that strengthens the relationship between credibility and purchase intention. This suggests that the persuasive impact of a credible Key Opinion Leader is substantially amplified when the promoted content closely aligns with their digital persona.

Interaction intensity exhibits the lowest path coefficient at 0.28, although it remains statistically significant. This finding indicates that the frequency and depth of interactions between Key Opinion Leaders and their followers such as likes, comments, story replies, or live sessions have a meaningful yet comparatively weaker influence than credibility and content congruence. Importantly, this result highlights that interaction intensity primarily functions as a maintenance and reinforcement factor within the relationship, rather than as a primary driver of trust formation.

The interpretation of these effect magnitudes suggests that daily interactions such as those reported by 64% of respondents in Table 1 play an important role in maintaining audience engagement and reinforcing brand or product recall. However, such interactions are effective only when they occur within a relationship framework that is firmly grounded in credibility and content congruence. In the absence of these foundations, high levels of interaction may instead generate fatigue or perceptions of excessive commercial aggressiveness, as highlighted in the study by Febrianto (2023).

Overall, this hierarchy of influence (Credibility > Content Congruence > Interaction Intensity) forms a layered decision-making process. Consumers first evaluate whether the message source the Key Opinion Leader is trustworthy. Once this initial credibility filter is passed, they assess the relevance and congruence of the message content with their personal needs and interests. Only after these two stages are satisfied does the intensity of exposure and interaction contribute to moving consumers from interest to intention and ultimately to actual purchasing behavior.

These findings carry important theoretical implications. The research model confirms and quantifies the theoretical proposition that, within influencer marketing contexts, not all influencing factors carry equal weight. This study contributes to the development of a more

precise hierarchical influence model for predicting consumer behavior on social media, in which source credibility functions as the primary gateway in the persuasion process.

From a managerial perspective, the results provide clear strategic guidance for marketers and brand managers. Budget allocation and strategic efforts should prioritize collaborations with Key Opinion Leaders who possess high credibility within relevant niches, rather than focusing solely on follower counts or content production frequency. The selection of Key Opinion Leaders based on credibility and content fit should therefore constitute a critical first step.

Subsequently, once appropriate Key Opinion Leaders have been identified, content strategies should be co-designed to ensure optimal alignment between brand values, influencer personas, and audience expectations. Only after these two pillars are firmly established should strategies aimed at increasing interaction intensity such as question-and-answer sessions, quizzes, or interactive challenges be implemented to drive conversion. This sequential approach is expected to enhance both the effectiveness and efficiency of influencer marketing initiatives.

Strategic Implications

Based on the relative strength of influence identified in this study, strategies for selecting and collaborating with Key Opinion Leaders should be structured according to clear priorities.

Table 3. Strategic Priorities for Collaboration with Key Opinion Leaders

Priority	Strategic Focus	Objective
1	Selection based on credibility: expertise and honesty	Building trust and perceived quality
2	Creative development of authentic content congruence	Enhancing relevance and message acceptance
3	Encouraging interaction through dialogical campaigns	Building community and loyalty

Source: Processed by the authors

The findings of this study, consistent with those reported by Dharma and Sari (2024), clearly demonstrate a hierarchy of influence in which credibility emerges as the strongest determinant, followed by content congruence and interaction intensity. This hierarchical structure carries profound practical implications for the design of digital marketing strategies. The primary implication is that collaboration with Key Opinion Leaders must move away from a shallow quantitative logic toward a stratified qualitative paradigm. Effective strategies are no longer centered on maximizing exposure through numerous influencers, but rather on building depth of influence through a structured sequence, beginning with the most critical foundation—credibility.

In practical terms, this means that brands should prioritize identifying Key Opinion Leaders who demonstrate strong expertise, integrity, and trustworthiness within a specific niche before considering other performance indicators. Once credibility is established, strategic emphasis should shift toward the co-creation of content that is authentic and congruent with both the influencer's persona and the brand's values. Only after these two layers are firmly in place should interactive campaign elements be intensified to foster dialogue, community engagement, and long-term loyalty. This hierarchical and sequential approach provides a more effective and efficient pathway for achieving sustainable influence and conversion in influencer marketing initiatives.

The first and most critical priority, as outlined in Table 3, is to position credibility-based selection as a non-negotiable strategic step. Credibility in this context is multidimensional, encompassing recognized expertise within a specific domain, trustworthiness in expressing opinions, and the authenticity of the influencer's digital persona.

Brands must therefore reallocate resources away from merely purchasing reach or follower counts toward conducting in-depth assessments of how a Key Opinion Leader is perceived within their core community. This involves thorough due diligence on audience engagement quality, consistency of communicated values, and the influencer's track record of integrity. Investment in credible Key Opinion Leaders, even those with more niche audiences, enables the transfer of intangible assets in the form of trust to the brand, which in turn fosters stronger and more durable perceptions of product quality.

Once credible Key Opinion Leaders have been identified and engaged, the second strategic priority is to ensure optimal content congruence. The finding that content congruence exerts a relatively strong influence ($\beta = 0.37$) underscores that credibility alone is insufficient if message execution lacks alignment. The practical implication is that brands should grant substantial creative autonomy to Key Opinion Leaders. Rather than imposing rigid scripts or overly controlled creative directives, brands should focus on providing clear briefs that articulate core values, product benefits, and key messages, while entrusting narrative development and creative execution to the influencer. This approach allows content to be organically integrated into the influencer's usual communication style, making it feel more authentic, relevant, and non-intrusive to the audience. Such authenticity enhances message acceptance and mitigates resistance arising from perceptions of forced or artificial advertising. The third priority within this strategic framework is the design and encouragement of meaningful interaction. Although interaction intensity exhibits a comparatively lower effect coefficient ($\beta = 0.28$), it remains an important component that functions as both a catalyst and a reinforcing mechanism. Accordingly, collaborative campaigns should not end with one-way content dissemination. Strategies should actively incorporate elements that stimulate dialogue and two-way participation. This can be achieved through interactive content formats such as live question-and-answer sessions, polls, audience challenges, or content that explicitly invites followers to share opinions and experiences. The objective extends beyond merely increasing engagement metrics; rather, it aims to transform the relationship dynamic from a simple sender–receiver model into an actively engaged community centered around both the brand and the Key Opinion Leader.

The sequential and integrated implementation of these three priorities creates a synergistic effect that strengthens overall marketing objectives. A collaboration initiated with a credible Key Opinion Leader establishes a strong foundation of trust. When the content delivered is subsequently highly congruent and authentic, it resonates more effectively with an audience that already trusts the source. At this stage, purchase interest begins to form. Thereafter, intensive and dialogical interaction functions as a final catalyst that converts interest into more concrete purchase intention, while simultaneously nurturing relationships that support long-term loyalty.

These strategic implications are particularly relevant in influencing Generation Z, which constitutes the majority of respondents in this study. This demographic group is widely recognized for its skepticism toward traditional advertising and its strong appreciation for transparency and authenticity. For Generation Z, credibility is not granted automatically but must be consistently earned and demonstrated over time. A strategy that prioritizes credibility and content congruence therefore aligns closely with Generation Z values, increasing the likelihood that marketing messages will be perceived not as intrusive advertisements but as valid recommendations from trusted sources.

From a resource management perspective, the findings offer a framework for more effective budgeting decisions. Rather than dispersing budgets across numerous micro- or nano-influencers based solely on cost per post, brands can allocate greater investment toward securing collaborations with a smaller number of Key Opinion Leaders who possess genuinely high credibility and strong brand congruence. This approach is more likely to generate superior

return on investment in terms of conversion quality and long-term brand equity development, compared to a "spray and pray" strategy that emphasizes broad but shallow reach.

Another important implication relates to performance measurement. Campaign success metrics must evolve in accordance with these strategic priorities. In addition to quantitative indicators such as reach and awareness, qualitative metrics that reflect credibility and content congruence should be developed and monitored. These may include sentiment analysis of audience comments, the quality of discussions generated, expressions of trust articulated by followers, and the extent to which content is perceived as authentic. Engagement metrics should also be examined more deeply, focusing not only on the number of likes or comments but also on the depth and duration of interactions.

The findings reported by Dharma and Sari (2024) further imply the need for a redefinition of roles between brands and Key Opinion Leaders. The role of the brand shifts from that of a full controller to a facilitator and strategic partner that respects the influencer's expertise in connecting with their audience. Conversely, Key Opinion Leaders are expected to move beyond being paid message deliverers to becoming guardians of trust who protect both their own credibility and that of the brands they represent. This balanced and mutually respectful partnership is essential for generating successful collaborations.

At a broader level, these findings encourage the influencer marketing industry to move toward greater maturity. Practices such as purchasing followers, generating fake engagement, or pursuing irrelevant collaborations based solely on short-term popularity are likely to become increasingly ineffective. Instead, the market will place greater value on Key Opinion Leaders who build influence organically through expertise and integrity, as well as on brands that demonstrate discernment in selecting collaboration partners. Ultimately, this shift will foster a healthier, more transparent, and value-oriented digital marketing ecosystem for consumers.

Overall, the strategic implications of this study are transformative. They offer a clear roadmap from planning and execution to performance measurement for impactful influencer marketing campaigns. By prioritizing credibility, optimizing content congruence, and subsequently activating interaction, brands can cultivate deeper and more sustainable influence in the minds and hearts of digital-native consumers, ultimately driving stronger purchasing decisions and enduring brand loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Key Opinion Leaders exert a significant influence on Generation Z purchasing decisions on social media. However, this influence is not uniform; rather, it forms a clear hierarchy in which Key Opinion Leader credibility built upon perceived expertise and trustworthiness emerges as the strongest determinant. This finding directly addresses the research objective by demonstrating that, within digital persuasion processes, Generation Z's acceptance of marketing messages is highly dependent on the credibility filter applied to the message source.

Content congruence, reflecting authenticity and relevance, occupies a critical intermediary position by bridging source credibility and audience interest. Meanwhile, interaction intensity functions as a reinforcing factor that sustains engagement and facilitates the conversion of interest into purchase intention. Theoretical implications of these findings include the empirical reinforcement of a hierarchical influence model within social media contexts, emphasizing the primacy of credibility over mere exposure frequency.

From a practical standpoint, this study offers clear strategic guidance for digital marketing practitioners seeking to enhance the effectiveness of collaborations with Key Opinion Leaders. Specifically, marketers are encouraged to prioritize credibility-based influencer selection, develop authentic and well-aligned content, and design dialogical interaction strategies to support stronger consumer engagement and purchasing outcomes.

REFERENCES

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. Journal of Business Research, 117, 557–569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. Journal of Business Research, 117, 510-519.

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. Computers in Human Behavior, 68, 1-7.

Febrianto, A., & Lestari, D. (2024). Dampak Frekuensi Interaksi terhadap Brand Recall dalam Kampanye Media Sosial. Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, 12(1), 45-60

Gunawan, S., & Sari, M. P. (2024). Heuristic Processing dalam Pengambilan Keputusan Belanja Online Generasi Z. Jurnal Psikologi Konsumen dan Pemasaran, 8(2), 112-128.

Handoko, B. (2023). Peran Congruence sebagai Moderator Hubungan Kredibilitas Influencer dan Niat Beli. Jurnal Manajemen Pemasaran, 17(3), 250-265.

Kumar, V., & Gupta, S. (2021). Conceptualizing the evolution and future of advertising. Journal of Advertising, 50(3), 237-248.

Lee, J. A., & Eastin, M. S. (2021). Perceived authenticity of social media influencers: The role of visual aesthetics and transparency. Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, 15(1), 102-122.

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19(1), 58-73.

Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Journal of Advertising, 19(3), 39-52.

Pratiwi, R., Dewi, K., & Haryanto, B. (2023). Analisis Efektivitas Platform Instagram sebagai Media Komunikasi Pemasaran Visual. Jurnal Media dan Komunikasi, 9(1), 78-95.

Putra, A. W. (2024). Beyond Engagement Rate: Membangun Keterlibatan Emosional Audiens di Media Sosial. Prosiding Seminar Nasional Manajemen Digital.

Saima, & Khan, M. A. (2021). Effect of social media influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intention and the mediating role of credibility. Journal of Promotion Management, 27(4), 503-523.

Sari, D. P., & Gunawan, S. (2024). Digital Trust: Persepsi Kredibilitas sebagai Heuristik Keputusan Konsumen Milenial. Jurnal Bisnis dan Manajemen, 15(1), 35-52.

Siregar, T. Z., & Wijaya, B. S. (2023). Pola Konsumsi Digital dan Perilaku Belanja Generasi Z di Indonesia. Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi dan Bisnis, 20(2), 200-215.

Smith, A. N. (2020). Consumer trust in social media marketing: Implications for Generation Z. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 37(6), 641–651. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-01-2019-3042

Smith, K. T. (2020). Marketing to Generation Z through social media influencers. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 37(4), 403-413.