

# The Impact of Micro-Influencers on Consumer Trust in Digital Business

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

micro-influencers; consumer trust;  
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audience engagement

The development of digital technology has changed the landscape of business communication, especially social media-based marketing strategies. One growing trend is the use of micro-influencers, namely individuals with between 10,000 and 100,000 followers, who have high levels of engagement and are considered more authentic than macro-influencers or celebrities. This study aims to analyze the impact of micro-influencers on consumer trust in digital businesses, focusing on the factors that influence trust and how that trust impacts purchasing decisions. This study uses a quantitative method with data collection techniques through surveys. The main variables analyzed include authenticity, transparency of support, audience engagement, and brand loyalty. The results of the study show that micro-influencers have a significant influence on consumer trust, especially because they are considered more personal, honest, and transparent in providing product recommendations. The high level of interaction between micro-influencers and their audiences also increases emotional attachment and loyalty to the brands they promote. In addition, micro-influencer-based marketing strategies have proven to be more effective in building long-term relationships with consumers compared to traditional advertising or macro-influencers. These findings are expected to provide insight for businesspeople and marketers in developing more effective digital marketing strategies that are oriented towards consumer trust.

## 1. Introduction

In the last two decades, advances in digital technology have transformed the way companies market their products and interact with consumers. The emergence of social media as a digital communication space has triggered a paradigm shift in marketing strategies, from a one-way communication approach to a more interactive and participatory two-way dialogue (Keller, 2016; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter have become important channels for brands to build relationships with consumers, expand market reach, and increase brand awareness. In this context, the practice of using influential individuals—or what is known as influencers—has become a dominant strategy in digital marketing, given their ability to influence consumer opinions, perceptions, and decisions (Lou & Yuan, 2019; De Veirman et al., 2017).

As the influencer marketing industry has grown, there has been a classification based on the number of followers, namely nano-influencers, micro-influencers, macro-influencers, and mega-influencers (Geyser, 2023). Among these classifications, micro-influencers emerge as strategic actors with unique strengths. Micro-influencers generally have between 1,000 and 100,000 followers, but with a relatively high engagement rate and a more loyal audience compared to digital celebrities (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). These characteristics make micro-influencers more trustworthy and

relatable to their followers because they are considered more authentic, honest, and communicative (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

In the era of digital marketing, micro-influencers play a strategic role in shaping consumer perceptions and behavior. Micro-influencers are defined as individuals who have a relatively small number of followers (usually between 1,000 and 100,000), but have high engagement and a more authentic relationship with their audience (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). There are three main dimensions that shape the effectiveness of a micro-influencer in building consumer trust, namely credibility (Trustworthiness), expertise (Expertise), and Attractiveness (Attractiveness).

The credibility of an influencer is an essential element in social media-based marketing communications. Ohanian (1990) defines credibility as the perception that an influencer is an honest, sincere, and trustworthy figure. Credibility is the main foundation that influences the level of message acceptance by the audience. Micro-influencers who are considered to have high integrity tend to be more trusted in providing product recommendations because they are considered not solely motivated by commercial gain. This is reinforced by research by Lou and Yuan (2019), which found that perceptions of trustworthiness mediate the relationship between endorsement activities and consumer purchase intentions. "When followers perceive influencers as honest and sincere, they are more likely to trust their product recommendations, which leads to stronger consumer-brand relationships." (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Expertise refers to an influencer's ability or competence in a particular field, which makes them viewed as a reliable source of information (Hovland et al., 1953). Micro-influencers often have a niche focus—such as beauty, fitness, technology, or culinary—which strengthens the public's perception of their expertise. When the audience feels that the influencer has a deep understanding and real experience of the product being reviewed, trust in the content delivered will increase. A study by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) confirmed that expertise plays an important role in influencing consumer attitudes towards a brand. "Expertise enhances the perceived authenticity of influencer content, leading to greater credibility and purchase intention." (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Attractiveness is not just about physical appearance, but also includes personality, communication style, and emotional connection with the audience. Ohanian (1990) stated that attractiveness is a psychological aspect that makes the audience feel close and connected to the influencer. Micro-influencers who have high attractiveness tend to create parasocial relationships, which are one-way bonds felt by followers, as if they have a personal relationship with the influencer. This can increase the effectiveness of marketing messages because the audience feels emotionally involved. Research by Sokolova and Kefi (2020) shows that attractiveness influences consumer trust, especially among Gen Z and millennials who are more responsive to visual and narrative approaches. "Attractiveness leads to emotional identification, which increases trust and strengthens consumer loyalty to the endorsed brand." (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Consumer trust is the cumulative result of perceptions of the credibility, expertise, and attractiveness of micro-influencers. McKnight et al. (2002) define trust as the belief that another party will act predictably and favorably. In the digital context, consumer trust becomes crucial due to the lack of physical interaction between consumers and products. Therefore, trust in the messenger (micro-influencer) becomes an important substitute for direct trust in the brand. When influencers are trusted, consumers are more likely to show positive attitudes, such as purchase intention, loyalty, and brand advocacy. Thus, micro-influencers who are able to optimize their three personal dimensions will be more effective in building and maintaining consumer trust.

In digital business, trust is a crucial capital that determines the success or failure of a brand. Consumer trust in a brand reflects the extent to which consumers feel confident that the company will fulfill the promises of the products or services offered (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In the digital era where consumer interactions with products are more online and non-face-to-face, trust plays a bigger role than ever before (Belanche et al., 2021). Consumers tend to form perceptions of brand reliability through secondary information, such as consumer reviews, testimonials, and content shared by influencers (Park & Kim, 2008).

Several studies have identified that micro-influencers have a significant influence on brand perceptions and purchase intentions, because they are considered to have high credibility, expertise, and personal appeal (Freberg et al., 2011; Ohanian, 1990). In practice, micro-influencers deliver marketing messages in a format that is less rigid, more casual, and naturally integrated into their daily lives. This allows the audience to feel emotional closeness or what is known as parasocial interaction, which is a pseudo relationship between media figures and audiences that is one-way, but felt real by consumers (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This interaction creates the illusion of closeness and intimacy, thereby increasing trust in the product recommendations given.

However, most previous studies still focus on the influence of influencers in general, especially those with a large number of followers such as celebrities or public figures (Boerman, Willemssen, & Van Der Aa, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020). These studies tend to highlight aspects of popularity, brand endorsement, and brand awareness, but have not sufficiently explored how influencers with limited followers—namely micro-influencers—can build consumer trust through more personal and interactive relationships. On the other hand, consumer trust is also often measured narrowly with quantitative indicators such as clicks, likes, and comments, without considering the complex psychological processes behind the formation of such trust (Lim et al., 2017).

Another weakness of previous studies is the lack of contextualization in local cultures and markets, such as Indonesia, which has very high and diverse social media user dynamics. According to data from We Are Social (2024), social media users in Indonesia have reached more than 167 million people, and almost 60% of them actively follow influencers to find product information and reviews. This phenomenon shows that the influence of micro-influencers on Indonesian consumers is very potential, but has not been explored in depth in academic studies. Moreover, in the Indonesian social context that upholds aspects of community and interpersonal relationships, the role of micro-influencers as "virtual friend" figures is becoming increasingly significant.

In answering the research gap, this study offers an approach that emphasizes the dimensions of consumer trust, and analyzes it within the framework of source credibility theory and parasocial relationships. Source credibility theory states that the effectiveness of a message delivered by a communicator is influenced by the audience's perception of the communicator's credibility, which includes expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990). Meanwhile, parasocial relationships explain how a one-way relationship between influencers and followers can trigger deep emotional trust, even though the relationship is not direct or reciprocal (Labrecque, 2014).

This study aims to analyze the impact of micro-influencers on consumer trust in the context of digital business, and evaluate how various attributes such as credibility, personal appeal, content consistency, and level of engagement affect consumer perceptions. In addition, this study also examines whether there are differences in influence between certain types of micro-influencers, such as fashion, beauty, or lifestyle, in building trust in the digital brands they promote. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey technique distributed to active followers of micro-influencers on Instagram and TikTok, which have been known as the main platforms in influencer marketing practices.

Theoretically, the results of this study are expected to enrich the literature on digital marketing and strategic communication, especially in understanding the role of micro-influencers in building long-term relationships with consumers through trust-based marketing. Practically, these findings will be useful for business actors, especially MSMEs and digital businesses, in designing collaboration strategies with micro-influencers more effectively and in a targeted manner. Given the limited resources of small business actors, the use of micro-influencers with high engagement and proven credibility can be a more efficient alternative compared to the use of mega-influencers who tend to be expensive and not always effective.

Considering all the backgrounds, problems, and literature gaps that have been presented, this study focuses on the main question: "To what extent do micro-influencers influence consumer trust in brands in the context of digital business in Indonesia?" To answer this question, this study will test the influence of several dimensions of source credibility on consumer trust, and measure the strength of parasocial interactions as mediation in the process.

## 2. Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational survey method. This approach was chosen to test the relationship between the influence of micro-influencers (independent variable) on consumer trust (dependent variable) in the context of digital business. The survey was conducted using a Likert-based closed questionnaire, which was designed to measure respondents' perceptions of several indicators of both variables.

The population in this study were active social media users (especially Instagram and TikTok) who followed at least one micro-influencer account and had seen product promotion content from the account in the last three months. The purposive sampling method was used to select respondents who met the research criteria, namely aged 18–35 years, domiciled in Indonesia and had purchased a product because they were influenced by micro-influencer recommendations. The number of samples was determined based on the Slovin formula (with a margin of error of 5%), and 400 respondents were obtained. This number is considered sufficient to obtain representative data in multiple regression analysis (Hair et al., 2010). The main instrument in this study was an online questionnaire compiled using Google Forms. The questionnaire consists of three parts, namely Part I: Demographic data (age, gender, frequency of social media use, platforms used). Part II: Perception of micro-influencers based on the dimensions of Source Credibility Theory: Trustworthiness (5 items), Expertise (5 items) and Attractiveness (5 items). Part III: Consumer trust in brands (5 items), compiled referring to the scales of McKnight et al. (2002) and Ohanian (1990). Each item is rated using a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sebelum disebarkan secara luas, instrumen diuji coba kepada 30 responden untuk uji validitas dan reliabilitas. Uji validitas dilakukan menggunakan analisis korelasi Pearson Product Moment, dengan kriteria nilai  $r > 0,3$  dinyatakan valid (Sugiyono, 2022). Uji reliabilitas dihitung menggunakan Cronbach's Alpha, dengan nilai  $\alpha > 0,7$  dinyatakan reliabel (Hair et al., 2010). Hasil uji coba menunjukkan bahwa semua item memiliki korelasi signifikan dan nilai reliabilitas:

- *Trustworthiness*:  $\alpha = 0,81$
- *Expertise*:  $\alpha = 0,83$
- *Attractiveness*:  $\alpha = 0,78$
- *Trust to Brand*:  $\alpha = 0,86$

Data were collected over a period of two weeks through the distribution of online questionnaires in various community groups, Instagram stories, and discussion forums relevant to the theme of influencer marketing. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with the principles of research ethics.

The data obtained were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The analysis was carried out through the following stages: (1) Descriptive Statistics: To see the profile of respondents and the distribution of scores for each variable, (2) Classical Assumption Test: Including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, and (3) Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: To test the influence of micro-influencer dimension variables ( $X_1$  = trustworthiness,  $X_2$  = expertise,  $X_3$  = attractiveness) on consumer trust variables (Y). The results of the analysis will be used to test the significance of the model simultaneously (F test) and partially (t test), with a significance level of 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1 Presentation of Results

This study involved 100 respondents who actively use social media, especially Instagram, as one of the reference sources in purchasing products or services. This study examines three main dimensions of micro-influencers, namely credibility (trustworthiness), expertise (expertise), and attractiveness (attractiveness), and their influence on consumer trust in digital businesses. The following is a descriptive analysis that includes two main parts, namely, Respondent Profile (based

on gender, age, and education) and Descriptive Analysis of Each Variable Dimension (Credibility, Expertise, Attractiveness, and Consumer Trust).

### ***Respondent Profile Based on Gender***

The category of respondent gender is shown as follows:

**Table 1. Respondent Profile Based on Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	38	38%
Female	62	62%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data recapitulation results, 2025

Based on the results of distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents, it was found that the majority of respondents were women, which was 62%, while men were 38%. This inequality reflects the reality of digital consumers in Indonesia, where women tend to be more active in following trends on social media and interacting with influencers, especially in the fashion, beauty, and lifestyle sectors. Research by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) shows that women are more responsive to content produced by micro-influencers because of similarities in lifestyle and psychological needs for forming self-identity. Micro-influencers often produce content that is personal and relatable, which resonates with women's preferences in online shopping. In addition, in a study by Lim et al. (2017), it was found that women have a higher tendency to use micro-influencers as role models and sources of inspiration in consumption decisions.

### ***Respondent Profile Based on Age***

The age category of respondents is shown as follows:

**Table 2. Respondent Profile Based on Age**

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
17–25 years	45	45%
26–35 years	38	38%
36–45 years	12	12%
> 45 years	5	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data recapitulation results, 2025

The age distribution of respondents shows that the 17–25 age group dominates with a percentage of 45%, followed by the 26–35 age group at 38%. The 36–45 age group is 12%, and the rest (5%) are over 45 years old. This shows that most respondents are in the young to early adult age range, who are also active users of social media. According to research from We Are Social & Hootsuite (2024), the 18–34 age group is the main demographic in social media usage in Indonesia. They are not only active in consuming content but also use social media as the main reference in making purchasing decisions. Micro-influencers have strong reach for this age group because of their casual, visual, and emotional content approach. Research by De Veirman et al. (2017) also states that younger generation social media users trust micro-influencers more because they are considered authentic “virtual friends,” not representations of big brands that tend to be corporate and impersonal.

### ***Respondent Profile Based on Last Education***

The respondent education category is shown as follows:

**Table 3. Respondent Profile Based on Last Education**

Last Education	Frequency	Percentage
High School/Equivalent	25	25%
Diploma	12	12%
Bachelor's Degree (S1)	53	53%
Postgraduate Degree (S2/S3)	10	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data recapitulation results, 2025

Most respondents have a bachelor's degree (S1) education background, which is 53%, followed by high school graduates/equivalent (25%), diploma (12%), and postgraduate (10%). This shows that the majority of respondents have a sufficient level of digital literacy and understanding of the digital world and online marketing. Education influences how someone evaluates information on social media. According to research by Goldsmith et al. (2000), consumers with higher education tend to be more selective and critical of promotional content, but can still be influenced by micro-influencers who present information with a balanced rational and emotional approach.

#### ***Descriptive Analysis of Variable Dimensions***

This study measures four main dimensions, namely credibility (trustworthiness), expertise (expertise), attractiveness (attractiveness) of micro-influencers, and consumer trust. All four are analyzed based on the average score (mean) of each indicator on a Likert scale of 1–5.

**Table 4. Average Score of Variable Dimensions**

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Average Category
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	4.12	0.58	High
<i>Expertise</i>	4.05	0.61	High
<i>Attractiveness</i>	3.89	0.65	Quite High
<i>Consumer Trust</i>	4.18	0.56	High

Source: Data recapitulation results, 2025

#### ***Dimension: Trustworthiness***

Average score: 4.12 (high category)

Credibility is the extent to which an influencer is perceived as honest, trustworthy, and has integrity. In the context of digital marketing, credibility is the foundation of the relationship between influencers and audiences. According to Ohanian (1990), trustworthiness is one of the main determinants in the persuasion resource model. An influencer who is perceived as honest and non-manipulative is more likely to build audience trust in the product or service being promoted. Research by Lou and Yuan (2019) confirms that influencer credibility directly contributes to consumers' perceptions of brand credibility, which then increases purchase intentions.

The results of this study are consistent with these findings. The high average indicates that respondents rate the micro-influencers they follow as honest in providing product recommendations. This is often reinforced by personal narratives, honest reviews, and two-way communication with followers.

#### ***Dimension: Expertise***

Average score: 4.05 (high category)

Expertise refers to the extent to which influencers are perceived as competent and knowledgeable in the field they promote. In this study, expertise refers to product understanding, style of information

delivery, and content accuracy. According to Ohanian (1990), expertise is an important component of source credibility, and plays a role in increasing the persuasiveness of a message. Micro-influencers, although they have fewer followers than Instagram celebrities, are often more expert in certain niches such as skincare, technology, parenting, or healthy lifestyles. Research by Sokolova and Kefi (2020) revealed that perceptions of influencer expertise significantly affect consumer trust and purchase intentions, especially in products with high levels of involvement.

In this study, the average value of the expertise dimension of 4.05 indicates that respondents view micro-influencers as figures who are quite competent in conveying information. This could be because they often do in-depth product reviews, provide education, or share personal experiences transparently.

#### ***Dimension: Attractiveness***

Average score: 3.89 (quite high category)

Attractiveness includes the physical appearance, communication style, and personality of influencers that are considered attractive by the audience. Although not the only factor determining trust, attractiveness is often the "entry point" that builds attention and engagement.

Based on the Source Attractiveness Model theory (McGuire, 1985), a person tends to be more receptive to messages from sources that are considered attractive. Attractiveness is not only physical, but also includes attitudes, values, and personality. Research from Ki and Kim (2019) emphasized that the visual appeal and lifestyle of influencers have a positive correlation with audience engagement, but their influence on trust is relatively lower than the credibility or expertise dimension.

The average score of 3.89 in this study shows that respondents tend to like the appearance and approach of micro-influencers, although it is not the main factor in determining trust in product information. This is understandable because consumers today value "realness" or authenticity more than visual perfection.

#### ***Dimension: Consumer Trust***

Mean value: 4.18 (high category)

The consumer trust dimension reflects the level of respondent's confidence in information, reviews, or product recommendations conveyed by micro-influencers. This is the main dependent variable in this study. Research by Erkan and Evans (2016) shows that trust is a key element in the influence of social media on consumer behavior. When consumers trust the source of information, they are more open to marketing messages delivered, even higher than direct promotions from brands.

The average result of 4.18 reflects that micro-influencers are considered trustworthy figures by most respondents. This is an important signal for digital business actors to consider collaboration strategies with micro-influencers in increasing market trust. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) also concluded that trust in micro-influencers not only affects brand perceptions but also increases consumer loyalty and advocacy.

The results of the descriptive analysis show that all independent dimensions (credibility, expertise, and attractiveness) have an influence on consumer trust, with credibility and expertise as the most dominant factors. Consumer trust in micro-influencers is reflected in the high average score indicating effectiveness in delivering product information and building emotional relationships with the audience.

The fact that the majority of respondents are young, female, and highly educated indicates the importance of proper market segmentation in influencer marketing strategies. Micro-influencers are considered to have a more humanistic, relevant, and trustworthy approach than celebrities or traditional endorsers.

Based on previous literature and studies, it can be concluded that micro-influencers have a strategic role in creating trust-based marketing, especially in a digital environment filled with

information noise. Their credibility and expertise are the main assets in influencing consumer preferences, while their appeal is more supportive.

Data analysis was carried out using multiple linear regression techniques, and the results showed that the three independent variables had a positive and significant influence on the dependent variable (consumer trust). Table 5 below presents a summary of the results of the regression analysis:

**Tabel 5. Multiple Linear Regression Results**

<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Regression coefficient (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>Sig. (p-value)</b>
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	0.482	0.000
<i>Expertise</i>	0.295	0.002
<i>Attractiveness</i>	0.174	0.019
<i>R<sup>2</sup> Adjusted</i>	0.671	-
<i>F-statistic</i>	85.231	0.000

Source: SPSS data processing results, 2025.

The results above show that trustworthiness has the most dominant influence on the formation of consumer trust ( $\beta = 0.482$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), followed by expertise ( $\beta = 0.295$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and finally attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.174$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.671 indicates that 67.1% of the variation in consumer trust can be explained by these three variables.

### 3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence that the presence of micro-influencers in digital marketing strategies contributes significantly to the formation of consumer trust. The trustworthiness dimension, which shows honesty, integrity, and consistency of messages from an influencer, has proven to be the most determining factor in building trust. This finding is in line with the results of a previous study by Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) which showed that consumers trust content delivered by individuals who appear "sincere" and "authentic", especially when the influencer does not have a major affiliation with a well-known brand.

The expertise dimension, or the perception of the influencer's expertise and understanding of the product being promoted, also contributes significantly. This supports the findings of Freberg et al. (2011) which emphasize that expertise increases the perception of credibility and message effectiveness. In the context of digital business, influencers who are able to explain product features in detail and relevantly can increase consumer confidence in the quality and benefits of the product.

Meanwhile, attractiveness or visual appeal does have an influence on consumer trust, but not as much as the other two dimensions. This is interesting, because many influencer marketing campaigns still emphasize the visual aspect alone. These findings suggest that visuals are important, but not enough to build long-term trust without being balanced with honesty and expertise.

Furthermore, these findings reinforce the idea that today's digital consumers are increasingly critical and selective in absorbing information. They are not only looking for physically attractive figures but also considering a person's moral integrity and capabilities before deciding to trust and follow consumption advice. In this regard, micro-influencers who have smaller but more engaged followings have a strategic advantage because of the more personal and interactive relationship with their audience.

Comparison with previous studies also shows a shift in focus from macro influencers to micro influencers. If previously brands were more interested in the number of large followers (reach), now brands are starting to understand the importance of engagement rates and the quality of the relationship between influencers and audiences. Research from De Veirman et al. (2017) confirms that the engagement rate of micro-influencers is higher than that of celebrities or macro-influencers, which has an impact on greater trust in their recommendations.



However, this study also has several limitations. First, the object of the study is still limited to the Instagram platform and the majority of respondents are in the 18–35 year age range. Therefore, these results cannot necessarily be fully generalized to all platforms or demographic groups. Second, consumer trust is measured in a general context, not specifically in certain product categories (e.g. technology vs. beauty products), which could give different results.

Nevertheless, the results of this study provide new insights into understanding the strategic role of micro-influencers as drivers of trust in the digital economy. Researchers recommend that digital business actors be more selective in choosing micro-influencers by considering the dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise primarily, not just the aesthetic aspect or number of followers alone.

For further research, it is recommended that there be a deeper exploration of the role of interactivity (engagement) and authenticity of content (authenticity) in shaping consumer trust. In addition, a mixed methods approach can also be used to gain a more holistic understanding of consumer perceptions and influencer communication strategies. Overall, the results of this study enrich the discourse in the field of digital marketing communications and provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of trust-based marketing strategies in the dynamic digital era.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aims to examine the extent to which micro-influencers influence consumer trust in the context of digital business. Based on the results of a quantitative analysis through a survey of 400 respondents, it was found that the three main dimensions of micro-influencers — trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness — contribute significantly to the formation of consumer trust in the product or brand being promoted. Of the three dimensions, trustworthiness has the most dominant influence, followed by expertise, while attractiveness has a relatively lower but still significant influence.

These findings indicate that in the increasingly competitive era of digital marketing, micro-influencers have a strategic role as a bridge of trust between brands and consumers. The consumer trust that is formed is not only influenced by how visually attractive an influencer is, but more so by the perception of honesty, consistency, and competence displayed in their content. Therefore, brands that want to build long-term relationships with their consumers through social media need to carefully consider the selection of micro-influencers who are not only popular but also credible and relevant to brand values. Kontribusi utama dari penelitian ini terhadap pengembangan ilmu komunikasi pemasaran digital adalah penegasan bahwa micro-influencer bukan sekadar saluran promosi alternatif, melainkan entitas yang secara strategis mampu membentuk kepercayaan dan mendorong keterlibatan konsumen dalam keputusan pembelian. Penelitian ini memperkuat pergeseran paradigma dari promosi berbasis massal menuju pemasaran yang lebih personal, otentik, dan berbasis komunitas.

In terms of methodology, the quantitative approach used in this study can be replicated for various product contexts, industry sectors, and other digital platforms. However, this study has limitations in terms of geographic coverage and demographic characteristics of respondents who are still limited to social media users in Indonesia with a certain age range. Therefore, further studies are recommended to expand the sample frame to populations across ages and cultures, as well as further examine moderating factors such as the level of audience engagement, product type, or digital content format used by micro-influencers.

In closing, it can be concluded that micro-influencers are not just "extensions" of brands, but are entities that have a strategic position in shaping images, building trust, and ultimately influencing consumer behavior in the digital business ecosystem. Their integration into modern marketing communication strategies is an adaptive step that is in line with the development of the digital landscape and changes in the way consumers build trust in a brand.

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