

Preferences for the use of skincare products in Gen Z women from the perspective of marketing communication

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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This study aims to find out how the preferences of Gen Z female consumers in purchasing skincare products based on the marketing messages they receive. The data collection technique in this study is to conduct observations and conduct in-depth interviews with Gen Z women who are actively using the product skincare. The results of the study show that the cognitive stage, namely product knowledge and brand awareness, plays a crucial role in strengthening consumers' understanding of the existence of skincare products and their benefits. The conative stage is the endpoint in the purchase decision-making process, where consumers have formed a positive belief in skincare products. Effective marketing communication, especially through social media and collaboration with influencers or other user reviews, has a significant impact on shaping consumer preferences and guiding their purchasing decisions. This study can help skincare companies to develop a more effective marketing strategy that is in line with the preferences and purchasing behaviors of today's young consumers.

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INTRODUCTION

Generation Z is the generation born in 1997-2012 that distinguishes this generation from the previous generation is the development of the digital world which has started quite rapidly. Nowadays, for Gen Z women, using skincare has become a natural thing, and not a few Gen Z people pay attention to the care and health of their skin and its appearance (Kompas, 2023). Generation Z will be the most important generation for the retail future, because the majority of them have a large enough buying capacity in 2026 (Savić et al., 2024). Therefore, with considerable purchasing power, according to a report by WGSN (Worth Global Style Network) Gen Z is considered the largest group of beauty buyers, where Gen Z women spend \$358 per year.

In a company, there are several aspects that affect increasing product sales, especially in the field of marketing (Damayanti, 2017). One of the aspects that affects increasing product sales is the concept and strategy of marketing communication. In general, marketing communication is a tool used by companies to make more efforts to introduce their products and brands more attractively and clearly to consumers in a direct or indirect way (Firmansyah, 2020).

Generally, marketing communication is used in business to attract, persuade, and provide information to consumers about the brands and products they sell in a direct or indirect way (Farahdiba, 2020). Marketing communication plays a crucial role in the success or failure of a business and is considered an essential component of the overall marketing process. That way companies can use marketing communication as a means to introduce their goods and also help them in terms of achieving sales targets (Syauki & Avina, 2020). One of the components of marketing communication is promotion. The essence of promoting is the goal so that the promoted product becomes better known by the public. By becoming more famous by many people, it will automatically affect the increase in product sales (Puspitarini & Nuraeni, 2019).

This increase is also supported by technological developments in today's digitalization era where the development of social media and mass media among the public is happening so fast. Due to the high level of use of social networks around the world, social media can be used for a variety of purposes, such as building creative ventures, expanding business networks that were previously inaccessible through conventional media, and easily promoting goods and services. One of the most commonly used digital marketing strategies is

promotion or advertising through endorsement (Andriany, 2022). Principle of endorsement Social media is like a symbiosis of mutualism, namely between both parties benefiting (Hardilawati et al., 2019). Promotion using services endorsement through Celebrity Endorser this can affect consumer buying interest (Lestari & Wahyono, 2021). Beauty influencer is news in the beauty world, especially thanks to the videos uploaded by the influence can guide preferences regarding beauty products (Chen & Dermawan, 2020). And now Generation Z can meet their communication needs with digital technology, which encourages them to express themselves on social media (F. S. E. Putri et al., 2023)

The results of the ZAP Beauty Index 2023 research found that Indonesian women feel insecure about the condition of their facial skin. Because the face is the first part of the body that is seen by others. So problems with the face often cause insecurity for most Indonesian women. A survey of 9,010 female respondents aged 12-66 years in Indonesia found that the main problem of concern is dull faces and acne.

Skin care at this time must be more paid attention to how to maintain and care for it. For this reason, the use of products skincare with natural ingredients and safe from chemical content and according to individual skin needs, it can be an option for skin care. What is very important before using the product skincare. The first thing is to make sure that each of our facial skin types is different. The types of facial skin that humans have are generally oily, normal and dry. Realizing that each facial skin owned by each individual has differences, therefore the problems that arise on each facial skin are also different such as the onset of acne, dark spots, the appearance of blackheads, dull faces, streaks and other skin problems. This may be caused by the use of the product skincare contains harmful ingredients and is not suitable for facial skin. Incompatibility use skincare It can be caused by a lack of education about the ingredients in skincare or the influence of the outside environment, then the right treatment is needed for facial skin problems (Dewi et al., 2022).

Consumers are inseparable from their behavior. Consumer behavior is the behavior that consumers show when they search, buy, use, evaluate, and dispose of products and services that they hope will satisfy their needs. Consumer behavior focuses on how individuals, groups, or organizations make decisions about purchasing goods and services and how they use and dispose of them. The decision includes the product or service chosen, the reason for the purchase, the time and place of purchase, the post-purchase evaluation, and the disposal process (Syafrianita et al., 2022).

In the decision-making process, consumers follow a series of steps that begin when they encounter a specific problem or need. For example, a consumer feels that his old phone is no longer responsive and often experiences problems in daily use. This is a problem for consumers because mobile phones are an essential tool in their daily lives for communication and productivity. So, these consumers began to look for information, the process continued with the evaluation of some of the information obtained, then entered the decision-making process to buy a new cellphone. The decision to buy or consume a product with a certain brand will begin with the introduction of the product's needs. The quality of the product is also a preference in the purchasing decision (V. K. Putri & Halik, 2024).

The development of the beauty industry has reached its peak, especially when it comes to skincare. In this digital era, Generation Z women are increasingly actively looking for information and products skincare that suits their preferences. Consumer behavior in purchasing decision-making is also a complex and complicated aspect to understand. Some consumers evaluate products in detail, while others make decisions with simpler considerations (Syauki & Avina, 2020).

Seeing the phenomenon that has been described above, the researcher sees an urgency to find out how the decision process to purchase skincare products is carried out by Gen Z women. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out how the preferences of Gen Z female consumers in purchasing skincare products based on the marketing messages received. This research is important because it can provide a better understanding of how Generation Z women choose skincare products based on the marketing messages they receive. Thus, the results of this study can help skincare companies to develop a more effective marketing strategy that is in line with the preferences of today's young consumers.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. The data collection technique in this study is to conduct observations and conduct in-depth interviews with Gen Z women who are actively using the product skincare and have a preference for the product skincare. Because, the subject of this study is related to preferences skincare in Gen Z women. Women in this study are those aged 12-27 years. This is in accordance with Indonesian Gen Z report, the age is the Generation Z group.

The data analysis technique in the study used Miles and Huberman (2014) analysis. In this study, researchers used the Hierarchy of Effects theory by Robert J. Lavidge and Gery Steiner in their 1961 article "A Model for Predictive Measurements of Advertising Effectiveness" to analyze preferences skincare. This theory is one of the theoretical parts of marketing communication theory. This theory explains how consumers who after seeing a product or service marketing message will experience a series of different conditions and

attitudes. This theory states that consumers go through a series of stages or levels in the decision-making process before they finally take action, such as buying the product. The stages in Effect Hierarchy Theory include, Cognitive, Affective and Connotative. In more detail, the stages can be explained as follows (Darnika, 2021):

Cognitive Aspects

The cognitive stage is related to the understanding and recognition of information. It involves cognitive processes such as noting, recognizing, and processing information rationally. The cognitive aspect here usually consists of awareness and knowledge which can be explained as follows: (a) Awareness. Companies must regulate how the target market can know about their products or services, so that they are able to attract the buying interest of potential consumers: (b) Knowledge: Consumers may know the products or services of a company, but they do not know much about the product. So, companies may need to do some strategies such as advertising in order to better introduce products to the public. Companies must provide the information needed to increase buying interest from a product.

Affective Aspects

In the affective stage, after knowledge of the product is able to be fulfilled, then consumers will form feelings about a brand or product. Brands can do a variety of things at this stage, such as expressing confidence in their product offerings, using consumer testimonials to reinforce these beliefs, and improving the consumer experience to increase customer loyalty. Areas in this affective aspect include: (a) Liking. If the target market is already familiar with a product, they are likely to like it. However, on the other hand, if the target market is not familiar with the product, the chances that they will be interested and like it will be very small: (b) Preference. If the target market already likes the product but feels dissatisfied, they tend to look for similar products from competitors to compare them. In this process, they will assess which products are more suitable and suitable for their needs. Therefore, it is important for companies to establish preferences among their audience at this stage. One way to do this is to promote the quality, value, performance, and other advantages of their products: (c) Conviction. When the target market is amazed and considers a product important, this can help the product become popular with consumers. This phenomenon occurs because when a person feels satisfied with what they buy or use, they tend to share their positive experiences with the people around them. Conversely, if the experience is negative, they may also tell others to avoid the product. Indirectly, this activity provides benefits for the company in the form of free word-of-mouth promotions by users who are satisfied with the product.

Conative Aspects

This aspect focuses on the individual's response to the communication process. The desire to respond differently to a product is the last step in the buying process. Once consumers gather information and form an opinion about the product, they will be more likely to be interested in buying and getting it at the time they think is right (Purwitasari, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations and in-depth interviews to get an overview of how Gen Z women describe their preferences for purchasing skincare products. Consumers, in this case Gen Z women, stated that skincare is a very important product for women.

The context that is the reason for the informant's purchase decision consists of a series of processes and factors. Including knowledge about the product, need for the product, preference for the product, belief in the product, and information obtained about the product. Researchers have successfully identified skincare preferences in Gen Z women and hierarchical factors of effect on the decision to purchase skincare products, that there is a significant relationship between the two factors.

First, the average informant relies on social media, online reviews, and influencers as the main source of information about skincare products. This shows that they are actively looking for information before deciding to buy. By seeing advertisements or information about skincare products, informants feel that they have gained more in-depth knowledge about the ingredients, benefits, and how to use skincare products. They consider this information important to make a purchase decision. The results of the study also show that the factors most considered by informants are product content, compatibility with skin type, benefits offered, brand reputation and price. This shows that knowledge of the product influences the purchasing decision-making process.

The skincare preferences of Gen Z women are reflected in their need for skincare products to overcome skin problems such as dry, sensitive, or acne-prone skin. The results of the questionnaire showed that the majority of informants had certain skin problems that they wanted to address, indicating that consumers' needs

in dealing with their skin problems could result in their preference for skincare products. And the price factor also greatly affects skincare preferences because consumers make price a benchmark for product quality and consumers are also looking for products according to the contents of their pockets.

The results of the study also show that marketing communication factors, especially through social media, collaboration with influencers or other user reviews, have a significant impact on shaping skincare product preferences and purchase decisions. Generation Z, who grew up with the internet and social media, tends to seek information about skincare products through digital platforms and pay attention to the opinions and recommendations of the influencers they follow. This shows that effective marketing communication through social media can determine consumer preferences, especially in terms of skincare product selection. Effective marketing communication can also increase consumer awareness of a particular skincare product, create a positive brand image, and generate consumer trust which in turn can determine a purchase decision. However, it should be noted that consumer preferences are not only influenced by product promotion, but also by product quality, price and other user experiences or testimonials.

Skincare preferences in Generation Z women and marketing communication have a positive impact on the purchase decision of skincare products. Consumer preferences formed from individual needs for certain skincare products can be determined by effective marketing communications that prioritize information, interactions, and opinions from influencers or public figures who are popular among Generation Z, companies need to understand well consumer preferences and integrate marketing communications that match the characteristics and purchasing behavior of Generation Z.

The Hierarchy of Effects Theory from Robert J. Lavidge and Gery Stainer is a commonly used concept in marketing communication to understand how various elements of communication interact with each other in achieving the end goal. Lavidge & Stainer mentions that once consumers see a marketing message about a product or service, they will go through a series of stages before finally becoming interested in buying. The three stages are the cognitive stage which includes awareness and knowledge about the brand, the affective stage which involves preferences and fondness for the brand, and the conative stage which includes beliefs and purchase actions. With the existence of advertising or product promotion skincare. Then curiosity arises which can hinder the process of consumers in responding to marketing messages, so that they will go through a sequence of three stages as described in the Hierarchy of Effects Theory, namely the stages of thinking, feeling, and acting, which are also known as the cognitive, affective, and conative stages (Purwitasari, 2021).

The first is the cognitive stage consisting of the stage of consumer awareness and knowledge of a product or brand. When consumers are informed about a product and how they process the information they receive, this can affect their interest in buying the product. The Cognitive stage in this study is how Gen Z women know about skincare products. Evidence that they know skincare products based on research results that state that they have enough knowledge about skincare products obtained through various sources of information such as social media, online reviews, and recommendations from other users or influencers. They process this information to form an understanding of the benefits and characteristics of certain skincare products. Then, this understanding can affect their interest in choosing and buying skincare products that are considered to suit their needs and preferences. In this study, it was obtained that knowledge about the product or brand awareness plays an important role in strengthening consumers' understanding of the existence of skincare products and their benefits. The analogy is that when a consumer finds out a product that is needed, they will tend to be more open to the information conveyed about the product. This can encourage them to explore further and consider buying the product.

The next stage is the affective stage which consists of likes and preferences. It refers to the stage at which consumers develop feelings or emotions towards a particular brand or product. Consumers at this stage consider aspects such as compatibility with their skin type, ingredients used, brand reputation, price and also testimonials from other users. The information received at this stage can elicit positive or negative feelings of consumers towards the product, which can then influence their decision to choose or ignore the product.

In addition, at this stage consumers can also begin to form preferences for a particular brand or product based on personal experience, recommendations from others, or various other factors that contribute to their perception of the product they are looking for. In the context of marketing, understanding this Affective stage allows companies to direct communication strategies that focus more on building emotional connections with consumers. By conveying relevant messages and building a positive image about the product, companies can increase the likelihood of consumers identifying themselves with the product emotionally, thereby increasing loyalty and the likelihood of purchasing the product on an ongoing basis.

The last stage that consumers go through before making a purchase is the conative stage. In the context of this study, the conative stage includes the real actions that consumers take after they have passed the cognitive stage (awareness and knowledge about the product) and the affective stage (emotional preferences and evaluations of the product). At the conative stage, consumers have formed a positive belief in skincare products based on the knowledge they have and their emotional evaluation. They have reached a point where

they feel confident in their decision to make a purchase. In this study, the conative stage can be observed from consumer behavior related to skincare products, such as searching for more information such as reviews from other users, suggestions from those closest to them, as well as reviews from influencers who are considered honest and trustworthy about product specifications, comparing prices and features with other products. This is the stage where consumers change their intentions into concrete actions in fulfilling their needs or desires for skincare products so that they come to the stage of the purchase process. Understanding this conative stage is important for companies to design effective marketing strategies to influence consumers by the time they are ready to take the purchase step. By understanding the psychological processes and consumer behavior at this stage, companies can optimize their marketing messages and create a more enjoyable and satisfying buying experience for consumers.

In the perspective of marketing communication, skincare brands can use compelling promotional messages to attract attention and influence these consumers' purchasing decisions. Promotional messages should be designed to create a sense of urgency and increase consumer engagement. The process of delivering messages must also be able to be conveyed to consumers well and easily understood by the target market. Conveying messages that are relevant and related to the lives of Gen Z women, those consumers will feel connected to the brand.

Social media platforms also have a positive impact because they can be used to interact in different ways according to the social media features. Thus, it can be concluded that the preferences of Gen Z women in skincare purchasing decisions are in line with the Hierarchy of effects theory by Robert J. Levedige & Gery Staner. So skincare businesses first analyze all aspects of their marketing communication strategy to create a strong preference among consumers and gain a competitive advantage in the market.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that skincare is a crucial product for Gen Z women, with their purchasing decisions influenced by factors such as product knowledge, personal needs, brand preferences, and information obtained. The cognitive stage, which includes product knowledge and brand awareness, is crucial for Gen Z women to understand the benefits of skincare products. They seek information about skincare products through social media, online reviews, and influencer recommendations, gaining a deeper understanding of ingredients, benefits, and usage. The affective stage, as per the Hierarchy of Effects theory, is also significant, as Gen Z women develop preferences and emotional evaluations based on factors like skin type, brand reputation, price, and user testimonials. The conative stage, which refers to the actual actions taken by consumers after passing the cognitive and affective stages, is the endpoint in the purchase decision-making process, where consumers form a positive belief in skincare products. Effective marketing communication, particularly through social media and collaboration with influencers, is essential for shaping consumer preferences and guiding purchasing decisions. To succeed in the skincare market, companies must understand Gen Z's preferences and purchasing behaviors, and integrating marketing communication strategies that suit their characteristics and preferences is highly recommended.

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