



The Influence of Influencer Marketing and Online Customer Review on Purchasing Decision Mediated by Brand Image (A Study on Nivea Suncare Consumers among Students of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University)

Putri Sabrina¹, Meutia², Hayati Nupus³
Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University^{1, 2}

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to empirically examine the influence of influencer marketing and online customer reviews on purchase decisions of Nivea suncare products, with brand image serving as a mediating variable. A quantitative descriptive method was employed by distributing questionnaires and reviewing related literature. A total of 170 undergraduate students from Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University (cohorts 2021–2024) were selected using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS 4 software. The findings indicate that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on both brand image and purchase decision. Meanwhile, online customer reviews positively influence brand image but do not directly affect purchase decisions. Furthermore, brand image is proven to have a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions and mediates the relationship between influencer marketing, online customer reviews, and purchase decisions. These results highlight the strategic importance of brand image in strengthening the effectiveness of digital marketing practices.

Corresponding Author:

Putri Sabrina

Email : putrisabrina2107@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Business competition in Indonesia is becoming increasingly intense, encouraging companies to utilize digital marketing strategies to attract consumers. One of the most commonly used strategies is influencer marketing and online customer review, both of which have been proven to influence consumer behavior and shape brand perception. In the cosmetics industry, particularly skincare, data from [Compas.co.id](https://www.compas.co.id) (2024) shows that the skincare category dominates beauty product sales with a contribution of 89.9%. This trend is accompanied by an increase in the use of suncare products, including sunscreen, driven by education from influencers and online reviews. To understand the competitive position of suncare brands in the Indonesian market, the Top Brand Index (TBI) data is presented in table 1 below:

Tabel 1 Top Brand Index (TBI)

Brand	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Nivea	32,3%	36,4%	29,5%	27,8%	26,5%
Oriflame	16,9%	17,8%	16,5%	14%	19%
Vaseline	16,2%	16,3%	20,4%	21,2%	20,4%
Wardah	12,3%	13,2%	14%	14,1%	16,4%

Source: Processed secondary data (2024)

Based on Table 1, Nivea holds the position of market leader in the skincare segment. However, over the past five years (2020–2024), there has been a declining trend in market share, mind share, and commitment share, indicating a weakening of the brand's strength compared to competitors such as Oriflame, Vaseline, and Wardah. To strengthen these findings, the researcher conducted a pre-survey among students of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University to identify consumer tendencies toward Nivea skincare products, as shown in table 2 below:

Tabel 2 Pre-Survey Results

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I always choose Nivea skincare products as my first choice	10%	60%	20%	10%	0%
I often buy more than one Nivea skincare product each time i shop	23,3%	60%	6,7%	10%	0%
I prefer Nivea skincare products over other brands when buying skin protection	16,7%	50%	13,3%	16,7%	3,3%
Nivea skincare products meet my skin protection needs	16,7%	23,3%	33,3%	26,7%	0%
I would recommend Nivea skincare products to my friends and family	20%	20%	36,7%	23,3%	0%
Average	17,3%	42,7%	22%	17,3%	0,7%

Source: Processed primary data (2024)

Based on Table 2, the pre-survey results show that students of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University display a low tendency to choose Nivea as their primary option, along with noticeable consumer hesitation to make repeat purchases. This condition indicates an issue in purchase decision-making despite the brand's wide recognition. Recent studies also reveal that strong brand awareness does not always translate into strong purchase intentions unless supported by positive digital engagement such as influencer credibility and authentic customer reviews (Nabilaturrahma et al., 2024).

Previous research on influencer marketing and online customer reviews has shown inconsistent results. Several studies found positive and significant effects, including Adriana & Syaefulloh (2023), while other studies reported insignificant or even negative findings. These inconsistencies highlight a research gap and suggest that additional variables, particularly brand image, may play a mediating role in strengthening the relationship between digital marketing activities and consumer purchasing behavior.

However, despite Nivea's strong brand recognition, its declining market share and low consumer preference reflected in the pre-survey indicate that awareness alone is not sufficient to drive purchase decisions. At the same time, previous empirical findings regarding the effects of influencer marketing and online customer reviews remain inconsistent and inconclusive. These conditions create a clear research problem regarding which digital marketing factors significantly shape purchase decisions, and how brand image may serve as a mediating mechanism.

Therefore, based on the issues identified, this study aims to analyze the influence of influencer marketing and online customer reviews on purchase decisions for Nivea skincare products, with brand image as a mediating variable. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical contributions and practical insights for companies to design more effective digital marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

This study is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which explains that an individual's behavior is influenced by three main factors: attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This theory is relevant for understanding how consumers make purchase decisions that can be affected by external factors such as influencer marketing and online customer reviews.

Influencer Marketing

According to Nurniati et al. (2023), influencer marketing is a promotional strategy that utilizes individuals with influence on social media to market products or services to their audience. The indicators of influencer marketing, based on Sumanti et al. (2024), include trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity between the influencer and the audience.

Online Customer Review

According to Willis & Faik (2022), online customer review refers to statements provided by consumers in positive, neutral, or negative forms regarding a product or service, which can be widely accessed through the internet. The indicators of online customer review, based on Willis & Faik (2022), include perceived usefulness, source credibility, volume of reviews, and argument quality.

Brand Image

According to Nurjannah & Firmansyah (2018), brand image is defined as consumers' perception of a brand formed through experiences and information received. The indicators of brand image, based on Sumanti et al. (2024), include image of the product, perceived value, image of service, and product durability.

Purchase Decision

According to Wibowo & Gunawan (2022), purchase decision is the final outcome of a consumer's evaluation process when determining which product or service to choose. The indicators of purchase decision, based on Widayat et al. (2022), include stability to buy, considerations in buying, conformity of attributes with needs, deciding without hesitation, and quickly deciding between alternatives.

Research Model and Hypothesis Development

This study develops a conceptual framework involving four variables: influencer marketing and online customer review as independent variables, brand image as the mediating variable, and purchase decision as the dependent variable. The relationship among these variables is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

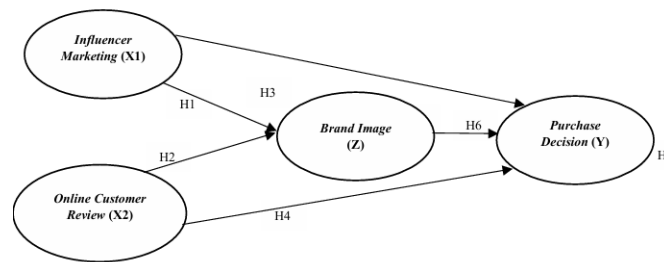


Figure 1. Research Model
Source: Processed Primary Data (2025)

Based on figure 1, the proposed hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: The more effective the influencer marketing, the higher the purchase decision.
- H2: The better the online customer reviews, the higher the purchase decision.
- H3: The more effective the influencer marketing, the stronger the brand image.
- H4: The better the online customer reviews, the stronger the brand image.
- H5: The higher the brand image, the higher the purchase decision.
- H6: Brand image mediates the effect of influencer marketing on purchase decision.
- H7: Brand image mediates the effect of online customer review on purchase decision.

METHODOLOGY

The research utilized a quantitative method with a descriptive approach to examine the relationship between the independent variables, namely influencer marketing (X1) and online customer review (X2), toward the dependent variable purchase decision (Y), with brand image (Z) as a mediating variable.

The population consisted of active undergraduate students of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University from the 2021–2024 cohorts, totaling 20,606 individuals. The sampling technique applied was purposive sampling, based on the criteria of respondents who had purchased Nivea skincare products at least once. Referring to the SEM sample size determination, the total sample used in this study was 170 respondents.

Primary data were obtained through questionnaire distribution, conducted both online (via Google Form, WhatsApp, Instagram, and X) and offline (through barcode scanning on campus). Secondary data were collected from scientific journals, books, reports, and institutional publications related to the research topic. The questionnaire employed an interval scale ranging from 1 to 10 (agree–disagree scale).

Instrument testing was carried out using SPSS version 25 on an initial sample of 30 respondents. Validity was measured using the loading factor ≥ 0.7 and Pearson correlation, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.6 .

Data analysis involved descriptive statistical analysis to describe the respondents' characteristics and variables, followed by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS 4. The SEM analysis included testing the outer model, which measures construct validity and reliability, and the inner model, which evaluates the structural relationships among the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Instrument Testing

The instrument testing in this study was conducted through a pre-survey involving 30 respondents to examine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The validity test using the Pearson Product Moment correlation showed that all 17 indicators had r-values greater than 0.3610 with a significance level below 0.05, indicating that all items were valid. Furthermore, the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha produced values above 0.6 for all variables, confirming that the instruments were reliable and consistent in measuring the research constructs.

Research Object

The respondents of this study consisted of undergraduate students of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University from the 2021–2024 cohorts, who had purchased Nivea suncare products at least once. Data were collected through both online and offline distribution methods, resulting in 170 valid responses that met the research criteria. The characteristics of respondents, including gender, age, faculty, and cohort year, are presented in table 3 below:

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics

Profile	Category	Number of Respondents	
		Respondents	Percentage
Total Sample	-	170	100%
Gender	Male	25	14,7%
	Female	145	85,3%
Age	<20 years	11	6,5%
	20-23 years	158	92,9%
	>23 years	1	0,6%
Faculty	Law	15	8,8%
	Education and Teacher Training	51	30%
	Engineering	28	16,5%
	Agriculture	25	14,7%
	Economics and Business	25	14,7%
	Social and Political Sciences	19	11,2%
	Medicine and Health Sciences	7	4,1%
Cohort	2021	133	78,2%
	2022	20	11,8%
	2023	13	0,76%
	2024	4	0,24%

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 3, the total number of respondents was 170 active students of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University. The majority were female (85.3%), aged 20–23 years (92.9%), and primarily from the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training (30%), with most belonging to the 2021 cohort (78.2%). This indicates that Nivea suncare products are predominantly favored by young female students, particularly those from the 2021 cohort, who tend to be more independent in making purchasing decisions.

Descriptive Analysis of Variables (Index)

The descriptive analysis of variables aims to understand respondents' perceptions of the variables studied. To quantitatively illustrate these perceptions, an index value was calculated based on the questionnaire results. The analysis used the average score of respondents' answers and was evaluated using the scale range shown in table 4 below:

Table 4. Index Value Interpretation

Index Value	Interpretation
17 – 68	Low
69 – 120	Moderate
121 - 170	High

Source: Primary Data, processed (2025)

Based on table 4, the analysis of variable index values shows that all variables fall into the high category. The average index value for influencer marketing is 129.3, online customer review is 142.4, brand image is 138.4, and purchase decision is 133.6. These results indicate that respondents have a positive perception of influencer marketing implementation, the quality of online customer reviews, brand image, and purchase decisions toward Nivea suncare products. Therefore, all research variables are considered relevant and received favorable responses from the participants.

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

The initial stage of analysis involved assessing the outer model to evaluate the validity and reliability of indicators related to exogenous, mediating, and endogenous variables. The purpose of this stage is to ensure that each indicator accurately reflects its corresponding construct.

Convergent Validity Test

Convergent validity testing aims to determine whether the indicators within a construct consistently represent the same latent variable. This validity is assessed using two key measures: loading factor and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Ghazali (2021), an indicator is considered valid if the loading factor > 0.70 and the construct's AVE > 0.50. The results are shown in table 5 below:

Table 5. Loading Factor and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	AVE
Influencer marketing (IM)	IM1	0,782	0,651
	IM2	0,867	
	IM3	0,798	
	IM4	0,777	
Online customer review (OCR)	OCR1	0,869	0,692
	OCR2	0,809	
	OCR3	0,836	
	OCR4	0,814	
Brand image (BI)	BI1	0,847	0,711
	BI2	0,876	
	BI3	0,780	
	BI4	0,967	
Purchase decision (PD)	PD1	0,824	0,713
	PD2	0,856	
	PD3	0,849	
	PD4	0,812	
	PD5	0,879	

Source: Primary Data, processed (2025)

Based on Table 5, all indicators have loading factor values greater than 0.70, indicating that they meet the requirements for convergent validity. Moreover, all constructs show AVE values above 0.50, which confirms that each construct in this study is valid and appropriately represents the variables being measured.

Discriminant Validity Test

Discriminant validity ensures that each construct in the model is distinct from the others. This validity is achieved when two different constructs produce scores that are not significantly correlated (Abdillah & Hartono, 2015). According to Ichwanudin (2018), discriminant validity can be tested by comparing cross-loading values, where each indicator should have a higher loading on its associated construct than on any other construct. The results of this analysis are presented in table 6 below:

Table 6. Discriminant Validity

Variable	BI	OCR	IM	PD
B11	0.847	0.563	0.596	0.660
B12	0.876	0.608	0.615	0.710

BI3	0.780	0.551	0.517	0.641
BI4	0.867	0.504	0.640	0.692
OCR1	0.466	0.782	0.366	0.435
OCR2	0.567	0.867	0.560	0.525
OCR3	0.591	0.798	0.484	0.493
OCR4	0.494	0.777	0.498	0.546
IM1	0.611	0.504	0.869	0.439
IM2	0.519	0.539	0.809	0.451
IM3	0.627	0.421	0.836	0.490
IM4	0.577	0.531	0.814	0.490
PD1	0.807	0.568	0.579	0.824
PD2	0.576	0.453	0.317	0.856
PD3	0.563	0.517	0.379	0.849
PD4	0.688	0.525	0.516	0.812
PD4	0.694	0.539	0.526	0.879

Source: Primary Data, processed (2025)

Based on table 6, all indicators show higher loading values on their corresponding constructs than on any other constructs. Therefore, all constructs in this study meet the criteria for discriminant validity.

Reliability Test

The reliability test was conducted to assess the consistency of the research instruments in measuring the constructs. Reliability is considered achieved when a measurement tool produces stable and consistent results. In this study, reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values. A variable is deemed reliable if both values exceed 0.70. The results of the reliability test are presented in table 6 below:

Table 6. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
IM	0,821	0,882
OCR	0,852	0,900
BI	0,864	0,908
PD	0,900	0,925

Source: Primary data, processed (2025)

Based on table 6, all variables show Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. Similarly, all Composite Reliability values also exceed 0.70, suggesting that all instruments in this study are reliable and can consistently measure their respective constructs.

Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

The inner model analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between variables in the study. Evaluation was performed by observing the R-square (R^2) and Adjusted R-square values, which indicate how much the independent variables explain the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2017). The results of the R-square test are shown in table 7 below:

Table 7. R-square Results

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand image	0,584	0,580
Purchase decision	0,660	0,655

Source: Primary data, processed (2025)

Based on table 7, the brand image variable has an R-square value of 0.584, indicating that approximately 58.4% of the variation in brand image can be explained by influencer marketing and online customer review, while the remaining 41.6% is influenced by factors outside the model. Meanwhile, the purchase decision variable has an R-square value of 0.660, meaning that 66% of the variation in purchase decisions can be explained by influencer marketing, online customer review, and brand image, while 34% is explained by other factors beyond this study. Thus, the relatively high R-square values indicate that the model has a strong explanatory power for the dependent variable.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using the bootstrapping method with the SmartPLS 4 application. The test results were evaluated using the t-statistic and p-value to determine the significance of direct relationships between variables. At a significance level of $\alpha = 5\%$, the t-table value used is 1.96. A hypothesis is accepted if t-statistic > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05. The results of the direct effect testing are presented in table 8 below:

Table 8. Direct Effect Hypothesis Test Results

Relationship	Original Sample (o)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	t-Statistics	p-values
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IM -> PD	0,175	0,176	0,076	2,294	0,022
OCR -> PD	-0,048	-0,041	0,073	0,657	0,511
IM -> BI	0,373	0,369	0,100	3,744	0,000
OCR -> BI	0,481	0,485	0,133	3,624	0,000
BI -> PD	0,720	0,713	0,066	10,901	0,000

Source: Primary data, processed (2025)

Based on table 8, the interpretations of the direct effect hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: The original sample value of 0.175, with a t-statistic of 2.294 > 1.96 and a p-value of 0.022 < 0.05, indicates a positive and significant effect of influencer marketing on purchase decision.
- H2: The original sample value of -0.048, with a t-statistic of 0.657 < 1.96 and a p-value of 0.511 > 0.05, indicates a negative and insignificant effect of online customer review on purchase decision.
- H3: The original sample value of 0.373, with a t-statistic of 3.744 > 1.96 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicates a positive and significant effect of influencer marketing on brand image.
- H4: The original sample value of 0.481, with a t-statistic of 3.624 > 1.96 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicates a positive and significant effect of online customer review on brand image.
- H5: The original sample value of 0.720, with a t-statistic of 10.901 > 1.96 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicates a positive and significant effect of brand image on purchase decision.

Mediation Test

The mediation (indirect effect) test was conducted to determine whether brand image mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and online customer review toward purchase decision. The criteria used were t-statistic > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05. The results are shown in table 9 below:

Table 9. Mediation Test Results

Relationship	Original Sample (o)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	t-Statistics	p-values
IM -> BI -> PD	0.269	0.263	0.076	3.543	0.000
OCR -> BI -> PD	0.346	0.346	0.100	3.458	0.001

Source: Primary data, processed (2025)

Based on table 9, the interpretations of the mediation test results are as follows:

- H6: The original sample value of 0.269, with a t-statistic of 3.543 > 1.96 and a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05, indicates a positive and significant indirect effect of influencer marketing on purchase decision through brand image. Since the direct effect (H1) is also significant, this relationship falls under complementary (partial mediation). This means influencer marketing directly affects purchase decisions, but the effect becomes stronger when mediated by brand image.
- H7: The original sample value of 0.346, with a t-statistic of 3.458 > 1.96 and a p-value of 0.001 < 0.05, indicates a positive and significant indirect effect of online customer review on purchase decision through brand image. However, since the direct effect (H2) is negative and insignificant, this relationship is classified as full mediation. This means online customer reviews do not directly influence purchase decisions but have an effect when mediated by brand image.

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Influencer Marketing on Purchase Decision

The results show that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision, with a coefficient value of 0.175, a t-statistic of 2.294 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.022 (<0.05). This positive value indicates that the more effective the influencer marketing strategy is, the higher the likelihood of consumers making purchase decisions for Nivea's skincare products. This suggests that influencers successfully attract attention, build trust, and influence consumer buying behavior. These findings support the studies of Mahmud et al. (2023), Adriana & Syaefulloh (2023), and Willis & Faik (2022), which also found that influencer marketing significantly affects purchase decisions.

The Effect of Online Customer Review on Purchase Decision

The study results indicate that online customer review has a negative and insignificant effect on purchase decision, with a coefficient of -0.048, a t-statistic of 0.657 (<1.96), and a p-value of 0.511 (>0.05). The negative value shows an opposite direction of influence; however, since it is not significant, online customer reviews do not directly affect the purchase decision for Nivea's skincare products. This means that consumer reviews are not always the primary consideration when making a purchase, as other factors such as price, promotion, or personal experience may play a more dominant role. This finding is consistent with Lestari et al. (2022) and Suwondo & Noor Andriana (2023), who also found that online customer reviews do not significantly affect purchase decisions.

The Effect of Influencer Marketing on Brand Image

The study results show that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand image, with a coefficient value of 0.373, a t-statistic of 3.744 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). This implies that the more effective the influencer marketing strategy, the stronger the resulting brand image. Credible influencers with attractiveness and authentic delivery can strengthen Nivea's image as a trustworthy and high-quality brand. This

finding supports the studies of Sumanti et al. (2024), Rahmawati et al. (2024), and Agustina & Sari (2021), which revealed that influencer marketing positively affects brand image.

The Effect of Online Customer Review on Brand Image

The study results reveal that online customer review has a positive and significant effect on brand image, with a coefficient of 0.481, a t-statistic of 3.624 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). This indicates that the more positive reviews Nivea's skincare products receive, the stronger the brand image formed in consumers' minds. Reviews are perceived as evidence of real experiences that enhance trust in product quality. This result is consistent with Faliyah et al. (2021) and Adriyanto et al. (2022), who concluded that online customer reviews can strengthen brand image.

The Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

The results show that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision, with a coefficient of 0.720, a t-statistic of 10.901 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). This means that a positive brand image of Nivea strongly encourages consumers to make a purchase. A strong brand image provides confidence that the product is safe, high-quality, and suitable for consumers' needs, thereby influencing purchasing decisions. This finding supports previous studies by Garut & Purwanto (2023), Suhaily & Darmoyo (2017), and Havidz & Mahaputra (2020), which state that brand image significantly affects purchase decisions.

The Effect of Influencer Marketing on Purchase Decision Mediated by Brand Image

The results indicate that brand image partially mediates (complementary mediation) the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase decision, with a coefficient of 0.269, a t-statistic of 3.543 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). This implies that influencer marketing not only directly affects purchase decision but also strengthens brand image, which subsequently enhances purchasing behavior. An effective influencer marketing strategy contributes to a positive brand image, which reinforces consumer confidence in making a purchase. These findings support Sumanti et al. (2024), Nabilaturrahma et al. (2024), and Mahmud et al. (2023).

The Effect of Online Customer Review on Purchase Decision Mediated by Brand Image

The results show that brand image fully mediates the relationship between online customer review and purchase decision, with a coefficient of 0.346, a t-statistic of 3.458 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.001 (<0.05). This indicates that online customer reviews do not directly affect purchase decisions but exert an indirect influence through brand image. In other words, consumer reviews shape a positive brand image, which in turn drives purchase decisions. This result aligns with the studies of Guo et al. (2020), Adriana & Syaefulloh (2023), and Garut & Purwanto (2023), which also demonstrate the mediating role of brand image.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to empirically examine the influence of influencer marketing and online customer review on purchase decision of Nivea's skincare products, with brand image as a mediating variable. The findings reveal that not all variables directly influence purchase decisions. Influencer marketing shows a positive and significant effect, whereas online customer review shows an insignificant direct effect. However, both variables positively affect brand image, and brand image itself significantly influences purchase decisions.

Based on the respondents' responses, most Nivea skincare users perceive that brand image, formed through influencer marketing and consumer reviews, strongly shapes their perception of product quality and trust. This indicates that purchase decisions are more strongly driven by brand image rather than direct reviews alone.

These findings provide practical implications for Nivea. First, influencer marketing strategies should focus on selecting credible, engaging, and authentic influencers who can effectively strengthen brand image. Second, even though online customer reviews do not directly affect purchase decisions, they remain essential in shaping brand image. Therefore, Nivea should ensure that authentic and trustworthy reviews are available across various digital platforms. A strong brand image can thus become the primary driver of consumer purchase decisions.

This study has limitations as it only involves student respondents from a single region. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of respondents by including consumers from diverse backgrounds and to explore the use of other digital platforms to gain broader insights into improving purchase decisions.

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