



The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention Mediated by Emotional Attachment

Yasmin Namira¹, Syarifah Evi Zuhra^{2*}, Rizki Amalia³

^{1,2,3} Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, 23111, Aceh, Indonesia

Corresponding Email : syarifah.evizuhra@usk.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine the influence of Physical Attractiveness, Expertise, and Trustworthiness of social media influencers on Purchase Intention toward Bening Clinic products in Aceh, with Emotional Attachment acting as a mediating variable. The research seeks to understand how influencer credibility dimensions shape consumers' emotional connections and subsequently their intention to purchase. The study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method involving 200 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.2.8 to test the direct and indirect relationships among variables. The findings reveal that Physical Attractiveness, Expertise, and Trustworthiness significantly influence Emotional Attachment. Expertise and Physical Attractiveness have a significant direct effect on Purchase Intention, while Trustworthiness does not directly affect Purchase Intention. Emotional Attachment fully mediates the relationship between Trustworthiness and Purchase Intention and partially mediates the relationship between Physical Attractiveness, Expertise, and Purchase Intention. The study focuses on consumers of Bening Clinic in Aceh and examines specific dimensions of influencer credibility, which may limit generalization to other regions or industries. Future research may expand the geographical scope, include additional variables such as brand image or perceived

value, or compare different types of beauty clinics to enhance broader applicability. The study contributes to the influencer marketing and consumer behavior literature by integrating Emotional Attachment as a mediating variable in explaining Purchase Intention within the beauty clinic industry. The findings provide empirical evidence that emotional bonding plays a crucial role in strengthening the impact of influencer credibility on consumer purchase decisions.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh Daya Tarik Fisik, Keahlian, dan Kepercayaan terhadap *influencer* media sosial terhadap Niat Beli produk Bening Clinic di Aceh, dengan Keterikatan Emosional sebagai variabel mediasi. Penelitian ini berupaya memahami bagaimana dimensi kredibilitas *influencer* membentuk ikatan emosional konsumen dan, pada akhirnya, niat beli mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei yang melibatkan 200 responden yang dipilih melalui teknik *purposive sampling*. Data dianalisis menggunakan *Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) dengan perangkat lunak SmartPLS 3.2.8 untuk menguji hubungan langsung dan tidak langsung antarvariabel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Daya Tarik Fisik, Keahlian, dan Kepercayaan berpengaruh signifikan terhadap Keterikatan Emosional. Keahlian dan Daya Tarik Fisik memiliki pengaruh langsung yang signifikan terhadap Niat Beli, sedangkan Kepercayaan tidak berpengaruh langsung terhadap Niat Beli. Keterikatan Emosional memediasi secara penuh hubungan antara Kepercayaan dan Niat Beli, serta memediasi secara parsial hubungan antara Daya Tarik Fisik, Keahlian, dan Niat Beli. Penelitian ini berfokus pada konsumen Bening Clinic di Aceh dan mengkaji dimensi spesifik kredibilitas *influencer*, yang dapat membatasi generalisasi hasil ke wilayah atau industri lain. Penelitian di masa mendatang dapat memperluas cakupan geografis, menyertakan variabel tambahan seperti citra merek atau

nilai yang dipersepsikan (**perceived value**), atau membandingkan berbagai jenis klinik kecantikan untuk meningkatkan keberlakuan hasil penelitian secara lebih luas. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada literatur pemasaran **influencer** dan perilaku konsumen dengan mengintegrasikan Keterikatan Emosional sebagai variabel mediasi dalam menjelaskan Niat Beli di industri klinik kecantikan. Temuan ini memberikan bukti empiris bahwa ikatan emosional memainkan peran krusial dalam memperkuat dampak kredibilitas **influencer** terhadap keputusan pembelian konsumen.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The changing landscape of modern marketing is inextricably linked to the rapid development of social media, including in the beauty industry. Promotional strategies now increasingly rely on social media influencers, who have proven effective in shaping perceptions and influencing their audience's consumption behavior. Zhao et al. (2024) explain that this influence arises from the emotional closeness and high level of trust between influencers and their followers, thereby increasing Purchase Intention. In this context, Benings Clinic, a beauty clinic growing nationally, including in Aceh, actively utilizes platforms like Instagram and TikTok to increase brand visibility and attract potential customers through collaborations with influencers.

Benings Clinic's success is not only supported by the large number of followers of the influencers it collaborates with, but also by the quality of their characteristics. Abdullah et al. (2024) stated that physical attractiveness can increase consumer interest in the promoted product. On the other hand, Christea and Chairun Nisa (2022) emphasized that expertise and trustworthiness are key factors in building consumer trust in promotional messages delivered by influencers.

Conceptually, digital marketing literature groups influencer characteristics into three main dimensions: physical attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (Masuda et al., 2022). These three dimensions are believed to influence purchase intention not only directly but also through emotional mechanisms. Emotional attachment serves as a psychological bridge, fostering a sense of closeness between consumers and a brand or service. Rahayu et al. (2024) found that the authenticity and intensity of influencer interactions with audiences can form emotional bonds that ultimately strengthen brand credibility and increase purchase intention.

Although various studies have examined the influence of influencers on consumer behavior, there remains a research gap regarding the simultaneous examination of three influencer characteristics—physical attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness—on purchase intention with emotional attachment as a mediating variable, particularly in the beauty services sector. Most previous research has focused on fashion or cosmetic products, rather than on beauty clinic services like Benings Clinic. Furthermore, studies in Aceh remain rare, even though consumer characteristics and preferences exhibit their own dynamics.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the influence of physical attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of influencers on the purchase intention of consumers at Benings Clinic in Aceh and examine the role of emotional attachment as a mediator. The results are expected to expand the literature on influencer marketing and provide strategic implications for beauty industry players in designing more effective

influencer collaborations that are emotionally based and tailored to local market characteristics.

Trustworthiness: The degree of consumer trust in an influencer's honesty, integrity, and good intentions. Influencers who are perceived as honest, authentic, and consistent in conveying information will be more trusted by their followers (Utami & Handayani, 2019). A high level of trust increases consumer confidence in recommended products and reduces perceived purchase risk (Han & Balabanis, 2024). This trust encourages consumers to accept recommendations as credible information, thereby increasing the likelihood of developing purchase intention.

Expertise refers to an influencer's level of knowledge, experience, and competence in a specific field. Influencers with a deep understanding of a product are perceived as more professional and convincing (Syarifah et al., 2019). Strong competence increases the audience's positive evaluation of product quality and strengthens confidence in decision-making. A high level of expertise increases consumers' likelihood of making a purchase.

Attractiveness: Visual appeal is the physical and personal appeal that influencers possess, enabling them to attract attention and create a positive impression. An attractive appearance increases audience engagement with promotional messages and strengthens positive perceptions of products (Abdullah et al., 2024). Visual appeal also increases the likelihood that consumers will take an interest in recommended products.

Trust in influencers fosters a sense of security and psychological closeness among audiences. Influencers who are perceived as honest and genuine foster stronger affection and emotional connections (J. Kim et al., 2025). High levels of trust strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and influencers.

Influencer expertise involves understanding audience needs and providing relevant, useful information (Caiado et al., 2025). High competence generates admiration and respect from followers. These feelings deepen into a stronger emotional attachment to the influencer.

An influencer's physical or personal attractiveness creates a positive impression and increases audience engagement. Attractive influencers are often perceived as ideal figures to be admired (Madina & Kim, 2021). This perception fosters an emotional connection between followers and influencers.

Emotional Attachment is an emotional bond formed by an intense psychological connection between a consumer and an influencer or a product. Emotional attachment increases trust, comfort, and confidence in product recommendations (Faisal et al., 2024). A high level of emotional closeness increases the likelihood that a consumer will intend to purchase.

2. METHOD

Population and Sample

The population in this study was all social media users in the Aceh region who had been exposed to promotional content for Benings Clinic products through influencers on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. The population included individuals with active social media accounts who had seen or followed promotions from influencers about Benings Clinic services. The study sample consisted of 216 respondents, selected using a purposive sampling technique, who were domiciled in Aceh and had been exposed to Benings Clinic promotions through influencers.

Data collection technique

Data collection in this study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to respondents who met the research criteria. The questionnaires were compiled based on indicators for each research variable: Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Emotional Attachment, and Purchase Intention.

The data collection process was conducted online to facilitate the distribution and completion of the questionnaire by respondents. The questionnaire link was distributed via social media and instant messaging apps to users in the Aceh region who had been exposed to Benings Clinic promotions via influencers. This method was chosen because it was efficient, practical, and able to reach a wider range of respondents in a relatively short time.

Data Analysis Methods

In this study, data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 3, which employs the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. This method was chosen because it is suitable for analyzing complex research models involving multiple latent variables and mediating relationships. The PLS-SEM approach also does not require a strict normal data distribution and can be used with relatively moderate sample sizes.

The analysis process consists of two main stages: outer model evaluation and inner model evaluation. The outer model evaluation aims to test the validity and reliability of the indicators for measuring the research constructs, while the inner model evaluation examines the relationships among variables and tests the formulated hypotheses, including the direct and indirect influences through the Emotional Attachment variable.

Variable Measurement and Data Analysis

The dependent variable in this study is Purchase Intention, which is measured through indicators of future purchase intentions, desire to try the service, tendency to choose as the main choice, and willingness to recommend to others (Zaman et al., 2024; Stephanie, 2025).

The independent variables consist of Trustworthiness, Expertise, and Attractiveness. Trustworthiness is measured through indicators of honesty, integrity, consistency of information, and the level of trust in influencer recommendations (Utami & Handayani, 2019; Han & Balabanis, 2024). Expertise is measured through indicators of product knowledge, experience in related fields, the ability to provide clear explanations, and professional competence (Syarifah et al., 2019; Caiado et al., 2025). Attractiveness is measured through indicators of attractive appearance, pleasant personality, visual appeal, and the ability to attract audience attention (Abdullah et al., 2024; Madina & Kim, 2021).

Emotional Attachment acts as a mediating variable and is measured through indicators of feelings of emotional closeness, comfort, deep trust, and personal connectedness with the influencer or product (Rahayu et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024).

The analysis was conducted in two stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). Evaluation of the outer model was conducted by testing convergent validity (outer loading > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50), discriminant validity using HTMT (< 0.90), and reliability using Composite Reliability (0.60–0.70 is acceptable) and Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.60).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The measurement model for validity and reliability tests, the coefficient of determination of the model and the path coefficient for the equation model can be seen in Figure 2 below.

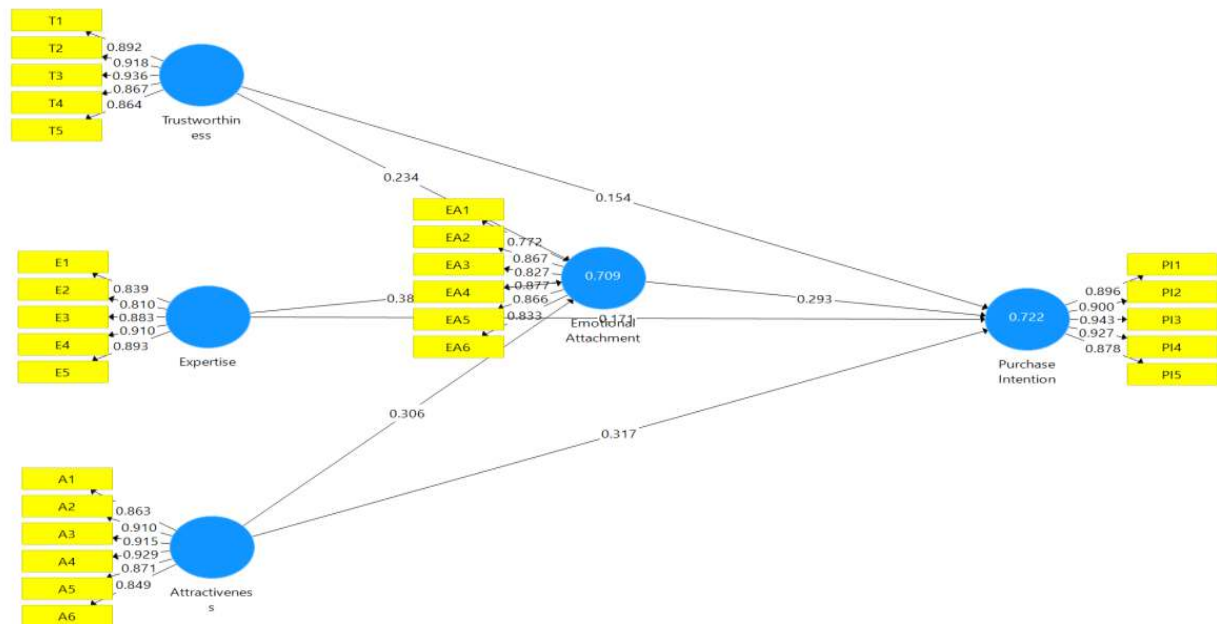


Figure 1. 2025 Analysis Results

Table1. Average variance extracted (AVE)

Variables	AVE
<i>Attractiveness</i>	0.792
<i>Emotional Attachment</i>	0.708
<i>Expertise</i>	0.753
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	0.827
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	0.803

Source: Analysis, 2025

Based on the results of the measurement model testing in Figure 2, all constructs have factor loading values above 0.6 and AVE values greater than 0.5 for all indicators. This indicates that each construct has met the requirements for convergent validity.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
<i>Attractiveness</i>	0,947	0,958
<i>Emotional Attachment</i>	0,917	0,935
<i>Expertise</i>	0,918	0,938
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	0,947	0,960
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	0,939	0,953

Source: Analysis, 2025

A construct is considered reliable if it has a composite reliability value above 0.70 and a Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.60. Based on the SmartPLS output, all constructs in this study meet both criteria, thus concluding that the constructs used have good reliability.

Hypothesis Testing

Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing

The results of testing the direct influence hypothesis can be seen in table 3 below.

Table 3. Path Coefficient

Variabel	Original Sample	Standar Deviasi	T-statistics	P-values
<i>Trustworthiness</i> → <i>Purchase Intention</i>	0.154	0.090	1.716	0.087
<i>Expertise</i> → <i>Purchase Intention</i>	0.171	0.077	2.221	0.027
<i>Attractiveness</i> → <i>Purchase Intention</i>	0.317	0.068	4.677	0.000
<i>Trustworthiness</i> → <i>Emotional Attachment</i>	0.234	0.072	3.244	0.001
<i>Expertise</i> → <i>Emotional Attachment</i>	0.384	0.055	6.982	0.000
<i>Attractiveness</i> → <i>Emotional Attachment</i>	0.306	0.063	4.850	0.000
<i>Emotional Attachment</i> → <i>Purchase Intention</i>	0.293	0.085	3.442	0.001

Source: Analysis, 2025

The test results show that Trustworthiness, Expertise, and Attractiveness of influencers have different influences on Emotional Attachment and Purchase Intention of Bening Clinic

consumers. Trustworthiness is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Emotional Attachment with a coefficient of 0.234, T-statistic 3.244, and P-value 0.001, which means that the higher the consumer's trust in the influencer, the stronger the emotional attachment formed. A similar thing is also seen in the Expertise and Attractiveness variables which each show a positive and significant effect on Emotional Attachment, with a coefficient of 0.384 (T-statistic 6.982; P-value 0.000) and 0.306 (T-statistic 4.850; P-value 0.000), so that the expertise and attractiveness of influencers are able to strengthen the emotional closeness of consumers. Furthermore, Emotional Attachment has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention with a coefficient of 0.293, T-statistic of 3.442, and P-value of 0.001, so the stronger the emotional attachment of consumers, the higher their purchase intention. However, Trustworthiness does not have a significant effect on Purchase Intention directly (coefficient of 0.154; T-statistic of 1.716; P-value of 0.087), which indicates that trust alone is not enough to drive purchase intention without emotional involvement. In contrast, Expertise and Attractiveness are proven to have a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, with coefficients of 0.171 (T-statistic of 2.221; P-value of 0.027) and 0.317 (T-statistic of 4.677; P-value of 0.000), respectively, which means that the expertise and attractiveness of influencers can encourage consumers to intend to purchase Bening Clinic products.

Table 4. Bootstrapping Test Results

Variabel	Original Sample	Standar Deviasi	T-statistics	P-values
<i>Trustworthiness</i> → <i>Emotional Attachment</i> → <i>Purchase Intention</i>	0.069	0.025	2.690	0.007
<i>Expertise</i> → <i>Emotional Attachment</i> → <i>Purchase Intention</i>	0.112	0.041	2.758	0.006
<i>Attractiveness</i> → <i>Emotional Attachment</i> → <i>Purchase Intention</i>	0.090	0.034	2.606	0.009

Source: Data processing with PLS, 2025

The results of the mediation analysis show that Emotional Attachment plays an important role in bridging the influence of Trustworthiness, Expertise, and Attractiveness on Purchase Intention of Bening Clinic consumers. In the relationship between Trustworthiness and Purchase Intention, Emotional Attachment is proven to be a significant mediator with an original sample value of 0.069, a T-statistic of 2.690, and a P-value of 0.007. This shows that consumer trust in influencers does not directly drive purchase intention, but first forms an emotional attachment which then increases Purchase Intention. Furthermore, in the

relationship between Expertise and Purchase Intention, Emotional Attachment is also proven to mediate significantly with an original sample value of 0.112, a T-statistic of 2.758, and a P-value of 0.006, which means that influencer expertise in providing information strengthens consumers' emotional bonds and ultimately influences purchase intention. Similarly, in the relationship between Attractiveness and Purchase Intention, Emotional Attachment became a significant mediator with an original sample value of 0.090, a T-statistic of 2.606, and a P-value of 0.009, confirming that influencer attractiveness not only directly impacts purchase intention but also indirectly through the formation of emotional attachment. It can be concluded that emotional attachment plays a key role in strengthening the influence of influencer credibility on consumer purchasing decisions.

Discussion

The research results show that trustworthiness of influencers or brands has a positive influence on consumers' emotional engagement. This means that when consumers perceive influencers or Bening Clinic as honest, consistent, and delivering factual information, they not only trust them but also feel comfortable and emotionally connected to the brand. This trust creates a sense of security and emotional loyalty, as consumers judge Bening Clinic not only on the quality of their products but also on the sincerity of their communications on social media.

The expertise of influencers and Bening Clinic professionals has been proven to strengthen consumers' emotional engagement. When influencers or clinic staff demonstrate credible knowledge, share accurate education, or demonstrate professionalism, consumers feel confident they're in safe hands. This fosters a sense of trust, security, and emotional connection to the brand. In other words, expertise creates not only rational credibility but also an emotional connection that forms the basis for loyalty.

The physical and visual appeal of influencers, or the image of Bening Clinic, also significantly influences consumers' emotional engagement. An attractive appearance, elegant communication style, promotional aesthetics, and the clinic's modern and clean visuals create an emotional connection for consumers. For young consumers, especially in Banda Aceh, appealing visuals foster a sense of pride and connection with the brand. Therefore, appeal is not just about appearance, but also about creating a pleasant emotional experience.

Emotional attachment has been shown to be a crucial factor in increasing purchase intention. Consumers who feel close, comfortable, and satisfied with Bening Clinic are more likely to use its services, try new products, or even recommend it to others. Emotional attachment drives consumers to buy not only out of necessity but also out of a sense of belonging, personal connection, and emotional closeness to the brand.

Research found that trustworthiness has no direct effect on purchase intention, while expertise and attractiveness have a positive and significant effect. Trust is a foundation, but it's not enough to drive a purchase without emotional engagement. Conversely, an influencer's expertise and visual appeal can influence purchase decisions because they create a sense of confidence, admiration, and a desire to experience the quality the brand offers.

Emotional attachment has been shown to mediate the influence of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness on purchase intention. This means that trust, expertise, or attractiveness will more effectively influence purchasing decisions if they first foster an emotional bond. This explains why consumers don't immediately buy simply because they trust a brand, but rather when they feel close, confident, and proud of the brand they trust.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that influencer characteristics consisting of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness play a role in forming consumers' emotional attachment to Bening Clinic in Aceh and influencing purchase intention. These three characteristics are proven to have a positive and significant effect on emotional attachment. A strong influence is also seen in the relationship between emotional attachment and purchase intention. Expertise and attractiveness have a significant direct influence on purchase intention, while trustworthiness does not have a direct influence but has an indirect influence through emotional attachment. The mediating role of emotional attachment emphasizes that emotional bonds are the main mechanism that translates influencer credibility into purchase intention. Influencer-based marketing strategies at Bening Clinic should focus on building strong emotional connections alongside delivering product information.

Bening Clinic recommends considering influencer credibility when selecting collaborations. A good reputation, honesty, consistent messaging, and closeness to the audience are crucial factors in building emotional attachment. Long-term collaborations are considered more effective than short-term promotions because they foster a more natural, deeper emotional connection among influencers, brands, and consumers.

Strengthening expertise should be a priority in all promotional activities. Educational content on skin care, explanations of medical procedures, and presentations of treatment results grounded in scientific knowledge can enhance perceptions of professionalism. These efforts not only strengthen credibility but also foster emotional engagement with consumers. Training for influencers and marketing teams is necessary to ensure accurate and understandable delivery of medical information.

Attractiveness in visual communication and service experiences also needs to be maintained. Consistent social media aesthetics, comfortable clinic design, and the professional appearance of medical staff create a positive image in consumers' minds. A strong visual image fosters emotional connection and increases brand pride, ultimately impacting purchase intent and loyalty.

The central role of emotional attachment in increasing purchase intention underscores the importance of a more personal, humanistic communication approach. Active social media engagement, prompt responses, emotionally engaging testimonials, and excellent after-sales service can strengthen consumers' sense of closeness. The relationships they build not only encourage purchases but also foster a sense of belonging within Bening Clinic.

Future research could expand the study to other beauty clinics or different regions to increase the generalizability of the results. Adding variables such as brand trust, perceived value, customer satisfaction, or social media engagement could potentially provide a more comprehensive picture of the factors shaping purchase intention. A qualitative approach could also be used to delve deeper into consumer emotional dynamics.

Collaboration between the government and beauty industry players in Aceh is needed to build a transparent and ethical digital marketing ecosystem. Regulations promoting beauty services should emphasize security, transparency, and consumer protection. Influencer marketing strategies should not only be profit-oriented but also focus on public education and increasing trust in professional and responsible beauty services.

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